

# The Traveling Pulpit

Published Quarterly By



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Volume 8, Number 4

October

Fall 2013

## Gratitude

“And it came to pass, as he went to Jerusalem, that he passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee. And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off: And they lifted up their voices, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us. And when he saw them, he said unto them, Go shew yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed. And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God, And fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan. 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. And he said unto him, Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole.”

(Luke 17:11-19)

## Introduction

In such a selfish, “dog eat god,” world like we find ourselves, it’s very common to find the spirit of ingratitude permeating every segment of society. It might even cause us to ask the question, “whatever happened to gratitude?” However, the sin of ingratitude is nothing new as we see it dating back to the very beginning of time with Adam and Eve. They were not grateful enough for God’s perfect provision to obey a simple command and abstain from a particular fruit. Today, there are only two countries that observe a national day of Thanksgiving with those two being the United States of America and Canada. Unfortunately, even in these two countries, the observance of Thanksgiving has turned into a day of personal frolic instead of praise to God.

It pleases the Lord for His people to acknowledge His blessings that He so mercifully bestows upon them. In the Old Testament, the Feast of Tabernacles was observed for the primary purpose of giving “thanks” to God for His provision over the previous year. In the New Testament, we need not reserve our time of Thanksgiving for an annual occasion, but learn how to constantly recognize God’s intervention and “in every thing

give thanks” (I Thess. 5:18). We’ll never be the kind of Christians that we ought to be until we learn how to say “thank you” to our God, parents, friends, and neighbors. To learn how Jesus feels about us expressing gratitude, we need to look at the “ten ... lepers” who were healed and only “one” took the time to say “thanks.”

### A Lesson Taught

A lesson about sin is taught to us from Holy Scripture through the dreaded disease of leprosy. In the Old Testament, leprosy was a type (example or illustration) of sin and was considered by the Jews to be a mark of God’s displeasure. It illustrated that what the inherited disease of leprosy was to the body, sin is to the soul. Just like leprosy, sin destroys and eats away at the worth of an individual. For this reason, those contaminated with this disease were excluded and quarantined from the general public. If a leper was ever cured, then he was required to go through a ceremonial purification that involved two birds as recorded in Leviticus, chapters 13-14. One bird would be killed and the other bird dipped in its blood and let go. This spoke of the blood that cleanses from the leprosy of sin. The only way for a sinner or a leper to be healed was by the marvelous intervention of God’s grace.

In keeping with the Law of Moses, these “lepers” spoken of in our text, “stood afar off” because they had been isolated from both family and friends. The defiled leper was forced to live only among the other “lepers” and was not even allowed to participate in the services of the temple. Anyone who, in so much as touched a leper, was also defiled and considered unclean. In the same way the leprosy separates, sin separates man from God and only through spiritual cleansing can fellowship be realized. Every person can identify with these ten lepers because it is the leprosy of sin with which we all are defiled and stand in need of spiritual healing (Rom. 6:23).

### A Blessing Sought

Having heard about the miraculous power of Jesus Christ, the lepers looked to Him for a healing blessing. While everyone else was trying to avoid the lepers, Jesus willingly acknowledged their need and their presence. There is never a sinner too defiled that Jesus will not forgive and cleanse. From the pages of Scripture, we can find people such as Zaccheus, Matthew, and Mary Magdalene who needed spiritual cleansing. Like these lepers in our text, there is nothing that one can do to save himself (Eph. 2:9). There has never been a person who did not cry out to Christ in genuine faith that He did not save (Rom. 10:13). The only way to experience the power of God’s forgiveness is simply to cry out in childlike faith for His “mercy.”

The healing of these lepers was different than the way He had previously healed others (Lk. 5:13). It was common for Christ to heal by speaking a word or by the touch of His hand. In this case in our text, He commanded for them to show themselves “to the priests.” From this we are reminded that God does not necessarily deal with everyone in the same way. It’s true that everyone must be saved the same way and that God’s standards of holiness never change. However, circumstances vary in the salvation and growth of different people. According to the Jewish Levitical system, a cleansed leper was to present himself to the priest in order to be restored to his place

in the congregation of Israel. Jesus was simply implying that by the time they reached the priests they would be healed. Otherwise, there would have been no need to send them to the priests. Jesus was expecting these lepers to believe and act upon His Word. Only as people respond to the WORD of God in faith, will they witness the mighty power of God in their lives. Two essential things are needed in a believer's life, faith in the Word of God and obedience to the will of God. The unregenerate soul must believe the Word to be saved and then believers must trust God's Word in order to experience spiritual growth. Why did Jesus want these lepers to show themselves to the priests? Because it was a testimony to the priests of Christ's power in their lives. Likewise, once we have been born again, our testimony should give evidence that we are new creatures in Christ.

