



Light from the Word

Expressing Gratitude to Others (Part 2)

Editor's note: this month concludes a two-part series on Expressing Gratitude

*“And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.”*¹

“Now what do you tell them?” Perhaps all of us have witnessed a parent's hint to their small child upon receiving a gift. Certainly, expressing gratitude to others is a basic principle most of us learn from our youth up. Indeed, when any of us goes to the effort of doing something for someone else we like to hear a heartfelt expression of gratitude and if this is omitted we usually feel a little let down. Quite possibly, we all tell someone “thank-you” nearly every day. Some of this might be for rather ordinary things such as someone holding a door for us. However, it is also important to recognize when someone assists us in a spiritual way. In the New Testament, the Apostle Paul enthusiastically expressed his gratitude to a wide variety of individuals who ministered both to his needs and to those of the church. Paul mentions many of them specifically in his epistles: Phebe, Aquila and Priscilla, Onesiphorus, and a host of others too many to enumerate.² Paul openly complimented them, which surely strengthened the bonds between them. They not only helped Paul in his physical needs, but they greatly assisted him in the furtherance of the gospel message of salvation—sometimes putting their own lives at risk to do so.

Many scriptures concentrate specifically on giving thanks to God and His Son for His many blessings, but examples also abound of individuals showing gratitude to others. Ruth was humbly thankful to Boaz for his benevolence to her and Naomi.³ The Israelites spared Jonathan's life in recognition of his miraculous victory over the garrison of Philistines.⁴ Later, when David had replaced Saul as king, he

sought to repay Saul's family for the sake of his son Jonathan's faithfulness and self-sacrificing friendship.⁵ The scriptures instruct us to be thankful not only to God, but also to one another, *“In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.”*⁶

Expressing gratitude to others is a part of fulfilling the higher principle of loving our neighbor as ourselves. *“And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.”*⁷ Our expression of gratitude to others not only makes them feel loved and appreciated, it glorifies God.

One of the more instructive examples in the New Testament is that of the ten lepers whom Christ healed. From this account we learn that it is one thing to have the feeling of thankfulness and quite another to make the effort to express it. Our Saviour evidently was disappointed when only one of the ten lepers returned to give Him thanks for being cleansed, *“And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine? There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger.”*⁸ We do not read that the other lepers were completely unthankful, but we do know that they did not make the effort to tell Him. The lost opportunity for the glorification of God is what disappointed Jesus, not His own hurt feelings.

The Samaritan's sincere gratitude glorified God as an illustration of the grace and mercy of the New Testament age. Jesus had given the ten lepers specific instruction to go show themselves to the priest in fulfillment of the old law regarding leprosy. All ten obediently turned to do this, and as they went, all of them realized that they were cleansed of this dread disease. However, only one turned around and returned to give thanks, honor, and glory to his Savior for His merciful compassion that far exceeded the power of the law. Small wonder that Jesus responded, *“... Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole.”*⁹

— **Please turn to pg. 16**

Continued Articles

Expressing Gratitude to God (Part 2)

— Continued from pg. 3

The prophetic words in one of the psalms of Asaph are also applicable, “Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me: and to him that ordereth his conversation (course of life) aright will I shew the salvation of God.”¹⁰

We might expect that showing gratitude comes naturally and is always a pleasant and easy experience. However, before being succeeded by David, King Saul spent years chasing David and his followers through the wilderness while repeatedly trying to kill him. During this time, David experienced two opportunities to slay Saul with little danger to himself. However, David refused to “stretch forth (his) hand against... the anointed of the LORD.”¹¹ Later, after Saul died in battle with the Philistines and David became king, he rewarded those men of Jabeshgilead who retrieved the bodies of Saul and his sons from the Philistines and buried them. Like the Samaritan leper, David also fulfilled a New Testament teaching of Christ: “But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.”¹²

In the face of so many examples of thankfulness, the Word also warns us of the dangers of being unthankful. To do so exhibits pride rather than humility and robs God of His due glory, “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.”¹³

As an illustration, David treated Nabal’s servants and his property with respect. Nabal’s servants realized this and were thankful for it; “But the men were very good unto us, and we were not hurt, neither missed we any thing, as long as we were conversant (walking) with them, when we were in the fields: They were a wall unto us both by night and day, all the while we were with them keeping the sheep.”¹⁴ When David’s men asked a favor in return, their master Nabal not only refused them, but also treated them with contempt.¹⁵ Nabal’s ingratitude and churlish behavior ultimately cost him his life.

Clearly, there are many blessings in a sincere expression of gratitude. Most importantly, it glorifies God and His Son. It may sound a little redundant, but people truly appreciate gratitude. It strengthens our relationships within the church, our families and our friendships. We edify the body of Christ when we appropriately express appreciation to someone for

their demonstration of faith and love: “We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth.”¹⁶

(Footnotes)

¹ Col. 3:15

² Rom. 16:1-4; 2 Tim. 1:16-18

³ Ruth 2:10

⁴ 1 Sam. 14:45

⁵ 2 Sam. 9:1

⁶ 1 Thess. 5:18

⁷ 1 John 4:21

⁸ Luke 17:17-18

⁹ Luke 17:19

¹⁰ Psalms 50:23

¹¹ 1 Sam. 24:6

¹² Matt. 5:44

¹³ Rom. 1:21

¹⁴ 1 Sam. 25:15-16

¹⁵ 1 Sam. 25:10

¹⁶ 2 Thess. 1:3

Remembering Our Spiritual Heritage

— Continued from pg. 70

they placed their new baby for the trip to church. Rising early, they prepared for a 4 a. m. departure. They traveled at approximately four miles per hour. They forded the Mackinaw River, and traveled on the most meager of roads. This they willingly did, in all kinds of weather, in devotion to their God.”

-By Perry Klopfenstein