Attitudes of the Heart
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Preface

Many churches put an inordinate emphasis on outward conformity and reformation and teach very little on spiritual attitudes of the heart. For this reason, when I became the Pastor of Calvary Baptist Church in April of 2010, one of my first priorities was to teach a series on internal attitudes that the Holy Spirit desires to produce in every Christian. This book is the culmination of that series.

How to use this Book

Open the Bible. This book is designed for Bible study. In order to fully benefit from the studies contained here, you must be willing to open your Bible and search the scriptures for answers. These studies are based upon the King James Version of the Bible. If you are accustomed to reading another version you may need to have both opened in order to discover the right answers.

Take your Time. The purpose of any Bible study is not to race to the finish line. If your time spent studying scripture does not produce a better understanding of the word of God then it is in vain. Take your time going through these studies. Stop and think about what you’ve read and take the time to apply the truths to your life.

Reflect. Throughout these studies you will see the symbol \( \text{REFLECT} \) followed by a question. There is no room to write an answer because these are designed for meditation. Take a minute and think about how the question applies practically to your life. Apply the study and be willing to change where God prompts you to. You will also see questions prefaced by Think. These were originally questions for open discussion in our church. There are no right or wrong answers for these just your own personal opinion.

Pray. Bible truths are only imparted by the Holy Spirit of God. While you study, pray that God would help you to understand and apply His word to your life.

Contact

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Thankfulness

I Thessalonians 5:18
In every thing give thanks:
for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.

Thankfulness is hard to come by in a selfish, discontented culture but the same should not be true of the Church of Jesus Christ. Every Christian should exude thankfulness toward God at all times. Although God has commanded that his people be thankful, this attitude should also freely and willingly flow from the heart of those who are forgiven by Christ.

Unthankfulness – A Mark of Unbelievers

2 Tim 3:1-5. Q. In this passage, Paul is warning Timothy of “perilous times” which would come. Paul lists 19 characteristics of “evil men.” Considering all that is mentioned in these verses, what is significant about the fact that “unthankfulness” is also mentioned?

Rom 1:18-21. Q. In this passage we find another description of “unrighteous” and “ungodly” men. According to verse 21, what should be the proper response to an acknowledgement that God is the creator of the world?

God made everything and is the sovereign of the universe. A recognition of God’s sovereignty should lead mankind to be thankful toward Him. For this reason, anything short of glorifying God through thankfulness is sin. In fact, unthankfulness is a characteristic of the unsaved. Unrighteousness, ungodliness and unthankfulness go hand-in-hand.
Think. In what ways does an unsaved person evidence their unthankfulness toward God?

Ephesians 5:3-4. Q. What six things should never characterize the Christian?

Q. v4. In contrast to the things you listed above, what should characterize the Christian?

The unsaved man or woman does not recognize God the Father as the Lord of creation and is therefore, unthankful. This should never be the condition of the Christian. After all, salvation itself is a matter of confessing Jesus Christ as Lord. Salvation then, is in part, a transition from an attitude of unthankfulness toward God to one of continual thankfulness toward Him.

Think about your own life. How did your salvation change your thankfulness toward God? How do you express this thankfulness?

Thankfulness – A Matter of Praise and Worship

Hebrews 13:15. Q. What is the continual “sacrifice of praise” mentioned here?

Throughout the Bible, and especially in the book of Psalms, we see thanksgiving, praise and music linked together.

Psalms 69:30. Q. What did the Psalmist say he would do through thanksgiving?
Psalms 147:7. Q. What should be the content of our songs of praise?

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Write out Psalm 100:4.

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Eph 5:18-20. Q. How is thanksgiving connected with the Holy Spirit?

Jesus said in John 4:23 that the Father is seeking “true worshippers” who will worship him “in spirit and in truth.” As we have seen above, this spirit-filled worship has a prominent thread of thankfulness running through it (cf. Ps 18:49; 30:12; 35:18; 69:30; 79:13; 92:1; 100:4; 106:1, 47; 147:7). The Christian life then, is one of praise, worship and song. All of which are to be saturated with thanksgiving. (see also Ezra 3:10-11; Neh 12:4-6; Ps 92:1-3 for a connection between thanksgiving and song).

1 Cor 14:16. Q. Although Paul had to correct much of what went on in the Corinthian church, we see from this passage that they understood that “thanksgiving” should play an important role in the worship service. How might a church incorporate times of thanksgiving into its worship?

Do you include thanksgiving in your private times of worship? In what ways can you express thankfulness to God in your worship?
Thankfulness for God’s Mercies

Read the following: 1 Chron 16:34,41; 2 Chron 5:13; Ezra 3:11; Ps 106:1; 107:1; 118:1,29; 136:1-3,26.

Q. Why should we give thanks to God?

There is an unmistakable connection in scripture between thanksgiving and the mercy of God. It is chiefly for His mercies that we thank him.

- Charles Hodge has defined mercy this way: Mercy is kindness exercised toward the miserable; it includes pity, compassion, forbearance, and gentleness.
- Webster, in his 1828 Dictionary has it thus: Pity; compassion manifested towards a person in distress.

