

Give Thanks ... Just because

If God were to never answer another prayer you prayed, could you still pray? Would you? And, would you still thank Him? I suppose the real crux of that question is this: Have the benefits you have already received from God's hand established Him as perpetually worthy of your thankfulness? It is interesting to browse the scriptures on this topic of thankfulness and see how often we are called to thank God. Sometimes, the verses mention specific reasons for human gratitude; deliverance, provision, mighty deeds in the past, covenant faithfulness and the like. But, the scriptures are also replete with calls to thanksgiving for which no specific object of thankfulness is even mentioned.

¹⁵Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. – Colossians 3:15

²Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. – Colossians 4:2

³But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people. ⁴Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving. – Ephesians 5:3, 4

¹⁶Be joyful always; ¹⁷pray continually; ¹⁸give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. – 1 Thessalonians 5:16

It is as though the biblical writers are confident that we should not require coaching or prompting in this matter. When we are still before God, when we are truly attentive to His presence, thanksgiving ought to be instinctive. Thanksgiving ought to be a natural posture for each of us. If it is not, then, why not?

Twenty centuries ago, Paul touched upon the attitudes that typify the people who would populate the last days. It is difficult to determine when the last days began and impossible to know when they will end, but Paul certainly touched upon the spirit of our own age:

¹But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. ²People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, **ungrateful** ... – 2 Timothy 3:1, 2

At best, the worldly man thinks about giving thanks only once each year. The Thanksgiving holiday has a way of thrusting “an attitude of gratitude” into one's face. Still, it is probably not that unusual that some among them dive into the turkey and stuffing without so much as a pause to consider the source of their bounty. And, the fact remains, we live in this world. If we are careless, we can be heavily influenced by our society's attitudes of discontent, self-centeredness, grabby-ness and ingratitude. This is why the call to self-denial is a daily one. It takes a special resolve for a Christian to peel away the jaded filter through which others in this world view life so that he might always bask in the goodness and generosity of his God.

In her now classic book, *The Hiding Place*, Corrie Ten Boom tells about an incident that taught her the principle of giving thanks in all things. It was during World War II. Corrie and her sister, Betsie, had been harboring Jewish people in their home, so they were arrested and finally imprisoned at Ravensbruck Camp.

Their barrack was extremely crowded and infested with fleas. One morning they read in their tattered Bible from 1 Thessalonians 5 the reminder to give thanks in all things. Betsie said to Corrie, "Corrie, we've got to give thanks for these barracks and even for these fleas."

Corrie replied, "No way am I going to thank God for fleas."

But Betsie was persuasive, and they did thank God even for the fleas. During the months that followed, they found that their barrack was left relatively free, and they could do Bible study, talk openly, and even pray there. It was their only place of refuge. Several months later they learned that the guards never entered their barrack because of those blasted fleas.

Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good (Psalm 107:1) ...

... and, because it really shouldn't be that hard to do when you just think about it.

© 2010 bt R. Karl Crouch, 551 Abbeyville Road, Lancaster, PA 17603