

Why Be Thankful?

by Bryan Hodge

There are those who are unthankful to God or man. This is true for a variety of reasons. (1) Some are so focused on what they do not have, that they fail to appreciate and be grateful for what they do have. (2) Some recognize what they have, but believe that all was achieved by their own abilities and efforts. They have, in their minds, no one to whom they should be thankful or express thanks. (3) Some recognize what they have, but have a sense of entitlement. When something is done for them they feel that they deserve it; they expect it; it was owed to them. (4) Some are so focused on the problems of life and the ills of society that they fail to appreciate and be grateful for the good that does exist.

1. God created us. No one can rightly say that all was achieved by his own abilities and efforts. One would not exist without God. It is God who has given us life and whatever abilities we have. Consider the words of Psalm 100, “It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves... Be thankful to Him, and bless His name” (Psalm 100:3-4). Paul proclaimed, “He gives to all life, breath, and all things.” Notice the prepositions, “For of (ek) Him, through (dia) Him, and to (eis) Him are all things, to whom be the glory forever. Amen” (Romans 11:36).

[Sidebar: Consider the prepositions in Romans 11:36 with the prepositions in another. Colossians 1:16 reads, For by (en) Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through (dia) Him and for (eis) Him.” The first verse refers to God, the LORD (Jehovah). The second verse refers to Jesus. This has implications, I believe, concerning the Godhead.]

2. God sustains us. He makes life possible on this earth, and provides for our needs. “He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust” (Matthew 5:45). He daily loads us with benefits (Psalm 68:19). Our food is to be received with thanksgiving, and this thanksgiving is to be expressed in prayer (1 Timothy 4:4-5).

3. God is good. The Bible affirms this, repetitively. “Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him,

and bless His name. For the LORD is good; and His truth endures to all generations” (Psalm 100:4-5). Praise the LORD! Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for He is good! His mercy endures forever” (Psalm 106:1 cf. Psalm 107:1; 118:1; 1 Chronicles 16:34). “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of Lights” (James 1:17).

His goodness to us goes beyond what one would expect. No one should feel entitled. “For scarcely for a righteous man will once die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:7-8). “In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins” (1 John 4:10). “Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God” (1 John 3:1-2 cf. Romans 8:17).

Furthermore, it is not only to God that we should be thankful. When others do good to us, we should be grateful. Consider: (1) A Samaritan leper returned to thank Jesus for healing him (Luke 17:15-16). (2) Paul said of Priscilla and Aquilla “to whom not only I give thanks, but also the churches of the Gentiles” (Romans 16:3-4). They had risk their necks for Paul. We are told: “be thankful” (Colossians 3:12-15).

[Note: Many times Paul thanked God when brethren did what was right (e.g. Romans 1:8; 6:17; Philippians 1:3-5; 1 Thessalonians 1:2-3; 2:13-14; 3:9; 2 Thessalonians 1:3-4). Credit ultimately belongs to Him (cf. Philippians 2:13)]

4. It is Good for Us. Having an attitude of gratitude is good for us. (1) It is helpful in our relationships with others (Colossians 3:12-15). Christy Wright stated, “Thankfulness improves relationships. Everyone has a need to be appreciated – spouses, children, parents, friends, coworkers, even the strangers we meet in passing (Christy Wright, 10 Reasons I’m Thankful for Thankfulness, November 11, 2016, daveramsey.com). Remember, the Golden Rule, Matthew 7:12.

(2) It is helpful to our mental wellness. Ungrateful people are often miserable. Ahab became so focused on what he did not possess (Naboth’s vineyard) that his spirit became sullen (1 Kings 21:1-6). Jonah became angry with God when the plant shading him withered (Jonah 4:6-11). He

seems to have felt entitled (cf. Paul's attitude Philippians 4:11-12 and Job's attitude Job 1:21-22).

Dennis Prager offers this bit of wisdom. "You can't be a happy person if you aren't grateful, and you can't be a good person if you aren't grateful... Here is a rule of life: ingratitude guarantees unhappiness... Here are two rules of life. Rule number one: The less you feel entitled to, the more gratitude you will feel for whatever you get and the happier you will be. Rule number two: The more you feel entitled to, the less happy you will be... The more that you feel that life or society owes you, the angrier you will get, the less happy you will be... If I were granted one wish, it would be that all people be grateful. Gratitude is the source of happiness, and the source of goodness; and the more good people and the more happy people there are walking around, the happier and better our world will be" (Dennis Prager, *The Key to Unhappiness*, prageru.com).

(3) It may be beneficial to our physical health. Christy Wright stated, "When we stop focusing on what we do not have, and begin focusing on what we do have, our shoulders relax and we invite peace, patience, and health into our lives" (daveramsey.com).

(4) It definitely is needful for our spiritual well being. We are to be a thankful people. "Pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you" (1 Thessalonians 5:17-18). "Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!" (2 Corinthians 9:15).