



Title: Attitude of Gratitude
Theme: Expression of Biblical Gratitude
Series: Full Measure of Thanksgiving

Long ago there was as a great British poet. He was a famous writer, whose writings had blessed many. Even before he died he made a great deal of money.

A newspaper reporter cynically came up to Mr. Kipling and said; "Mr. Kipling, I just read that somebody calculated that the money you make from your writings amounts to over one hundred dollars a word." Mr. Kipling raised his eyebrows and said, "Really, I certainly wasn't aware of that!"

The reporter reached into his pocket and pulled out a one hundred dollar bill and gave it to Mr. Kipling and said, "Here's a one hundred dollar bill. Now give me one of your one hundred dollar words." Rudyard Kipling looked at that piece of currency for a moment, then he folded it up and put it in His pocket and said, "Thanks!" (Author Unknown)

The word thanks is certainly a one-hundred dollar word.

Listen as I read 1 Thessalonians 5:16-17, "Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." (1 Thessalonians 5:16-17) Pray!

In this wonderful verse of Scripture, Paul is not giving a suggestion, but a command. Man owes a debt of obligation to God for anything that turns him from his inability to know God's love and enables him to enjoy the Lord's love which, in turn, equips him to express love to the Lord.

I would like to propose to you that if any nation ought to be thankful to God and grateful for His goodness, it ought to be America. If any people in America should be thankful to God and grateful for His goodness, it ought to be Christians, who are able to meet freely and fellowship together as Body of Christ.

Should gratitude always be expressed, and expansive, and is it expected?

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consequences of sin are going to fall upon Christians and non-Christians alike. In this sin-trodden world, the Lord through His loving grace and mercy will speak forth His blessings as He has done in the past. The Word of God speaks clearly of the heartfelt response of Holy Spirit illuminated Christians.

Please note: We are to give thanks in all circumstances, not for the circumstance, but that in Christ, there is victory, triumph and guidance to be found through all circumstances. No matter how terrible a situation may be, there is a God who says, "Never will I leave you nor forsake you." (Hebrews 13:5) It is a yes and Amen!

No obedient Christian has ever been made to drink the cup of affliction without drops of mercy being intermingled. Every calamity in some way in His time works out for the glory of God. We need to remember that trials are but only a temporary part of a larger plan for our spiritual well-being. Through this perspective we can always discern a cause for thanks to God. In fact, failure to give gratitude to God is a symptom of unbelief. When people do not take time to acknowledge or thank God, it is because they really don't believe in His sovereignty, that He really is watching over them.

Should gratitude always be expressed?

The first thing we want to consider today is, should gratitude always be expressed? Romans 1:21 says; "For although they knew God, they neither glorified Him as God nor gave thanks to Him." Paul is describing a lost world, a group of people who knew about God, of His existence, powerful workings and about His laws and decrees. Yet, they still did not thank Him, and the Book of Romans tells us that their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. (Romans 1: 21) That is why I say gratitude is always to be expressed! We are to give thanks always!

Scripture speaks of two obligations of man to God, praising and obeying Him. Man is created for worship and if he refuses to let God have the place of true honor, which rightly belongs to Him, then mankind will put something or someone in God's place. True victories in life are won by Christians who are joyful, prayerful and thankful.

We are to express gratitude always, simply because Scripture says so. David wrote, "Praise be to the Lord, to God our Savior, who daily bears our burdens." (Psalms 68:19) We are always to be thankful for God's daily goodness and mercy.

2 Corinthians says we are to thank God for His indescribable gift, Jesus Christ. (2 Corinthians 9:15) Paul says we are to thank God continually for those who receive God's Word. (1 Thessalonians 2:13) Psalm after Psalm reminds us to express gratitude to God. Psalms 54: 6 - 7 says, "I will sacrifice a freewill offering to you; I will praise your Name, O Lord, for it is good. For He has delivered me out of all my

troubles...”

There is no trouble that God cannot handle. By His grace He has even delivered people from trouble they have brought on themselves.

Psalms 105 is written to give gratitude to God for His providential deliverance of the nation Israel. Through Christ we have deliverance from indwelling sin. (Romans 7-8) Born again Christians have victory over death and the grave.... (1 Corinthians 15:57) The theme of Paul's epistles often pointed Christians to thankfulness. Paul tells us, for what the law was powerless to do, the Holy Spirit brought to life. All true born again Christians are very grateful for the cleansing power of the Holy Spirit's work.

