

Let Us Show Gratitude



Twelve Steps to a Good Year (Part 12) by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again. Our theme this week, and for the past two weeks, has been "Twelve Steps to a Good Year." Today I'm inviting you to take one step further to a good year. Each of the steps we're looking at is taken from a sentence in the epistle to the Hebrews beginning with the words "let us." Yesterday we looked at the ninth step, "Let us run with endurance the race." Today we're moving on to the tenth step. Like the ninth step, this also is found in Hebrews 12. The ninth step was at the beginning of the chapter, the tenth step is near the end. It's found in verses 28 and 29:

"Therefore, since we have received a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire."

So that's the tenth step, "Let us show gratitude."

The King James version says, "Let us have grace." It's important to understand the connection between grace and thanks. The King James translation, "Let us have grace," is a literal translation of the words, but that phrase "to have grace" is commonly used in Greek to express giving thanks. And so this brings out the connection between grace and thanks. This connection is found in various modern languages. For instance, in the French language they say, *Grace a Dieu*, "Thanks to God." "Grace" is exactly the same word as "grace" in English. And both in Italian and in Spanish, the word for "thank you" is taken from the word for "grace." In Italian it's *grazie* and in Spanish (don't laugh at my Spanish pronunciation) it's something like *gracias*. I can't say it right but I know what it comes from.

So you see, all through these languages there's a connection between grace and thanks. And I want to tell you that you can't have the grace of God in your life unless you practice giving thanks. Grace and thanks go together. And there's nothing more ungracious than an unthankful person, whereas a thankful person will always experience the grace of God.

You see, God requires two things of us as his people. First of all, He requires that we appreciate what He does for us. Secondly, He requires that we express our appreciation. It's important to understand that we need to express our appreciation. There are people, I believe, who really are

grateful to God but they never take time to tell God that they're grateful. How would you feel if your children never thanked you for all that you did for them? They never said thank you, they never showed their gratitude, they accepted everything you did for them as if by right, they took it for granted. Unfortunately, that's how many of God's children treat God and it's not pleasing in His sight. We're required to appreciate what God does for us, we're required to express our appreciation.

One of my favorite scriptures is in Proverbs 3:6:

"In all thy ways acknowledge Him [that's God] and he shall direct thy path."

I've learned by experience that if I pause at every stage in life to acknowledge God, I can be confident that He'll continue to direct my path. You say, "Well, how can I acknowledge God?" The simplest and the best way is simply by thanking Him, thanking Him for all that He's done, thanking Him for His faithfulness, and you get the assurance immediately that He's going to go on being faithful, just as He has helped and guided in the past, He will guide in the future. But the key to this assurance is acknowledging Him by our thanksgiving.

Now we need to look at the background of this exhortation to thankfulness as we read it in the epistle to the Hebrews, the twelfth chapter. Looking at the previous two verses or three verses, 25, 26, 27, we read this, and it's a rather solemn warning:

"See to it that you do not refuse Him who is speaking to us."

And then a parallel is taken from the Old Testament, when God spoke to the people of Israel through Moses:

"For if those did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, much less shall we [believers in the New Testament] escape who turn away from Him who warns from heaven. And his voice shook the earth then, but now he has promised, saying, 'Yet once more and I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens.' And this expression, 'Yet once more,' denotes the removing of those things which can be shaken, as of created things, in order that those things which cannot be shaken may remain."

So this is the background of the exhortation that we should show gratitude. We're in a world that's crumbling, that's falling

apart. There's distress, uncertainty, perplexity, confusion, hatred, division, war, fear, all around us, not merely in one nation, but in all nations on the earth. To a greater or a lesser degree, these conditions continue and indeed, grow worse. God says, "There's coming a time when I'm going to shake once more not only the earth but also the heavens." This "once more" indicates this is going to be the final shaking, and in this final shaking everything that can be shaken will be removed. But in the light of this, the writer of Hebrews says, "Since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude."

You see, that's the appropriate response to the particular privileges and benefits that we have in God. We are not dependent on a shakeable kingdom. We have an eternal kingdom, an unshakable kingdom, the kingdom of God Himself, the kingdom which is "righteousness, peace, joy in the Holy Ghost." In all that's going on around us, all that's being shaken, all the threatening and the alarms, the fears and the inadequate and insufficient remedies that only temporarily stop the gap, in the midst of all this, we have an unshakable kingdom. We have peace, security, purpose. What's the appropriate response? There is only one appropriate response, it's thankfulness. Therefore, since we have received a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, let us express our thanks to God.

