



TODD LEVIN MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL

A monthly teaching publication to our partners and friends

CULTIVATING A THANKFUL HEART

Dear Partners and Friends,

When Paul wrote his second letter to a young minister by the name of Timothy, the Holy Spirit inspired Paul to highlight several characteristics that would be prevalent in the last days. One of them would be an unthankful or ungrateful heart. Let's look at it together.

“This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy...”

2 Timothy 3:1-2 (KJV)

It seems that our society has drifted so far off base as moral values rapidly decline. Nowadays people get up in the morning mad at the world thinking that everybody owes them something. When will we wake up and realize that this is untrue. This kind of attitude is typical in both the sinner and sometimes the saint. There's only one debt that can never be paid off, and that is love. It's the gift that keeps on giving.

“Owe no man any thing, but to love one another.”

Romans 13:8 (KJV)

As long as a person believes in their heart and mind that everyone is indebted to them, their whole life is spent preoccupied and aggressively reaching for what belongs to them. As a result they never learn to enjoy where they are or what they have. They never take the time to stop and smell the roses. When a person's life is consumed with possessing, such as things, success, power or wealth, then there is danger in failing to appreciate what they do have; failing to enjoy what God has placed in their hands today. If we're not careful, our hearts can grow cold and soon become unthankful. Now don't get me wrong. I do believe in success, increase and pressing on in God, but what I'm wanting to emphasize is that wherever you are, and whatever you do in life, learn to cultivate a thankful heart.

“It is a good thing to give thanks unto the LORD, and to sing praises unto thy name, O most High.”

Psalms 92:1 (KJV)

When is the last time you stopped and thanked God for good health; for a roof over your head; for your job; for your children or for your mate? When is the last time you've stopped and prayed for your country or President? When is the last time you've stopped and thanked God for your Christian leaders and the freedom that you possess to evangelize and preach the Gospel in this nation without having to fear that you may be thrown into some concentration camp for talking about Jesus.

We live in a society now where people take life for granted as well as their freedom. Those who give no thought for tomorrow are usually ungrateful for today. Over the centuries, think of all the battles that have been fought and blood that's been shed in order for you and I to enjoy life and liberty. Someone else laid down his or her life so that you may go free. **(John 15:13)** We **do** need to thank God and pray for our nation, Christian leaders and those who are in authority over us in order to continue to enjoy our freedom and our peace. This is not something that the Lord invites us to do, but rather something that He expects us to do.

"I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour."

1 Timothy 2:1-3 (KJV)

I realize that time is precious and with some they don't know how to manage it very well. But when you take the time and call the name of your President before the throne of God, or the name of your Christian leaders, the name of your family members as well as your friends, then you are expressing your thankfulness to the Lord. You are asking God to intervene; you are trusting in His mercy and grace; you're believing that the same God which never let you down will move in the behalf of the one you're praying for.

When life becomes so cluttered with things to do, people to see and places to go and you've not set aside a time of prayer, a time of thanksgiving, a time of reflecting, then your life has become too busy!

I'm sure if you are reading this now you know what it is to taste of the goodness of the Lord. Many of you have been healed in your bodies, received God's mercy and grace, experienced the saving power of the Holy Ghost and the forgiveness of sins as well as a fresh start in life. But when is the last time you've let the Lord know how much you appreciate all that He has done and all that He is doing right now in your life? Yes it's true God's love keeps on giving. His goodness is made known throughout the whole world, but how often do people stop and give Him thanks. Here's a shocking story recorded for us in the Gospel of Luke worth looking at.

"Now on his way to Jerusalem, Jesus traveled along the border between Samaria and Galilee. As he was going into a village, ten men who had leprosy met him. They stood at a distance and called out in a loud voice, "Jesus, Master, have pity on us!" When he saw them, he said, "Go, show yourselves to the priests." And as they went, they were cleansed. One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. He threw himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him--and he was a Samaritan. Jesus asked, "Were not all ten

cleansed? Where are the other nine? Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?" Then he said to him, "Rise and go; your faith has made you well."

Luke 17:11-19 (NIV)

Jesus asked this stranger, "*Where are the other nine that I healed? Why didn't they come and give thanks for the miracle they've just received?*" I find it amazing and yet I'm not surprised that even in this instance nearly 2000 years ago, nine out of ten **never returned** to thank the Lord. People are almost predictable at times. I think that our culture as well as a person's upbringing has a large part to play.

Did you know that I found this to be true in holding street evangelism meetings overseas? Often I would spend several days a week for hours at a time laying hands on and praying for the sick in the market places. I've witnessed hundreds upon hundreds of people healed from various kinds of problems ranging from injuries to aches and pains, eyesight healed deaf ears opened crippled walking and tumors disappearing, yet as sad as it is true, the majority of these people never did come to church one time to testify and thank God for manifesting his love and goodness to them on that day. Can you believe it? After what I saw the Lord do for them, I personally could not believe they would never show their face again after they got what they wanted. Is this what prayer is all about, seeking the hand of God and not the heart of God? Do we only want the gifts and not the giver?

