



Dr. Peter Hammond
Frontline Fellowship

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CULTIVATING an ATTITUDE of GRATITUDE

"Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18.

Joyful, Prayerful and Thankful

Plainly, it is God's will for us to be joyful, prayerful and thankful.

"Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the other nine?"

"Now it happened as Jesus went to Jerusalem that He passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee. Then as He entered a certain village, there met Him ten men who were lepers, who stood afar off. And they lifted up their voices and said, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!" So when He saw them, He said to them, "Go, show yourselves to the priests." And so it was that as they went, they were cleansed. And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, returned, and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down on his face at His feet, giving Him Thanks. And he was a Samaritan. So Jesus answered and said, "Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the other nine? Were there not any found who returned to give glory to God except this foreigner?" And He said to him, "Arise, go your way. Your faith has made you well." Luke 17:11-19

The Sin of Ingratitude

When I was converted to Christ, 3rd of April 1977, the first sin God convicted me to confess, was lack of gratitude. Before my conversion, I had never thanked God for anything.

An Age of Entitlement

We are living in an age of entitlement, arrogance and pride. People selfishly litter and vandalize, The graffiti and pollution in so many urban areas testifies to this lack of gratitude and selfish sense of entitlement. As a result there are whole groups and movements demanding their rights, looting, rioting, burning down schools, shops and public buildings.

The First Thanksgiving meal was A Sacrifice of Praise

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The original Thanksgiving meal and the celebration in America was in 1621. Half of the pilgrims, who had arrived on the Mayflower, had perished in the harsh winter, but the surviving 50 organized a Thanksgiving celebration and invited 90 Indians to join them in this expression of appreciation to Almighty God for Life, health, strength and food. Sometimes Thanksgiving is an act of sacrifice and faith. "Therefore, by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of Praise to God that is the fruit of our lips, giving Thanks to His Name." Hebrews 13:15.

Fanny Crosby – The Queen of Gospel Songwriters

Fanny Crosby was born in 1820, of Puritan ancestry, a descendant of Mayflower Settlers, Mustard treatment on an inflammation of her eyes led to damage of the optic nerves and life-long blindness for Fanny. Despite her blindness, Fanny Crosby became one of the most prolific Hymn writers in history, composing more than 8,000 Hymns and Gospel songs. More than 100 Million copies were printed in her lifetime. She was described as "The Mother of Modern Congregational Singing in America."

Inspiring and Convicting

Ira Sankey attributed the success of D.L. Moody and Sankey's Evangelistic campaigns, largely to Crosby's Hymns, including: Pass Me Not, O Gentle Saviour; Blessed Assurance; To God Be the Glory; Praise Him, Praise Him; Rescue the Perishing and many others.

Thankful for Her Blindness

She wrote: "It seemed intended by the blessed providence of God that I should be blind all my life and I thank Him for the dispensation. If perfect earthly sight were offered me tomorrow, I would not accept it. I might not have sung Hymns to the praise of God if I had been distracted by the beautiful and interesting things about me. When I get to Heaven, the first Face that shall ever gladden my sight will be that of My Saviour."

Phenomenal Memory

According to her biographer, Annie Willis: "Had it not been for her affliction, she might not have had so good an education, or so great an influence and certainly not so fine a memory." Fanny Crosby memorised five chapters of the Bible each week from age 10. By age 15, she had memorised the four Gospels, the first five Books of the Old Testament, the Book of Proverbs and many of the Psalms.

An Accomplished Musician, Public Speaker and Activist

She learned to play the piano, organ, harp and guitar and became a good soprano singer. In 1943, Fanny Crosby became the first woman to speak to the United States Senate where she read a poem.

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Inner City Missionary

She was a vigorous campaigner for the Temperance Society's Campaign Against Alcohol Abuse and supported The American Female Guardian Society and Home for the Friendless. While Fanny Crosby is best known for her hymns, she was primarily a Rescue Mission worker in the inner city. For decades, Fanny Crosby lived in slum areas of Manhattan, such as Hells' Kitchen, the Bowery and the Tenderloin. As soon as she received payment or contributions for publication or concerts, she donated all proceeds to Missions, to reach the poorest and most needy people in society. "It is good to give thanks to the Lord and to sing praises to Your Name, O Most High; to declare Your loving kindness in the morning and Your faithfulness every night." Psalm 92:1-2.

