



## THE GRATITUDE ATTITUDE

Can you imagine how terrible it would be to have the disease of leprosy? My Bible Encyclopaedia describes it as “a slowly progressing and intractable disease characterized by subcutaneous nodules, scabs or cuticular crusts, and the growth of quick raw flesh.” Victims were treated as unclean and were removed from society.

Jesus met some lepers in Luke 17:12

Verse 12 “As He was going into a village, ten men who had leprosy met Him. They stood at a distance”. They had heard He was healing people, but they had to keep their distance. One authority states “when the wind was blowing from the leper to the healthy person, the leper should stand at least 50 yards away.”

Verse 14 “When He saw them, He said, “Go, show yourselves to the priests.” And as they went, they were cleansed.” He didn’t actually heal them, but told them to go to the Priests. Gave them an instruction – when they followed it they were healed.

Verse 15 “One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice.” Only one of the 10 came back. You would think after being released from such a terrible fate, they would all say thank you. But it meant going a bit out of the way – going back to find Jesus.

Verses 17-19 “Jesus asked, “Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? <sup>18</sup> Has no one returned to give praise to God except this foreigner?” <sup>19</sup> Then He said to him, “Rise and go; your faith has made you well.” This clearly shows Jesus thought the others should have thanked Him too.

So often we take things for granted and don’t say thank you when we should.

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 <sup>16</sup> “Rejoice always, <sup>17</sup> pray continually, <sup>18</sup> give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.”

God’s will for us is that we give thanks in all circumstances. That means having an attitude of gratitude at all times! An attitude of gratitude is really good for us because it is cheerful and positive.

What is the opposite of gratitude? Grumbling and complaining – and that isn’t good for our health or happiness. Yet so often that is our first reaction to adverse circumstances. We get down and grumpy when things don’t go our way.

I heard recently about a young woman who was finding life stressful and becoming depressed. She was looking for a way out of this, but wasn’t sure what to do to make her feel better.

She heard a radio program which gave the advice to take time each night to think of 3 good things that had happened to her that day, and to be thankful for them.

After doing that for a month, she said her life had changed. Her focus changed from negative things to positive things.

Gratitude is a very significant key to a feeling of happiness and life satisfaction. Having a thankful attitude can turn negative things into positives and help us overcome troubles.

Verse 18 tells us to give thanks in all circumstances – that means even in trials.

Here's an excerpt from an article entitled "Thankful for the Fleas" by Dr James Emery White, found at Christianity.com.

*"The barracks where Corrie Ten Boom and her sister Betsy were kept in the Nazi concentration camp Ravensbruck were terribly overcrowded and flea-infested. They had been able to miraculously smuggle a Bible into the camp, and in that Bible they had read that in all things they were to give thanks, and that God can use anything for good.*

*"Corrie's sister Betsy decided that this meant thanking God for the fleas. This was too much for Corrie, who said she could do no such thing. Betsy insisted, so Corrie gave in and prayed to God, thanking Him even for the fleas.*

*"Over the next several months a wonderful, but curious, thing happened. They found that the guards never entered their barracks. This meant that women were not assaulted. It also meant that they were able to do the unthinkable, which was to hold open Bible studies and prayer meetings in the heart of a Nazi concentration camp. Through this, countless numbers of women came to faith in Christ. Only at the end did they discover why the guards had left them alone and would not enter into their barracks. It was because of the fleas. God can use all things for good in the lives of those who trust Him (Romans 8:28.)"*

James 1:2-3 <sup>2</sup> "Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, <sup>3</sup> because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance."

Here we are encouraged to see the good things in our trials. We can be thankful for them, because they do have good results. If we find a way to be thankful for our troubles, they can turn into blessings! It can just be something really small that we find to be grateful for...

There is a true story about the Jewish women in concentration camps during the Second World War having to work to build roads: their wheelbarrows were their aprons; their shovels were their fingers; on cardboard shoes they went out on frozen ground and worked all day; only diluted soup to eat; and then back again at night, on frozen ground, to their dormitory.

When one of the women who survived it was asked later "How did you manage day after day after day? What kept you going?" She replied: "I don't know what all it was. But I do know one thing – when we would go out in the morning to work on those cold muddy roads, we passed a house that had a flowerbox in the window, and in one there was a tulip blooming. And I would say to myself all day when we worked if I make it through the day, going back home, I'll get to see the tulip again."

As we go through the trials of life, thinking of something we can be thankful for will help us be positive.

A good man of faith fell down a flight of stairs. He picked himself up and dusted himself off, all the while remembering the Bible's instruction to give thanks in every situation. "Thank God that's over with," he said.

We read about this in other Scriptures too –

Philippians 4:6-7 <sup>6</sup> “Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. <sup>7</sup> And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

Phil. 4:6 says again to be thankful for all circumstances, in all our prayers. And Verse 7 says what will happen if we do this. This is the result of an attitude of gratitude. PAUL WAS IN PRISON WHEN HE WROTE PHILIPPIANS!