These definitions help us to immediately understand why we are in need of God’s mercy and why we should be thankful for it. It is no wonder that Lamentations 3:22 says, It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not.

Consider the following.

Eph 2:1-10. Q. v1. What state were we in before salvation?

Q. v2-3. How did we live?

Q. v1. Were we able to save ourselves?

Think. Considering the passage in Ephesians, how do you think the definitions of mercy above apply to us?
Q. v5-10. What did God, driven by his mercy, do for us?

[Titus 3:5; 1 Peter 1:3. Q. According to these verses, how have we benefited from the mercy of God?

God’s people have a long history of offering thanksgiving to him in response to his mercy. In fact, under the Old Testament sacrificial system, God provided for this expression of thanksgiving by instituting the thank offering. The thank offering was a freewill offering that the Jews could choose to offer in recognition of the mercies which God had shown them. (Lev 22:29; Lev 7:11-12; 2 Chron 29:31).

Lev 22:29. Q. How was the thank offering to be offered?

2 Chron 29:29-31. Q. In this passage we see the beginning of the reign of King Hezekiah. Under his rule, we find spiritual revival in Israel. He cleanses the temple, re-institutes the feasts and returns to the sacrificial system. According to verse 31, what did Hezekiah tell the people to bring after the burnt sacrifice had been offered?

Q. What was the attitude of those who brought the thank offerings?

Our Thank Offering – A Living Sacrifice

In the book of Romans we find an ongoing theme of the mercy of God. In chapters 9-11, Paul teaches the Romans that God is perfectly justified in sovereignly choosing to whom he will, and to whom he will not, show mercy.

Rom 9:15-16. Q. v15. What did God tell Moses?
Q. v16. In your own words, how is someone not saved? How are they saved?

Rom 9:22-24. Q. What does God desire to do “on the vessels of mercy?”

Q. v24. To whom has God chosen to show mercy?

Paul teaches the gentile church in Rome that Jewish people are temporarily blinded from the gospel because of their rejection of Jesus Christ (Rom 11:25). He goes on to assure the Romans that this does not mean that God has “cast away” his people but that he will, one day, save the Jews as a nation (Rom 11:1-2; 11:11; 11:26-27). He tells them that what appears to be the wholesale Jewish rejection of the messiah does not mean that God has annulled his covenant with Israel. The reasoning? Even those who are ethnic Jews are not necessarily God’s people. Salvation is by faith and not genealogy (Rom 10:12-13; Matt 3:9; Rom 4:12; Gal 3:6-11). God sovereignty chooses those among the Jews and among the Gentiles upon whom he will shed mercy (Rom 3:29-30; Rom 9:23-24).

After Paul lays the foundation of the mercy of God in chapters 9-11, we come to Romans 12:1:

Rom 12:1. Q. Considering that chapters 9-11 dealt largely with the topic of God’s mercy, what do you think is significant about Paul’s use of the word “therefore?”

Q. Paul has laid the foundation of the mercies of God in the previous chapters. What did Paul, in response to God’s mercies, ask the Romans to do?

Paul’s use of Old Testament terminology in this verse is very clear. He is making a blatant reference to the sacrifices of the Old Testament. Just as the Jews in the Old Testament would offer acceptable sacrifices to God,
should we. Furthermore, just as the Jews in the Old Testament would offer sacrifices in response to God’s mercies, so should we. Paul is telling us that we should consider the mercy which God has shown us and in response, offer our entire lives back to him as an acceptable thank offering.

Thankfulness toward God in the life of a Christian is not simply something we whisper in prayer occasionally. It is an all-consuming lifestyle. We live our lives for God, seeking His will and not our own. This is the ultimate thank offering, given in response to the mercies he has shown us in salvation.

Think. How might the way that we live reflect thankfulness toward God? Or not reflect it?

How do we increase our thankfulness? Meditate on the mercies of God and think about all that God has done for us. He has spared us from hell and he seeks to pour out all the blessings of Heaven upon us. It is no wonder that those who are furthest from God are the most unthankful. They do not spend time in His word, in prayer or meditating upon what God has done for them. The deeper understanding we have of our sinfulness, God’s holiness and all that he has done to reconcile us to himself, the deeper our thankfulness toward him will be (Luke 7:47). This thankfulness will then overflow into praise, worship, song and sacrifice.

In addition to the mercy that God has shown us in salvation, what else should produce a continual attitude of thanksgiving within us?

Thankfulness for God’s Sovereign Provision

1 Chron 29:9-16. In this passage we find King David encouraging God’s people to give willingly toward the building of the temple. David himself set the example by giving much of his riches to the project. In verse 10 we find David blessing the congregation and praying:

Thine, O LORD, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O LORD, and thou art exalted as head above all.

Q. In that short paragraph, David does a wonderful job of describing God’s sovereignty. Based upon that verse, what belongs to God? What is He head over?
Q. v12. Where do "riches and honour" come from? How about "greatness" and "strength"?