Hebrews 13:15 says, “Through Jesus, therefore let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise - the fruit of our lips confess His Name.” Believers are to offer praise to God continually. Since a loving God is working out His purposes all the time, there is no circumstance in which praise should not be given. Please note how praise is to be offered, it is only through Christ that God will receive praise.

For application's sake: Have you ever thanked God for the person who planted the seeds of the gospel into your life? Have you thanked Him for the prayer intercessors He raised up in your behalf? Have you ever thanked God for those who feed the Word of God to you and to those who are putting God's Word out in the world? Have ever thanked God for your parents who have been given Biblical oversight over you? When was the last time you thanked God for your helpmate or for your husband? When was the last time you thanked God for His provision?

Christians who express an attitude of gratitude take every thought captive and make it obedient to Christ so they can “demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God.” (2 Corinthians 10:5) There is so much to Biblically thank God for and those who have an attitude that is pleasing to the Lord fill their minds and spiritual hearts with Biblical truth, thus destroying the flesh, the world view, and the lies of the devil.

Gratitude is to be expansive

Transitional Sentence: Gratitude is to be expressed always and it is to be expansive. The Holy Spirit of Christ moved the Apostle Paul to write, “...give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.” (1 Thessalonians 5:16-17)

The two words “all circumstances” makes this exhortation from the Lord very difficult. If we were told in “most things” or “in good things,” we would find it much easier to accept and obey.

The Apostle Paul lived what he preached and this so clearly seen in Acts 16: 16-

34. What a mighty work of God is seen in this portion of Scripture in regards to our Lord intervening for those who praise Him expansively.

The Apostle Paul, in the Name of Jesus commanded an evil spirit to come out of a slave girl who predicted the future. Her owners, after realizing that their hope of making money was gone, had Paul and Silas dragged before the magistrates. After being stripped and beaten they were thrown into the inner cell and they were put into stocks.

The Bible says; “About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them.” (Acts 16:25) Our Biblical examples, Paul and Silas expressed expansive praise and others heard it. This Biblical account sets the heartbeat for those with Holy Spirit illumination of the attitude of gratitude in being called to the work of the Lord.

One would think that Paul and Silas would be bemoaning their plight. Most certainly they were suffering from their flogging. Instead of complaining, we hear praying and singing. Notice that the great Apostle Paul and Silas are not demanding a miracle, rather enjoying the power of praise.

As the heartbeat of praise is given in extremely difficult circumstances, the Bible says, “Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everybody's chains came loose.” (Acts 16:26) Now, that would be a sight worth the seeing!

However, the head jailer didn't think so. He was the one responsible for those prisoners. It is my understanding that if a prisoner escaped under the supervision of a jailer, the jailer paid the penalty with his life. The execution of a jailer must have been horrible, for the jailer intended to take his own life. (Acts 16:27)

The presence of God's Holy Spirit must have been powerful. For after calling for lights, the jailer fell before Paul and Silas trembling and said, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved.” (Acts. 16: 30) The Bible says it is the work of the Holy Spirit of God to “...convict the world of sin... and righteousness.” (John 16:8)

Paul and Silas then shared the gospel, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, you will be saved – you and your household.” (Acts 16:31) Paul and Silas also shared the gospel with the jailer's household. The jailer produced the fruit of repentance, he washed their wounds and set food before them to eat. (Acts 16:34)

Luke tells us that the jailer was filled with joy, because he and his family had come to believe in God. (Acts. 16:34) All in one night Paul and Silas were flogged, thrown into prison, freed by direct intervention of God, and royally entertained in the home of rejoicing new converts. Expansive praise will usher in the presence of God's Holy Spirit and great things can happen.

I was blessed when a non-churched young man told me that he read Bonnie's

CrossRoads entitled "Diagnosis; Brain Cancer." In this article Bonnie was able to tell how her life was hidden in Christ, regardless of the outcome, whether she had just a few years or fifty years left to live. He said, "After I read it, I knew you would be alright, you two are fully prepared to share with others about eternal things." (Eric Thompson)

Those who are mature in spiritual matters know that Paul's and Silas' imprisonment was an attack from the enemy working through unsaved mankind. Jesus taught that there are times when physical infirmities are from Satan keeping people bound. (Luke 13:11-16) Being bound by mankind because of faithful service to the Lord or being bound by an infirmity from Satan are opportunities for expansive praise.

Our expansive praises are heard by others. Expansive praise birthed from a sure trust in the Sovereignty of God proves there is something different about Christians in comparison to those who live in this world.