Phil. 4:11 “I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances.” Being content is an attitude that helps – if we are that way, we can be thankful.

Colossians 3:15-17 <sup>15</sup> “Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. <sup>16</sup> Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. <sup>17</sup> And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.” Notice how often thankfulness is mentioned here.

Thanksgiving: it is better to give than to receive. One thing we can give to others is thanks. We can say it to them, and we can write thank you notes. And this is something we can give to God too! He has given us so much, we sometimes think how can we repay Him, there’s nothing we can give someone who has everything! How about giving Him thanks!

David was a man after God’s own heart. Why? Because he had some great qualities – courage, desire to serve God, teachability, repentance. One other great quality he had was his practice of constantly praising and thanking God, as we see through the book of Psalms, he had an attitude of gratitude. For example:

Psalms 105:1 “Give praise to the LORD, proclaim His name; make known among the nations what He has done.”

Psalms 106:1 “Praise the LORD. Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good; His love endures forever.”

Psalms 107:1 “Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good; His love endures forever.”

Psalms 107:21-22 <sup>21</sup> “Let them give thanks to the LORD for His unfailing love and His wonderful deeds for mankind. <sup>22</sup> Let them sacrifice thank offerings and tell of His works with songs of joy.”

One of the Levitical offerings was the thank offering. Giving thanks is important to God; it is something that God really appreciated.

Psalms 50:14 “Sacrifice thank offerings to God, fulfill your vows to the Most High”

It glorifies God – Psalms 69:30 “I will praise God’s name in song and glorify Him with thanksgiving.”

*A fable tells about two birds, each in a cage with food and water. One bird rebelled against his conditions, rejected the food and kept knocking his head against the cage door. A few hours later, he died of his injuries. The other bird said, “Nothing’s worthy dying that way. Let me enjoy the food and water and be grateful for the little space in which I can fly.” At the end of the day, the master came to free both birds. But only one was ready and able to enjoy freedom while the other lost it once and forever.*

Our life may get trapped in a cage. Closed doors might be health problems, job problems, financial limitations, feeling of rejection and insecurity, marriage problems, etc. If we focus on the closed door, we will eventually act like the poor bird. But if we enjoy our life the way it is granted, we will eventually be freed. In such situations, "It is good that one should hope and wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord." (Lamentations 3:26).

W. Mitchell speaks and writes of his transformation that involved a disfiguring motorcycle accident and a subsequent paralyzing airplane crash. In his book "It's Not What Happens To You, It's What You Do With It," he writes, "Before I was paralysed there were 10,000 things I could do. Now there are 9,000. I can either dwell on the 1,000 I've lost, or focus on the 9,000 I have left."

Matthew Henry, the famous Bible scholar, lived that way. More than 250 years ago, he wrote these words in his diary after he was robbed of all the money he had in the world: "First, let me be thankful because I was never robbed before. Second, because although they took my purse, they did not take my life. Third, that although they took my all, it was not much. Fourth, because it was I was I who was robbed, not I that did the robbing." What a winning attitude!

An example of being thankful in troubles:

*I am thankful...*

*For a lawn that needs mowing, windows that need cleaning, and gutters that need fixing, because it means I have a home.*

*For the wife who says it's spaghetti tonight, because she is home with me, and not out with someone else.*

*For the husband who is on the sofa being a couch potato, because he is home with me and not out at the bars.*

*For the teenager who is complaining about doing dishes, because it means she is at home, not on the streets.*

*For the taxes I pay, because it means I am employed.*

*For the mess to clean after a party, because it means I have been surrounded by friends.*

*For the clothes that fit a little too snug, because it means I have enough to eat.*

*For all the complaining I hear about the Government, because it means we have freedom of speech.*

*For the parking spot I find at the far end of the parking lot, because it means I am capable of walking and I have been blessed with transportation.*

*For the lady behind me in church who sings off key, because it means I can hear.*

*For the pile of laundry and ironing, because it means I have clothes to wear.*

*For the alarm that goes off in the early morning hours, because it means I am alive!*

It's a matter of looking for the good in all situations, and counting our blessings.

Ephesians 5:20: “always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

How often do we thank God for our eyes, ears, noses, our brains? There is so much to be thankful for! How often do you thank your wife, husband, children – just for being there, as well as the things they do? People thrive on appreciation. And the attitude of gratitude is so beneficial to those who display it too!

It is more blessed to give than receive – and that includes all types of giving, including thanksgiving! The giver and receiver are both blessed, but the giver is blessed more.

So let's not be like the 9 lepers who neglected to say thank you for their healing. Let's be like the one who said thank you, and Jesus blessed him.

Let's strive to be thankful in everything. We will have a more happy and successful life if we remember always to have a godly attitude of gratitude!

