

INTRODUCTION: We want. Lk 17:11-13. God provides. Lk 17:14. Few appreciate. Lk 17:15-19. Are we like the nine or the one? Sadly, some of us are in the former category. 2 Ti 3:1-2, 5. In today's lesson, let's talk about our desperate need to not only always be thankful, but to always give thanks.

DISCUSSION:

1. **We are blessed.** Given what we are not getting that we do deserve, we have no reason to complain. La 3:39. Given what we are getting that we do not deserve, we have no reason to complain. 2 Co 4:17. The following prayer well illustrates just how good we've got it. "Father ... I Have A Problem."

Father ... I Have A Problem. It's weighing heavy on me. It's all I can think about, night & day. Before I bring it to you in prayer, I suppose I should pray for those who are less fortunate than me—those in this world who have barely enough food for this day, and those who don't have a roof over their heads at night.

I also pray for families who have lost loved ones in sudden death, for parents whose children have leukemia, for the many people who are dying of brain tumors, for the hundreds of thousands who are laid waste with other terrible cancers, for people whose bodies have been suddenly shattered in car wrecks, for those who are lying in hospital with agonizing burns over their bodies, whose faces have been burned beyond recognition.

I pray for people with emphysema, whose eyes fill with terror as they struggle for every breath merely to live, for those who are tormented beyond words by irrational fears, for the elderly who are wracked with the pains of aging, whose only "escape" is death.

I pray for people who are watching their loved ones fade before their eyes through the grief of Alzheimer's disease, for the many thousands who are suffering the agony of AIDS, for those who are in such despair they are about to commit suicide, for people who are tormented by the demons of alcoholism and drug addiction.

I pray for children who have been abandoned by their parents, for those who are sexually abused, for wives held in quiet despair, beaten and abused by cruel and drunken husbands, for people whose minds have been destroyed by mental disorders, for those who have lost everything in floods, tornadoes, hurricanes, and earthquakes.

I pray for the blind, who never see the faces of the ones they love, or the beauty of a sunrise, for those whose bodies are horribly deformed by painful arthritis, for the many whose lives will be taken from them today by murderers, for those wasting away on their deathbeds in hospitals.

Most of all, I cry out for the millions who don't know the forgiveness that is in Jesus Christ ... for those who in a moment of time will be swept into hell by the cold hand of death, and find to their utter horror the unspeakable vengeance of eternal fire. They will be eternally damned to everlasting punishment. O God, I pray for them. Strange, I can't seem to remember what my problem was. In Jesus name I pray, amen.

2. **We must be thankful.** Col 3:15.

3. **We must be very thankful.** Col 2:6-7.

4. **We must be very thankful in everything.** 1 Th 5:18. Not everything that happens in life is good, but good can come from everything that happens in life. Jesus insists that we focus on the latter not the former, the silver lining not the cloud, that we be glass half full not glass half empty kind of people. The following well illustrates how whether we grumble or are grateful is all about how we look at things. "Be Thankful."

Be thankful that we don't already have everything we desire. If we did, what would there be to look forward to?

Be thankful when we don't know something for it gives us the opportunity to learn.

Be thankful for the difficult times. During those times we grow.

Be thankful for our limitations because they give us the opportunities for improvement.

Be thankful for each new challenge because it will build our strength and character.

Be thankful for our mistakes. They will teach us valuable lessons.

Be thankful when we are tired and weary because it means we have made a difference.

It's easy to be thankful for the good things. A life of rich fulfillment comes to those who are also thankful for the setbacks. Gratitude can turn a negative into a positive. Find a way to be thankful for our troubles and they can become our blessings.

5. **We must be very thankful in everything and always give thanks.** I'm sure the ten lepers were very thankful they were healed. But only one of them gave thanks. We must always do both. Ps 107:8; Ep 5:20. "Feeling gratitude and not expressing it is like wrapping a present and not giving it" (William Arthur Ward).

6. **If we are very thankful in everything and always give thanks we ...**

A. **Please God.** He 12:28; 13:15-16. God takes a very dim view of ingratitude. 1 Co 10:10; Php 2:14A; Ja 5:9; Jude 1:16A. A grumbler "discontentedly complains (against God)" (Thayer). A fault finder (*mempsimoiros*) complains of his lot, is querulous, discontented (Thayer). "The *mempsimoiros* was a standard Greek character ... 'You're satisfied by nothing that befalls you; you complain at everything. You don't want what you've got, you long for what you haven't got. In winter you wish it were summer, and in summer that it were winter'" (Green).

B. Encourage other people. Ro 16:3-4. David Gibson, in his short article entitled, "Praying For Sick People" well explains how this is so.

