

Thanksgiving- By- Comparison; A Poor Substitute For Godly Thankfulness

"Thankful- by -comparison," means you know it is reasonable and logical to look around at many who have it bad in life and say, **"I may have it bad, but that guy has it worst!"**

A good start, but not a deep thankfulness. You can then just as easily become grumpy because you realize that a whole lot of people have it much better than you! Now how long-lasting is the comparison idea? There is a better way!

Example: (This was your parent's way.) **"I walked to school ten miles, and it way uphill, both ways, and I did it in the year-round snow! We ate 3 -day -old road kill and were glad to get it."**

Question: What does it take for someone to become a truly thankful person?

Some believe that a really bad, near death experience, will bring the hardest heart around.

Well, that depends.

1. An already thankful person, who knows the Lord and walks with Him, will have cause to give exceptional praise to God. It causes them to keep doing the things they were already doing; giving thanks continually to God.

2. For the self-focused and unthankful? They may just get embittered.

Ex. Miller Road and 635 accident. He was unthankful and cursing!

Thankfulness is the best life-navigation device you can have!

Ex. Bats are nearly blind. So how do they navigate? Echo-location. They send out a sound and it bounces back to them to give distance and direction. The more sounds they put out, the more detailed the picture they get of their surroundings. When we make a habit of being thankful to God, it comes back to us as navigation signals to guide us through life.

Ex. Compass and "Metszer" map triangulation- North West deer hunt.

Ignoring God, and being unthankful to Him, is to be in a very dark place with no hope of navigating to freedom! Romans 1: 18-22 READ

1. Only real way to be truly thankful, is to see this world through God's eyes.

2. The only way to see things through God's eyes is to be saved.

3. Then allow the Holy Spirit to change your thinking.

4. That will only happen when you spend time with God alone in prayer and in His Word

As you keep making adjustments; i.e., surrendering to the Spirit of God to work through your new nature you have in Christ, (that is called being "filled" with the Holy Spirit,) you become a thankful person. By comparison only? No, that is not good enough, but rather the thing you really want to do and be is to be thankful:

On a consistent basis; and on the basis of a new identity;

And if you really know God, you hate the snippy, hyper-critical person you are when you are operating out of your old nature.

Question: You do hate it, don't you?

Colossians 2: 6-10 *****

v. 6 "as you have received"

Someone who has asked Christ to come into their heart.

"so walk in Him" Go along with the influence, urgings, thoughts that the Holy Spirit gives you. These urgings will match the written Word of God, but will be fleshed out in you in a custom-made way. Now that sounds like a good adventure!

v. 7 "as you were instructed"=

The teachings of the Word of God; the Bible.

"and overflowing with thanksgiving" =

Is Paul being overly expressive? No. Think of what he went through!

Question: Where is he as he writes this?

(Ephesians , Philippians , Colossians, and Philemon are called the "Prison Epistles.")

v. 10 "in Him you- have been- made complete,"

Because you are in a relationship with Him, inside the flow of His life, you also share in His resources.

QUESTION: Do you feel complete?

If you always "feel" lacking, you will always be an unthankful person.

It is not that you are lacking that you are feeling incomplete, but rather you are feeling the normal training perimeters of faith. That means that many times you will feel like you are about to go under. It may fall completely apart at any minute! Right? Ever feel like that?

Then God bless you! You are passing the class already. Faith has to be tested; your faith has to be stretched! You are simply in training. RELAX!

Ex. Thankfulness is like the heat given off by the light of the sun. The light was first; then the effect immediately after; the heat. Rarely do you get one, without the other. As we constantly come and spend time with the Lord, the light of His Word warms our hearts, and we are thankful, not by comparison, but by a shared heart. His heart and ours tuned together; and with fellowship with other believers.

Not trying to have a stiff upper lip and force yourself to be thankful, but rather realizing your life is hidden inside of Christ' life and His victory and His peace, and His thankfulness to the father flows out of us.

Our part is to stay "inside" His life. Colossians 3:1-4

Example: In the second "Alien" movie the frail star of the show must rescue a little girl from the attacks of an overwhelmingly powerful monster. No way to deal with it one-on-one. She steps inside an exoskeleton fork-lift and gains protection and power to overcome the monster. These types of fork lifts actually exist today. Her movements were now super-powered by the machine wrapped around her!

Example: Thankfulness is the spiritual air that we breathe in our new life in Christ! It is the atmosphere, the spiritual weather conditions, of one taking a careful walk in the grace of God.

READ 1 Thessalonians 5: 18

Thankfulness is the clear revealed will of God for each of us. You can know for certain that when you give thanks to God you are hitting the nail on the head every day!

READ HEBREWS 13: 15-16

QUESTION: Is it hypocritical to thank God when we don't feel thankful? Of course not!

It is hypocritical to go against the truth, but not hypocritical to go against your feelings. Jesus is Lord, not your feelings!

Example: Happy time and feeling good, but I still get a ticket over the Mexia bridge! I went against the truth! I was feeling great! For a moment I thought God had let me down!

Example: I don't feel like going to church. You will be a blessing to others even when you have to give a sacrifice smile. Your gifts of service work well, even when you are not so "into it."

DO THE TRUTH FIRST! ACT IN A WAY THAT LINES UP WITH THE WORD OF GOD.

You will have good feelings following, if you do the truth first.

Feelings make wonderful companions but pitiful masters.

