

Tuesday's Touch ...#44 *...from Pastor Ed ...November 24, 2009*

In All Things Give Thanks

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. 1 Thess 5:16-18

Because that, when they knew God, they glorified *him* not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Romans 1:21

...and when they had called for the apostles and beaten *them*, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name. Acts 5:40-41

And when they had laid many stripes on them, they threw *them* into prison, commanding the jailer to keep them securely. Having received such a charge, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks. But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing praises unto God, and the prisoners were listening to them. Acts 16:23-25

As we focus on Thanksgiving this week, I have been reminded again of how many things I take for granted. In our nation we assume that food, clothing, shelter, transportation, etc. are the norm, and we even consider that having such things is an inherent right. If our health has been generally good we seldom if ever consciously give thanks each day for being well. The list of things we do not consistently thank God for is almost endless if we but take the time to consider them. I believe there are two factors we must consider in regard to our un-thankfulness.

The first is covetousness – our unceasing desire for what we *don't* have. Consider Adam and Eve at the time of the fall. They lived in a literal paradise. They had unimaginable provision and blessing. All of creation lay before them. There was nothing to afflict them or cause them grief. They knew the inexpressible joy of living in unbroken harmony with the Lord, and of existing to the praise of his glory. What could possibly make them unthankful? One fruit tree. Satan got them to focus on the one thing in all of creation that they were not to have, and that simple diversion blinded their eyes to the enormity of blessings bestowed upon them by their Creator. Now, in our fallen state, no matter how great our blessings, that insatiable desire for whatever we don't have is pretty much unfettered. The children of Israel had miraculous provision in the wilderness, but repeatedly longed for the leeks and onions of Egypt; David reigned as king with great wealth and (contrary to God's will) had many wives. But he *had* to have Bathsheba, another man's wife. Ahab also reigned as king with much power and possessions, but he *had* to have Naboth's little vineyard. Who among us can honestly say we are as thankful to our Creator as we ought to be for what we *do* have, and that we do not focus most of concern on our wants?

If we, through covetousness, have been so afflicted by un-thankfulness, then there is little wonder that we utterly fail in the second factor that we must consider - giving thanks *in all things*. Count it all joy, James tells us (James 1:2), when you fall into various trials. Paul says that we rejoice in tribulation (Rom 5:3); that we know that *all things* are working together for good (Rom 8:28). If we so easily become unthankful for our blessings, how shall we ever be able to give thanks for our trials? Yet, that

is the witness of the early Christians. The Apostles rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for Jesus. (Acts 5:40-41) Paul and Silas, having been severely beaten and chained in a dungeon, held a midnight praise service and transformed that dungeon into a cathedral. The prisoners were so affected by this spectacle that none of them escaped when their chains fell off and the prison doors were opened. (Acts 16:23-28) Offering thanksgiving and praise in times of difficulty not only demonstrates the reality of our trust and confidence in God's sovereign care, but also bears the greatest witness to unbelievers. *Therefore will I give thanks unto thee, O LORD, among the heathen, and sing praises unto thy name (Psalm 18:49).*

We who are recipients of eternal life, and are heirs and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ, must make it our aim to be an expressively thankful people. Let us pray to put a guard on our complaining lips and to put a song of praise in our hearts.

*Bestower of every good and perfect gift,
Grant us to praise and thank you from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same. Turn our hearts from the covetousness of the world to the daily bounty of your mercy and provision.
Not nearly thankful enough,
Amen*

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