

"Were Not Ten Cleansed?"

And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine? There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger." -- Luke 17:17,18

Ten Lepers met Jesus one day nearly 2000 years ago as He journeyed south to Jerusalem. All sought His mercy and were given the same instruction: "Go show yourselves unto the priests." As they obeyed His word, all were cleansed. Yet only one, a Samaritan, returned to give thanks to Jesus. The failure of the nine to do so brought the above remarks recorded by Luke. What of the other nine? Were they grateful for their healing? Or did their joy in the gift cause them to quickly forget the giver? Yes, it is possible even for those who have received much to take God's favors for granted.

Thankfulness, genuine gratitude, is considered a mark of maturity and gentility among all honorable people. But even then, it remains only a gesture unless it comes from the heart in real appreciation of the goodness of the giver. The one leper, when he realized that he had been healed, deliberately turned back to where Jesus was. Heedless of all about him, he praised God with a loud voice. Falling on his face at Jesus' feet, he thanked Him publicly.

There is lesson of thankfulness here for all people. It is not surprising to find numerous scriptural injunctions to Christian thanksgiving -- for all things, at all times, in all circumstances. Indeed, the Christian life is to be one of thankfulness, for "*what has thou that thou didst not receive?*" (1 Cor. 4:7) The words in Psa. 107:21,22 are relevant to every believer in Christ Jesus: "*Oh that men would praise the LORD for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men. Let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving, and declare His works with rejoicing.*" The Psalmist associates the qualities of praise, sacrifice and witness to others with the discharge of the debt of gratitude.

Causes for Gratitude

The writings of the apostles make it clear that the giving of thanks is an essential accompaniment to all other aspects of Christian living. But first of all, there must be a heart of gratitude within, a full recognition of the bountiful grace of our Heavenly Father and an appreciation of all His gifts. We read in James 1:17 that "*every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.*" What, then, of His "*unspeakable gift*"? How can we adequately thank God for His so great love in the gift of His dearly beloved and only-begotten Son? Surely we can offer nothing less than lives of thankfulness in every part.

But is it possible to maintain a spirit of gratitude to God always and in every situation? While it is certainly not in our fallen and imperfect human nature to do so, the Christian perspective should be a different one from that of the world. One of the great axioms of our faith is presented in Rom. 8:28: "*We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to His purpose.*"

Paul's full confidence in God's care for every believer enabled him to declare, "*I have learned in whatever state I am, therewith to be content*" (Phil. 4:11,12). He who knows the end from the beginning has at heart the best interests of each trusting child. Having this blessed assurance helps God's children heed the apostle's words: "*Let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.*" -- Col. 3:15

Every experience of life is working out God's purposes in us. Even the necessary chastenings are a token of our Father-child relationship. Each experience is to be received with thanksgiving, as from a wise and loving Father. *"In every thing give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you"* (1 Thess. 5:18). It is God's will that we show forth His praises in lives of inner peace, ready for all His perfect will. Let us be truly thankful for all that He has done for us in Christ -- for rich blessings already received, and for the even richer blessings still to come.

Our Savior Our Example

Consider that perfect example of thankfulness in our loving Savior. He through whom and for whom all things were created, and in whom all things consisted (Col. 1:16,17), always gave thanks to the Father for the daily fare He shared with the disciples. He gave thanks for those whom the Father had given to receive of His word (Matt. 11:25, John 17:6), and for answered prayer. -- John 11:41,42

Each one of us has much for which to be thankful. And all His exceeding great and precious promises are yea and amen in Christ Jesus. They are certain of fulfillment because of the faithfulness of our dear Lord and Savior. How can we be other than a thankful people when we remain mindful of the riches of His grace toward us already experienced! Each prayer should be first an offering of praise and thanks: *"Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise"* (Psa. 100:4). It has been suggested that the basic elements of every approach to our Heavenly Father should be praise, prayer, and petition, with praise -- the expression of our gratefulness -- having first place.

Of course our expressions of thankfulness should not be limited to our loving Father. Let us never take for granted and let pass unnoticed the generosity and kindness of others; it is good to be grateful for all such loving assistance. And it is important that we let them know of our appreciation. Our quiet sincere expression to benefactors may be to them a needed tonic of encouragement along the narrow way. And our spirit of gratitude will be a factor in that character development which God desires in us. May our lives be lives of thankfulness and praise in every part: first to our Heavenly Father for all the riches of His grace; to His dear Son, our Savior, who loved us and gave Himself for us; and towards all whose love and kindness enrich our lives.