

A classic passage on the topic of faith and gratitude.

EXPOSITION

Resolutely with love, Jesus was going to Jerusalem to be crucified for sinners. Everyone knew He was a Healer. Ten lepers (the worst disease, incurable) saw Him as their only hope of healing. They begged for mercy. He directed them to the Jewish priests to be examined and officially declared healed acc. to the OT law. “As they went, they were cleansed.” All ten had trusted Him for healing of their leprosy, as evident from their obedience to Jesus. Only one was truly grateful to God, praised Him, and thanked Jesus—a Samaritan (“stranger,” i.e., foreigner). Implies the nine were ungrateful Jews. Jesus’ probing questions censure them. His last statement to the Samaritan, “Thy faith hath made thee whole,” distinguishes the one leper’s faith from the nine. “The choice of the word [whole—i.e., safe or saved] leaves room for the view that the healing power of Jesus and the saving power of faith go beyond physical life” (TDNT). The faith of the nine was only for the healing of leprosy. The Samaritan’s faith was for his complete healing—even from ingratitude.

DOCTRINES

Many helpful points → Jesus is the Savior we all need. He proves His claims to be the Christ by miracles. We should pray to Him, humbly and hopefully, for deliverance from our misery. But one point really stands out:

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 Saving faith in Christ heals us from the plague of ingratitude.

I. We All Have Contracted the Plague of Ingratitude

Ingratitude is a wicked, shameful lack of being thankful with a failure to show appreciation for kindness. “Gratitude is properly a virtue, disposing the mind to an inward sense and an outward acknowledgment of a benefit received, together with a readiness to return the same, or the like” (*Samuel Johnson’s Dictionary*). For kindnesses from God, the truly grateful person praises and thanks Him from the heart. But sin has hardened our hearts and silenced our mouths, making us ungrateful. Sin is a plague of the heart, worse than leprosy which is only a plague of the body (1 Kgs 8.38). Lepers might have God’s saving favor, but not ingrates.

None of us are born grateful. Characteristic ingratitude is universal among sinners (Luke 6.35; Rom 1.21; 2 Tim 3.2). Ingratitude dehumanizes us. It distorts the soul from the beautiful creature God made in His image, originally distinct from all the other animals. We have become “like hogs eating acorns that never look up to see where they come from” (Appalachian saying). Why do you suppose so many people eat their meals without a prayer of thanks? Their food is unsanctified like their hearts (1 Tim 4.3-5). They bite the Almighty hand that feeds them. What a great sin!

II. Christ Is the Savior Even from Ingratitude

Ingratitude, then, is a horrid sin. Christ is the Savior not only from the guilt but also from the power and practice of sin. This is illustrated in the tenth leper. He was naturally ungrateful like the rest. In his case alone, Christ also cured the plague of his heart, with the sin of ingratitude. Behold the display of gratitude in vv. 15, 16. That is how it’s done, beloved—earnestly, humbly, orally, with expressions of thanks directed to the Giver.

This is the spirit of true worship in those who are saved. See how the psalmist yearned that all might possess it: Psa 107.1, 8, 15, 21, 31. This why God made us and saves us—to glorify Him in thanksgiving (Psa 50.15).

The Orthodox Catechism (1680) teaches us about gratitude considered biblically and theologically. To live and die in the joy of our Christian comfort, we need to know how to thank God for deliverance from all our sins and misery (#2). Our knowledge of God’s providence helps us to be thankful when things go well (#28). We are called Christians because we are anointed to present ourselves to Him as a living sacrifice of thanks (#32). One advantage we receive from Christ’s sacrifice and death on the cross is He causes us to dedicate ourselves as an offering of gratitude to him (#43). We do good so that in all our living we may show that we are thankful to God for all He has done for us, so that He may be praised through us (#92). Christians are bound to show thankfulness and obedience to the Lord who saves us (#101). Prayer is the most important part of the thankfulness that God requires of us (#135, prayerlessness is ingratitude).

III. Not All Faith in Christ Is Saving Faith

We contrast the faith of the nine with the faith of the one. The nine had faith for this miracle; the one, for salvation. “Saving faith may be defined as a certain conviction, wrought in the heart by the Holy Spirit, as to the truth of the gospel, and a hearty reliance (trust) on the promises of God in Christ” (Berkhof, ST 503). It is not doubtful but certain. It is not natural to us but the gift of the Holy Spirit. It accepts the gospel message as true and relies on it to be true for my salvation. “We come to the Savior with empty hands, admitting we have nothing to give to God but that we depend fully and completely on His unmerited favor. We open the empty hand of faith to receive God’s promised blessing” (*TableTalk*, July 2016).

IV. Grateful Praise to God for Christ Is a Mark of Saving Faith

Because grateful praise is the fruit of saving faith, it is its mark and evidence. OC says it is impossible for those grafted into Christ by true faith not to produce fruits of gratitude (#64). People who do not turn to God from their ungrateful and impenitent ways are not saved (#93).

USES

- For Confession of Sin. We’ve all been guilty and helpless in our ingratitude.
- For Appeal to Christ. “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us” re: our ingratitude.
- For Examination of Ourselves. Am I truly grateful and do I show/speak it?
- For Thankful Praises to the Lord. As objects of His mercy, we thank Him. Ω