

OUR CHOICE - THANKFUL OR NOT THANKFUL

Psalm 103:2

Introduction: We are strange in our behavior at times. We act and react in unpredictable ways sometimes. Times we should be afraid, we're not. Times we should be unafeard, we are afraid. Times we should be strong we're not, times we should be weak, we're not. Times we should be proud, we're ashamed. Times we should be ashamed, we're not. Everyday we make choices, some forced, some deliberate and some premeditated. Being thankful or not thankful is a choice that shows what a person is really like inside.

I. PEOPLE CHOSE TO EITHER BE THANKFUL OR TO BE THANKLESS

1. Out of people can come the most vile, deadly poison or there can come a most lovely, beautiful person.
2. From each of us there can come the flower of Gratitude. How does that come about?
 - By more than just saying "thank you." It's good to do this, but too often, it is automatic, with little or no real thought behind the words and with no real gratitude.
 - Our thanksgiving is too often from our lips only. For it to be real, it must be from the heart.
3. How can we be grateful from the heart?
 - By refusing to be forgetful. "*...Forget not all His benefits...*"
 - It is impossible to remember all the benefits of God, but we can remember some, so try.
 - God says to "think" and we will "thank." We are so often thankless because we are so thoughtless.

II. HOW ARE WE TO "THINK" IN ORDER TO "THANK?"

1. We are not to think of our enemies, those who get on our nerves, that grouchy person that rubs us the wrong way.
2. We are not to think of our petty injuries and hurt feelings. Have you ever met someone who never fails to fill you rear with all the little annoyances that has come their way? All the wrongs they have suffered. If ever anyone did them any kindness, they kept it a secret? If they found a rose bush in their path, they would fuss about the thorns and forget the roses. After listening to them for ten minutes, it takes you two weeks to recover strength and courage to face the world again.
3. We are not to contrast our own benefits with those of others, griping about some inferiority in ours, that we think we see. It is so easy to think that our neighbor is getting better things in life.
4. We are not to catalogue or make an alphabetical list of what we do not have, but we are to remember and list what we do have.
 - We are to think of God's benefits, to remember His gracious gifts to ourselves.
 - There seems to be few flowers in life, but there are enough to make a bouquet of gratitude, if only we remember to gather them.
 - We never realize our wealth till we take the time to think upon it instead of looking enviously at what others have.
 - The story is told of a boy who lived in a nice cottage and across the valley was a house with golden windows. The boy disliked his own cottage and went off in search of the golden windowed house. After searching for some time, he asked someone where the house was that had the golden windows and they pointed to his own house back across the valley.
 - Whether we realize it or not, we also live in a house with golden windows. If we only had eyes to see it.

III. SOME BENEFITS FOR WHICH WE SHOULD BE THANKFUL

1. The psalmist does not mention our day-by-day mercies we regard as commonplace, things we take for granted because they are so constant.
2. The psalmist does not mention the beautiful sunrise, the order of the seasons, the bloom of flowers, the song of birds, the handshakes of dear friends, the tender love a family circle.
3. The psalmist goes directly to the benefits that have come straight from God's hands.
 - God's revelation of Himself to us using Moses and the Lord Jesus.
 - The beauty of God revealed by His revelation, compassion, love, concern and care.
 - God is like a father. You and I can never run past His love for us.
 - God's heart is a forgiving heart, eager, abundant, "*...plenteous in mercy...*" God completely forgets that we have ever sinned when we ask for forgiveness.
4. The psalmist reminds us that in a world of restlessness and weariness, of broken hearts and broken hopes, there is one who can abidingly satisfy. "*...What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and misses Him who alone can satisfy?...*"
 - What have we lost if we miss the things for which people are scrambling most madly for and find instead real satisfaction?
 - Can it be said of us, "**...I am satisfied with Jesus**" as the hymn goes? If it can truly be said of us then we have sufficient reasons to make all time and eternity one great thanksgiving day.

IV. BEING GRATEFUL IN OUR HEARTS IS THE FIRST STEP, BUT NOT THE FINAL STEP

1. Giving expression to our gratitude is good for us and it will increase only as we share it. To keep it shut up in our hearts means only to lose it.
2. Giving expression to our gratitude brightens the day for those to whom we are grateful.
 - Every young preacher thinks that the average person needs "skinning" but most of us learn that what people really need is a little encouragement, a little something to let them know that their efforts are recognized and appreciated, no matter how small.
 - Why are we so stingy with sharing a treasure that would enrich both those who give and those who receive?
3. Giving expression to our gratitude gladdens the heart of God.
 - How many times have you been dog-tired, on edge, worn out and here come your children, whooping and yelling. You brace yourself for the shock, but instead they climb into your lap and put their little arms around you and plant a wet kiss on the side of your face, "Hi Dad" or "Hi Mom" and then bounce away with all the noise and clamor before?
 - That tiredness and edginess seemed to just melt away and the children don't seem to be as noisy as before.
 - God is a Father, too! His heart is warmed at our giving thanks. Therefore, "*...Let the redeemed of the Lord say so!...*"

CONCLUSION:

1. Thankful or not? We choose to be one or the other.
2. Which had you rather be around, a cranky, always complaining, fussy person or one who is always expressing thankfulness and gratitude?
3. Which do you think God had rather you be?