

Giving God Thanks After Being Robbed

One of my favorite stories about maintaining a thankful heart comes from the respected Bible commentator Matthew Henry. At a certain point in his walk with God, he made a commitment to always abide by the often-quoted biblical command:

“In everything give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you” (1 Thess. 5:18, MEV).

Of course, this verse does not mean we give thanks to God for the problems of life but rather we thank God in spite of the problems of life—thus rising above them. Not surprisingly, Matthew Henry’s commitment was put to a test soon after he made it.

He was robbed.

At first he felt compelled to react in negative ways: upset, angry, depressed and fearful. But then he remembered his commitment. So he sat down, took hold of his mind and prayerfully pondered how to respond the situation. Feeling inspired, he wrote down four things he decided he could be thankful for, despite the life-threatening encounter he had just endured.

This is the proclamation he penned to God:

“Let me be thankful first because I was never robbed before; second, because although they took my purse, they did not take my life; third, because although they took my all, it was not much; and fourth, because it was I who was robbed, not I who robbed.”

When I was confronted with this story and realized how thankfulness calmed his mind and realigned his faith, I was

immediately convicted of areas of negativity in my own thought life and speech that needed to be adjusted. The thought kept echoing in my heart, "If Matthew Henry could be that thankful after being robbed literally, then I need to more passionately express thankfulness when it seems I've been robbed—mentally, emotionally or even physically—by circumstances of life.

"Robbed by who or what?" you may say. Robbed by unexpected adversities, by the lower nature, by our own failures, by the corrupt world system, by harmful relationships or even by evil spirits whose agenda is to "steal, and kill, and destroy" (John 10:10).

Anyone professing faith in God should pursue this mindset in the following two ways:

First when we approach God in prayer, we should rehearse with gratitude the things He already has done in our lives, as commanded in Psalm 100:4:

"Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise; be thankful to Him, and bless His name."

Second, when we present our petitions, we're instructed to thank Him in advance for things we desire Him to do:

"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and supplication, with gratitude, make your requests known to God" (Phil. 4:6).

Six things are accomplished by giving God thanks in this dual way (as illustrated by the following acrostic):

T—Tames the turmoil of the mind

H—Helps the focus of the heart

A—Acknowledges the goodness of God

N—Nullifies the influence of the enemy

K–Kindles the fire of joy unspeakable

S–Sets the stage for miraculous, divine intervention. {eo}

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