For application's sake: Do people around you know that regardless of your circumstances, good or bad, you live a life of praise to God? Christians who are Holy Spirit led in all circumstances obey the exhortation of Philippians 2:14-16a, "Do everything without complaining or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe as you hold out the word of life..."

Gratitude is expected

Our praises are to be expansive and gratitude is expected. The heartbeat of an attitude of gratitude is the foundation of today's key text. "Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." (1 Thessalonians 5:16-17)

The great Communitarian Matthew Henry writes, "Here we have short exhortations that will not burden our memories, but will be of great use to direct the motions of our hearts and lives. This is a duty of great importance." These series of brief, staccato commands indicate the heartbeat of Christian living. (The New Bible Commentary; The Bible Knowledge Commentary) Today's key text gives the marks of a genuine church (Daily Study Bible Series) that is surrendered to the Headship of Christ.

Quality ministries that produce a God pleasing attitude take to heart what is written in 1 John 5:3-4, "This is love for God: to obey His commands. And His commands are not burdensome, for everyone born of God overcomes the world." The world view is not to praise God. The lie of the devil says that the Lord is not aware of nor concerned about your present circumstance.

It should not be a burden to express gratitude. Paul was inspired by the Holy

Spirit when he wrote “give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.” If there is not a wellspring of thanksgiving boiling up out of your heart, then you are out of the will of God.

Gratitude is the mark of a growing Christian. For example: Babies are not born being able to express gratitude. You can walk a colicky baby for several hours throughout the night. When you lay the baby down, he will not express thanksgiving, because he can’t, he is a baby. But as the child begins to grow, good parents train the child to say “thank you” and as the child continues to grow, he is expected to show gratitude by the way he lives.

If they don’t, their child will grow up living a self-centered life. It is a sign of maturity when our children reach a point of living self-less gratitude.

We don’t want to be like the little boy who thanked his grandmother for the piece of pie that he received. His grandmother said; “O I like it when you say thank you.” The boy replied, “I will say it again if you would put some ice-cream on top of the pie.” We are not to say thanks so we can get more, we are to say thanks simply as an expression of gratitude.

We express gratitude by becoming a giving Christian. When a Christian matures he takes his eyes off himself before he can notice the needs of others. Then he can sacrificially serve others as he meets their needs.

James tells us that the religion God the father accepts as pure and faultless is this, those who look after the needy. (James 1: 27) Jesus makes a great promise to those who would just give a cup of water to any disciple of His. (Matthew 10: 42)

We show gratitude to God and for the things He has done for us by helping others in the Name of Christ. James tells us that every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father. (James 1: 17) A thankful Christian will be a giving Christian.

It has been well said, “Thanksgiving is just thanks, then giving.” You can give without being thankful, but you cannot be thankful without giving. When you give, you are not only acknowledging that everything you have has been given to you by the Lord, but you are expressing your gratitude to Him.

A true “Attitude of Gratitude” will change your life. It will shield you from becoming over critical. It will draw you close to the Lord and it will make you more aware of His presence.

In Closing: *Walter B. Knight wrote about the "Ceaseless Praise of a Leper."* He writes;

"David was a Negro preacher, a leper, and a patient in the National Hospital for Lepers in Carville, Louisiana.

He was crippled, deformed and blind. Yet he was cheerful and thankful. He sang hymns of praise and greatly inspired all the other lepers who suffered the same health problems that he did. A note of thanksgiving was always dominant in His prayers.

An old-fashioned radio brought joy to him. He turned it on and off with his lips, for his fingers were useless.

It was told of Pastor David, 'He brought the joy of the Lord to all who heard his praises and saw the life he lived.'"

Pastor David, the black preacher who was bound in a Louisiana Hospital for lepers, expressed a true "Attitude of Gratitude."

No matter what our circumstances are, we can always have a testimony that glorifies the God who created us, the Christ who died for us and testifies of the Holy Spirit of Christ who enables us. A clear witness of the true church expresses continued gratitude, makes it expansive, and realizes it is expected.

The Bible says Christians, "...are a chosen people belonging to God, [so] that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness in to His wonderful light." (1 Peter 2: 9)

An attitude of gratitude affirms the heart of the psalmist who wrote, "How can I repay the Lord for all His goodness to Me?" Then he answers his own question, "I will lift the cup of Salvation and call on the Name of the Lord. I will fulfill my vows to the Lord, in the presence of all His people." (Psalm 116:12-13) By His enabling, we can express \$100.00 words.

Let us pray!

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