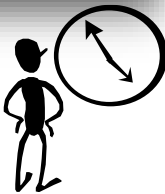


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Time of Assembly



Sunday:

Bible Study 9:00 a.m.
Worship 10:00 a.m.
(every other week)

Worship 5:00 p.m.

Wednesday:

Bible Study 7:00 p. m.

Always Grateful

By Doy Moyer

How we think about God and our level of gratitude are connected. If we think about God respectfully and remember what He has done and continues to do, we will be grateful. How can we not be? Paul makes this connection in Romans 1:21-22. In a context where he is speaking about those who have given up God, he writes, *“For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools...”* Honoring God and giving thanks are interwoven. Conversely, failing to be thankful indicates a lack of honor for God, which leads to futile thought and action.

There is, arguably, an integral connection between a lack of gratitude and an attitude of entitlement. If we think that we ought to be treated in a special manner or that people ought to give us things, then why should we be thankful to those who give us what we think we deserve? We are entitled, so why the need to be grateful? Yet we know there is something particularly egregious about this kind of attitude. The ungrateful cannot see when grace has been given because they don't see their need for it. Grace has no place for them, and because grace is shunned, so is a thankful spirit.

David DeSilva points out, “Generosity was a highly valued characteristic in people in the Hellenistic and Roman periods.” Just as important was the attitude of those who were on the receiving end of a gift. While a giver was not to act out of self-interest, “The recipient should be a virtuous person who will honor the generosity and kindness behind the gift, who would value more the continuing relationship with the giver than any particular gift.” The “gift must always be met with gratitude” [*Honor, Patronage, Kinship & Purity*, pgs. 105-108].

“For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:23). Our response to this gift speaks volumes about how we view both the gift and the Giver. No amount of work that we do will ever make up for it, for all we can say, after doing what God asks of us, *“We are unworthy servants; we have only done what was our duty”* (Luke 17:10). Humility, praise, and gratefulness should flow from our hearts.

How much do we value our relationship with the God who has given, not just a few gifts, but Himself as a sacrifice to atone for our sins? Christians value salvation and ought to be eternally grateful for what God has done to make forgiveness viable. Yet we ought not to value only the gift of salvation but also the Giver Himself—the God who made us in His image and wants us to be in fellowship with Him. Our thankfulness, then, goes beyond thanking God for forgiveness (as great as that is). Our thankfulness is for God Himself. *“Let all who seek you rejoice and be glad in you; let those who love your salvation continually say, ‘God is great!’”* (Psalms 70:4).

Being thankful is a continual attitude that should characterize us no matter what else is going on in our lives. This is one of the reasons that Christians ought not to be given to grumbling and complaining (Philippians 2:14), for this demonstrates a lack of gratitude and focuses more on our circumstances and lack of contentment. A lack of gratitude is more a sign of selfishness and a corollary to a lack of love. Thankfulness should be pervasive and consistent, as Paul indicated:

“Let the word of Christ dwell richly among you, in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another through psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. And whatever you do, in word or in deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him” (Colossians 3:16-17).

The Hebrews writer also makes an interesting connection: *“Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful. By it, we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and awe”* (Hebrews 12:28). The link here is that our service to God with reverence and awe flows out of our gratitude for God and His mercy toward us. We cannot serve God acceptably or have proper respect for Him if we do not maintain the gratitude (grace) in our hearts.

Connecting our last two passages (Colossians 3 and Hebrews 12) would show that our praise and worship of God are always to be attended by thankfulness and gratitude. This goes beyond assemblies to our daily offering up of ourselves as living sacrifices (Romans 12:1-2). Indeed, we are to *“give thanks in everything; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus”* (I Thessalonians 5:18).

“Give thanks to him and bless his name. For the LORD is good, and his faithful love endures forever; his faithfulness, through all generations” (Psalms 100:4-5).

When You Are Discouraged

By Jefferson David Tant

Do you ever feel discouraged or disappointed? Welcome to the club! Take comfort in the fact that you are not alone. There are countless numbers of people who can sympathize with you, as these feelings have impacted people on planet earth for multiple thousands of years.

We are familiar with the story of Job in the Bible's Old Testament. He was a man who was blessed with wealth, good health, a family of ten children, and a good reputation. Then in a moment of time, all his blessings were taken away. He didn't know why, as he had done no evil. His own wife turned against him. His friends came to "comfort" him and accused him of some awful sins that would have caused these catastrophes to happen to him.

Having received word after word from his servants about the bad things that had taken place, he finally got the word that his ten children had been killed in a storm.

"While he was still speaking, another also came and said, "Your sons and your daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house, and behold, a great wind came from across the wilderness and struck the four corners of the house, and it fell on the young people and they died, and I alone have escaped to tell you." Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head, and he fell to the ground and worshiped. He said, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, And naked I shall return there. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away. Blessed be the name of the LORD." Through all this Job did not sin nor did he blame God" (Job 1:18-22).

