

Where Are The Nine?

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INTRODUCTION:

- A. Illustration about being grateful – This certainly shows the attitude of some doesn't it!
- B. We've heard about "The ME Generation" – I don't know that it's one generation... it may have just become a characteristic of our society! Christians must rise above that & shine as lights of gratitude and praise!

I. JESUS HEALS TEN LEPERS – A CONTRAST IN GRATITUDE:

- A. Jesus was simply passing through an area, when he met and changed the lives of ten men forever!
 - 1. Jesus encountered ten men who had the fatal disease of leprosy (**Luke 17:11-12**)
 - a. If you were a leper it meant a certain, painful, and slow death! There was no known cure!
 - b. It was a highly contagious disease, so the physical pain was just amplified by the emotional suffering from being ostracized not only from society in general but also your family!
 - c. Once a person was diagnosed with leprosy, their life was seen as over! From God's instructions we know there's a chance you might recover; but, from the reaction of the people we know this was also very rare! We think AIDS is bad... this was worse!
 - 2. To really appreciate the hopeless and miserable state these ten men were in, let's go back and read from the law Moses God's instructions for lepers (**Leviticus 13:45-46, 52; 14:44-45**)
 - 3. These lepers had either heard of Jesus or had personally seen His miracles, either way, they understood that only through His mercy would they be saved! (**Luke 17:13-14**)
 - a. Here we find these men turning to the right source for help! All too often we see people dying from the greatest disease of all, sin, yet they run from the very thing they need
 - b. Notice Jesus doesn't say to this group, "You are healed" or reaches out and touches them ...He only tells them to go and show themselves to the priest – Why do it this way?
 - c. Going to the priest was what you were supposed to do if you were healed of your leprosy... He had to pronounce you clean before you could return to living a normal life.
 - d. When the ten men walked away they were still lepers and they knew it! But by faith they headed on to the priest as instructed and on the way were cleansed... A test of faith!
 - e. They were hopeless, dying, and couldn't help themselves! How pitiful they were! But through the mercy and compassion of the Lord they were healed!
 - 4. So far this story is very encouraging, however, it now turns sad when only one man out of those ten returned to give praise and thanks to the Lord! (**Luke 17:15-19**)
 - a. Where'd the other nine go? They most likely went to the priests, but then what? We can only guess, but it makes sense they returned home and resumed their former life
 - b. These other nine had faith, they had pleaded, and they even obeyed... However, they did not return to the source of their salvation to return thanks and praise!
 - c. You can hear the disappointment in Jesus voice when he asks this one Samaritan leper, "Where are the nine?" → Did they appreciate their being cleansed? I doubt anyone would deny that! But only went back to the source to express his gratitude!
 - 5. When I consider Jesus' last words to this man I believe we can walk away understanding that true faith will respond not only with belief and obedience, but also thankfulness & praise! (**vs. 19**)

- B. The two different responses seen in these ten lepers are very picturesque of either the problem of ingratitude or the praise of gratitude – Are we the tenth leper or are we off with the nine?**

