

Healing of the ten lepers

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Let us turn to the gospel of Luke, Luke 17: 11-19.

Luke 17: 11-19

- 11 And it came about while He was on the way to Jerusalem, that He was passing between Samaria and Galilee.
- 12 And as He entered a certain village, ten leprous men who stood at a distance met Him;
- 13 and they raised their voices, saying, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!"
- 14 And when He saw them, He said to them, "Go and show yourselves to the priests." And it came about that as they were going, they were cleansed.
- 15 Now one of them, when he saw that he had been healed, turned back, glorifying God with a loud voice,
- 16 and he fell on his face at His feet, giving thanks to Him. And he was a Samaritan.
- 17 And Jesus answered and said, "Were there not ten cleansed? But the nine-- where are they?"

- 18 "Was no one found who turned back to give glory to God, except this foreigner?"
19 And He said to him, "Rise, and go your way; your faith has made you well."

As we go through this passage, let us have a look at some of the principles that are revealed which can be helpful in our own lives.

Walking with God at all times

In this passage, we are told that the Lord Jesus was travelling to Jerusalem and on His way, He entered this village where there were ten leprosy men. They cried out to Him and He helped them. Although His objective was to go to Jerusalem, He responded to these ten lepers along the way – He was always conscious of the needs of others. He did not regard this as a disruption in His life, but as part of His walk with God in His service.

It is true that in our lives we need to be conscious that some things are more important and must be given priority. In the midst of many daily responsibilities, we cannot afford to lose sight of our mission, our primary goal in life. However, do we recognize that many of the things that God wants us to do take place in common circumstances of life?

In the life of the Lord Jesus, we see in John 4: 3-26 a similar kind of situation where He left Judea and departed into Galilee. He had to pass through Samaria and he came to a city of Samaria, called Sychar. As He passed through Samaria, the Lord Jesus had enough time to listen to this woman of Samaria, to attend to her need, to share the gospel with her, to help her to drink of the living water. Subsequently, many of the Samaritans also came to believe in the Lord through the testimony of this woman as well as from the direct witness of the Lord Jesus Himself.

Likewise, we see in Mark 5: 21-34, the Lord Jesus was on His way to heal the daughter of a synagogue official. He was on the way to help this little girl who was at the point of death. This was something

important and urgent to attend to but we are told in verse 25 that a woman who had a haemorrhage for 12 years was in great need and she came to the Lord Jesus, touched His garments and was healed. The Lord Jesus had enough time to stop, and bring attention to the fact that she was healed and that she was healed because of her faith in the Lord.

Mark 5:34

And He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your affliction."

He had time to talk to her and encourage her in her faith. If our lives are in continuous fellowship with the Lord, we will also be able to recognize situations that we should attend to even though they may not seem important. This must be done with the consciousness and carefulness not to lose sight of, or be distracted from, or to dilute what is primary in our lives. We will have enough time for all that God wants us to do, hence we need not be so anxious and so hasty that we leave out many things in life because of our concern that we have something important to do. When we are busy attending to important issues and a little child comes to us, happy to tell us what he has done, it is easy for us to ignore him and continue with our "important work". However, if we are prayerful, we may recognize that in some such situations, a short pause to acknowledge the child and encourage him could at times mean much to him and be contributory in his future development in the positive direction. However, it is also easy to be distracted from important issues by many such incidents and we need to be vigilant and prayerful in our responses, with wisdom and regulation.

Calling for help

In the incident of the ten lepers, we notice that in the midst of their suffering they expressed their need, they raised their voices saying, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!" They knew their need and they cried out

to the Lord. They must have had some awareness of who the Lord Jesus was, as they cried out to Him, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!" We do not know how much they knew of the Lord, but they knew enough to recognize that He was able to heal them and give them help from God. One of them later returned and he glorified God. So there was a reasonable degree of recognition of who the Lord Jesus was, and in their need they cried out to the Lord.

In our lives too, when we have a great need we may raise our voices, we may cry out to God and persist in crying to the Lord in our need. Often, it is in difficult times that men draw near to God and cry out to Him for help. When things are easy, when life goes on smoothly, many of us do not seem to recognize that we need God just as much. We do not sufficiently recognize that without life from God, we have no life in ourselves.