Q. v11. What belongs to God?

Q. v13. God owns everything, is the source of everything, is exalted as head above all and reigns over the universe. How does David respond to these wonderful truths? (note "therefore")

Q. v14. The thought of God’s sovereignty leads David to praise and thank Him. David then considers how he and his people compare to their sovereign God. How did David understand his ability to make such an offering to God?

Q. v14. David felt that he and his people were unworthy to make such an offering to God. What was his reasoning? (also consider v16)

The Contentment Connection

The Bible teaches not only that God is the sovereign source of all of our possessions, but that he is also the source of our strength to obtain wealth (Deut 8:17-18). Even when we work and earn money to buy possessions, God deserves all of the glory!
Think. If the above is true, what does discontentment with our possessions, social class or living standard say about our view of God?

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_____________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________

The unthankful person is a discontent person. They are unthankful because they feel they deserve more or better than what they have. At the source of this discontentment is a failure to accept that we have all that God wants us to have. It is a rejection of his sovereign provision. Unthankfulness says to God, “I am unhappy with what you have provided for me.”

If we, like David, remember both God’s sovereign provision and our own unworthiness, we will be well on our way to maintaining a continual attitude of thankfulness. The fact is, we deserve nothing (except Hell) and all that we do have has come to us by the grace of God (1 Tim 6:6-8; 1 Cor 4:7). It is no wonder then that we are told in scripture to be thankful for everything (Eph 5:20; Col 3:17; 1 Thess 5:18; Php 4:6).

Not only should we be thankful for everything that God has provided for us in the physical realm, but we should also be thankful for the spiritual work that he continues to do on the inside of us by His grace.

Thankfulness for God’s Continuing Grace

It was Paul’s pattern to continually thank God for the work he was doing in him and in the hearts of fellow believers (Col 1:3; Eph 1:16; 1 Thes 1:2, 3:9; Phm 1:4; Phil 1:3). Paul understood that God was to be thanked, not only as the source of all material provision, but also as the source of all spiritual blessings.

1 Thess 2:13. Q. How did the Thessalonians receive the word of God?

_____________________________________________________

Q. What does the fact that Paul is thanking God for the Thessalonian’s receptive spirit tell us about God’s role in salvation? (see also 2 Thess 2:13)

_____________________________________________________

2 Thess 1:3. Q. Paul did not stop at thanking God for the salvation of the Thessalonians. What else did he thank God for?

_____________________________________________________

Unthankfulness says to God, “I am unhappy with what you have provided for me”
Whenever Paul saw or heard of the spiritual growth of others he thanked God on their behalf (Acts 28:14-15; Rom 1:8, 6:17; 1 Cor 1:4; 2 Cor 8:16). He understood that God was not only the source of all material blessings but that he was also responsible for everything good that happens within us spiritually. Paul thanked God for calling men to salvation, for producing a care in them for the brethren and for enabling them to work in the ministry. God is to be thanked for our salvation and for every spiritual work that he continues to do in the hearts of believers (2 Cor 9:8; Php 2:13; 1 Thes 2:13).

**Conclusion**

The Bible is clear that the Christian is to be thankful at all times, and for all things (Eph 5:20; Col 3:17; 1 Thess 5:18; Php 4:6). And why wouldn’t we be? God has called us to salvation, given us his Spirit, has promised he will never leave us, that he will provide all of our needs and that he has an eternal inheritance awaiting us in Heaven. He did all of this “while we were yet sinners”, “without strength” and his “enemies” (Rom 5:6-10). As Christians, we have every reason to live life in a state of constant thankfulness. After all, even trouble in our lives is meant for our good (James 2:2-4; Rom 8:28).

Thankfulness is a choice. By deliberately dwelling on all that God has done for us and by purposefully recognizing God’s grace at work all around us, we can maintain a continual attitude of thankfulness just as he has commanded us (Eph 5:4; Col 3:15; Col 4:2). On the other hand, if we live life swept up in the things of this world; its pride, its materialism and its lust, then it is likely that we will compare ourselves with others and become unthankful and discontent with what God has given us. How then should we respond to God’s blessings? With praise, with worship, with sacrifice and with song. Each of these with thankfulness as its theme.

**Write a list below of things you are thankful to God for. Use this list to incorporate times of thanksgiving into your prayer life.**
Review: Thankfulness

1. List below some things that you are thankful to God for.

_____________________________________     _______________________________________
_____________________________________     _______________________________________  
_____________________________________     _______________________________________  
_____________________________________     _______________________________________  
_____________________________________     _______________________________________  
_____________________________________     _______________________________________  

Use the list above next time you are praying and thank God for each of them.

2. How should dwelling on God’s mercy toward us affect our worship?

3. How is thankfulness related to Romans 12:1?

   Romans 12:1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

4. How are contentment and thankfulness linked?

5. Having a right attitude toward our possessions will help us to be thankful. What attitude should we have toward our material things?

6. Why should we thank God even for the things we have obtained or accomplished through our own hard work?