

Unthankfulness: Prelude to Disaster



Thanksgiving, Praise, and Worship (Part 5)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again as we draw near to the end of another week. Today I'm going to continue and conclude the theme that I've been dealing with all week, thanksgiving.

In my previous talks this week I've explained the following facts about thanksgiving or thankfulness.

First, thanksgiving is one of the gifts or sacrifices that God requires from us whenever we come into His presence.

Second, thankfulness is a direct command of Scripture and also an indispensable mark of being filled with the Holy Spirit.

Third, thanksgiving is a key to unlock the miracle-working power of God.

And fourth, thanksgiving sets the seal of permanence on blessings that might otherwise be only temporary. In the case of the ten lepers, it marked the transition from being healed, something partial and temporary; to being saved, something total and permanent.

In my closing talk today I'm going to look at the opposite side of the coin, unthankfulness. I'm going to lay bare the subtle snare of unthankfulness and all the disastrous consequences that follow in its train. The first thing we need to see is that both thankfulness and unthankfulness are expressed through our mouths. Unthankfulness comes out of our mouths in the form of such things as complaining or grumbling, and the Scripture has a lot of solemn warning against grumbling or complaining. For instance, in Philippians 2:14-15, Paul says:

> "Do everything without complaining or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation..."

The implication is clear. If we are to be real children of God, blameless and pure, we are going to have to learn to do everything without complaining or arguing. Complaining and arguing are two things that ought not to come out of the mouths of God's children.

Also in the epistle of Jude there is a picture of the ungodly. In verse 15 of this epistle, the word "ungodly" actually occurs five times in one verse. And in the next verse, verse 16, we have this description of these ungodly men:

> "These men are grumblers and faultfinders; they follow their own evil desires; they boast about themselves and flatter others for their own advantage."

Notice the first distinctive characteristic of these ungodly men is that they are grumblers, and they are grumblers because they are following their own evil desires. One thing we can be sure of, when we start grumbling it is because we are following our own evil desires.

You see, ultimately the words that come out of our mouths are either positive or negative. There really isn't anything neutral in our speech; it's either good or it's bad; it's either acceptable to God or it's unpleasing to God. There is no middle ground. Listen to what Jesus says in Matthew 12:36-37:

> "And I say to you, that every careless word that men shall speak, they shall render account for it in the day of judgment."

A "careless word" in Greek actually is a word that doesn't have any fruit, any good work resulting. So, every word that doesn't produce good, that doesn't have a good consequence, that doesn't accomplish something good, we're going to have to give account for it in the day of judgment. Frankly, some of us would be wise to talk less, because a lot of things we say when we talk too much we're going to have to give account to God for one day.

And then in the next verse, Jesus continues like this:

> "For by your words you shall be justified, and by your words you shall be condemned."

So, our words are either going to cause us to be justified (to be accepted as righteous with God) or to be condemned (to be rejected by God) and there's nothing in between. All the words that we speak have one or other consequence. They cause us to be justified or they cause us to be condemned.

Now, in 1 Corinthians 10, the apostle Paul gives us a picture of Israel after their deliverance out of Egypt on their way through the wilderness, and he points out many mistakes and unfortunate things and evil things that they did. And he warns us that we should not follow the evil example of Israel.

This is what he says:

> "Now these things happened as examples for us, that we should not crave evil things, as they also craved. And do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written, 'The people sat down to eat and drink, and stood up to play.' Nor let us act immorally, as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in one day. Nor let us try the Lord as some of them did, and were destroyed by the serpents. Nor grumble, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the destroyer. [And another translation says, 'killed by the destroying angels.'] Now these things [all that Paul has been writing about] happened to them as an example and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come."

In other words, all these things that happened to Israel are recorded in Scripture as an example and a warning to us that we shouldn't do the same thing. Specifically, we are warned against five sins:

In verse 6: craving evil things

In verse 7: idolatry

In verse 8: sexual immorality

In verse 9: testing or trying the Lord; that is, questioning God's wisdom and power and ability and faithfulness.

And verse 10: grumbling

So, notice the other sins that grumbling is set beside. They are these: craving evil things, idolatry, sexual immorality, and testing God. That's God's estimate of grumbling and it is recorded in Scripture for our warning. So when you start to grumble, just bear in mind you are categorized with those who crave evil things, those who practice idolatry and sexual immorality, and those who are guilty of trying or testing God.

