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Got Gratitude?

Colossians 2:6-7: (NASB) *Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the 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.*

Special Guest: Tom Ruggirello

Thanksgiving! It is a word that for most conjures up images of a holiday - as a matter of fact, it was this past Thursday. It conjures up food, family and friends, it conjures up overeating, football, and a day off; and hopefully, it conjures up...well, hopefully it conjures up thanksgiving! You know, the act of giving thanks - the act of gratitude. Now, with that somewhat novel thought of actual gratitude in our minds, we need to focus on the recipient of this gratitude. Stay with us as we talk about true heart-felt gratitude and the life-changing results of giving such gratitude!

Thanksgiving is a truly American holiday that is put in place via Presidential Proclamation each year. As we look at the holiday now, it has changed significantly and that change is reflected in the Proclamations from year to year. To grasp the original meaning of the Thanksgiving holiday, let's go back to its roots...!



"Battle Hymn of the Republic," Instrumental

(George Washington's Proclamation can be found in the Full Edition of CQRewind. Please subscribe at no cost.)

The original Presidential Proclamation given by George Washington in 1789. Following American Tradition, President Obama issued the 2010 Proclamation this past week. While we won't take the time to read it, we note some important observations as we compare the two:

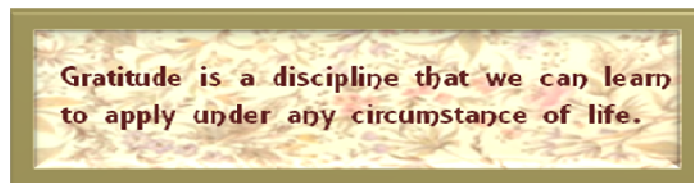
Washington's Proclamation got to the heart of what Thanksgiving was meant to be - it was completely filled with thanksgiving to God for the blessings and overruling providences at the birth of our nation.

Compared to the 2010 Proclamation, we see that it reflects where we have gone as a nation. We have become more secular and "politically correct." We have gradually taken God out of our country, and the statements reflect the general attitude of our country.

(President Obama's Proclamation can be found in the Full Edition of CQRewind. Please subscribe at no cost.)

We should reflect on the contributions of the Native Americans, but President Washington gave the gratitude to God. It is appropriate to thank the men and women of our Armed Forces. But that is not what we see in Washington's Proclamation, or Lincoln's. These two presidents in particular were personally involved in two of the greatest military struggles our nation has ever experienced - the War of Independence and the Civil War. But at Thanksgiving, they didn't thank the military, they thanked God. The America today has wandered away from thanking God for the blessings of our nation. It reflects the wealth and prosperity we have had for so long. Prosperous people often believe in their own ability to make prosperity.

..."No human counsel hath devised nor hath any mortal hand worked out these great things. They are the gracious gifts of the Most High God, who, while dealing with us in anger for our sins, hath nevertheless remembered mercy..." Abraham Lincoln's Proclamation of Thanksgiving, October 3, 1863



A Christian has to choose gratitude and not just let it well up on its own.



Colossians 2:6-7: In our theme text, note that the Apostle Paul did not say to let your gratitude overflow only when things are going well. When we are young and strong and prosperous, we think things will never change. Paul's gratitude came from being firmly rooted in the Lord. The longer we are followers of Christ, the more appreciative and thankful we should be. Christian maturity should create that deeper understanding of the things for which we have to be grateful.

How can we be thankful to God when we have painful or difficult experiences? That's what makes this subject of thanksgiving difficult when life is difficult.

What part does knowing the Gospel play in creating a thankful heart, even in trying circumstances? We believe knowing the Gospel (the "Good News") makes all the difference. We have to really understand what that Good News is in order to really appreciate God. Young Christians or non-Christians might ask, "How can we give thanks to God when He hides Himself when trouble comes?" Part of the Gospel message is that there is a specific and necessary purpose for what God does. Only then can we begin to understand from God's perspective how thankfulness can be a part of our lives, even when we have trials. Part of the Good News is that there is good news behind the clouds of trouble. There is hope for a future in God's plan.

Hebrews 12:5-8: When Adam sinned, God dealt with him as a father should. For his own good, God had to punish him - that's what good fathers are supposed to do. The fact that we are all descendents of Adam's, we share in that punishment. We are learning the results of sin, which are painful.

Psalms 103:2: We are living under the Adamic curse. When we see why we are living under this curse, we can look at God's actions and be thankful for them. A good son, when he understands why his father is correcting him, eventually thanks his father for that correction. Real happiness comes only from living under God's rules, and Adam and Eve did not understand that. The experience we have with sin today will be an invaluable help in choosing to obey God in the earthly Kingdom in the future.

