

The Lifestyle Of Thanksgiving (The Healing Of The Ten Lepers)

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It was a common sight--lepers wandering about together, little clusters of human rejection and hopelessness bound together by mutual misery and desperation, a subculture separated from society by the law.

One such group spotted Jesus traveling on His way to Jerusalem. We read the account in Luke 17:11-19.

These ten lepers kept their distance from Jesus, perhaps as much from uncertainty as from the requirements of the law. Would Jesus reject them? They had suffered so much rejection. To be rejected now would be especially painful. Would they be healed even if they asked? They were common men with common thoughts and feelings.

Whatever their thoughts, delay was dissipating their moment of opportunity. Jesus was about to enter a village, and they were not allowed to follow Him in. He would mingle with the crowd, and they might never see Him again. They had to act now. It was believe or die!

"Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!"

There. It was done. They had thrown themselves on His mercy. It was all they could do. How would He respond?

"Go show yourselves to the priests."

Show ourselves to the priests? That is what lepers do after they get well. At this point the leprosy was still clearly visible. Jesus was directing them to take a step of sheer faith.

And that is exactly what they did. Furthermore, "as they went, they were cleansed." They all believed. They all obeyed. They all were healed. Let us not underrate these men. Their faith was remarkable. Of course, what did they have to lose? What was the alternative?

However, nine of the ten lacked one very important quality--thankfulness. Only one returned to give Him thanks, and he did it with all his heart.

Notice, he gave thanks to the right Person. When Jesus heals, all glory belongs to Him. Let no man touch it.

Also, Jesus did not have to check to verify that the others were healed. He knew that all ten had been healed. He knew what happens when people believe His Word and act upon it.

It is interesting to observe what happens to some people when God heals them or blesses them in some way. New possibilities open up, and it is easy to become taken up with the possibilities and forget the Lord. The nine lepers had a lot of catching up to do; so off to the priests to get that clean bill of health and get on with life. Jesus had served His purpose and was no longer going to be a part of their lives. They were on their way to their own concerns.

Yes, a selfish heart is an unthankful heart. Part of God's indictment of an unbelieving world is "when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful" (Romans 1:21 KJV).

Jesus gave these ten lepers freedom to go their way. The test was to see what way that would be. One man's way was right back to the feet of Jesus.

A right heart is a thankful heart. Thanksgiving is more than a holiday. It is an attitude that flows naturally out of love, humility, and trust.

So, for what should we give thanks? We are to give thanks for His indescribable gift (2 Corinthians 9:15).

We should give thanks for fellow believers. In his epistles Paul repeatedly expressed his thanks to God for the believers--yes, even the problem ones at Corinth (although he thanked God that he had baptized none of the Corinthian believers except Crispus and Gaius).

We are to thank God for all men (1 Timothy 2:1). Practicing this will sweeten us and help us break the habit of griping and grumbling. We should express thanks for (and to) our spouse, our parents, our children, and in general to all who love us, serve us, and enrich our lives.

We give thanks to God because gives us the victory (1 Corinthians 15:57) and always leads us in triumph in Christ (2 Corinthians 2:14). We give thanks to the Father,

who has made us fit to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light (Colossians 1:12). These are sufficient reasons for us to break forth spontaneously and often in heartfelt thanksgiving.

Reaching out and encompassing all of life are the Biblical commands to give thanks for (in behalf of) all things (Ephesians 5:20) and in everything (1 Thessalonians 5:18). Prayer and petition with thanksgiving is God's effective antidote to anxiety (Philippians 4:6).

We are to be rooted and built up in Christ, established in the faith, "abounding therein with thanksgiving" (Colossians 2:7).

Whatever we do, we are to do "all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him" (Colossians 3:17. NKJV).

When the Biblical commands and examples of thanksgiving become our established attitude and lifestyle, we will rise above discouragement, complaining, self-pity, bitterness, and all the other negative attitudes that work to defeat us and rob us of the joy of living. Thanksgiving is the voice of faith, and faith is the victory that overcomes the world (1 John 5:4).

No, a person who gives thanks in all things is not out of touch with reality. On the contrary, that person has learned to live in the greater, higher reality of God's all-sufficient grace and His sovereignty over all things. Such believers live in liberating victory in the everyday world that grinds down the average person. They have discovered the grace of God in the adversities of life. They are living proof that Jesus Christ is real. Wherever they go, they rekindle hope where hope has flickered and died.

To such a lifestyle of thanksgiving God is calling us.