It's also interesting that there was a particular kind of judgment on those Israelites who grumbled. It says that they were killed by the destroying angels. That really impresses me. God had to send an angel, not just some natural calamity or disaster, but an actual angel to deal with these people of His who were guilty of grumbling. I tell you, that makes me think twice before I permit myself to grumble.

The most solemn of all warnings against the danger of unthankfulness is to be found in Romans 1, from verse 21

onward. Paul is speaking about the declension of all humanity into its condition of sin and ignorance and darkness and misery. And in verse 21 he shows us how this decline of humanity began. He says:

> "For although they knew God, they neither glorified Him as God nor gave thanks to Him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened."

What were the first two downward steps that humanity took? The first was not glorifying God. The second was not giving God thanks. With regard to glorifying God, compare what Paul says a little later on in Romans 3:23. He says:

> "...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."

The very essence of sin is failing to glorify God. Somebody said once, "Man has no right to exist if he does not exist for the glory of God." And when we fail to glorify God in our existence, that in itself is the essence of sin. The first failure always leads to the second. When we cease to glorify God, it won't be long before we cease to give Him thanks. And from this point onwards the path goes deeper and darker down into an horrible abyss of wickedness, ignorance, vileness and misery.

I'll read the verses that follow, Romans 1:22-32, bearing in mind that this is the result in our experience when we fail to glorify God and to give Him thanks.

> "Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles. Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped and served created things rather than the Creator, who is forever praised. Amen. Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion. Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, He gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done. They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; they are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless. Although they know God's righteous decree, that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things, but also approve of those who practice them."

Isn't that a terrible list? How pitiful! How dark! How hopeless! And yet, note the steps that led to that decline. When they knew God, they glorified Him not, neither were they thankful. Now here's the safeguard, Hebrews 12:28-29:

> "Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire."

Remember that grace and thankfulness cannot be separated.

Our time is up for today. I'll be back with you again next week at this same time, Monday through Friday. Next week I'll be dealing with the second gift or sacrifice that God requires from us whenever we come to Him, the sacrifice of praise.

If you would like to study this theme more fully in the quietness of your own home and with opportunity to focus on passages of special interest to you, all my five messages this week on thanksgiving are available in a single, carefully edited 60-minute cassette. Also this week I'm making a special offer of my book, The Baptism in the Holy Spirit. This book contains a vital scriptural key to releasing the kind of worship that God desires to receive from us. The announcement that follows will tell you how to obtain both the cassette and the book.

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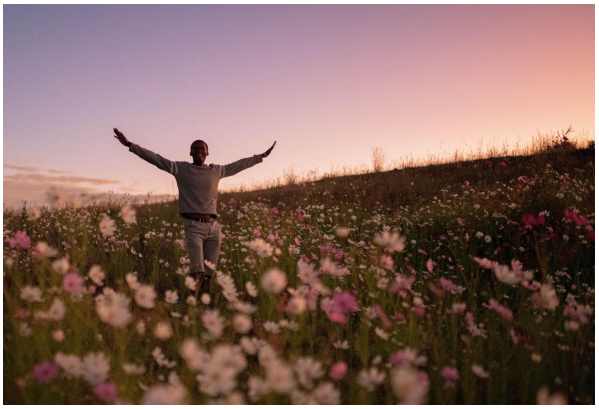

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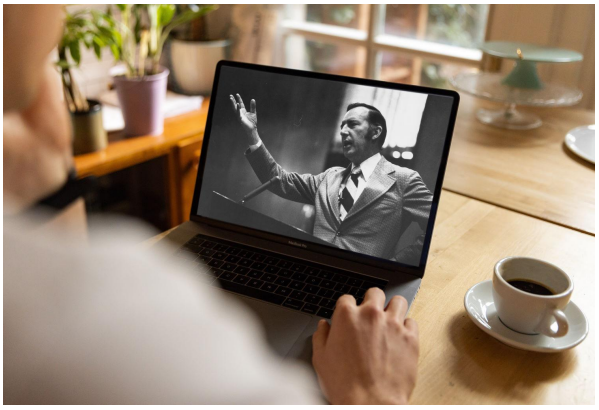

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