Imagine Living in Darkness and Silence

When I lead tour groups to the Castle of Good Hope, it is most telling when I shut the door to the dungeon and switch off the light. Immediately there are gasps, shouts and screams from people being exposed to complete darkness for not even a minute. Imagine living your entire life in complete darkness and silence. That was how life was for Helen Keller.

Helen Keller – A Light in Darkness

Born, 27 June 1880, in Tuscumbia, Alabama, an illness took away Helen Keller's hearing and sight when she was only 19 months old. With her family not being able to communicate with her, they viewed her as wild and uncontrollable. However, in 1887, Anne Sullivan became Helen Keller's teacher and through finger spelling w-a-t-e-r into Helen's hand while pumping water over Helen's hand for her to feel, had a breakthrough, which led Helen to learn how to communicate and read with her fingers. At age 24, she graduated from Red Cliff College in 1904 with a Bachelor of Arts Degree. Helen became a tireless advocate for people with disabilities. She travelled to over 40 countries and famously stated that deafness was a greater affliction than blindness.

You Should Experience Blindness for a Few Days

Helen Keller said: "I have often thought that it would be a blessing if each human being were stricken blind and deaf for a few days for some time during his early adult life. It would make him more appreciative of sight and of the joys of sound." "Give thanks to the Father who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the Kingdom of light." Colossians 1:12.

Do You Recognise the Many Blessings God Has Granted You?

Do you appreciate the incredible blessings of sight and sound? Surrounded by such wonderful nature, able to see sights like Table Mountain and to have the legs and health to climb these

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mountains. When did you last thank God for your hands, legs, eyes, ears, sense, sound, taste, for music, for sunshine, for nature, for the birds that sing, for the wild animals, the sea life, the Whales and the Dolphins, the Eagles and the Lions?

Have You Thanked God?

*Have you ever thanked God for His mercy, grace and undeserved favour?

*Have you thanked God for His matchless blessings through regeneration, repentance, faith and adoption as a child of God?

*Have you thanked God for His forgiveness and for the privilege of being His servant and His soldier?

Sin is a Result of a Lack of Gratitude

People would not steal if they were grateful to God for His provision. People would not commit adultery if they were grateful for the spouse God has given them.

Appreciation for Our Parents

Civilisation is built upon gratitude to God and recognition of our debts to previous generations. My appreciation for my parents has only grown in leaps and bounds as I became a parent and for the first time came to understand something of what my parents had sacrificed for me. As Professor Martin Luther declared: "There is no love so sacrificial and unselfish as that of a parent."

Reformation Heritage

We have a great debt to great Reformers such as Professor Martin Luther for championing the great principles of freedom of conscience, freedom of worship, freedom of thought and calling us back to the Bible as the sole foundation for all truth and education. Scripture alone is the ultimate authority.

Back to the Bible

We have so much to be grateful to Reformer Ulrich Zwingli for dispensing with the Latin mass and initiating Biblical Exposition, preaching through every verse, chapter and book of the Bible, applying the Lordship of Christ to all areas of life.

The Bible in Our Own Language

Everyone who has an English Bible should be grateful to William Tyndale, who gave his life, burned at the stake, that we could have the Bible available in English.

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Life and Liberty

The people of India have a tremendous debt of gratitude to Missionary William Carey, who ended widow-burning, the burning of lepers and the sacrifice of infants; and for pioneering the first schools for girls, the first Christian college in Asia, for translating the Bible and New Testament or Gospels into 35 languages!

Faith and Freedom

All of us are deeply indebted to Missionary explorer, Dr David Livingstone, for opening up Africa for the Gospel and for exposing and campaigning to end the rampant Islamic slave trade.

