

When I was a young man living in Saginaw Michigan, I had a paper route. I would get my bundle of papers each day, and deliver to my 110 customers in neighborhoods around where I lived. I always looked forward to Christmas time, because then I would get Christmas tips from my customers. I remember one year pulling in close to \$200.00. But what always upset me, was that my mother would make me write a personal note to each customer that gave me a money gift to express thanks for the money. She told me that these people needed to know that I really appreciated the gift, and to tell them the wise way I planned to use the funds they gave me.

Even to this day, if you give me a Christmas gift of money, candy, or something else, and I know where it came from, I will write you out a personal note of appreciation. You need to know that I appreciate your thoughtfulness and am grateful.

What about you? If someone has you over for dinner at their home, do you just kind of pay them back by having them over. Or if you don't like them, you just don't ever invite them over to your home. Shouldn't we as Christians send a little note of appreciation and thanks when we are invited over to someone's home, for the good food and fellowship we shared whether we ever have them over at our home? Wouldn't that brighten their day, and make them feel we really appreciate them for their kindness?

Let's go one step further. We have a God who supplies us with food, clothing, plenty of fresh water, an automobile, a lovely home, heat and air conditioning, furnishings which include comfortable chairs, couches and beds. Truly when we look at how some people live in 3<sup>rd</sup> world countries, we are extremely rich. . As the Bible says, "Every good and perfect gift comes from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows." Plus this God has brought us back into relationship with him by sending his Son, to die for all our sins, including our sins of ungratefulness. He promises to be with us every step of the way, and oneday have his angels take us to heaven. If anyone deserves our thanks it is our God. He deserves our thanks not just on Thanksgiving Day, but everyday. So consider the thought on this Thanksgiving Day: "Give Thanks In All Circumstances".

To be thankful in all circumstances, we need a proper perspective of our circumstances and of our God. Only then we will be able to give thanks to the Lord always. Now, I believe there are at least four attitudes that steal away our gratitude. Four things that keep us from being thankful.

1) One is our pride. This is the attitude that says, "Nobody ever gave me anything, I worked hard for everything I have." For years you studied hard and now it is finally paying off. With this kind of attitude, we feel that we have no one to thank but ourselves.

2) Another attitude that keeps us from being thankful is a critical spirit or constant complaining. Instead of being grateful, this person will always find something to complain about. "A lady known as an incurable grumbler constantly complained about everything. At last her preacher thought he had found something about which she would be happy, for her farm crop was the finest for miles around. When he met her, he said with a beaming smile, 'You must be very happy Mary. Everyone is saying how healthy your potatoes look this year.' 'True they're pretty good, but what am I going to do when I need bad ones to feed the pigs.'" How often aren't we constantly criticizing things that aren't done right or don't look right. We tend to see the dark side of life rather than the many blessings we have from God.

3) A third attitude that keeps us from being grateful is taking everything for granted.

Someone once said that if the stars only came out once a year, we would stay out all night to watch them. But they are there every night and we have grown accustomed to them.

The Israelites grumbled because they had no food so God miraculously sent manna (a crust-like bread) to cover the ground each day except the sabbath day. Their hunger and potential to starve to death was removed. They had plenty to fill their bellies each day. But then they took it for granted. It was the same thing every day. They started to think of other things they could be eating that were more tasty. Then they started to grumble. They had a miracle - straight from God every day but were no longer satisfied. Because we take what we do have for granted, like we are entitled to at least this much, we will never be truly thankful for all that God has given us.

The fourth area that robs us of thankfulness, is we are always looking over the fence at what someone else may have. If they have certain material goods that we don't have, we become filled with discontent. Or if they have plenty of retirement income, and we don't, we become upset. They must be happier and have a more fulfilled life with all those extras things they have and do. Thus, we become discontented, and are not thankful for what we do have.

Rudyard Kipling was a great writer and poet whose writings we have all enjoyed. Unlike many old writers, Kipling was one of the few who had opportunity to enjoy his success while he lived. He also made a great deal of money at his trade. One time a newspaper reporter came up to him and said, "Mr. Kipling, I just read that somebody calculated that the money you make from your writings amounts to over a hundred dollars a word; Mr. Kipling raised his eyebrows and said, "Really, I certainly wasn't aware of that."

