

Three Accounts of Gratitude

Ingratitude toward God

The story is told about a vendor who sold bagels for 50 cents each at a street corner food stand. A jogger ran past and threw a couple of quarters into the bucket but didn't take a bagel. He did the same thing every day for months. One day, as the jogger was passing by, the vendor stopped him. The jogger asked, "You probably want to know why I always put money in but never take a bagel, don't you?" "No," said the vendor. "I just wanted to tell you that the bagels have gone up to 75 cents."

Too often, we treat God with that same kind of attitude. Not only are we less than grateful for what He's given us—but we want more, and treat Him with disappointment when we don't get it. Somehow we feel that God owes us good health, a comfortable life, material blessings regardless of whether we work for it or deserve it. Of course, God doesn't owe us anything, yet He gives us everything.

G.K. Chesterton wrote, *"Here dies another day, during which I have had eyes, ears, hands, and the great world round me. And with tomorrow begins another. Why am I allowed two such days?"* The psalmist said, *"This is the day the Lord has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it"* (Psalm 118:24).

Each day, whether good or bad, is one more gift from our generous God. Our grateful response should be to live to please Him without demanding more.

Godly Gratitude

Ezra the priest and prophet experienced the *"good hand of his God upon him"* when he led a delegation to Jerusalem to provide spiritual leadership for the former captives who were rebuilding the temple and the city. *"On the first day of the first month he began his journey from Babylon, and on the first day of the fifth month he came to Jerusalem, according to the good hand of his God upon him. For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the Law of the LORD, and to do it, and to teach statutes and ordinances in Israel"* (Ezra 7:9-10).

Ezra found strength and courage in knowing that the Lord was with them each step of the way. *"So I was encouraged, as the hand of the Lord my God was upon me; and I gathered leading men of Israel to go up with me"* (v.28). When we consider the Providence and blessings of God in our lives, it should bring forth more than gratitude; it should increase our desire to do His will and our courage to trust Him with the future. If we know that God's hand is in everything, we can leave everything in God's hands.

God's Steadfastness in the Presence of Our Ingratitude

A South African man came home early and surprised nine men robbing his home. Seven of the robbers ran away, but the homeowner managed to shove two into his backyard pool. After realizing that one of the robbers couldn't swim, the homeowner jumped in to save him. The Cape Times reports that once out of the pool, the wet thief called to his friends to come back. Then he pulled a knife and threatened the man who had just rescued him. The homeowner said, "We were still standing near the pool, and when I saw the knife I just threw him back in. But he was gasping for air and was drowning a second time. So I rescued him again."

In his letter to the Colossians, the apostle Paul wrote of another rescue: God the Father saves us from the domain of darkness. *"He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins"* (Col. 1:13-14). John wrote, *"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"* (1John 1:9). Every. Single. Time!

The appropriate response to such amazing grace is to show joyous gratitude by offering God acceptable service with reverence and awe. *"Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear"* (Heb. 12:28).

Being truly grateful to God is more than simply saying "Thank You" in prayer and in song; it means living every day joyfully accepting and being grateful for whatever blessings come our way, or perhaps do not come at all. In good times and bad, in abundance or in loss, Christians are filled with thanksgiving toward God.