### A Thanksgiving Caught

Out of the ten, only one caught the vision of GRATITUDE. The one who turned back "giving him thanks" is said to be a "Samaritan." Although, he was not a Jew, he subjected himself in obedience to Christ. Ordinarily, Jews despised the Samaritan race, but Jesus loves even those whom the world despises. These Jews and this "Samaritan" were bound together by the common misery of leprosy, just like all sinners have sin in common (Rom. 3:23). With a heart overflowing with praise and thanksgiving, the "Samaritan" returned to express his GRATITUDE to God. At this point, we need to notice that the "Samaritan" recognized Jesus as God while the Jews paid Him no mind after being healed. Everyone who has ever lived has been a recipient of God's blessings (Matt. 5:45). However, only those who come to Christ in repentance and faith, recognizing Him as Lord and Savior will ever know His "mercy" and forgiveness of sin and a home in heaven when they die. There are many that recognize the name of Jesus, but do not know Him personally as the incarnate deity. Just like those nine, multitudes call out to Jesus wanting a free handout in time of need. But, how many prove that Jesus is worthy of our gratitude and praise by their acts of worship and adoration? We cannot help but notice how this Samaritan "fell down on his face at his feet giving him thanks." Gratitude makes us humble and leaves no room for selfish pride and boasting. Humility and thankfulness should be characteristics of those saved by grace.

Jesus noticed (perhaps in disappointment) that nine did not return to "give glory to God." He asked, "where are the nine?" God could very well be asking as He looks among church congregations of our day, "where are those whom I have blessed so abundantly?" God blesses us materially and financially, but do we express gratitude in our tithes and offerings? God blesses us with employment, health, and family, but do we put Him in first place as an act of gratitude? He, who is able to number the very hairs of our head, knows the number of those who are truly redeemed and who are truly grateful.

The truth of the matter is that there is so little real worship on the part of Christian people today. Even when believers assemble, often it's not for the purpose of worship. It's one thing to experience a physical blessing, but it's another thing to receive a spiritual blessing and have full assurance of salvation. Jesus is not only able to heal

physical leprosy, but also the spiritual leprosy of our soul. It's evident that this one leper received something that the other nine did not. The only way to be made "whole" is to be spiritually cleansed by grace through faith. Of all people, Christians should be a thankful people because we have been made "whole" by the precious blood of Christ. Jesus is still doing the same today for those who trust Him as He did for the lone Samaritan leper.

### Closing

Learning how to express verbal gratitude is one thing, but learning now to express gratitude in daily living is another. Thanksgiving should not only be expressed in prayer and songs of praise, but above all in ordinary acts of daily kindness toward others. After saying "thanks" to God, our attitude should be that of asking God what we can do for Him. As an expression of gratitude, we owe God a yielded life of commitment and service. Genuine gratitude should be in the form of life service as well as lip service. In other words, true thanks-giving is thanks-living.

Just as a parent is pleased by the expression of gratitude from his child, so must God be pleased when we give "thanks" for His physical and spiritual provision. On the other hand, it must disappoint God as it disappoints a parent for a child to take things for granted. We need to teach a child to express gratitude for the sake of social acceptability. But, the main reason for teaching a child to be thankful is to build within him an attitude of gratitude to God. If a person never learns how to say THANK YOU to friends and family whom he sees, then how will he ever bow before Almighty God in appreciation for His matchless gift of "mercy?" Do you know God's forgiving grace? If so, how are you expressing your gratitude to God and demonstrating it to others?

### A Word From The Ministry

This October quarterly Bible Study is the last one for this year. In November, we'll be celebrating our annual Thanksgiving Season and then in December, we'll be celebrating the birth of our Blessed Redeemer. Just because these are two important events on the calendar doesn't mean we don't observe these events at any other time of the year. In fact, Christians are to daily express thanksgiving and praise unto God for our salvation and for all God's blessings that He so bountifully pours out upon us. However, I wonder how often we appear ungrateful?

Have you ever had a similar experience as myself? Have you ever held the door open for someone entering a building, perhaps a lady, and she would walk right by you, hold her nose up to the sky, never look at you, nor acknowledge you holding the door open? You might be prone to think, like myself, "that's gratitude for you." How many times have you done something nice for someone and they never in so much as said, "thank you?" With that being said, can you imagine how it must appear to God when we take His blessings for granted and never say "thank you" and express our love and gratitude to Him? It's a good testimony to express gratitude to others when they share a blessing with you and above all, it pleases the Lord when we praise His name from Whom all blessings flow!

Because of His Sovereign Grace.....BWM