

AN ATTITUDE OF GRATITUDE

INTRODUCTION

On Wednesday morning in this past week, I was led to do a video encouragement about not sweating the small stuff. Certain things in life have the ability to rob us of our peace and joy, some of them are of no moral or eternal significance.

Paul wrote to the Romans about their Christian liberty, and how they were not to judge one another if some ate certain foods and others didn't, or if some observed certain days as important but others didn't. He then pointed out what the kingdom of God is about.

Romans 14:17 (NKJV) for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. This implies that things like eating and drinking, or following certain days are not really going to produce the kingdom characteristics of righteousness, peace and joy that we need. Furthermore, focusing on these non-essential and unimportant aspects of life could result in a loss of our Christian peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

It is not only what we eat or what days we observe which will have this result, but any undue focus on trivial, non-essential issues can also rob us of our joy. I like to use the example of my wife's slippers in the bathroom which once were an irritation, but now are a reminder of how blessed I am to have a loving, wonderful wife.

As I thought about it, I got to thinking of the things I should be grateful for. If I am going to walk in the kingdom characteristics of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, I need to focus on the blessings in my life, the things I need to be grateful for, rather on the small stuff that gets in the way and is able to steal my peace and my joy, and ultimately impact my righteousness. What is needed is an attitude of gratitude, and I want us to spend some time focusing on what it means to such an attitude every day of our life.

MESSAGE

Ephesians 5:18-20 (NKJV) And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, 19 speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, 20 giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul's instruction to the Ephesians here is to give thanks for ALL THINGS to our Heavenly Father in the name of Jesus. There is no exception. There is always something in every situation to be thankful for.

THE PSALMS RING TEACH US HOW TO BE THANKFUL

Psalm 7:17 I will give thanks to the Lord **because of His righteousness**; I will sing the praises of the name of the Lord Most High.

Psalm 9:1 I will give thanks to you, Lord, with all my heart; I will tell of all **Your wonderful deeds**.

Psalm 35:18 I will give You **thanks in the great assembly**; among the throngs I will praise You.

Psalm 69:30 I will praise God's name in song and **glorify Him with thanksgiving**.

Psalm 95:1-3 Come, let us sing for joy to the Lord; let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation. Let us **come before Him with thanksgiving** and extol Him with music and song. **For the Lord is the great God**, the great King above all gods.

Psalm 100:4-5 **Enter His gates with thanksgiving** and His courts with praise; give thanks to Him and praise His name. For the Lord is good and His love endures forever; His faithfulness continues through all generations.

Psalm 107:21-22 Let them **give thanks to the Lord for His unfailing love and His wonderful deeds for mankind**. Let them sacrifice thank offerings and tell of His works with songs of joy.

Psalm 118:1 Give thanks to the Lord, **for He is good**; His love endures forever.

Psalm 147:7 Sing to the Lord with **grateful praise**; make music to our God on the harp.

THE NEW TESTAMENT ALSO TEACHES US ABOUT THANKSGIVING

Philippians 4:6-7 Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Colossians 2:6-7 So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.

Colossians 3:15-17 Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit,

singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Colossians 4:2 Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

Hebrews 12:28-29 Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our "God is a consuming fire."

Let me summarise what these verses say about thankfulness.

The things about God we can be thankful for:

- His righteousness.
- His wonderful deeds.
- His greatness and His goodness.
- His faithfulness which endures to all generations.
- His enduring and undying love.
- His wonderful deeds for mankind.
- The work of Jesus Christ in our lives.
- The fact that we are heirs of an unshakable kingdom.

Where and when should we thank God?

- In the great assembly and among the throngs (in church).
- When we enter His gates (any time we come into His presence, whether when we are on our own or in the midst of the congregation).
- In our times of prayer and petition.
- When we are anxious.
- In every circumstance.

How should we thank God?

- In music and song by singing praises.
- With all our heart.
- With thank offerings.
- With a heart of gratitude.
- There should be an overflow of thankfulness.
- With a watchful heart – making sure we don't neglect it.
- With an attitude of reverence and awe.

We have much to thank God for, thanking God always for all things. Being a child of God makes us more aware of God's goodness, love, provision and

care for us. The enemy on the other hand, wants to rob us of our joy and our peace by taking our focus off the things for which we are thankful and causing us to focus on all the negatives.

Let us choose not to lose our joy and peace by giving in to anxiety and worry. We do it by being thankful for all things at all times.

FRUITFUL LIPS

Hebrews 13:15 Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name.

Thankfulness is a form of praise. It's the sacrifice of praise, we bring it via our lips as we speak out and sing out and pray out our gratitude to our God.

THE OPPOSITE OF GRATITUDE

Timothy 3:1-5 (NKJV) But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: 2 For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, 3 unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, 4 traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, 5 having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!

When we observe the signs of the times, we conclude that we are living in the last days. Paul describes the carnal attitudes that will be present in this day. Why is it not a surprise that we find in the list of attributes of people who have a form of godliness but no power attitude of unthankfulness?

We have all met someone like this, they complain all the time, they can't find anything good in anyone, they take what they have for granted. Their life is full of "me, myself and I", and Paul warns Timothy, "from such people turn away!"

Lucifer was the worship leader in heaven. He was a beautiful creature with a special position, but his pride led to an attitude of unthankfulness. He could not be content with the much he already had, he wanted more and as he said, "I will, I, will, I will...", God's judgment fell on him and he was cast out of heaven. Tragically, his bad attitude had impacted several of those around him and a third of the angels fell with him.

Let us take care not to have an attitude of ingratitude. Today let us choose to have an attitude of gratitude. Regardless of our circumstances, there is always something to be thankful for. It's time to set aside the carnality and fleshliness that leads to an attitude of

thanklessness and to fully embrace a heart of thanksgiving with every fibre of our being.

CONCLUSION

Romans 14:17 (NKJV) for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

The key to that peace and joy is to focus on how much we truly have in the Lord. It will help us take our eyes off the negatives all around that rob us of our joy, this is the true joy that we only attain to through the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit.

On Wednesday morning, I posted just five of many things I'm grateful to the Lord for on Facebook, I challenged people to add their own list. Very few people actually responded. Could it be that we have become unthankful?

- I'm thankful I'm forgiven, Jesus paid for my sins.
- I'm thankful for my wonderful loving wife, my children and my extended family.
- I'm thankful for the very air that I breathe.
- I'm thankful for what I eat, drink and wear.
- I'm thankful for this new day.

Someone else wrote this, I am thankful for:

- The taxes I pay, because it means I am employed.
- The mess to clean after a party, because it means I have been surrounded by friends.
- For the clothes that fit a little too snug, because it means I have enough to eat.
- For a lawn that needs mowing, windows that need cleaning, and gutters that need fixing, because it means I have a home.
- For all the complaining I hear about the government, because it means we have freedom of speech.
- For the parking spot I find at the far end of the parking lot, because it means I am capable of walking and I have been blessed with transportation.
- For my huge heating bill, because it means I am warm.
- For the pile of laundry and ironing, because it means I have clothes to wear.
- For the alarm that goes off in the early morning hours, because it means I am alive.

What about you? What are you thankful for? I challenge you to sit down and start listing all the things God has blessed you with. It will not take long for the heaviness, anxiety and unhappiness you may be struggling with to disappear as you begin rejoicing in the Holy Spirit.

When we focus on thankfulness, we truly will begin speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in our heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

No matter what we are facing, no matter how bad things seem, let us enjoy the peace and joy of the kingdom of God as we develop an ATTITUDE OF GRATTITUDE.