Obedience in faith

In verse 14, we read, "And when He saw them, He said to them, "Go and show yourselves to the priests." The Lord Jesus answered their cry but His response may at first seem strange. He did not seem to be responding to their request. They were lepers and they wanted to be healed by the Lord Jesus. It was likely that they had heard that He had healed many people who were sick. He had touched them and they were made well. Many people were miraculously healed by the Lord Jesus and these lepers called on Him, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us". However, the Lord Jesus said, "Go and show yourselves to the priests." He did not heal them directly but asked them to go and show themselves to the priests. Some people may be reluctant to go in that way. They may say, "Please heal me first. After I am cleansed, I will go and show myself to the priests."

There is another incident, recorded in Luke chapter 5, in which we see the Lord Jesus healing a leper by touching him.

Luke 5: 12-14

- 12 And it came about that while He was in one of the cities, behold, *there was* a man full of leprosy; and when he saw Jesus, he fell on his face and implored Him, saying, "Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean."
- 13 And He stretched out His hand, and touched him, saying, "I am willing; be cleansed." And immediately the leprosy left him.
- 14 And He ordered him to tell no one, "But go and show yourself to the priest, and make an offering for your cleansing, just as Moses commanded, for a testimony to them."

In this instance, it was after he was cleansed that the Lord Jesus instructed him to show himself to the priest. However, with regard to the ten lepers, the Lord Jesus said, "Go and show yourselves to the priests" before He healed them. Instead, it was "as they were going" that they were cleansed. It was in the act of obedience, it was in the exercise of faith that they were cleansed.

In our own lives, we may at times see God answering our prayer in a certain way and when we pray similarly on another occasion, we may expect Him to do the same thing. When He does not do that, we may become discouraged, we may lose faith, we may give up, we may not respond well. In various situations, the Lord may require obedience and faith before He will help us in a more definite and more obvious way. When He says, "Go", are we willing to go, and trust Him to do as He sees fit? Or, do we demand that He must act first and then we go? We should always be available and ready to do whatever He may require of us, even when we find it difficult emotionally and naturally. At the same time, we can prepare ourselves for a healthy response of obedience and faith as we seek to appreciate more deeply the ways of the Lord and understand more fully what is in His heart, and set our

heart to identify with Him as well as take practical steps to learn whatever may be helpful in that direction.

At times we may recognize that the Lord wants us to take a certain course of action but we are afraid to do so. In this state, we may say to the Lord, "Lord, please remove this fear and then I will take that course of action. When You have strengthened me and I have peace and calm in my heart, then I will do my part." However, that peace and calm may not come to us until we take the step to obey Him in faith and true obedience. At times, the peace and calm may not come to us even after we obey Him, but the Lord will undertake for us such that it will be helpful for our lives, as we learn to develop our own convictions. The way that the Lord undertakes for us may be different from our expectations but it will be meaningful and helpful for our development. When the lepers took the step to go to the priests, it was an act of obedience. It was also an act of faith. In verse 19, the Lord Jesus told this man who returned, "Rise, and go your way; your faith has made you well." It was because they believed the Lord Jesus that they went; it was because they trusted that He knew what He was doing that they obeyed. As they obeyed in faith, the Lord undertook and He healed them.

Application in context

The Lord's instructions to the lepers to fulfil the requirements of the Law of Moses were appropriate in that context but not applicable to our situations today. This is a helpful principle to be conscious of in our walk with the Lord.

In both incidents of healing of the lepers, the Lord Jesus instructed them to fulfil the requirements in the Law of Moses. In the incident of the ten lepers, the Lord Jesus said, "Go and show yourselves to the priests". In the other incident of the healing of a leper, in Luke 5:14, the Lord Jesus

also said, "But go and show yourself to the priest, and make an offering for your cleansing, just as Moses commanded, for a testimony to them". When the Lord Jesus preached on the mountain, He declared that He came to fulfil the Law (Matthew 5: 17). When He healed the lepers, He had not yet accomplished His mission. He therefore instructed them to follow what Moses had commanded in the Law, including these offerings. When He said, "It is finished!" (John 19: 30), He had completed His mission and had fulfilled the Law. The ceremonies in the Law looking forward to the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus on the Cross were fulfilled. After that it would not be necessary or right to offer these sacrifices: the Mosaic Law was already superseded.

