

A Grateful Heart

Luke 17:11-37 Thanks seems to be a word that is used less and less in this culture. People seem to expect to be served, and it doesn't cross their minds to thank the person serving them. This passage in Luke tells the story of ten lepers who were cleansed by Jesus. Only one returned to thank Jesus for healing him. Jesus asked where the other nine were, and then He told the leper who thanked Him that his faith had made him whole. Did something else occur when this leper gave thanks to Jesus? Wasn't he already made whole when Jesus healed the ten lepers?

Do You Believe in Hell?

Luke 16:19-17:10 I had a frightening dream one night, and it changed my life. In the dream I saw masses of blindfolded people walking off a cliff into a fiery ravine. Then I saw Jesus standing close by. I cried out, "Jesus, stop them, stop them!! They are perishing." Then I heard Jesus say, "I cannot stop them. I am in My resurrected form in heaven, but you as the church are My body on earth. On earth My spirit indwells you and desires to use the vessel of your body to do My will. You are My hands, eyes, mouth and feet on earth, and for the Holy Spirit to do His work, you must submit your body to be used by Him. Unless you use your own voice to warn these people, they will all perish."

You May Have to Eat Your Words

Proverbs 13:2-3 We learned earlier that a man is satisfied by the fruit of his lips. Today's proverb conveys this same thought when it says, "A man shall eat well by the fruit of his mouth." Then this proverb adds a special exhortation "He who guards his mouth preserves his life, but he who opens wide his lips shall have destruction."

Talk Your Way Out of Difficulty

The tongue is the red carpet we throw out to Satan to walk right into our lives with his special delivery of troubles.

☒ **Psalm 50:1-23** There is one promise of God that will be fulfilled in every life. Jesus said, "In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). Because we live in a fallen world, there will always be trouble.

This psalm reveals two important responses we should have when trouble comes our way. Verse 15 exhorts us to call upon the Lord in our day of trouble. Verse 23 exhorts us to praise the Lord and to order our conversation aright.

If we will call upon the Lord in the day of trouble, the promise is He will deliver us. If we will praise the Lord and order our conversation aright in the day of trouble, He will show us His salvation.

The moment we enter troublesome times, we should first pray—and then we should be careful about what we say. God will be glorified when we do these two things. If we fail to call upon God in our troubled times, the hope of being delivered through or out of the trouble will be slim.

Preventative medicine is better than a cure. A lot of the trouble we find ourselves in is self-inflicted. We have submitted to fleshly lusts instead of following the Spirit. The preventative medicine to keep us out of trouble is God's Word and prayer. We can prevent the majority of troubles in our lives if we are not anxious about anything, but instead pray about everything. If we stay in God's Word daily, chances are we will be able to discern the origin of the thoughts we have throughout the day. Our thoughts usually come from three sources: God, our own flesh or the devil. We will only be able to recognize the counterfeit if we know the Truth, and we find that in God's Word. We only can take those thoughts captive to Jesus if we recognize who gave us those thoughts.

Another preventative medicine is to be careful about what we speak. There is a proverb that says, "He that keepeth his lips is wise; he keeps his soul from troubles." We get into trouble many times just because we have not been wise in our speech.

David, when he wrote this psalm, knew that the only way God could be glorified in our lives was if we learned to order our conversations aright. The tongue is the red carpet we throw out to Satan to walk right into our lives with his special delivery of troubles.

Even if we guard our tongues, pray about everything and stay in God's Word, some troubles will come our way simply because we live in a corrupt world. Tribulation is in the world and always will be until the Lord sets up His kingdom on earth. The moment trouble comes knocking on your door, you need to begin to praise the Lord because you know He is in control. His plan is to work good out of what Satan means for evil.

The moment you begin to praise the Lord, a glory shield is placed around you because you have ordered your conversation aright. You will not be overwhelmed by whatever trial is facing you. You will be at peace and can even experience fullness of joy in the presence of the Lord.

Learn to Trust in the Lord

Fear is the frontal assault the enemy uses against us. If he can get us in fear, then he has neutralized any effort of ours to overcome him.

Psalm 56:1-13 The Bible exhorts us in many verses to trust in the Lord at all times. There is, however, a special time when we need to say aloud, "I trust in the Lord." That special time is when fear comes upon us. David writes in this psalm, "What time I am afraid, I will trust in You." If you are familiar with David's history, you will know he was provided with many opportunities to be afraid. He constantly was surrounded by enemies, and in the psalms David reveals some of the secrets to overcoming fear. He certainly became an expert at this. David was quite sure that fear would always present its cold, clammy handshake throughout his life. David, however, learned not to shake hands with the devil and receive fear.

Fear is the frontal assault the enemy uses against us. If he can get us in fear, then he has neutralized any effort of ours to overcome him. We must have faith to overcome the enemy, and fear always negates faith. Fear is the anesthesia Satan uses to paralyze so he can then perform his surgery on his victims. If we learn to refuse fear, we will spare ourselves from much of what Satan would love to accomplish in our lives. Jesus

said, "Fear not," and the words "be not afraid" and "fear not" are written over 365 times in the Bible. We see over and over again people who began in faith, but then were overwhelmed by fear. The moment fear entered in, they were neutralized in their effectiveness. An example of this, of course, was Peter when he was walking on the water. Everything was going fine until Peter took his eyes off Jesus and looked at the angry sea. He was overcome with fear and began to sink.

