

Gratitude

Contributor: Tony Matthews

Scriptures:

Luke 17:17
Deuteronomy 4:9
Joshua 4:6-7
Exodus 20:12
Ephesians 6:2
Romans 1:21
Philippians 4:6
1 Thessalonians 5:18
Hebrews 13:15
James 1:2

Jesus asked, "were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine?" Luke 17:17

When I was old enough to go to school my mother would produce a pencil and pad and teach me to write 'thank you' letters after every Christmas and birthday.

Gratitude, like kindness, is a little used word in the world today. I feel sad at its demise. Perhaps the first thing to note is that gratitude must be taught and learned.

Gratitude develops in three stages.

1. We don't feel grateful.
2. We learn to feel grateful.
3. We begin to show our gratitude.

Jesus felt let down when nine lepers didn't return to show gratitude for their healing.

Both Old and New Testaments teach us that God loves gratitude and hates ingratitude. The opposite is also true. Satan loves ingratitude and hates gratitude toward God and others.

Sometimes we think we have nothing to be grateful about. Maybe things of this world are given to others and we feel we are not being fairly treated.

I was greatly challenged at church recently when one of the Pastors lead us into communion by reminding us of God's daily provision and guidance. After a pause she added words to this effect, "If God never did anything else in my life it wouldn't matter because He has already done more than enough through the sacrifice of Jesus which has settled my eternity with Him."

Throughout the Old Testament, feasts were celebrated to remind God's people of the varying ways in which He had blessed them and given opportunities to teach their children about the history of His goodness toward His chosen people.

Pause for a moment to read Moses' words in Deuteronomy 4:9, and Joshua's words in Joshua 4:6-7.

We see in those Scriptures how the Israelites laid piles of stones and set up altars and feasts to ensure they remembered God's goodness. These stones, altars and feasts also served to teach and remind successive generations to continue to show gratitude for God's love and provision.

In Exodus 20:12 we read the fifth commandment "Honour your father and your mother so that you may live long in the land your father is giving to you." in Ephesians 6:2 Paul refers to this as "the first commandment with a promise" so here God provides motivation appealing to our self interest and encouraging us to show gratitude to our parents.

The focus of our gratitude in the New Testament is the Easter story - the suffering of Jesus on the cross, His victorious resurrection, His Ascension, and His promise fulfilled in sending Holy Spirit upon all believers at Pentecost.

Paul emphasized gratitude in his writings:

"For although they knew God they never glorified Him as God, nor gave thanks to Him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened." (Romans 1;21)

"In everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God." (Philippians 4:6)

"Giving thanks in all things, for this is God's will for you in Jesus Christ." (1 Thessalonians 5:18)

The writer to the Hebrews (13:15) spoke of gratitude as a sacrifice, "Through Jesus therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise."

James 1:2 says, "Consider it pure joy brethren when you face trials of many kinds.

I believe that as we revitalise our thanksgiving to God we will be amazed by His generosity.

Prayer: Father, we thank you for all the blessings you have given to us. Forgive us for the days when, like the nine lepers, we have failed to thank you. Amen.