Love in Action

All Nigerians should be grateful to Missionary Mary Slessor, for campaigning tirelessly to end the killing of twins, campaigning against the slave trade, cannibalism and drunkenness, for pioneering Christian schools and planting churches in remote regions of Nigeria.

Setting the Captives Free

We have much to be grateful for, to Member of Parliament, William Wilberforce for his life-long crusade to end the slave trade and to set the captives free.

Enriched and Empowered

All of our lives have been enriched by the Devotional writings of Andrew Murray and the Biblical preaching of Charles Spurgeon. There are so many inventors and innovators whose life's work have made our lives richer and healthier.

Francis Grim of Hospital Christian Fellowship

As an author, I have the opportunity to dedicate books to people who have been a blessing to me. One of my first books, *In the Killing Fields of Mozambique* was dedicated to Francis Grim, the Founder and President of Hospital Christian Fellowship (now Healthcare Christian Fellowship International). It was my great privilege to receive my initial missionary apprenticeship under this great missionary pioneer, who proclaimed the Gospel and established missions in over 110 countries. It was Francis Grim who taught me to pray for world Evangelism, in days of prayer and nights of prayer. I am further grateful for his demanding high standards of excellence from all his staff. Francis Grim's unwillingness to tolerate less than our best and his determination not to accept

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excuses has continued to inspire me to overcome all obstacles and achieve what others said was impossible.

Professor Fritz Haus

I dedicated the Old Testament Survey to Dr. Fritz Haus, who taught me to see Christ in every Book of the Old Testament. Dr. Fritz Haus was a God-fearing, dedicated Christian Missionary, a veteran of the Second World War, he led Bible studies and prayer meetings on the Eastern Front and in North Africa. For over 60 years, he planted churches throughout South Africa. As Professor of the Old Testament at Baptist Theological College, in Cape Town, Dr. Fritz Haus introduced me to the doctrines of the Reformation and the Christology of the Old Testament.

Rev Erlo Stegen

Putting Feet to your Faith, I dedicated to the Founder and Director of KwaSizabantu Mission, which is undoubtedly the most successful mission station in Africa & the world. Rev. Erlo Stegen's lifelong dedication to God and his faithfulness in putting feet to the Faith continues to be an inspiration and example to all Christians.

https://www.christianlibertybooks.co.za/item/putting_feet_to_your_faith_1 We all have so much to be grateful to Uncle Erlo for. God continues to use Uncle Erlo and the Mission he pioneered to bless, challenge, enrich and empower each one of us.

Brent Noebel and His Vision for Sudan

I dedicated the third edition of Faith Under Fire in Sudan to Brent Noebel, who was a good friend and great inspiration. Brent was a living testimony of perseverance and endurance under terribly adverse circumstances. Although blind for the last 21 years of his life, Brent's vision for the suffering Christians in Sudan mobilised thousands of Summit students to become the greatest single sponsor of Bibles for Sudan and film Evangelism in Sudan. By God's grace, there are today, many tens of thousands of South Sudanese and Nubans, who have seen and heard the Gospel graphically portrayed through the Jesus film and/or through the God Story VCD presentations and many tens-of-thousands who received copies of the Scriptures, because of the vision of Brent Noebel and the sacrificial love and generosity of the students and staff of Summit ministries, who Brent inspired and mobilised to do without a few luxuries and donate the money that they would have spent on Starbucks coffee, etc. for Bibles, for Frontline Fellowship to deliver to Sudan.

"I Once Was Blind, But Now I See!"

Brent Noebel went to be with the Lord 18 July 2002, but the impact of his missionary vision and sacrificial generosity continue to echo throughout eternity. Brent did not allow his blindness to

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prevent him from reaching and blessing hundreds-of-thousands of Christians in faraway Sudan. As his favourite hymn, Amazing Grace, declares: "I once was blind, but now I see!"

The Nuba Evangelist Who Had No Feet

I think of the Nuba Evangelist in Sudan, who I met. Despite having had both his feet axed off at the ankles by malicious Muslims, he continued to walk on his knees, or ride on a donkey, to evangelise his neighbours. The Bible declares: "How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring Good News." This brother had no feet and yet he did not allow that to prevent him from reaching, blessing and benefiting his neighbours and even his enemies, with the Gospel of Christ. What excuse do we have?