In this psalm David tells us what to do when fear comes. David knew that Satan would never stop trying to put fear on him, but David learned how to resist Satan when he came knocking at the door of his heart with the special delivery marked "FEAR." The moment fear knocked, David said, "I will trust in the Lord." Not one of us is skillful enough to overcome Satan's tactics in our own strength. If, however, we put our trust in the Lord to fight our battles for us, we will have the victory every time.

The next time fear comes knocking at your door, say aloud, "I will trust in the Lord and not be afraid." The moment these words leave your mouth, you will feel a surge of faith and strength rising within you. The Bible tells us not to be anxious about anything, but instead to pray about everything. We have learned today not to be fearful in anything, but to trust the Lord in everything. When we do this, the peace of God will mount guard over our hearts with His peace. Fear always attacks the heart and upper part of the body. Fear causes our hearts to race, and also causes that sinking feeling in the pit of our stomachs. The moment you feel either of these sensations, immediately say aloud, "I will trust in the Lord and not be afraid." A blanket of God's peace will flow over you, and you will be able to fulfill all God desires for you on this earth.

READ: Numbers 19:1-20:29; Luke 1:1-25; Psalm 56:1-13; Proverbs 11:8

Knowing the Lord Fights for You

One of my favorite expressions is, "The victory is ours, and the battle is the Lord's." There have been many trials in my life, as there are in all of our lives. Jesus said that in the world we would have tribulation, but His exhortation was to be of good cheer, for He has overcome the world. James tells us to count it all **joy** when we have trials because these **trials** will form patience and other character traits of God in us.

When we enter trials, we need to think of the word *traits*. When we change the *l* to *t* in the word *trials*, the word *traits* appears. Trials will always be turned into godly traits in us when we trust in the Lord, no matter how hard the trial is.

God allowed the children of Israel to experience trials as they traveled through the wilderness because He wanted their **character traits** to change. He knew they would have a tendency to want to go back to the land of Egypt (the land of bondage) when the going got rough. He knew their character, and we see the children of Israel murmuring and complaining to Moses. They said, "It had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness" (Ex. 14:12, KJV).

In every trial, we face the **temptation** to go back into the land of bondage. The enemy always whispers, "You were better off before you trusted in the Lord." The truth, however, is this: The Lord will fight for us if we hold our peace.

In the midst of our trials, we need to position ourselves in the cleft of the Rock (Jesus Christ) and watch Him do battle for us. Our place is to wait upon Him, trusting in Him with all of our hearts. When we trust in Him and surrender to His

control of the trial, peace will always come. The Word of God says, "I will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed upon the Lord." The Lord is our strength and song, and He has become our **salvation**.

The next time you are in a trial, ask the Lord what character traits of God He is trying to form in you. It may be one of the fruits of the spirit: love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, selfcontrol. Then position yourself in the cleft of the Rock (Jesus Christ) and trust Him. The **victory** is ours, and the battle is the Lord's.

Read: Exodus 13:17–15:19; Matthew 21:23–46; Psalm 26:1–12; Proverbs 6:16–19.

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The Key to Walking in the Spirit Every Day

The longer we walk with the Lord, the more adept we become at knowing His voice and obeying Him.

In Psalm 18, there is one verse that says it all: "As for God, His way is perfect; the word of the Lord is proven; He is a shield to all who trust in Him" (v. 30, NKJV). To walk through this life with God's success, we must walk in His ways, live by His Word and trust in Him.

A successful person in God's view is one who walks daily in God's Spirit and obeys His Word. The only work we do on this earth that will remain eternally are those things done not by our own self-effort but by the guidance of the Holy Spirit and

the grace of God.

The key to walking daily in the Spirit is to trust God with all of our hearts and lean not on our own understanding (Prov. 3:5-6). As we trust God with all of our hearts, He will prove His Word to be true in this life.

Every day we trust what we are hearing from the Lord through His Word and through the promptings of the Holy Spirit. When we act in faith upon His Word and His guidance, God will work through us both to will and to do of His good pleasure (Phil. 2:13). We believe and trust, and He accomplishes His will through our lives.

The perfect illustration of this was an experience Arthur Burt had when he was on a bus in England. Arthur is an evangelist from Wales, and God uses him mightily even now when he is in his 90s.

He shares a story about riding a bus when it was pouring down rain outside. Suddenly he heard the following instruction: "Get off the bus at the next stop."

He argued with this still quiet voice and said, "But it is pouring down rain outside, and I have not arrived at my destination." Thus ensued a battle Arthur describes as a battle between "the fanatic in the attic" and "the fellow in the cellar."

Sometimes the Holy Spirit asks us to do things that are not reasonable in the natural. The Holy Spirit was asking Arthur to do something past his human logic. The fellow in the cellar that was Arthur's flesh was saying, "It's pouring outside, and besides, the next stop is not my stop." The fanatic in the attic won the war, and Arthur got off the bus.

As he ran for shelter he saw a car approaching him. Then the car stopped right in front of him, and he recognized a lady he had met at some of his meetings. She yelled past the rolling

thunder, "Arthur Burt, is that you?"

He replied, "Yes," and then she offered him a lift.

He gladly got in her car, and then she asked, "If you don't have anything to do in the next two hours, would you like to accompany me to a prayer meeting?" He didn't have anything pressing, so he answered in the affirmative.

That prayer meeting where he ended up sharing from the Scriptures turned out to be one of the most powerful meetings Arthur had ever led. Since that experience Arthur tries to obey quickly that still quiet voice of the Holy Spirit, even when it seems illogical.

God's ways are higher than ours. Therefore, we must trust him and lean not to our own understanding.