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An Attitude of Gratitude

By Wallace Alexander

*Thou who hast given us so much,
Mercifully grant us one more thing:
A grateful heart.
-Unknown*

Gratitude, one of the noblest of virtues, becomes obvious less when demonstrated than when absent. A simple “thank you,” frequently expected in response to a kind deed, often is accepted with little thought, yet the absence of that “thank you” speaks very loudly. Nobody likes an ingrate.

When Paul spoke of the grievous times that would come, he said men would be “unthankful” – and he listed it with some very serious character flaws from which one is to “turn away” (2 Timothy 3:1-5).

Paul spoke of thanksgiving in prayer: “In nothing be anxious; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God” (Philippians 4:6). And, “Continue steadfastly in prayer, watching therein with thanksgiving...” (Colossians 4:2).

The Psalmist, realizing how gracious Jehovah had been to him, exclaimed, “I will give thanks unto Jehovah with my whole heart; I will show forth all thy marvelous works. I will be glad and exult in thee; I will sing praise to thy name, O thou Most High” (Psalm 9:1-2). And, “Sing praise unto Jehovah, O ye saints of his, and give thanks to his holy name. For his anger is but for a moment; His favor is for a lifetime...” (Psalm 30:4-5). Further, “I will give thee thanks with my whole heart: Before the gods will I sing praises unto thee. I will worship toward thy holy temple, and give thanks unto thy name for thy loving kindness and for thy truth...” (Psalm 138:1-2).

Even adults have the problem of the child who was given a gift by an uncle, yet failed to say, Thank you. His mother asked the child, “Did you thank Uncle Bill for the gift he gave you?”

The child replied, “Yes,” but realizing that was not exactly the truth, hastily added, “But I forgot to tell him!”

The gratitude may be there, but unexpressed. David, however, in the Psalms quoted above (and many others that could be cited) said that his gratitude compelled him to sing praises to God for His goodness and otherwise express his heart’s gratitude.

Thanksgiving should not only be a day but a perpetual attitude. God-fearing people should be grateful that even in a nation being plunged into secularism, there is still a day set aside for Thanksgiving. May it always be so.

In America, many spiritual problems exist, with forces seeking to destroy influences of religion, with immorality being advocated as acceptable behavior, and with Satan enthroned in so many areas, yet there is still so much, nationally, for which to be thankful. No other country in the world gives as much freedom and safety to follow God's will. One need only hear of the chilling stories of the suffering of people in Iraq and other Muslim nations who dare oppose the religious or political mandates of corrupt leaders to know how richly blessed America is. Gratitude should flow freely to God for that freedom, and to all who have sacrificed so much to make it possible. So many have given, and continue to give, "all their tomorrows" that we can have our "todays."

An overabundance of blessings can sometimes cause one to fail to be grateful, while others with little demonstrate more gratitude for the little they do have. This is true with children. When youngsters have about everything they want, there is often a tendency to expect even more and not be grateful to the source of their abundance.

A child received a piece of candy from a friend and failed to say, "thank you." The mother prompted the child, "What are you supposed to say?"

The child answered, "Give me another piece!"

In times of economic prosperity, it is easy to forget to be grateful because things come so easily. Paul said that in whatever state he found himself, with little or with much, he would be content. No doubt Paul would also add, he would be grateful. He commended the Philippian Christians for their assistance to him, and thus showed his gratitude (see Philippians 4:10-20). May God's people always be grateful; with little or with much.

The greatest blessings that have ever been given mankind were given by the Heavenly Father and His Son to give eternal life to an undeserving mankind. It took the blood of the totally innocent Son of God, in the death He did not deserve, to give that life. And to a people who are so often ungrateful for what He did.

Gratitude for what Jesus did will drive out all indifference, lukewarmness, and apathy toward His Cause. Gratitude will seek to take the saving message to those who do not know it. Gratitude will cause the saints to turn away from sin and live as the Master directs. If Christians are grateful to God, they must "tell Him" – and show Him!

God miraculously delivered the children of Israel from Egyptian captivity and in many ways showed them His power. Yet, they saw every obstacle as a reason to murmur against God and Moses. They showed some gratitude in their song of deliverance, but apparently, it was lip service. Still, they complained. Their attitude not only showed a weak faith, but it showed a lack of gratitude for the many things God had done for them. God was very much displeased with their murmuring.

Murmuring against God did not end with the Israelites. Pessimism, negativism, and murmuring continued among the ungrateful. The answer to such is to count the many blessings God has abundantly bestowed and express that gratitude by word and deed.