Is thanksgiving a costly offering to God? That depends on your perspective. It can be just words. When thanksgiving is done right, there is a cost to it.

Saying the right words is important, but living a life that reflects a grateful heart is the essence of gratitude. Gratitude has to be anchored to God as the source of everything good, now and future. Understanding our relationship to Him as sinners is the well from which gratitude starts. When we sin, we have a recourse through the blood of Christ that covers our shortcomings.

Whoever presents to the Lord real thanksgiving with lips of praise will follow his lip service with something more substantial.

The thing that awakens the deepest well of gratitude in a human being is that God has forgiven sin.



"Blessed Assurance," Don Wigton

(The story of Fanny Crosby can be found in the Full Edition of CQRewind. Please subscribe at no cost.)

Knowing the Lord and His plan can change the very way we look at life. Gratitude is a discipline to thank God even in the face of adversity. It is said: A grateful heart will be revealed and

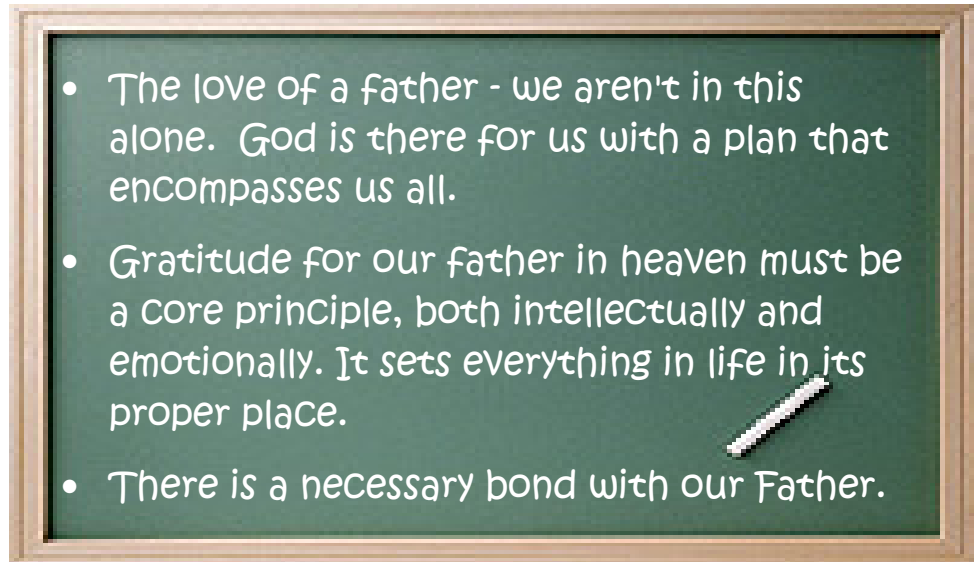
expressed by thankful words, while an unthankful heart will manifest itself in murmuring and complaining. We don't want to complain secretly in our hearts. We want to have a deeper appreciation for all the things for which we have to be grateful. Listen to our own words - simply by listening to what we say, or don't say, we can know if we have grateful hearts.

Luke 6:44-45 **2 Corinthians 9:15:** The unspeakable gift is the life of Christ who paid the ransom that guarantees the future of mankind. **Philippians 1:3** **Ephesians 5:20** Gratitude is more difficult if we don't have an understanding of God.

(The story of Derek Redmond can be found in the Full Edition of CQRewind. Please subscribe at no cost.)



