

Barriers To Thanksgiving

No. 262

Introduction.

- I. Once I read about a young man who shared an apartment with three other graduate students who all had part-time jobs while in college. Each day the young men took turns preparing the meals, which usually consisted of canned vegetables, hamburger meat, a baked potato. Most of the time the meal was barely edible. No matter how poor the meal was, a young man named "Joe" always said, "That was a mighty fine dinner." One evening the meal was worse than usual, and Joe made his regular comment. One of the other fellows said, "Why do you always say that when this was hardly fit for human consumption?" Joe answered, "I come from a family of 11 children. My mother would spend all afternoon in the kitchen preparing dinner. One night when she called us to the table, there was only a plate and straw on each plate. My father looked at it and asked, "What is this straw doing on my plate?" Mother said, "Oh! you noticed. This is the first time you have given any indication that you noticed what was on your plate." Joe then said, "I vowed that I would always express my appreciation to the person who had prepared my meal." From Dear Abby" 11/21/96)
- II. This illustration points to the fact that we often take for granted things for which we should be grateful. It points to the fact that we often fail to express thanks as the scriptures teach us to do. (Col. 3:15; 1 Thess. 5:18).
- III. Let us consider some barriers to thanksgiving for the purpose of breaking down those barriers.
 - I. **Thoughtlessness** - One barrier to blessings is thoughtlessness.
 - A. It is interesting that "think" (like I am thinking on something) and "thank" (like I am grateful for something) come from the same Anglo-Saxon root word.
 - B. **Often we are not grateful because we just do not think.**
 1. We do not think of what God has done for us.
 2. We do not think of God's love and care for us.
 3. Many are like hogs feeding at the trough, eating, and never looking up to see where their food is coming from.
 - C. Many of the Psalms are beautiful songs of thanksgiving. (Psa. 30:1-12; 103:1-5; 105:1-3; 106:1-3).

PSA 30:1 I will extol Thee, O Lord, for Thou hast lifted me up, And hast not let my enemies rejoice over me. 2 O Lord my God, I cried to Thee for help, and Thou didst heal me. 3 O Lord, Thou hast brought up my soul from Sheol; Thou hast kept me alive, that I should not go down to the pit. 4 Sing praise to the Lord, you His godly ones, And give thanks to His holy name. 5 For His anger is but for a moment, His favor is for a lifetime; Weeping may last for the night, But a shout of joy comes in the morning. 6 ¶ Now as for me, I said in my prosperity, "I will never be moved." 7 O Lord, by Thy favor Thou hast made my mountain to stand strong;

Thou didst hide Thy face, I was dismayed. 8 To Thee, O Lord, I called, And to the Lord I made supplication: 9

"What profit is there in my blood, if I go down to the pit? Will the dust praise Thee? Will it declare Thy faithfulness? 10 "Hear, O Lord, and be gracious to me; O Lord, be Thou my helper." 11 Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing; Thou hast loosed my sackcloth and girded me with gladness; 12 That my soul may sing praise to Thee, and not be silent. O Lord my God, I will give thanks to Thee forever.

PSA 103:1 Bless the Lord, O my soul; And all that is within me, bless His holy name. 2 Bless the Lord, O my soul, And forget none of His benefits; 3 Who pardons all your iniquities; Who heals all your diseases; 4 Who redeems your life from the pit; Who crowns you with lovingkindness and compassion; 5 Who satisfies your years with good things, So that your youth is renewed like the eagle.

PSA 105:1 Oh give thanks to the Lord, call upon His name; Make known His deeds among the peoples. 2 Sing to Him, sing praises to Him; Speak of all His wonders. 3 Glory in His holy name; Let the heart of those who seek the Lord be glad.

PSA 106:1 Praise the Lord! Oh give thanks to the Lord, for He is good; For His lovingkindness is everlasting. 2 Who can speak of the mighty deeds of the Lord, Or can show forth all His praise? 3 How blessed are those who keep justice, Who practice righteousness at all times!

1. In these amazing psalms the **inspired writers tell of God's great blessings and call on us to be thankful.**
2. We certainly have been blessed in countless ways and we should be quick and eager to give thanks.
 - a. We need to give thanks for the Bible, this building we meet in, our leaders, our teachers, our song leaders, and for all our fellow church members.
 - b. We need to give thanks for forgiveness, redemption, knowledge of truth, and God's mercy and grace.
 - c. We need to give thanks for all things "big" and "small."
 - d. There is a **true story told of a man whose job was to transport people** who had been committed to a mental hospital. After delivering a patient one day, he was walking back to his car when he heard a voice call out, "Hey you!" It came from one of the upper floors. Looking up, the man called back, "Are you speaking to me?" The man in the building said, "Yes, I am." "I want to ask you a question, "Have you ever thanked God that you have a healthy mind?" To say the least, the driver was stunned. He said, "I suddenly realized that I had been bringing people to this facility for some 15 years; yet, I had never once thanked God for a good mind!"
 - e. Truly, let us learn to give thanks for the things we so often take for granted.