In time Job lost his health, and even his wife turned against him, telling him to just curse God and die, and get it all over with. Was Job discouraged? Obviously so, but he did not let his discouragements overcome him. He had something that sustained him—his faith. Consider what is recorded in Job 19:25-27: *"As for me, I know that my Redeemer lives, And at the last He will take His stand on the earth. Even after my skin is destroyed, Yet from my flesh I shall see God; Whom I myself shall behold, And whom my eyes will see and not another. My heart faints within me!"*

Job knew there was something waiting for him in the future, and that sustained him in all his trials. If you think your burdens are too heavy to bear, compare your burdens with those that the apostle Paul had to deal with.

"Are they servants of Christ? --I speak as if insane--I more so; in far more labors, in far more imprisonments, beaten times without number, often in danger of death. Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep. I have been on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from rob-

(Continued on page 4)

bers, dangers from my countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren; I have been in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. Apart from such external things, there is the daily pressure on me of concern for all the churches. Who is weak without my being weak? Who is led into sin without my intense concern? If I have to boast, I will boast of what pertains to my weakness. The God and Father of the Lord Jesus, He who is blessed forever, knows that I am not lying. In Damascus the ethnarch under Aretas the king was guarding the city of the Damascenes in order to seize me, and I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall, and so escaped his hands” (II Corinthians 11:23-33).

When it seems you have no hope, and the weight of the world becomes your burden, you need to be strong in faith, trust in God, leave it all in His hands, and He will see you through. God made a promise to Joshua as he was about to lead Israel into the Promised Land, he makes the same promise to us. "No man will be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I have been with Moses, I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you (Joshua 1:5).

God makes the same promise to us today.

What Is Tolerated Today Becomes Accepted Tomorrow

By Dick Millwee

Many years ago I read a quote that I found to be true. This was the quote: “What is tolerated today becomes accepted tomorrow.” Whoever said that said a mouthful and hit the nail on the head. Let me give a couple of examples.

In 1939 a movie was made that had one curse word in it. History tells all that moral leaders and church pulpits all over our country raised a sustained cry against it being released for public showing and almost succeeded in their efforts.

However, Hollywood turned a deaf ear to the protests and patiently waited until the hubbub died down. After the protest became old news, Hollywood released the picture, “Gone With the Wind.” Forty years later, in 1979, Hollywood produced and released a movie that had only one curse word in it (the same word used in Gone With The Wind), and parents all over the land breathed a sigh of relief and said, “Finally a movie that we can let our children go see.” It was Star Wars. This gradual “toleration creep” has led to most of the movies released today being filled with vile, filthy language that would have made a drunken sailor blush in 1939!

In 1953, a new magazine was about to be released for publication and a volcanic protest by churches and various organizations erupted. The publisher and court officials turned a deaf ear to the protests and, hence, “Playboy” magazine became an American institution. This led to the publication of similar magazines. This, in turn, motivated Hollywood to begin releasing movies of a vivid sexual nature which lead to the necessi-

tation of a rating system. Over time there has been "rating creep" so that what used to be X-rated is now R-rated, R-rated is now PG-13 rated, and PG-13 is now rated G. The slow graduation of "Toleration Creep" has desensitized us to the point we are now accepting as O.K. that was tolerated with anxious misgivings a few years ago.

Sadly, many Christians have become so desensitized to this media filth that they, with their money and attendance, have succumbed to this "wile" of the devil. God tells us through the apostle Paul, "*do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but, instead, expose them*" (Ephesians 5:11).

It is sad to see many Christians (even though it bothers them) allowing their children to watch TV programs and moves that promote this moral filth. The danger for their children, for the most part, is that they will feel it is acceptable for Christians to do this because their parents did not speak out against it or restrict them from involving themselves with this moral tragedy when they were in their formative years. Sadly, in some cases, the children learn by example when they see their parents rent or buy these movies and play them on their DVD sets at home.

"*Be not deceived, for whatsoever we sow that is what we shall reap*" (Galatians 6:7, 8). Brethren, young and old, let us take the high road of God and take a stand against these things. Let's not succumb to this moral creep. Beware, it is a device of the devil to ensnare our souls.

Faithfulness

Author Unknown

A preacher was asked to define "faithful attendance at worship." He replied that the best way to understand it was to apply the same standards of faithfulness that we do in other areas of our life. Consider the examples he gave:

1. If your car started one out of three times, would you consider it faithful?
2. If the paperboy missed Monday and Thursday, would those papers be missed?
3. If you didn't show up at work two or three times a month, would your boss call you faithful?
4. If you attend worship only often enough to show some interest but not often enough to get involved are you faithful?

It bears some serious thought.

