

Season of Gratitude

November 22, 2015

Gratitude is an attitude of the heart. There are people who never utter the words "Thank you." Their world view is one of entitlement and they never show appreciation for anything that comes their way. One of the priceless attributes of King David was the fact that he never forgot that God brought him from the sheepfold and gave him a palace and the responsibility of being a King of Israel. That elevation from the lowest degree to the highest position in the land was something that David always kept in the back of his mind and he continually praised and glorified the Lord. In Psalms 121:1-2, David declares, "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills. From whence cometh my help? My help cometh from the LORD who made heaven and earth." In Psalms 124, David remembers the God of Israel who delivered the children of Israel from Egyptian bondage. He states that if God had not been on their side, their enemies would have swallowed them up alive as their enemies' wrath was elevated due to all the plagues they had endured from God. God allowed the Children of Israel to cross the Red Sea on dry ground, yet the Egyptians were drowned when they attempted to follow in an attempt to capture the former slaves.

Verse 6 says, "Blessed be the LORD who hath not given us as a prey to their teeth."

David compares their deliverance to a bird who escaped the snare set for him. The snare is broken and the Israelites escaped. He ends the Psalm with these words "Our help is in the name of the LORD who made heaven and earth. David speaks of the gratitude of the hearts of the people when they were released from captivity of Zion in Psalms 126. It was like a dream come true. Their mouths were filled with laughter and their tongue with singing. They were looked on by other nations who said, "The LORD hath done great things for them."

In 2 Samuel 7:25, David prays a prayer of gratitude to the LORD and his request is that God will establish his throne forever. He prays that God's name will be magnified forever and he asks that his own house will be established before the LORD. When the angel of the LORD appeared to Mary, mother of Jesus, the promise was that there would be no end to his kingdom as God had promised to Jesus' ancestor, King David.

There are examples of people who are the opposite of King David in their response to God's gifts and blessings. The story of Nabal is one example of this type of person.

In 1 Samuel 25, the death of Samuel, the prophet is recorded. It then mentions that David and his men went to the wilderness of Paran. There was a wealthy man who dwelled there. The Bible says that he was very great and he had 3000 sheep, 1000 goats and he was shearing his sheep in Carmel. Nabal had a beautiful wife, Abigail, who was full of wisdom and she was respected by the servants of Nabal. However Nabal was harsh and behaved badly and he came from the family lineage of Caleb.

David and his men had protected the shepherds and all the flocks while Nabal was away on business and after a period of time, David sent 10 men to approach Nabal about receiving some compensation for their labor and good deeds.

He gave them a message to present to Nabal saying "Peace be both to you and your house and unto all that you have." He informed Nabal of the services that he and his men provided for Nabal concerning watching over the interests of his investments and herdsmen and David expected that in appreciation for their efforts, Nabal would give them some food in return. Instead, Nabal spoke rudely and condescending to them. After they had delivered the message that David had given to them, Nabal asked "Who is David? Who is the son of Jesse? There are many servants nowadays who break away from their masters. Am I to take my bread and water and sheep that I have killed and give them to men that I don't even know who they are or where they come from?" The men returned and gave the report to David. David was angry because he felt that their labor had been in vain for the man didn't even appreciate what they had done for him.

David told his men to prepare to attack and destroy Nabal's household. One of Nabal's servants realized the severity of the situation and went directly to Abigail and told her that David and his men had been treated badly by Nabal when they approached him for payment for the work that they had done for him. He explained that David and his men had stayed with the herdsmen and watched over the flocks day and night while they were there. They were like a wall around them watching over the sheep so no harm came to them. Now because of Nabal's bad attitude, David had planned an attack on all that he possessed. The servant said that Nabal was a worthless fellow and no one could speak to him about anything. Abigail made haste and loaded a donkey with loaves of bread, wine, dressed sheep, grain, raisins and cakes of figs and told the servant to take her to David. When she arrived to the spot where David was preparing for battle, she fell at his feet and took the responsibility upon herself for her husband's bad behavior. She told David that he was like his name which meant folly and she asked for mercy for her and her household. David responded by saying, "Blessed be the LORD God who sent you this day to meet me and blessed is your advice. You are blessed because you kept me from shedding blood and from avenging myself with my own hand. Go in peace to your house; see I have hearkened to your voice and have accepted your person."

Abigail returned home and realized that her husband had held a feast and was drunk from wine in her absence. The next morning she told him the story and his heart died within him and he became as a stone. Ten days later, God smote him and he died. Abigail became David's wife.

I picked up a newspaper in Topsham the other day and the editor had written about the first Thanksgiving and details about all the hardships that the pilgrims had endured since discovering the new land. Many people died from illness and starvation during the initial settling of the nation of America, but God was praised and given thanks as the settlers

learned to grow crops and to use the resources that were available to them in the new land. He mentioned that many people forget that God sustains and provides for people or we would all perish. He admonished parents to instill in their children the sense of gratitude to God for his mercy and kindness to the inhabitants of the earth. Thanksgiving is not a day just to get the family together and to have a feast, but to offer thanks to God and to show gratitude to those who have been entrusted with our care through life. We need a relationship with God and we need each other. I hope that we all spend time counting our blessings and sharing words of appreciation to those who love and share life with us. May God bless each one of you this day and draw you closer to him.