

Thanks is an Attitude of Gratitude.

By Doug Hamilton

We are told in Col 3:17, "Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father." We are also told in 1Thes 5:18, "...in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." Paul is telling the Christian that they are to have an ATTITUDE OF GRATITUDE. How does one develop an attitude of gratitude? How does one really be thankful?

1. Being thankful is something we say.

We must allow thankfulness to fill our voices in every conversation we have. Often our mouths are filled with negative words and complaints. Perhaps we would do well to observe the pattern of words from the scripture.

- Ezra 3:11, "They sang, praising and giving thanks to the LORD..."
- Psalm 26:7, "That I may publish with the voice of thanksgiving, and tell of all thy wondrous works."
- Psalm 95:2, "Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving, Let us shout joyfully to Him with psalms."
- Psalm 100:4, "Enter His gates with thanksgiving And His courts with praise. Give thanks to Him, bless His name."
- Psalm 109:30, "With my mouth I will give thanks abundantly to the LORD; And in the midst of many I will praise Him."
- Ephesians 5:2-3, "But immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints; and there must be no filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks."
- Ephesians 5:20 says that we are to "...always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God..."
- Hebrews 13:15, "Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name."

When we are not verbally thankful in what we say, we become ungrateful grumblers, forgetting the blessings

Who Let the Goat Out?

In Budapest, a man goes to the rabbi and complains, "Life is unbearable. There are nine of us living in one room. What can I do?" The rabbi answers, "Take your goat into the room with you." The man was incredulous, but the rabbi insists. "Do as I say and come back in a week."

A week later the man comes back looking more distraught than before. "We cannot stand it," he tells the rabbi. "The goat is filthy." The rabbi then tells him, "Go home and let the goat out. And come back in a week."

A radiant man returns to the rabbi a week later, exclaiming, "Life is beautiful. We enjoy every minute of it now that there's no goat -- only the nine of us."

Psalms 105:1, 2 "O give thanks unto the Lord; call upon his name: make known his deeds among the people ..." If we do not have an attitude of gratitude, we will end up with stinkin' thinkin', which is something that can destroy Christians.

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Let us fill our conversation with thankfulness unto God. Be willing to let a few "Praise Gods" roll off our tongue. Be willing to incorporate in our vocabulary "Thank God!" Let your brothers and sisters and the entire world know that you are thankful for all that God has done for you.

2. Being thankful is something we pray

Paul said in 1 Tim 2:1, "I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men..." It is the last of the four methods of prayer which is our focus. The word Paul used for giving of thanks is *eucharistia*, from Matthew 26:27-28, "And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He gave *it* to them, saying, 'Drink from it, all of you; for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins.'" That is why one denomination refers to the communion as the Eucharist.

Often when offering our prayers to God we make our requests and petitions on behalf of another, but we are slim on gratitude. Our prayers unto God must be filled with a great level of thankfulness if we ever expect to have the joy that God wants us to have. As Paul said in Philippians 4:6-7, "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." C

- Ps 139:14 I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Wonderful are Your works, And my soul knows it very well.
- 1Tim 4:2 For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with gratitude.
- Eph 1:16 tells us that Paul did not do not cease giving thanks for the Ephesians in his prayers.
- Col 4:2 "Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving..."

When we are thankful to God, be prepared to see how truly you are blessed. It is what allows us to know just how blessed we are. Being thankful is something we pray continually unto God.

Be Thankful for the Bull

Two men were walking through a field one day when they spotted an enraged bull. Instantly they darted toward the nearest fence. The storming bull followed in hot pursuit, and it was soon apparent they wouldn't make it.

Terrified, the one shouted to the other, "Put up a prayer, John. We're in for it!"

John answered, "I can't. I've never made a public prayer in my life."

"But you must!" implored his companion. "The bull is catching up to us."

"All right," panted John, "I'll say the only prayer I know, the one my father used to repeat at the table: 'O Lord, for what we are about to receive, make us truly thankful.'"

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Be willing to drop to your knees this week and “count your many blessings, name them one by one. Count your many blessings and see what God hath done.” Perhaps write a list before our prayers about all the things we are grateful to God for and then offer itemized thanks to God. Maybe get together with others from the church and your family and just dedicate an hour of thanksgiving to God.

3. Being thankful is something we display.

The giving of thanks was always to be on display through the actions of God’s people. From the beginning of the human race all the way to today, our actions must contain a display of thanksgiving.