Persecuted Christians Provide Perspective on our Problems

For many people their problems consist of: What shall I prepare for supper? Many of the people that I have ministered amongst have no such problem, as they have no food.

For many people the dilemma that consumes them is: What shall I wear? Many thousands of the people that I have ministered amongst have only one tattered garment to wear.

What Bible translation should I use? Well, for most of the people in the world, there is only one translation available and many millions do not even have access to that.

In Africa there are over 500 million churchgoers who do not yet have a Bible or New Testament.

"This is the Greatest Gift!"

On numerous occasions, I have heard persecuted Christians in Africa, declare: "I have been praying for five years for my own copy of the Word of God."; "not since the communist burned my Bible have I had the Word of God for myself!" I have seen Christians in Angola, Mozambique and Sudan fall on their knees and weep to receive a copy of the Word of God. I have seen people dance, raising the copy of the Bible that I had just given them, high above their heads, while shouting out their thanksgiving and praises to God that their prayers have been answered now they have their own copy of the Word of God, in their own language! "This is the greatest Gift anyone could ever receive! The Bible in my own language!"

Greedy, Demanding and Ungrateful

All too many people are consumed by the obnoxious habit of demanding! "Give me!" "You must give me!" Often, I have heard "What Christmas do you have for me?" As though Christmas is all about what others can give me, rather than what I can give, first and foremost to the Lord, Whose birthday we are celebrating and then to others, in honour of His great Gift. All too many are greedy, demanding, ungrateful, entitled, self-centred and miserable.

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Joyful Gratitude in War and Peace

In Leo Tolstoy's classic War and Peace novel, one of the prominent characters, Platon Karataev, is a joyful Russian peasant who is always giving thanks to God, praying and sharing what little he has with a stray dog and with fellow prisoners around him. Leo Tolstoy stated that he had actually based this character on a poor, but joyful peasant he had met and it occurred to him that this man, who had so little, was far happier, more joyful and at peace, than all the rich men he knew. It is more blessed to give than to receive.

Taught Thanksgiving Through Trials and Tribulations

I praise God for my times under fire, under aerial and artillery bombardments, in prison and under intense interrogation, in communist prisons. There is not a day that goes by that I am not grateful for freedom, for health, for clean water, for clean sheets, for soap, for the freedom to move and to see God's magnificent creation. To climb Table Mountain and so many other blessings, which I was deprived of and prayed for when in chains and in prison cells. What does God have to do get your attention?

Blasphemous Lack of Gratitude

In typical blasphemous Hollywood fashion, a TV series scripted a line where after the wife had given Thanks for the food, the husband declared: "Why give thanks to God? I'm the one who worked and paid for the food and you are the one who cooked it. So, thanks for nothing, God!" Such foolish, blasphemous and short-sighted wilful blindness is sadly fairly common today. Behind the retailer is the wholesaler and the transporter, whether by vehicle or train, the farmer, the soil, the sun and the rain. Behind all of this is the Hand of God. We should also give thanks to God for our life and health that enables us to work and contribute to the needs of others, while also been able to meet our own family's needs. "Oh, that men would give Thanks to the Lord for His goodness and for His wonderful works to the children of men!" Psalm 107:8.

Our Duty

"No duty is more urgent than that of returning thanks." Ambrose

A Good Habit

"It ought to be as habitual for us to Thank as to ask." C. H. Spurgeon

The Parent of All Virtues

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It has been said that a thankful heart is the parent of all virtues.

The Root Sin

It is also true that a lack of gratitude is a root sin: "The wrath of God is being revealed from Heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness... 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." Romans 1:18-21. Here, failure to give thanks to God is the root sin that leads to futile thinking and foolish, darkened hearts.