"You Raise Me Up," Josh Groban



1 Thessalonians 5:18

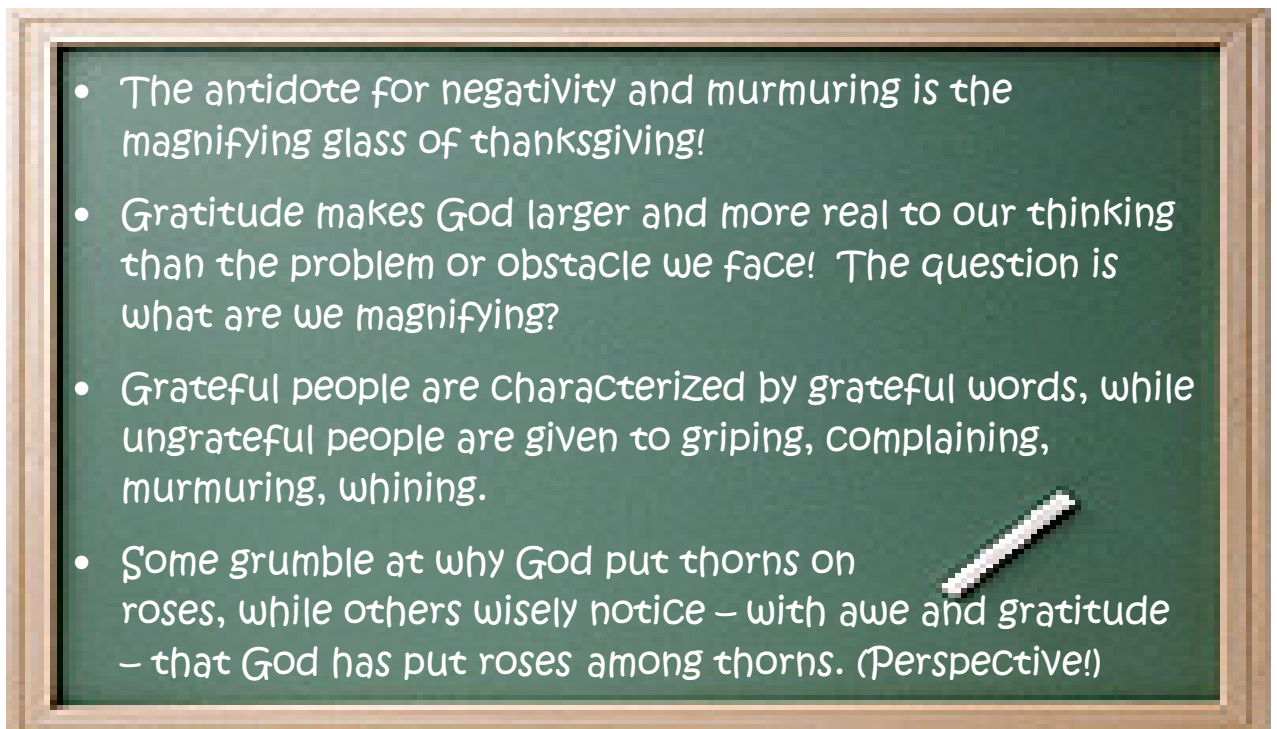
Daniel 2:19-23: Daniel realized that even though he didn't understand what was going on, he understood that God had everything under control, and there would be a time and season for God's plan to work out for Israel. He trusted God's wisdom.



"With This Love - Choir," Peter Gabriel

(The story of the grateful leper can be found in the Full Edition of CQRewind. Please subscribe at no cost.)

Psalms 69:30





1 Thessalonians 5:18: There is blessing in every circumstance even if it is just for having life. Gratitude is often an act of faith, because we do not understand why things happen in our lives. We can still trust Him. Psalms 28:7


"It is Well With My Soul," Don Wigton

(The story of Horatio Spafford can be found in the Full Edition of CQRewind. Please subscribe at no cost.)

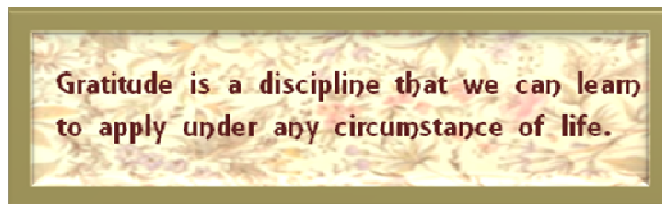
It would be very difficult for any of us to predict how we would react under circumstances similar to those experienced by the Spaffords. But we do know that the God who sustained them would also be with us.

Seeing life's experiences from God's perspective is important in building future faith. The Spafford's weren't overwhelmed by their grief, in spite of their immediate circumstances.

Let's take a closer look at the passages referenced by Mr. Spafford: 2 Kings 4:1-40: The prophet Elisha promised this woman her son in spite of her not being able to have children for a long time. When the son died, she was determined to go back and find Elisha. When her husband asked her what she was doing, her answer to him was, "It will be well." She knew Elisha could raise her son, and when she found Elisha, *that's* when she said, "It is well." There is the connection between her faith and her hope - it was her faith in the goodness of God expressed through Elisha that things would be well again. Elisha raised her child from the dead.

So that's the power of the God we are dealing with. When we believe as the Shunammite woman did and as Horatio Spafford did, we can say in our own experiences of life that it IS well in our soul, even though we don't understand it all at the moment, we can trust in God because He is wise and good.

In summary, gratitude has to be a core element of our lives. In order for that to be, we have to keep reminding ourselves with whom we are dealing. Remember:



This is very important - especially when the circumstances of life are painful and difficult. It is important to have the context of God's plan in order to have a foundation that we have a lot to be thankful for to God - not only in this life, but in the eternal life to come. Make the choice to give gratitude to God for your life and your blessings.



*...So got gratitude?
For Jonathan and Rick (...and Tom!) and Christian Questions,
Think about it...!*