

# Building the Body With an Attitude of Gratitude

## Colossians 3:15-17

***<sup>15</sup>Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. <sup>16</sup>Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. <sup>17</sup>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***

Attitude can have an incredible impact on our lives. The longer I live the more I am convinced that life is 10 percent what happens to us and 90 percent how we respond. Therefore, I believe the single most significant decision I can make daily is my choice of attitude.

It is **more** important than my past, my education, how much money I have, my successes or failures, what other people think of me or say about me....attitude is more important than any of these things. If I have a poor attitude, it doesn't matter how much talent I have or how many resources God put's at my disposal..... because if my attitude is wrong...then I am defeated before I even attempt the simplest task.

You are all probably familiar with Philippians 4:13;... ***"I CAN DO all things through Christ who strengthens me"*** Well Paul's attitude is found in the first three words of that verse.... ***"I can do"***... Without this same positive attitude...this willingness to attempt great things for God...then I cannot access the strength Christ is willing to give me to do His will. We spend more of our time fretting and concentrating over the things that can't be changed in life than we do giving attention to the one thing we can control: our choice of attitude. Our upcoming Thanksgiving holiday should remind us that one of these necessary positive attitudes is the attitude of gratitude. Scripture is full of passages that instruct Christians to continually choose to practice an attitude of gratitude.

Three times in our text for today Paul urges us to "**.....BE THANKFUL**". In Psalm 100:4 we are instructed to enter God's presence "**...with Thanksgiving and praise.**" Romans 1 describes the wrath of God against an ungrateful people when it says, "**.....although they knew God, they neither glorified Him as God nor gave thanks to Him.....**" So repeatedly we are instructed to be grateful people. Well, how would you go about describing a grateful person? What actions or qualities would you look for? I want to suggest three such attributes of a person who chooses an attitude of gratitude.

## **1. They Use Their Voice to Thank God.**

They never forget that He is the source of all the blessings of their lives. The simple act of saying "THANK YOU GOD" infers that I am not thanking myself...I realize that all that I have comes from God. So grateful people are in effect humble people.... they do not pridefully look at themselves as the source of their blessings in life but instead attribute everything to God.

Grateful people believe James 1:17 that says, "**Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.**" Ingratitude begins with PRIDE.....Pride can make us conceited, confident in ourselves. Pride can cause us to believe we brought the good things to our lives instead of recognizing God as the giver of every good and perfect gift. It is said that on his retreat from Greece after his great military expedition there, King Xerxes boarded a Phoenician ship along with his Persian troops. A terrible storm came up, and the captain told Xerxes there was no hope unless the ship's load was substantially lightened. The king turned to his fellow Persians on deck and said, "It is on you that my safety depends. Now let some of you show your regard for your king." A great number of the men bowed to Xerxes and threw themselves overboard!

Lightened of its load, the ship made it safely to harbor. Xerxes immediately ordered that a golden crown be given to the pilot for preserving the king's life—then ordered the man beheaded for causing the loss of so many Persian lives! Does this sound like gratitude to you?? Another attribute found in grateful people is this....

## **2. They Live A Life That Says – Thank You God.**

People who are truly grateful live every day of their life as a way to show their gratitude to a loving Heavenly Father..... Kierkegaard said, **“To stand on one’s legs and prove God’s existence is a very different thing from going on one’s knees and thanking God”**.

My sixth-grade teacher was Mrs. Ebert. She related stories to us of her Dad who had served in the Navy in WWII. As she told the stories she would tell us about exotic places her father had written her about as a girl. She made these places come alive – at least to me. I was in a school on an Army base but all I thought about was joining the Navy. After I enlisted, I sent a letter to Mrs. Ebert c/o Van Voorhis School. It had been 10 years and I did not expect the letter to get to her, but it did. I wrote that letter to let her know how thankful I was for the stories she had told us, and those stories had led me to becoming a sailor. She wrote me a note thanking me for the letter which was wonderful surprise. She let me know that she shared it with others.

A person with an attitude of gratitude think of their days as offerings to God...as a response to all He has given them. Paul wrote, ***“For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all.....those who live should no longer live for themselves but for Him who died for them and was raised again.”*** 2 Cor 5:14-15. The word "compels" means literally, "leaves me no choice." Paul is saying, "I have no choice but to respond to the love of Christ with my whole being---to use every day of my life to say thank you!" We live for God because in Jesus Christ He lived....and died for us....May I suggest then that a Christian is one who majors in appreciation?

### 3. An Attitude of Gratitude focuses on what other people need.

I think that an attitude of gratitude is the crucial difference between being a victim or a victor over the events of life. We cannot control what will happen to us in life - but we can control our response. When we face the inevitable tough times of life---and all of us do---we are free to choose our attitude. One alternative is to choose the attitude of resentment....to decide to focus on the bad and ask angrily: "Why did this have to happen?" The other alternative is to simply choose to be grateful. This involves thinking through every facet of an event and asking: "What is there here to be thankful for, and what can I use amid all this wreckage to build a better future?"

This optimistic choice is encouraged in the Bible.... James said in essence *"Consider it pure joy my brothers...be thankful my brothers when you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance..."* James 1:2-4. How do you access the courage to keep on trying even in the worst of times? One way is by learning to choose gratitude over resentment.

Remember the Pilgrims back in 1621? That little band of Puritans set out on the Mayflower for Virginia, only to get blown off course and finally come to shore hundreds of miles to the north at Cape Cod. For 13 long weeks they bounced around on the rough Atlantic until, at last, they landed at Plymouth. They had hardly established themselves when the cold Massachusetts winter was upon them. They faced that bleak winter without adequate stores, and it wasn't long until there were more crosses in the cemetery than there were citizens in the log stockade.... By April only fifty of the original one hundred and two had survived. A real discussion arose as to whether those remaining should all give up and go back to the Old World, but they decided to stay on and plant one crop---a few acres of corn and barley.

When the time for the first anniversary of their landing rolled around, discussion arose as to how it should be observed. Some proposed a Day of Mourning, when attention would be focused on all those who lay in unmarked graves in foreign soil. But the others said, "No, a Day of Thanksgiving would be more appropriate. After all, fifty of us have survived. We have gathered in a good harvest. The Indians have been our friends. Let's focus on what we have going for us, not on what we have going against us."

And it just could be that **THAT** was the turning point in the founding of this country! Had those Pilgrims chosen to mourn rather than give thanks to God, I doubt that they would have found the courage to hold out as they did! Think what this approach to life could do for you...

## **Conclusion**

The next time tough times come, I challenge you: instead of asking "Why has this happened to me?" Ask "What is there here to thank God for? What can I use to build toward the future?" This is the secret of making the most of life, not just the best of it.

There's a legend of a man who found the barn where Satan keeps seeds ready to be sown in the human heart. He noticed there were more seeds of discouragement than any other and was told that this kind of seed can be made to grow almost anywhere. He asked about it, and Satan reluctantly admitted that there is one place in which he could never get the seed of discouragement to thrive. "Where is that?" the man asked. Satan answered, "In the heart of a grateful man."

Are you grateful? We each have so much to thank God for. Health, loved ones, food, shelter, clothing but above all, salvation. Have you shown God your gratefulness for Him sending His Son to die for you? How?? By obeying Him.