Learning to cultivate a thankful heart

I've realized a long time ago that whatever I fail to thank God for is usually what I never get to enjoy. The reason being for this is because praise and thanksgiving are the highest expression of one's faith. I've noticed the more I've thanked God for his Word of promise the sooner I saw the manifestation of what I had asked for. There's a scripture in the book of Philippians that many of you may be familiar with. It's found in chapter four.

"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God."

Philippians 4:6 (NKJV)

Is this how you pray? Is there thanksgiving included in every prayer? If not there needs to be. How could you receive something from someone and never thank them for it? It simply wouldn't be right would it? It would be poor character and a demonstration of ungratefulness. Yet how many times have you ever done something for others only to experience this for yourself? Maybe it was a baby gift you sent congratulating a friend on the birth of their new child; maybe it was free tickets to the NY Mets game; maybe it was a gift certificate for two at Olive Garden; maybe it was simply your time, energy, skills or wisdom. Being the blessing is not what bothered you, in fact you were glad to be in a position to be the blessing. What bothered you was getting little or no response back from the person or people you had blessed. How did this make you feel? Did you want to run out and buy another gift for them? Hardly, you felt unappreciated. You felt they were ungrateful or unthankful. And do you know what? There's a good chance you were right.

When folks cannot stop what they are doing long enough to say, “**thank-you**” more than likely it’s because they are absorbed with themselves, un-interested in you and unappreciative of what’s been done for them. Let’s be honest, how much effort does one have to put forth in saying, “thank-you,” and genuinely mean it? It’s really not that difficult unless there is no thankfulness in them to begin with.

“As the end approaches, people are going to be self-absorbed, money-hungry, self-promoting, stuck-up, profane, contemptuous of parents, crude, coarse...”

2 Timothy 3:2 (Message)

The one reward we all look forward to is the response that the person gives in return for what has been given to them. When there is no response or it’s done with an ungrateful, “I expected more” attitude, we feel as though we’ve just been robbed or taken advantage of. Probably most of you can relate to this, but I want to encourage you in your own life to be aware and make sure that you are not guilty yourselves of having an ungrateful heart towards others and towards God. Things may not always work out the way you thought they would have or even should have, people will continue to surprise you at times, nevertheless, we must purpose in our hearts to maintain a Christ-like attitude, walk in peace and have a thankful heart.

“Let the peace of Christ keep you in tune with each other, in step with each other. None of this going off and doing your own thing. And cultivate thankfulness.”

Philippians 3:15 (Message)

A thankful heart is one that responds positively even when the answer is different than what we had anticipated, or takes longer than we expected. In relation to prayer, this is when we offer up the sacrifice of thanksgiving. In Psalms 116:17, David said, “***I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the LORD.***” It becomes a sacrifice when we seek the face of God and allow him to have his way, laying aside our wants and desires. A thankful heart gives God the praise even in advance knowing ahead of time that all things are going to work out for good. **(Romans 8:28)**

Giving thanks is our way of responding to God’s loving kindness that he shows toward us. In fact it’s how we are to approach the throne of God.

“Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms.”

Psalms 95:2 (KJV)

“Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise. Give thanks to him, bless his name.”

Psalms 100:4 (NRSV)

Thanksgiving is something that we can offer up to the Lord wherever we are both publicly as well as privately.

“Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime.”

Daniel 6:10 (KJV)

“I will give thee thanks in the great congregation; I will praise thee among much people.”

Psalms 35:18 (Darby)

Through our thanksgiving we are magnifying the Lord. This is a very good thing to do and will help you keep your mind on Him. People either magnify the Lord or magnify their problems. We should have learned by now that all things were created for His pleasure according to Revelation 4:11, and one way to bring pleasure to Him is through thanksgiving.

“I will praise the name of God with a song, and will magnify him with thanksgiving.

Psalms 69:30 (KJV)

This month we celebrate Thanksgiving. Families will travel nationwide to spend time with one another and center the day around a meal and perhaps a parade. Let me encourage you also to spend a little extra time giving thanks to your Heavenly Father for all that He has done for you. Remember to thank God for the freedom you enjoy – naturally and spiritually. I like what the Apostle Paul wrote to the Colossian believers. Let this be our practice too.

“Giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light. For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.”

Colossians 1:12-14 (NIV)

We have much to be thankful for don't we? God is not holding out on us. He has blessed us with every spiritual blessing. (**Ephesians 1:3**) In fact the scriptures tell us that, *“From the fullness of his grace we have all received one blessing after another.”* (John 1:16–NIV) Not just one blessing from the Lord, but one blessing after another! As believers, we continually walk in the blessing of the Lord. Thanksgiving should be a way of life, not just a national holiday. Learn to cultivate a thankful heart. Remember, every day is a thanksgiving day in the heart of the child of God!

I pray that as you and your family gather together this Holiday, that you will take some time out and thank God for all that he has done and is doing in your life. Pray for your nation and President and thank God that America is turning once again to the Lord.

Your Friends and Partners in ministry,

Todd & Eva