II. Faithlessness - A second barrier to thanksgiving is faithlessness.

A. Giving thanks is the spontaneous expression of those who have a genuine faith in God.

- B. People who refused to believe in God and refuse to accept that He is the source of all blessings can never really be thankful.

ROM 1:20 For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.

ROM 1:21 For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God, or give thanks; but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

1. **It is sad when men fail to recognize that God is their Creator.**
2. It is sad when this rejection causes men to be ungrateful and causes them to have a foolish, darkened heart.

C. People of faith recognize there is an all-powerful, loving God in heaven.

1. They recognized that God is the provider of all our blessings. (Jas. 1:17).
2. **Ted Malone**, whose radio show came on early in the morning, told of the Idaho shepherd who wrote: "Will you, on your broadcast, strike the note 'A'? I'm a sheepherder way out here on a ranch, far away from a piano. The only comfort I have is my old violin. It's all out of tune. Would you strike 'A' so that I might get in tune?" Malone honored the request. Later he received a "thank you" note from the distant shepherd saying, "Now I'm in tune."
3. One of the most tragic situations in life is when a Christian, through his unfaithfulness, becomes "out of tune" with God. Through repentance and prayer we can be restored to our former relationship with God and be "in tune" once again.

III. Discontentment - A third barrier to thanksgiving is discontentment.

- A. Before we can genuinely be thankful, we must develop contentment. (Phil. 4:11, 12; 1 Tim. 6:6-8).

6:6 But godliness actually is a means of great gain, when accompanied by contentment. 6:7 For we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it either. 6:8 And if we have food and covering, with these we shall be content.

- B. Too many of us suffer from the "thanks...but" syndrome.
1. We are grateful, but are not satisfied.
 2. We say "thanks," but ask, "how can I receive more?"
 3. We say "thanks," but ask "why didn't I receive something else?"

C. What a contrast with the attitude of thanksgiving the early pilgrims had.

1. **There were 102 who started on the voyage of the Mayflower.** Of that number 46 died the first year. Only 3 couples escaped death of one of their partners. They had only a few personal possessions, and lived in crude log huts with no modern conveniences. After those first hard years, they had a custom that at their Thanksgiving dinner there would be five kernels of corn on each plate. Before the meal each person would be required to mention 5 things for which to be thankful. The 5 kernels reminded them that at one time it was the daily allotment of corn - 5 kernels per person per day.

2. Instead of complaining about our hardships and problems, let us enumerate the things for which we can be thankful.

IV. **Selfishness** - A fourth barrier to thanksgiving is selfishness.

A. Those who have been blessed by God must learn to be a blessing. (Gen. 12:2).

B. **Selfishness is such a hideous attitude.** Selfishness says, “Why should I be thankful?”

1. “I earned it myself.”
2. “I deserved more than I received.”
3. “Why help others, they have not helped me.”

C. **Those who receive the letters written to Santa Clause** say that they receive thousands of letters from children requesting things at Christmas, but, so far as they know, they have only received one letter from a child thanking Santa Clause for the gifts. I mention this only to show that selfishness, without thanksgiving, is in the hearts of many from an early age.

V. **Failure To Show Appreciation** - A fifth barrier to thanksgiving is a failure to show appreciation. (Lk. 17:11-19).

A. More than likely the 9 lepers were thankful for their healing, but they failed to show their appreciation.

B. Most of us are thankful for God’s blessings, but through neglect we fail to express our appreciation to God and others. This attitude is loathed by God, and is absolutely repulsive to others.

Conclusion.

I. Let us resolve to be a thankful people. Let us give thanks to God when times are good and when circumstances are difficult.

II. **In Africa there is a fruit called the "taste berry."** It is so called because it changes a person's taste. Everything eaten, after eating the “taste berry,” tastes sweet and pleasant. Sour fruit, even if eaten several hours after the taste berry, becomes sweet and delicious

A. **Thanksgiving is the "taste berry" of Christianity.** When our hearts are filled with gratitude, nothing seems unpleasant or overbearing to us.

B. **Someone gave this needed admonition.**

Sorrowing heart, sweeten your grief with gratitude.

Burdened soul, lighten your burden by singing God's praises.

Disappointed one, dispel your heartache by making others grateful.

Sick one, grow strong in your soul, thanking God that you are healthy and strong spiritually.

III. **Have we shown our appreciation to God for what He has done for us?**

A. We need to be thankful for the salvation God had provided. We should show our appreciation by obeying Him.

B. We should turn from our sins, and be baptized as God’s word directs. We should then live a life of obedience

and service and thanksgiving. Come to Jesus now as we stand and sing.

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