



Thankful to be Thankful

Thankfulness is the gift of God. It is not something you can turn on and off at will. It seems that one of the things that we should daily be thankful for is the ability to even give God thanks. While we see millions of people sit around tables and celebrating, true thanksgiving is not on the menu.

The fallen nature of man is not a thankful one. It is more like a self-centered sponge — just taking and never thanking the giver. Romans 1:21 tells us, "*Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, **neither were thankful**; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.*"

As a substitute for God, we often see unbelievers honoring one another. Jesus talked about this to the Pharisees when He said,

*"And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life. I receive not honour from men. But I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you. I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive. **How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?**"*

(John 5:40-44)

God does not excuse the ingratitude of unbelievers (Romans 1:20), because they *do* in fact know the existence of God. It is just that they refuse to glorify or serve him. They willingly deny His rightful praise. Yes, they enjoy good things, and are pleased to have them, but are blind to where they come from. Everything is an anonymous donation to their cause. This is so sad. Did not our Lord ask, "*Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine? There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger.*" (Luke 17:17-18) The Samaritan leper was the only one who "*fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks.*" (17:16)

Why only one in ten? There was more healing taking place than just the leprosy. This healing was accompanied by *faith*. (17:19) One in ten looks pretty bad, but in today's world we would rejoice if just ten percent of all people would fall at the feet of the Lord and give Him thanks.

Non-Christians act from their inborn, fallen nature and, in fact, cannot see the giver, much less give Him thanks. The only way that we can see the hand of the Giver is if God Himself is pleased to change our heart and open our eyes. That is the first thing we should give thanks for — our willingness to give thanks to God.

Once we begin to thank God for a new heart, thankfulness must permeate our whole life — thought, word, and work. After all, this is the reason that God redeemed us in the blood of Jesus. "*Save us, O LORD our God, and gather us from among the heathen, to give thanks unto thy holy name, and to triumph in thy praise.*" (Psalm 106:47) Our Heidelberg Catechism Q/A 86 is very foundational for teaching us the fruits of God's saving grace.

Q: Since, then, we are redeemed from our misery by grace through Christ, without any merit of ours, why must we do good works?

A: Because Christ, having redeemed us by His blood, also renews us by His Holy Spirit after His own image, *that with our whole life we show ourselves thankful to God for His blessing*, and that He be glorified through us; then also, that we ourselves may be assured of our faith by the fruits thereof; and by our godly walk may win others also to Christ.

While we don't give God thanks in order to be seen of men, yet God will also use our example of faith and gratitude to lead others to Christ. Paul brings this out in 2 Corinthians 4:15, where he says, in effect, that the more who hear the Gospel through the Apostle Paul, the more it will cause "thanksgiving to abound to the glory of God." Our thanksgiving is to God, but it can also cause others to thank God. The heathen need to see us praising and thanking God.

"Therefore will I give thanks unto thee, O LORD, among the heathen, and sing praises unto thy name."

(Psalm 18:49)

Let's be honest, even the words or deeds of thanksgiving we bring to God are very imperfect. For thanksgiving to be acceptable to God, it must be brought to the Father through Jesus Christ, His eternal Son. Apart from Christ as our Mediator, nothing we say or do is acceptable at the throne of grace. That includes our thankfulness. Anyone who does not have Christ as Lord and Savior not only cannot bring God thanks, but ultimately has nothing to be thankful for, because all things are in Christ who dwells in us.

A thankful heart is a heart that God has graciously given to us by His Holy Spirit. Of the many things for which we are thankful to God, may the first be that **we are thankful to be thankful**. Are you expressing that thanks to God? And are you letting others see your thankful life? God saved us for this reason.

*"And whatsoever ye do in word or deed,
do all in the name of the Lord Jesus,
giving thanks to God and the Father by him."*

(Colossians 3:17)

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