- The first offering put forth by man was the grain offering of Cain, an offering of thanks to God the Creator. Genesis 4:3, “So it came about in the course of time that Cain brought an offering to the LORD of the fruit of the ground.”
- It was used to show thankfulness for the Lord in some of the meal and fellowship offerings. Leviticus 7:12, 13, 15; 22:29; 2 Chronicles 29:31; 33:16; Psalms 50:23; 56:12; 116:17; Jeremiah 17:26
- In Nehemiah, 12:46 The leaders of the people sang public praises of thanksgivings to God.
- Psalm 42:4, “These things I remember and I pour out my soul within me. For I used to go along with the throng and lead them in procession to the house of God, With the voice of joy and thanksgiving, a multitude keeping festival.”
- Psalm 50:14 "Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving..."
- Psalm 69:30, “I will praise the name of God with song And magnify Him with thanksgiving.”
- Rev 7:12 shows a display of thankfulness to God in heaven.
- Psalm 30:12, “O LORD my God, I will give thanks to You forever.”

When we display our thankfulness for God, be prepared for God's results. People should be able to see from our actions that we are a thankful people unto our God.

Gratitude is for the Birds

It is gratitude that prompted an old man to visit an old broken pier on the eastern seacoast of Florida. Every Friday night, until his death in 1973, he would return, walking slowly and slightly stooped with a large bucket of shrimp. The sea gulls would flock to this old man, and he would feed them from his bucket. Many years before, in October, 1942, Captain Eddie Rickenbacker was on a mission in a B-17 to deliver an important message to General Douglas MacArthur in New Guinea. But there was an unexpected detour which would hurl Captain Eddie into the most harrowing adventure of his life.

Somewhere over the South Pacific the Flying Fortress became lost beyond the reach of radio. Fuel ran dangerously low, so the men ditched their plane in the ocean...For nearly a month Captain Eddie and his companions would fight the water, and the weather, and the scorching sun. They spent many sleepless nights recoiling as giant sharks rammed their rafts. The largest raft was nine by five. The biggest shark...ten feet long.

But of all their enemies at sea, one proved most formidable: starvation. Eight days out, their rations were long gone or destroyed by the salt water. It would take a miracle to sustain

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them. And a miracle occurred. In Captain Eddie's own words, "Cherry," that was the B- 17 pilot, Captain William Cherry, "read the service that afternoon, and we finished with a prayer for deliverance and a hymn of praise. There was some talk, but it tapered off in the oppressive heat. With my hat pulled down over my eyes to keep out some of the glare, I dozed off."

Now this is still Captain Rickenbacker talking..."Something landed on my head. I knew that it was a sea gull. I don't know how I knew, I just knew. Everyone else knew too. No one said a word, but peering out from under my hat brim without moving my head, I could see the expression on their faces. They were staring at that gull. The gull meant food...if I could catch it."

And the rest, as they say, is history. Captain Eddie caught the gull. Its flesh was eaten. Its intestines were used for bait to catch fish. The survivors were sustained and their hopes renewed because a lone sea gull, uncharacteristically hundreds of miles from land, offered itself as a sacrifice. You know that Captain Eddie made it.

And now you also know...that he never forgot. Because every Friday evening, about sunset...on a lonely stretch along the eastern Florida seacoast...you could see an old man walking...white-haired, bushy-eye browed, slightly bent. His bucket filled with shrimp was to feed the gulls...to remember that one which, on a day long past, gave itself without a struggle...like manna in the wilderness. (Paul Aurandt, "The Old Man and the Gulls", Paul Harvey's The Rest of the Story, 1977, quoted in Heaven Bound Living, Knofel Stanton, Standard, 1989, p. 79-80.)

Captain Eddie displayed thankfulness in his actions through the feeding of seagulls for what God had done for him and his men. We can also display in our actions thankfulness unto God through our actions. How we help the needy, our giving to support the work of the church, our participation in the same mission together, our joyous smiles and happiness are all on display for our brethren and the world to see.

Conclusion:

We are to be thankful in what we say, what we pray and in what we display. What would it be like if we took just one week to dedicate ourselves to being thankful to God in these ways? Do you not see how much happier we would be, how much more joy we would have and how much more effective we could be in our efforts to reach out to others with the gospel? Make this your goal for the next week and perfect these techniques for the remainder of our lives.