II. MAINTAINING AN ATTITUDE OF GRATITUDE TODAY:

A. We need to continually possess and express thankfulness to God:

1. As the ten lepers are fresh on our minds, we see a direct parallel between their salvation from leprosy and our salvation from sin – How do we respond to God’s mercy?
 - a. Remember – Leprosy was a deadly disease that impacted men regardless of their wealth, power, or who they knew. It was a terrible disease. They couldn’t do anything to help themselves. It slowly but surely ate away their bodies until they were destroyed
 - b. Isn’t this the nature & impact of sin in our lives? From the tops of our heads to the soles of our feet, sin destroys us! Sin is pervasive to corrupt the whole body **(Isaiah 1:1-6)**
 - c. Just like those lepers, it’s only through the mercy of the Lord we find healing! **(1 Pet 2:10)**
 - d. Like the lepers, when we approach the Lord through faith, He cleanses us! Now, are going to be like the 9 who no doubt were glad they were made whole but continued life as normal or will we be as the 1 who returned to the source to express praise & thanks?
2. God is going to be praised and glorified, whether I express it or not! **(Psalm 22:3, 22-23)**
 - a. God’s creation constantly praises Him! There have always and always will be people who enthrone God with their praises! The question is, am I going to be one of them!
 - b. Sadly, out of all of God’s creation, the only part that sometimes doesn’t praise and glorify Him is the only part made in His own image! Given the choice, some neglect this!
 - c. When we choose to thank & praise God, it places us in His presence in a very special way
3. All of us have innumerable reasons to be thankful to God and to praise Him **(Heb 13:15)**
 - a. It is good for us to take a spiritual and physical inventory → Have we actually sat down and tried to write down all the ways God has blessed us & things we’re thankful for?
 - b. We say, “Of course I am thankful for what God has done for me!” – Is that just a feeling or is it something we express? Yes, God knows your hearts, but He also knew the hearts of the nine lepers! The point wasn’t just what they felt, but what they did!
 - c. One easy way to observe this is in our singing – Many of our songs are directly expressing our praise or thanksgiving → Does the way we sing reflect how we feel toward God?
 - d. What about our daily speech? We don’t want to be seen as charismatic or fanatical so we may hesitate to express praise & gratitude in common settings... Are we robbing God and lessening on our impact on the world around us? Christians to be heard!
4. Gratitude toward God is an attitude that will govern the way we think and live! **(Ephesians 5:1-4)**
 - a. **Illustration:** Emmy’s, Golden Globe, Oscars: “I want to thank God for giving me the ability” or “I want to start by thanking Jesus Christ, my Lord & Savior” – Yet no piety to God!
 - b. Maybe Kathy Griffin was just being honest when she said after getting an Emmy, “A lot of people came up here to thank Jesus for this award. I want you to know that no one had less to do with this award than Jesus. Suck it Jesus, this award is my God now!”
 - c. If one gives you a gift, how you respond to them & how you treat the gift shows whether or not you appreciate it → Our life shows the same toward all God has done for us!
5. Whether we realize it or not, our gratitude and praise to God is a salvation issue!
 - a. A failure to maintain an attitude of gratitude toward God results in Him being robbed of the praise and glory He is due! Soon we push God out of our minds! **(Rom 1:21ff)**

b. Feelings of thanksgiving are what paves the way for our salvation! (**Psalm 50:23**)

B. We need to continually possess and express thankfulness to others:

1. When we take the time to express our gratitude and praise for others we encourage them to continue to do what is right and good: (**3 John 1:3-4**)
2. One of the characteristics of Paul's writings are how they are full of personal notes of praise and thanksgiving for the life & faith of others (**Rom 1:8; 2 Cor 8:16-18; Col 1:2-4**)
3. Sometimes people think it's best not to show much gratitude or praise to others for what they have done because they don't want to be guilty of flattery! (**Prov 29:5**)
 - a. We may be afraid if we express our gratitude or praise someone too much that it may go to their heads and cause them to be proud... We don't want to be a stumbling block
 - b. Or we may recall Jesus' warning about not doing our good works to be seen of men and to receive their praise and if we don't want to cause them to violate that principle
 - c. Jesus' warning is not about how we view others but how we view ourselves and the condemnation of flattery has more to do with our motivation – These don't apply!
4. One of the great examples of this is Barnabas – The Son Of Encouragement (**Acts 4:36, 9:27**)

C. To help keep an attitude of gratitude alive, consider some common things that hinder gratitude in us:

1. I believe one of the main reasons we fail to be thankful is our rushed lifestyle: (**Psalm 73:11-17**)
 - a. It's not because we don't feel any appreciation for what God has done for us or for the lives of others... It's just that we're so incredibly busy we tend to forget about it!
 - b. What this boils down to is pure and simple carelessness! We become so caught up in the pursuits of this life & material things we fail to make room for the important things!
2. Sometimes we fail to express gratitude because we overemphasize our problems (**Acts 5:41-42**)
 - a. We all have problems in our lives & difficult things we must deal with... If we put a greater focus on those things then what is going good we'll soon feel nothing is going right!
 - b. **Illustration:** Person who always focuses on what's going wrong in a local church & never what is good about it – He soon thinks & makes others think it's a terrible church!
 - c. The church at Jerusalem certainly had problems and could have done a lot of complaining about them! But they handled their problems in light of God's great blessings!
 - d. We have to learn to put our problems & suffering in an eternal perspective! (**Rom 8:18**)
3. Another thing that squashes an attitude of gratitude is the problem of pride (**Deut 8:7-17**)
 - a. How could they go through the wilderness experiences, watch as God fought their battles, & be given a land they didn't build and yet be filled with pride? They were forgetful!
 - b. It wasn't something that took place suddenly – Little by little they failed to give God the praise & thanksgiving due Him, so they began to feel more & more responsible for it!
 - c. While we wouldn't be so brass as to say words such as these out loud, or even harbor them intentionally in our hearts, we live like it when we focus and what we've accomplished in life & fail to give God the praise and glory for the blessings we have!
4. Finally, it may be that we fail show gratitude because we are being too self-centered (**Phil 2:19-21**)

CONCLUSION: The song, "Count your many blessings" isn't just beneficial "when upon life's billows you are tempest tossed" or "when you are discouraged thinking all is lost." It's a practice that reminds us why we should be thankful!