

A Lack of Gratitude

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One of the more difficult parts of writing these articles is coming up with a topic that you think will be edifying. As the date for submitting my article approached, I was almost in a panic. I could not think of a topic that “felt right.” I was having a discussion this morning with a lady I was doing business with, and then a “light came on” about a good topic for an article. She asked me how I was doing as I approached her, which is a common greeting in our culture. I responded, “I am very well blessed,” as I like to say, to which she responded, “That was a great answer.” We then got to talking, and I added that I always try to respond like that, even when things may not be going as well as I would hope. She then said, “Yes, we like to complain.” I asked her why that was, to which she responded, “Perhaps it makes us feel better to complain.” I told her, I do not believe it makes us feel better; actually, it makes us feel worse. What makes you feel good is having a feeling of gratitude. Being thankful for what you have always helps you feel much better than complaining.

For a long time now, I have thought a lack of gratitude in our culture is at the heart of many of our problems. And yes, our society has plenty of problems. We are not a very grateful society. We can see this in our constant complaining, even though we still live in a very prosperous land, especially when you compare it to the rest of the world. The vast majority of us have plenty of food, clothing, and housing. I am reminded of the apostle Paul’s words in **1 Timothy 6:8**, “*And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content.*” The definition for “gratitude” is “The quality of being grateful or thankful.” And, in my estimation, our society certainly does not have such an attitude. Ours has become a society of complainers, even as our bellies are full and our bodies clothed (when we want them to be).

Perhaps my mind has been on this topic since my favorite holiday is approaching (at least at the time I was writing this article). And that is Thanksgiving! I love Thanksgiving and practically all that accompanies it. I love the food and the time with my family, friends, and brothers and sisters. I like smoking the turkey or ham. I like watching the football games, for Thanksgiving is often the only time I can watch very many NFL games. I even like the nice chill in the air as we are in the midst of Autumn. But I think most of all, I am glad our culture has a few days when we are encouraged to be thankful as a nation for what we have, even if it is temporary. Being thankful is always a good thing. I suspect that even in households in which they do not believe in a Creator, someone is usually asked to say a prayer of thanksgiving before they eat. And that also is a good thing.

In our home, as we are sharing the meal, we ask everyone to say things they are particularly thankful for one by one. And the challenge is that they must say something that has not already been said. This seems to encourage each one to think seriously of things that we may not usually consider. It is pretty cool and thought-provoking when you hear some of the responses! This is just our tradition.

Our Creator knows what is good for our spirits. He has given us many admonitions in His Word to encourage us to be grateful, such as **Psa 50:14**, **2 Cor 9:10-15**, **Col 2:6-7**, **Col 4:2**, and **1 Tit 4:4,5**, just to name a few. In particular, the New Testament abounds in many admonitions for us to be thankful, and in many contexts.

A passage that comes to mind following my discussion with the lady as to why I believe being thankful, even when things are difficult, is much better for our spirits than complaining is **Philippians 4:6-7**, *“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”* Our Creator knows what our lives and spirits need to thrive, and certainly, being thankful is at the heart of helping us appreciate our lives.

With all these words, a key for us as the Lord’s people is not allowing the lack of gratitude in our culture to drag us down to their level. It surely can if we let it. We are to be a grateful people, even if, and especially when, things are not going well for us. People will notice our gratitude, and it may even help plant the seed of the Word in their own hearts! And being grateful will certainly help our own spirits!

Remember **Ephesians 5:3-4** *“But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks.”*