

The Dynamic of Gratitude
Sunday, November 22, 2020
by C Benjamin Dill

Good morning Lighthouse! Are you ready for the Word of God this morning?

This week we get to celebrate what I believe is one of the greatest moral and political achievements of our Nation. That we, as a Nation, would set aside a day; a national holiday, specifically dedicated to giving God thanks for our freedom, for our benefits of every kind; to me is one of the greatest victories ever won in our Nation.

I realize that it would be virtually impossible to get a National Holiday adopted in the political climate in which we live today, especially one thanking God, (yes, God; the one in whom our coins and currency still, for now, all say that **in Him** we trust) for the incredible benefits from Him that we enjoy in this country today.

It does give me pride and joy to know that at least the stock from which we came did, indeed, understand the source of all these benefits.

Gratitude is one of the most important character traits you could possibly have; it makes an incredible difference in our lives.

Sometimes it seems that most people fall into one of two basic groups when it comes to gratitude.

There are those who constantly whine and complain about what they do not have...and there are those who constantly give thanks for what they do have.

Some would say, "Of course they do, they have everything".

Let me ask you a question. Those who have more; are they thankful because they have more...or do they have more because they are thankful?

Believers are commanded in Scripture to be thankful.

Colossians 3:15 And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and **be ye thankful**.

Believers are furthermore commanded in Scripture to give thanks.

Psalm 105:1-5

1 **O give thanks unto the LORD**; call upon his name: make known his deeds among the people.

2 Sing unto him, sing psalms unto him: talk ye of all his wondrous works.

3 Glory ye in his holy name: let the heart of them rejoice that seek the LORD.

4 Seek the LORD, and his strength: seek his face evermore.

5 Remember his marvelous works that he hath done; his wonders, and the judgments of his mouth;

Believers are also commanded to demonstrate their gratitude.

Psalm 107:22 And let them sacrifice the **sacrifices of thanksgiving**, and declare his works with rejoicing.

To be thankful, to give thanks, to practice thanksgiving; these are ordered more than 100 times in Scripture.

So just how important is thanksgiving? First, we need to understand:

I. The Principles of Gratitude.

A. Let's look at how gratitude works; there are basically three elements:

1. We are commanded to be thankful; thus, **Gratitude exists**.
2. We are also commanded to give thanks; thus, **Gratitude is stated**.
3. We are commanded to practice Thanksgiving. **Gratitude is expressed**.
4. Let's compare it to something I know you will understand; especially you ladies.

B. Gratitude is very similar to love.

1. Ok ladies, your husband claims he loves you; **love exists**.
4. He also tells you "I love you"; **love is stated**.
5. But is that truly love?
 - a. He says "I love you" but he spends his paycheck at the bar.
 - b. He says "I love you" but he doesn't help with anything around the house.
 - c. He says "I love you" but he is abusive when others are not around.
6. Let me ask you; does love really exist if it is not expressed?
7. Does then gratitude really exist if it is not also expressed in the things we actually do to demonstrate our gratitude to the Lord?
8. James gave us a very similar principle when he said:

James 2:17 Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.

Secondly, we should understand:

II. The Power of Gratitude.

A. Where gratitude does not exist, evil thrives.

1. A lack of gratitude is a major factor as to why lost people stay lost.
2. When God reveals Himself to man, some want to know more; others are unthankful.

Romans 1:21-22

21 Because that, when they knew God, they glorified *him* not as God, **neither were thankful**; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.
22 Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools.

2. Ingratitude is a sign of our times.

2 Timothy 3:1-5

1 This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.
2 For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, **unthankful**, unholy,
3 Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good,
4 Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God;
5 Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.

B. Gratitude is a key factor that brings men to Christ.

1. All of us are blessed of the Lord.
2. The rain falls on the just and the unjust.
3. God has revealed Himself and His goodness to all of us.

B. Our response to God's goodness is always one of two things.

1. We are thankful and thus we seek Him.
2. We are unthankful and we seek him not.

C. There is an entitlement mentality that is sweeping our country today.

1. That mentality is a product of men being unthankful.
2. Gratitude says “I owe someone else for what I receive”.
3. Ingratitude says “You, the world, the government...you all owe me; it’s mine and you are keeping me from it”!
4. Lives begin to change when men become thankful.

III. Gratitude calls us to give back.

A. Two weeks ago I demonstrated in Scripture how that giving and love are indivisibly connected.

1. Today I would hope we can see that gratitude has that same connection.
2. The demonstration of our gratitude is called **thanksgiving**.
3. Thanks what? Thanks “giving”.
4. Gratitude is always demonstrated in giving.
5. It might be money, service, friendship, time or some other gift; but gratitude is always demonstrated is some sort of giving.

B. When we, out of love and gratitude, obey the command we have come to know as “heart of purpose” we set a dynamic in motion.

1. We choose what part of the blessing God gives us that we will give back;

2 Corinthians 9:7 Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, *so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.*

2. Causing God’s law of sowing and reaping to be applied accordingly.

2 Corinthians 9:8 And God *is* able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all *things*, may abound to every good work:

3. The dynamic begins to move.

2 Corinthians 9:9-11

9 (As it is written, He hath dispersed abroad; he hath given to the poor: his righteousness remaineth for ever.

10 Now he that ministereth seed to the sower both minister bread for *your* food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness;)

11 Being enriched in every thing to all bountifulness, which causeth through us thanksgiving to God.

4. The result is even more thanksgiving!

5. As our gifts are used in the work of the Lord, the results become exponential!

2 Corinthians 9:12 For the administration of this service not only supplieth the want of the saints, but is abundant also by **many thanksgivings** unto God;

6. The result is more and more people coming to know the Lord, becoming thankful, joyfully giving back and the dynamic continues on and on!

Conclusion:

How did one single Church of about 120 in Jerusalem manage to populate today's entire world with real believers in real Churches reaching the lost with the gospel?

It happened because believers quit whining about what they do not have and became thankful for what they did.

The grateful will always ask, "What can I give back"?

Psalm 116:12-19

12 What shall I render unto the LORD *for* all his benefits toward me?

13 I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the LORD.

14 I will pay my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all his people.

15 Precious in the sight of the LORD *is* the death of his saints.

16 O LORD, truly I *am* thy servant; I *am* thy servant, *and* the son of thine handmaid: thou hast loosed my bonds.

17 I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the LORD.

18 I will pay my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all his people,

19 In the courts of the LORD'S house, in the midst of thee, O Jerusalem. Praise ye the LORD.

This Thanksgiving week can be the beginning of a life of gratitude expressed.

Why am I thankful?

Because Jesus died and was buried and rose again, paying for me the complete penalty of my sin; He set me free; gave me life eternal and life abundant here and now!

He has done the same for you if you are willing to receive it.

Lord, because of what you have done for me, I will serve tirelessly, I will worship faithfully, I will give generously and I will die trusting in you!

2 Corinthians 9:15 Thanks *be* unto God for his unspeakable gift.