

A Heart of Thankfulness

Being thankful is not self-serving. It is quite the opposite. Having a heart of thankfulness is an attitude of the goodness of God.

Introduction

This coming month in America families will be uniting and celebrating the Thanksgiving holiday. This is the most traveled time of the year in America. Our Canadian friends celebrate Thanksgiving as well but in October. Many countries have also adopted a holiday of giving thanks and it typically is celebrated around harvest time.

In America, we celebrate Thanksgiving to acknowledge God's providence in our country. In the 1600's a group of Christians fled England to seek religious liberty. They were not prepared for the harsh winter of the northeast in the new world. Only half of the pilgrims survived the first winter in this new land, but they did not allow the hardships to impact their devotion to God.

One of these pilgrims, William Brewster, a Separatist leader, who became the pastor to this group of Christians said this:

*We gather for prayer, and reading the Bible, and singing the songs of David.
- William Brewster, Pastor to the Pilgrims in the Plymouth colony*

As the Pilgrims continued to seek the Lord for guidance, they encountered Native Americans after that harsh winter. They befriended them and they taught the pilgrims how to live off the land. Their first summer in America was a testimony to God's continued provision. He blessed them with a bountiful harvest that autumn.

To show their thanks to God they gathered in their harvest and had a 3-day feast of thankfulness celebrating the provision of God which they invited their new native friends to. This feast took place just over a year after arriving to this new land seeking religious freedom.

Correct Heart Attitude

Having a heart attitude of thankfulness opens us up to the blessings of Christ.

It would have been easy for the pilgrims to give up on God that first winter. It would have been easy to doubt His will for their lives when their relatives and friends were dying around them. However, they chose to believe in the provision of God. They chose to stay the course and press on.

William Bradford, the Governor of the Plymouth Colony, is quoted as saying:

*"Nevertheless, to keep a good conscience, and walk in such a way as God has prescribed in his word, is a thing which I must prefer before you all, and above life itself."
— William Bradford, Governor of the Plymouth colony*

When walking in the way of the Lord is more important than life itself, you will see provision, you will see blessing.



This group of Christians had witnessed the provision of God. Yes, they saw a lot of death too, but they also saw life! They experienced hope. They had the correct heart attitude. They had an attitude of devotion, faith, perseverance, and thankfulness.

Thankfulness Requires Action

The pilgrims' thankfulness to the Lord motivated them to action. They were so overcome by God's provision that they were compelled to celebrate in his honor.

Thankfulness requires action. When we are truly blessed by the actions of another, the thankfulness that fills our hearts compels us to action. Whether it is to simply say "thank you", write a note of thanks, or to openly celebrate.

The apostle Paul was moved to action in his thankfulness towards the Ephesians. Ephesians 1:17-19 says:

Ephesians 1:15-17

(15) For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all God's people, (16) I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. (17) I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.

Paul did not take the Ephesians for granted. He was overcome with gratitude and his thankfulness toward them motivated him to action. Paul heard great news regarding these people and was so impressed that he kept giving thanks to God.

Paul was a proud spiritual father to the Ephesians. Just as God smiles down on us as we grow closer to him, so Paul was overwhelmed with the Ephesian's faith. The thankfulness Paul felt for the Ephesians motivated him to pray for them.

Sometimes we think that we need to intercede for someone because they have a need. Paul did not state there was a need here. He said he prayed to God for thanks for them. He takes it a step further and prays God's blessing upon them. He prays that God will give them the spirit of wisdom and revelation so that they may know him more.

Paul is praying blessing into the lives of the Ephesians. He is praying for them to draw closer to God so they can experience all he has for them.

A Heart of Thankfulness Prays

When we pray, we have the power to unleash the power of Heaven on those we are praying for.

Jesus is recorded in Matthew 16:19 saying:

Matthew 16:19

(19) I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."

When we are desperate for an answer, we pray fervently. When we need God to perform a miracle, we pray passionately. You can pray a blessing or for favor on someone else's life just as fervently and



passionately. You have the power to impact a person's life by praying that God will bless them, thanking him for their lives.

We have so much to be thankful for. It is important to not take others for granted but to acknowledge who they are and what they have done. Paul was overwhelmed with thankfulness by just receiving a good report. We too can be thankful when we see and hear of others being faithful to Christ.

The Ephesians did not do anything to Paul that required him to say "thanks". This was not about him. Instead, it was a heart attitude of thankfulness.

Conclusion

Being thankful is not self-serving. It is quite the opposite. Being thankful is an attitude of the goodness of God. Paul was filled with thanks because of the faith that the Ephesians illustrated. He had spent time with them previously preaching the Good News of Jesus Christ. His thankfulness came from knowing they were drawing closer to Jesus.

God's greatest desire for your life is for you to know him more. That is his desire for each one of us.

We encourage you to reflect on the things you are thankful for this week. Look for those people or things that show the goodness of God. Then, be motivated to action and motivated to pray for God's favor and blessing on those around you.