While visiting another congregation recently, I heard a man include this petition in his prayer: 'Bless those who are sick of this congregation.' Of course, what he meant to say was, 'Bless those of this congregation who are sick.' But that's not what he said. Yet, there's something to be said for the prayer as he prayed it. In almost every congregation today, there are those who, for whatever reason, are less than happy with the way the church is going. They complain no matter what arises.

Sometimes the church has failed in some way. In other cases, the problem may be due to the erroneous perception of the disgruntled member. Some folks are like the Israelites in the wilderness. We are warned not to follow their example of grumbling and complaining. (1 Co 10:10.) As James writes, "Do not complain, brethren, against one another, that you yourselves may not be judged; behold, the judge is standing right at the door." (Ja 5:9).

A complaining attitude has a number of drawbacks: 1) The habitual griper focuses on problems instead of the good things God has given. 2) Complaining is contagious. Dissatisfaction can spread from member to member until a rather bitter atmosphere prevails. 3) Those who are trying to do the Lord's work may become discouraged by constant harping. 4) Outsiders are hardly attracted to the Lord if they see His people as a bunch of bellyachers and quarrelers.

'Bless those who are sick of this congregation.' Yes, Lord, bless them with a new vision of the wonder and beauty of Christ and His church. Bless them with opened eyes and softened hearts that things do change and drastic decisions have to be made. Bless them with work to do that keeps them too busy to be faultfinders. Help them to be patient with their brethren, kind toward those who are truthfully trying to serve the Lord, and gentle with the erring. May the Lord bless us all with more love for Him and His fallible, wonderful people.

C. Bless ourselves. Php 4:6-7. We should develop an attitude of gratitude for many reasons, one of which is that it is just a far more pleasant way to live. "It is not happiness that makes us grateful, but gratefulness that makes us happy" (Steindl-Rast). So, "1. When upon life's billows you are tempest tossed, when you are discouraged, thinking all is lost, count your many blessings, name them one by one, and it will surprise you what the Lord hath done. 2. Are you ever burdened with a load of care? Does the cross seem heavy you are called to bear? Count your many blessings, ev'ry doubt will fly, and you will be singing as the days go by. 3. So, amid the conflict, whether great or small, do not be discouraged, God is over all; count your many blessings, angels will attend, help and comfort give you to your journey's end.

7. Why aren't we very thankful in everything and always giving thanks? Because we are so focused on what we want that we complain when we don't have it and give no thought to how we got it when we do get it because we immediately focus on the next thing we want. The nine lepers were understandably focused on how Jesus might free them from leprosy, but that was all they were focused on. As soon as Jesus gave them what they wanted, He'd served His purpose and vanished from their thoughts. It was all about them when it should have been all about God. It should sober all of us that only one of ten lepers gave thanks and that he was a despised, misguided, halfbreed Samaritan.

APPLICATIONS: What must we do so we are very thankful in everything and always giving thanks? We must ...

1. **Repent.** Psalm 86:12.

2. **Count our blessings.** Instead of looking for what we don't have that we might complain, we must look for all we do have that we might be thankful. If we do this, we will find that we have nothing to complain about and everything to be thankful for. As Orben so aptly put it, "The next time we feel like complaining, remember that our garbage disposal probably eats better than 30 percent of the people in the world" (Orben). **So let us count ...**

A. The many ways God is so good to us. Let us "Always Remember God gives us ... Enough happiness to keep us sweet, Enough trials to keep us strong, Enough sorrows to keep us human, Enough hope to keep us happy, Enough failure to keep us humble, Enough success to keep us eager, Enough friends to give us comfort, Enough wealth to meet our needs, Enough enthusiasm to make us look forward, Enough faith to banish depression, and Enough determination to make each day a better day than the last."

B. The "little" things we take for granted. "If one could only learn to appreciate the little things ... A song that takes us away, for there are those who cannot hear. The beauty of a sunset, for there are those who cannot see. The warmth and safety of our home, for there are those who are homeless. Time spent with good friends for there are those who are lonely. A walk along the beach for there are those who cannot walk. The little things are what life is all about. Search your soul and learn to appreciate" (Shadi Souferian).

C. All the things we don't have that we don't want. He 12:4.

D. The advantages of our adversities. He 12:11; 2 Co 12:7-10; Job 23:2A.

3. Give thanks.

A. To God & men for blessing us in ways that we take for granted, that we act like we deserve or are entitled to.

B. To people for what they have done right before we tell them what they have done wrong. Ro 1:8A; 1 Co 1:4A; Ep 1:16; Php 1:3; Col 1:3; etc.

4. Pray as Jesus taught us to pray. ACTIS—Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, Intercession, Supplication.