The Sin of Ingratitude

In Luke 17:7-19, we read of the ten lepers that were healed by the Lord Jesus. When one of them, a Samaritan, threw himself at Jesus' feet and thanked Him, the Lord Jesus asked: "Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?" In our missions' experience we have also found that barely 10% of those we help, or sponsor, will bother to express their gratitude either verbally, or in a letter, or card. Evidently gratitude is something of a rarity.

One of the Worst Sins

In 1 Timothy 3:1-5 the apostle Paul gives a list of some of the most terrible sins including: "People will be lovers 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, traitorous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God - having a form of godliness but denying its power." Here ungratefulness is listed in the middle of a litany of horrible sins.

A Fruit of Character

One of the first lessons good parents seek to teach their children is to say "Thank You". It takes character and courage to admit being in debt to others. It is humbling. However, those who cannot admit their indebtedness to others cannot learn, nor can they seek forgiveness.

Maturity

Failure to express gratitude is more than immaturity and rudeness, it is ungodly. We are commanded to honour our parents, our elders and our leaders. It is a sign of maturity to acknowledge indebtedness. Anyone who has learned anything is in debt to somebody else. We are all in debt, firstly and mostly, to God Himself, for our life, health, food, talents, family, friends, opportunities and for our salvation itself. We are also in debt to past generations who have

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sacrificed for the freedoms we now enjoy: Reformers, martyrs, pioneers, missionaries, soldiers, parents, teachers, pastors and so many others have sacrificed for our benefit.

Pride, Ingratitude and Unteachability

Those who do not take advice do not think they have anything to learn. They are often the same people who have a problem expressing a genuine heartfelt gratitude to others. It is a sign of pride to be ungrateful - it reveals an unwillingness to acknowledge a debt to others.

An Attitude of Entitlement

Instead of the Christian character of gratitude, our present culture prefers to promote an attitude of entitlement. This is the very opposite of gratitude. It builds on pride and covetousness. It is fuelled by bitterness, greed and envy. All too many in the present humanistic society take things for granted, demand to get, rather than seeking to give. "One man gives freely, yet gains even more, another withholds unduly but comes to poverty." Proverbs 11:24.

Taking God's Blessings for Granted

Dr. Martin Luther observed that we exhibit a degree of thankfulness in life in reverse proportion to the amount of blessing we have received. In *Tabletalk*, Dr. Martin Luther wrote: "The greater God's gifts and works, the less they are regarded (appreciated)." The blessings of life, health, freedom and food are not really appreciated unless they are lost, or threatened. Because sunrises and sunsets occur daily, they are taken for granted.

Consider the Stars

Ralph Waldo Emerson observed that "If the constellations appeared only once in a thousand years, imagine what an exciting event it would be. But because they are there every night, we barely give them a look."

The Hungry and Lonely are More Grateful

Similarly, the blessings of rain are barely appreciated unless one has been through a drought. A hungry man is more thankful for his morsel than a rich man for his heavily laden table. A lonely woman in a nursing home will appreciate a visit more than a popular person who has a party thrown in their honour. A Christian who has suffered under persecution for decades and receives his first copy of the Holy Scriptures will be more thankful for this one book than we are for all the Christian books, Bible translations and magazines that overflow our shelves.



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A Biblical Command

There are at least 138 passages of Scripture that deal with the subject of thanksgiving. We are commanded: "Enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise; give thanks to Him and praise His Name." Psalm 100:4.

"Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful." Colossians 3:15.

"Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." Philippians 4:6-7.

We praise God for our true friends, prayer warriors, co-workers, supporters and allies who stand with us in difficult times. Bad times are good for spiritual work. You do not actually lose friends, you just learn who your real friends are! Through our God we shall do valiantly, it is He who will tread down our enemies. No weapon formed against us shall stand. God has sent His angels to encamp around us. Thanks be to Almighty God, our rock solid foundation, our fortress, our Redeemer and Deliverer.

An Attitude of Gratitude

A grateful mind is a great mind. "Be thankful, therefore, for the least benefit and thou shalt be worthy to receive greater." Thomas a Kempis.

"Give thanks to the Lord, call on His Name; make known among the nations what He has done... Give thanks to the Lord for He is good; His love endures forever." 1 Chronicles 16:8,34