The reporter cynically reached down into his pocket and pulled out a one hundred dollar bill and gave it to Kipling and said, "Here's a hundred dollar bill, Mr. Kipling. Now, you give me one of your hundred dollar words." Mr. Kipling looked at that hundred dollar bill for a moment, took it and folded it up and put it in his pocket and said, "Thanks." He's right! The word thanks is certainly a hundred dollar word. In fact, I would say it is more like a million dollar word. It's one word that is too seldom heard and too rarely spoken and too often forgotten. If we would all adopt an attitude of thanksgiving into our lives - our lives would be changed. We would savor each day. If any nation ought to be thankful to God and grateful for his goodness, it ought to be America. If any people in America ought to be thankful to God and grateful for his goodness, it ought to be Christians.

This morning I would like to share with you three things we learn about thanksgiving from the Bible. **THANKSGIVING SHOULD BE EXPRESSED** In Luke 17 we read about ten men who were healed by Jesus of their leprosy. Out of those ten men only one came back to give thanks and Jesus said, "Where are the other nine?" He was the only one willing to take time to go back and say "thank you." Because of that Jesus said to him, "Rise and go; your faith has made you well."

We too are made whole by our thanksgiving. Psychologists today tell us that sincere gratitude, thanksgiving, is the healthiest of all human emotions. Hans Selye, who is considered the father of stress studies, has said that gratitude produces more positive emotional energy than any other attitude in life. And a thankful heart will endear others to us and us to others. For you see thanksgiving is not only good for the giver but also good for the receiver.

God appreciates our thanksgiving. It lifts Him up and it glorifies Him. And thanksgiving endears him to us. It draws us closer. You say thank you to God when you; 1) Spend time with Him (not just 1 hr a week) 2) When you forgive others 3) When you serve in His church 4) When you share His Plan of salvation 5) When you reach out to hurting people 6) When you give God the best of your TTT.

Secondly, OUR THANKSGIVING SHOULD BE EXPANSIVE It should include the blessings of life. It should include things like your spouse, your home, your dog or cat, food, clothing, your savings, your children and grandchildren, your congregation where you worship. Our prayers are often very general. We say, "Thank you God for all your blessings" but what blessings are we really thankful for? Count your blessings...name them one by one...count your blessings see what God has done. Our thanksgiving should include the burdens of life. They make us realize that this life is difficult, that we need strength from God, and only God can see us through the storm. Paul suffered from some very difficult problem that he called a thorn in the flesh. He also had been run out of town, beaten, whipped, imprisoned, betrayed by friends, naked, cold, hungry shipwrecked, and stoned because of his faith. Yet, Paul never stopped giving thanks. In our weakness God can make us strong. When we are struggling God is able to work in our lives. He helps us through times that we could have never faced on our own.

Thirdly, OUR THANKSGIVING IS EXPECTED Paul says we are to "give thanks in all circumstances BECAUSE this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." This is God's will for us. And he knows, if we will do it, that our lives will be changed. This is the mark of a Growing Christian. For example, a baby is ungrateful. You can take a little baby when it has colic and walk the floor with them for hours and when you put that baby down - they don't say, "Thank You." More than likely, they will just yell a little louder. A child has to be taught to be thankful. It just doesn't come naturally. Sometimes you have to almost force them to say thank you. When we realize how blessed we are by others and by God and express that - we are growing. Our thanksgiving is also the mark of a Giving Christian. When we realize how much God has done for us and how much he continues to do, we should be more than happy to give something back to him. This comes through our time and also our financial giving. Someone has said that for Thanksgiving to be real Thanksgiving, There must be "Thanks" and there must be "Giving." When we go to a restaurant, we are more than happy to give a good waitress a 15% tip, but for some reason, many have a problem with giving God 10% of all the good gifts he has given us. We need to ask ourselves if we are truly thankful.

Rejoice this Thanksgiving Day for all the good things the Lord your God has given to you and your household. Be conscious to thank God for the little things He daily does for you. "Enter His gates with Thanksgiving and His courts with praise; give thanks to Him and praise His name." Happy Thanksgiving!