Also remember that there is a time delay to test faith. A delay between the doing and the feeling. Let your faith in Christ tell your feeling where to get off!

v. 15 Note that "PRAISE" - "THANKS" - "DOING GOOD" - "SHARING"

are considered "SACRIFICES"

WHY? Because these are the things we do even when our current circumstances

may not be so good. It means to apply faith against feelings.

The beauty of it is, your feelings will follow your will eventually, if you set your mind long enough. Your feeling must follow to support what you have decided to do, by an act of your will.

END RESULT?

You become the one to have control over your moods. (A fruit of the Spirit is self-control)

You become truly thankful, and not thankful by comparison only.

Because no matter what may happen to you down here; you have a no-lose situation! This temporal life is the only hell you will ever experience; and the only taste of heaven a non-believer will experience!

You will have eternity with the Lord and eventually a new body also! You will have a future so dynamic, powerful and glorious that there are no analogies or words or experiences down here to compare with it! When was the last time you gave an hour's thought to that?

SHORT-TERM THANKFULNESS- "WHERE DID YOU SAY YOU LIVED AGAIN?"

Colossians 2:6-7

"Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus our Lord, so walk in Him, having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, and overflowing with gratitude."

"Eat all your food! You should be thankful you have so much! There are kids starving around the world tonight and you are being picky about what I put on your plate!"

The statements above represents a good attempt by parents to get their kids to appreciate things. **Nothing is worse than a thankless child !** It is such an irritating thing to endure!

Yet, even if the kid, "Gets it," it seems they only stay thankful for just a little while before they are back into the negative territory of complaining about something that is not going their way. **Most adults are the same way.**

When someone has gone out of their way to do something nice for us we usually express thankfulness to that person. I wonder why thankfulness does not last long in us; to become a settled condition in us?

The Scripture calls thankfulness a "sacrifice". Talk about an understatement! It hurts, at first, to be thankful! Hebrews 13:15-16

But it is exercising true faith, because you are called to be thankful, before you feel it many times. Then after a while you "feel" the blessing of a continued thankful life.

What we don't seem to understand is this; if we wait till all things go our way, then we will never be thankful as a lifestyle, because there is always something we consider; "not going right."

We are thinking about it all wrong!

We had a kid in the youth group who got the idea of wanting to be thankful at all times. She realizing this was 100% the will of God for all of us. (I Thessalonians 5:18- "In everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.")

Her mom was so negative that the daughter would say to her on occasion,

"Mom, now that you stated your complaint, tell me three things you are thankful for."

Mom simply blew that off as trivial. Good kid; poor mom.

So thankfulness- by- comparison, which means being thankful only because somebody else has it worst, is not the heart of thankfulness.

The person who is only thankful in that setting, is also the person who can be really negative a moment later, as they compare themselves, continually, to the person they think has it better. See the problem? A sad envy sticks to them as a perennial grievance.

Sometimes this can happen; even when they are, "Thankful- by – comparison", they have a **condescending attitude** toward those less fortunate. They feel they are somehow **intrinsically better** than the aforementioned "poor" person they are looking down on. So they walk in pride, even when they think they have helped the less fortunate!

Don't believe it? Watch how people treat waitresses, or wait in a line, and you will see the condescension. What a mess; what a short-term view of thankfulness. What a "poor" heart! There is a better way.

Thankfulness is like the heat given off by the light of the sun. If you stand in the sun long enough, you will warm up all the way through your body. It is the idea of knowing God's heart and sharing His life, **which is in you**, by being a believer. Not so much trying to be thankful, by gritting your teeth, to cough up a begrudging word of thankfulness, but rather a **flow of thanks coming from a full heart.**

The key is to spend time in devotion to God. Then the real, abiding, no-matter- what- the - circumstances thankfulness comes out. There is nothing Pollyanna-ish about that is there? Of course not. That is just real power given by the Lord being displayed in you. That is what the world needs to see.

I was in Colorado once and was engaged in a conversation about thankfulness with a friend who lived there. As we looked across the Continental Divide at Wolf Creek Pass, I ask why we seem to be so pathetic at giving thanks, **at all times.** And even when we do it, we do it by comparison only; by default as it were.

He had two responses:

"First, we are always looking for an excuse for our failures. If we have a lot to be thankful for, then someone outside of us might wonder why we are not happier. So being hyper-critical about our world makes us look smart, analytical, and covers- up our self-absorbed life." Ouch! (He was talking about me!)

Secondly, he told me to, "Look around and breathe in this mountain air." I did. Then he said, "You just have to live here to have this all the time."

Then he said the oddest thing. He ask, **"Where did you say you lived again?"**

I told him, "Texas." He ask again; I said, "Texas." He said that is **not** where I really lived. What he wanted from me was to state **where my heart stayed most of the time.** A few visits to the mountains is nice, but not a big help, long-term, to become acclimated to mountain life and its great benefits. In the same way, **and to be a truly, at- all -times, thankful person, I must abide with Christ often.**

I thought about avoiding that friend from then on, but that would be stepping away from someone who loved me and told me the truth. That would be living in darkness. Should you run away from people who love you, even though they are taking the risk of losing your friendship by telling you the truth? You and I desperately need those people in our lives. Galatians 4:13-16

There is a real, godly, live-style thankfulness that transforms our lives, but we have to live there; short visits rarely help. Even unbelievers are good at being thankful by comparison to someone who has it worst.

Believers must exhibit the real thankfulness. It starts as a sacrifice, it moves to joy, and is noticed by all who should say of us, "He must live in a wonderful place! I want to be in that place!" JWP TEAGUE BIBLE CHURCH THANKSGIVING 11/24/2022