Not only is thankfulness or gratitude the appropriate response to what God has done and is doing for us, not only is it something that we owe God and we need to pay, but thankfulness or gratitude as the expression of our appreciation does something in our spirits that nothing else can do. The way I express it is, "Thankfulness releases our spirits for acceptable worship and service." That's why the writer of Hebrews says, "Let us show gratitude, that we may offer to God an acceptable service, with reverence and awe." Without gratitude, our service to God will not be acceptable. It's that "attitude of gratitude" that makes our service acceptable, that releases our spirits. An unthankful person is bound up in himself. He's self-centered. He really cannot know true liberation. But thankfulness releases our spirits.

Look at what Paul says in 1 Thessalonians 5:18-19:

"In everything give thanks..."

That's a clear commandment. If we don't give thanks, we're disobedient.

"...for this [giving thanks] is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."

If we don't give thanks, we're out of the will of God. And then Paul says:

“Do not quench the Spirit.”

You see, failing to give thanks quenches the Spirit. The only release for the Spirit, to serve God acceptably, is through thanksgiving.

And then note the closing warning in Hebrews 12:29:

“For our God is a consuming fire.”

What the writer is saying is, “We have to approach this holy, awe-inspiring God with the right attitude, with a humble, thankful heart.”

And then again, just in closing, let's look at the background of the world in these last days. We've already looked at the shaking that was coming. Now look at the disintegration of character and morality and standards. In 2 Timothy 3:1-5, Paul says this:

“But mark this: there will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lover of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them.”

That's a terrible list of moral defects or character degeneration that's going to mark the close of this age. And I would suggest to you, if you go over that list by yourself, you'll find most of these character defects are conspicuous in our contemporary culture. And right in the middle of it, it says, “disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love.” Notice that association. The ungrateful are right next door to the unholy. You cannot be holy and be ungrateful. And since our God is a consuming fire, and He requires that we serve Him with holiness, which is appropriate, then we have to serve Him with gratitude. We're got to come to Him with thankfulness.

Let me read those words once more.

“Let us show gratitude that we may serve him acceptably, with reverence and godly fear.”

Our time is up for today. I'll be back with you again tomorrow at this time. I'll continue with this theme, “Twelve Steps to a Good Year.” Tomorrow I'll be speaking about the 11th step.

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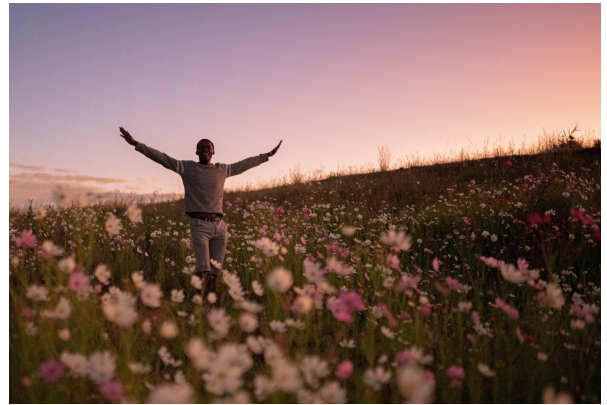
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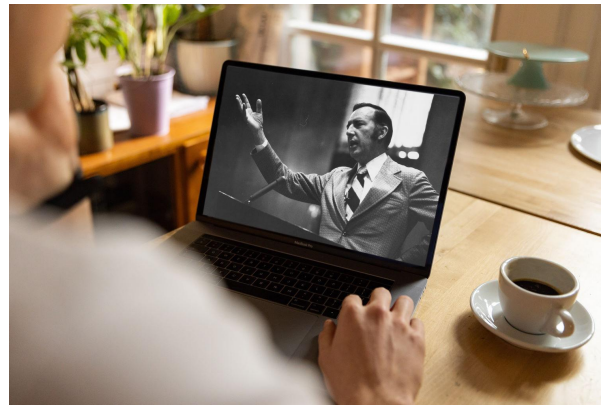
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