

The Grace of Gratitude

Seminar 1 - For better, for worse

1. What is gratitude?

“Gratitude is a heartfelt and lifelong response to the goodness of God expressed in thankfulness and praise which flows into works of service joyfully undertaken”

- ***“Gratitude is a heartfelt...”*** – It flows from a heart that has experienced God’s grace and although gratitude is deliberate and intentional, it is inspired and empowered by the Holy Spirit.
- ***“...and lifelong...”*** – Gratitude is not the response of a moment, but the attitude of a lifetime and it does not depend on circumstances, passing emotions or temperamental inclination.
- ***“...response to the goodness of God...”*** - The goodness of God means that God is the final standard of goodness and that God’s character, actions and intentions are always worthy of approval.
- ***“...expressed in thankfulness...”*** – Thankfulness is a readiness to show appreciation for all God’s bountiful gifts – both natural and supernatural - acknowledging that God is the provider of every good thing and that we should recognize both the gift and the giver.
- ***“...and praise...”*** – Praise is the celebration, honouring and adoration of God for who He is.
- ***“...which flows into works of service...”*** – Genuine gratitude always leads to surrender, happy discipleship and a desire to serve God and others.
- ***“...joyfully undertaken”*** – Joy is a quality of deep-seated delight and happiness which does not depend on temperament or circumstances, but which is grounded in a grasp of the character and benevolence of God.

❖ **Read Psalm 103:1-5 – What do we learn about gratitude from these verses?**

2. Why should we live lives of gratitude?

1) Gratitude is God's will for our lives

- **1 Thessalonians 5:16-18** - *"Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."*
- **Colossians 1:9-12** – This is how we please God and bring glory to Him.
- It is the natural response of the believing heart to the benevolence of God.
- If it is commanded it must be possible.

2) Gratitude is a mark of a Spirit-filled and Bible-centred life

- **Ephesians 5:18-20** – Paul commands us to *"be being filled with the Spirit"*.
- **Colossians 3:15-17** – He also commands *"let the Word dwell in you richly"*.
- To *"be filled"* mean to be controlled by the Spirit and the Word.
- One of the clear results of this will be a life of grateful thanksgiving.

3) Gratitude strengthens faith and helps in times of anguish

- **Psalm 136** – Past grace is a token of future grace. As we thank God for past blessings we are encouraged to trust Him for the future blessings.
- **Psalm 118:8-9** – The central call of the Bible is to trust God and take refuge in Him.

4) Gratitude is a powerful witness to a self-absorbed world

- **Romans 1:21** – We live in an ungrateful world.
- **2 Timothy 3:1-5** - Ingratitude is a mark of the last days.
- **Psalm 105:1** *"Give praise to the Lord, proclaim his name; make known among the nations what he has done."*
- When we thank God openly and acknowledge what He's done for us, we proclaim a personal, caring God to the world around us.

5) Gratitude protects us from legalism

- *"Legalism exists when people attempt to secure righteousness in God's sight by good works. Legalists believe that they can earn or merit God's approval by performing the requirements of the law,"* Thomas R. Schreiner
- **Matthew 20:1-20** – Legalism forgets grace and says, *"God owes me"*.
- **Luke 18:9-14** – Remember the Pharisee and tax collector.
- *"God so loved the world that he sent his only begotten Son to show us how to live"*
- Gratitude reminds us that salvation is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. We need to preach the gospel to our own souls.

- 6) **Gratitude is a defence against disappointment**
- “Disappointment is the sadness and displeasure and regret we feel when people or circumstances do not fulfil our hopes and expectations”
 - **Proverbs 13:12** – “Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a longing fulfilled is a tree of life”.
 - It is a universal human experience and Christians are not immune.
 - **Habakkuk 3:17-18** - Gratitude helps us see God in the darkest days.
- 7) **Ingratitude is the root of many other sins**
- **Genesis 3:2-3** – Satan’s chief tactic is to deny God’s word and malign God’s benevolence.
 - **Exod 16:1-8; 17:7** – Israel grumbled and rebelled in the wilderness.
 - Ingratitude is often the root of division in the church.
- 8) **Gratitude is an antidote to bitterness**
- Bitterness is a feeling of anger and resentment caused when we forget God’s goodness and doubt His kindness.
 - **Ephesians 4:30-31** – Bitterness grieves the Holy Spirit
 - **Ruth 1:19-21** - Bitterness poisons the springs of life.
 - **Romans 3:14** – Bitterness is evidence of a sinful heart.
 - Bitterness and unforgiveness strangles gratitude.

❖ **Why do we find it difficult to live grateful lives?**

3. Reasons to be grateful

1) God’s benevolence and abundant goodness

- **Psalm 103:8-16** – Let yourself bask in the grace of God.
- **Psalm 100** – “The Lord is good”. How should this make us worship Him?

2) All good gifts around us

- **James 1:17** - Every good gift comes from His hand.
- **Psalm 103:1-5** – List His blessing – remember what God has done.

3) Salvation

- **Ephesians 1:3-14** – Salvation is the work of the triune God which brings eternal glory and thanksgiving to Him.
- **Psalm 32:1-2** – The forgiveness of sins is a glorious blessing.
- **Romans 8:1,28,33-36** – God blesses us with full Salvation in Christ.

4) Adoption and the assurance of God's unchanging love

- **Romans 8:15-17** – We are heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ.
- **Ephesians 3:17-19** – God loves us more than we can possibly imagine and
- **Philippians 1:6** – God always finishes what He starts.

5) Daily strength for daily needs

- **Psalms 68:19** – He daily bears our burdens.
- **Lamentations 3:22-24** – His love is new every morning.
- **Psalms 23:6** – God's goodness and mercy will follow us all the days of our lives.

6) Our brothers and sisters are a reason for gratitude

- **Philippians 1:3-6** – Paul's joy flowed his memories of the church in Philippi.
- We need the church – gratitude grows in community.
- **Ephesians 5:25-27** - Don't bad mouth His bride!

7) Hope of heaven

- **Philippians 1:21-23** – Death brings us into the presence of Jesus.
- **2 Corinthians 4:17** – Do the maths!

8) Christ – God's ultimate gift

- **Colossians 2:6-7** – We are rooted and established in Him.
- **2 Corinthians 8:9; 9:15** – He is God's "unspeakable gift".
- **1 Peter 2:7** – "To those who believe, Jesus Christ is precious."
- **Matthew 13:44-46** - You have found the hidden treasure and the priceless pearl.

❖ **What do you want to thank God today?**