This helps us to understand the importance of context in our lives. The instructions that God has given are meant to be applied with understanding of the context. Some instructions are intended for all occasions while others are for specific situations and are temporary. For example, the moral law of God is applicable for all time, while ceremonial laws and other laws specific for the nation of Israel were meant for a limited period of time. Likewise, what God has instructed a particular person in his situation is suitable for his context but it may not be suitable for another person in his context. For example, God called Peter to minister among the Jews while He wanted Paul to concentrate on the Gentiles, and He wants all of us to love others as He has loved us.

Gratitude

The remaining verses of the passage that we are considering centre on the major subject of gratitude, which is important for us to ponder over more deeply.

From verses 15-19, we are told that although all the ten lepers who came to the Lord Jesus were healed by Him and experienced God's

mercy, only one came back and expressed his gratitude towards the Lord, thanking Him and glorifying God. The Lord Jesus was appreciative of this man and He commented, "Were there not ten cleansed? But the nine -- where are they? Was no one found who turned back to give glory to God, except this foreigner?" He then told him, "Rise, and go your way; your faith has made you well.

Let us ponder over what is described in verse 15: "Now one of them, when he saw that he had been healed, turned back, glorifying God with a loud voice". In such a situation, a natural response would have been, instead of turning back, to carry on – that would have been much easier to do. Since he had come to be healed and he was asked to go to the priests and found that he was healed as he went, he could have been satisfied with the outcome and gone on his way. This is what the other nine did. However, this man turned back. This required an active choice, an exercise of the will. It was an active step that the man had to take. It may have required him to walk quite a distance to come back. Some may reason, "Why bother? Why make such an effort just to say a 'thank you'? Perhaps the Lord might not appreciate it anyway." This man did not think in this way. He was sufficiently touched by what the Lord had done for him that he turned back. He took the active step because of gratitude.

We are told here in verse 15 that he "turned back, glorifying God with a loud voice". A loud voice does not always mean healthy enthusiasm, but in this instance, it was likely to be an expression of heartfelt gratitude. He glorified God with a loud voice. Earlier, he had cried out to God because of his need; he was earnest in seeking for help and we see that he was as enthusiastic in his gratitude and praise as he was eager in seeking help. This is commendable: a man who knows his need and cries out to God in all sincerity, humility, and urgency, seeking the Lord's help, and one who, when he is helped, just as enthusiastically

praises God and thanks Him. Many may do the same in crying out to God for help, but not thank Him when helped.

We notice that the emphasis in verse 15 is "glorifying God". It shows that this man recognized the source of life. He knew that the Lord Jesus worked by God's power. He knew that he was healed because of the mercy of God and that was why he glorified God. The Lord Jesus referred to this in verse 18: "Was no one found who turned back to give glory to God, except this foreigner?" The response of the Lord Jesus shows that this was the right thing to do.

From time to time, we may receive help from various people, and, while we are thankful to those who help us, do we look beyond all these external circumstances to the ultimate source of absolute goodness and perfection, the source of all help and all life, God Almighty? In this incident, we know that the Lord Jesus Himself is also God, but He was also helping the people in His capacity as the Perfect Man, and as the Mediator between God and man (1 Timothy 2: 5).

As we view the Lord Jesus as the Perfect Man showing love and compassion to the people in need, we see that this man was able to recognize that the Lord Jesus was a Man sent from God, and that God was the source of the help that he received. Do we also recognize God's goodness to us in all circumstances, whether He provides us a job, or gives us a place to stay, or helps us through a particularly difficult time and trial? Do we see beyond the help of human beings, the hand of Almighty God and His love and mercy towards us?

We should also notice that although this man glorified God, he did not forget the Lord Jesus. Verse 16 tells us: "and he fell on his face at His feet, giving thanks to Him." While he glorified God, he also thanked the Lord Jesus. He could appreciate that the Lord Jesus helped him out of love

for him as He laboured together with God. In recognition of the sincere and genuine love of the Lord Jesus, he thanked Him. Whether he recognized the Lord Jesus as God is not clearly stated here, although his action of falling at His feet could imply that he recognized the Lord Jesus to be more than a human prophet. The principle that we can appreciate here is that he gave glory to God and he thanked the one whom God had sent. There was gratitude to God as well as to the one through whom God had blessed. In this context we see that the one through whom God had blessed clearly did so in all purity of life, in genuine love and kindness towards him.

Gratitude an attitude

There are some principles that we can ponder over as we consider the issue of gratitude towards God.

In this incident, the grateful man did something as an expression of his gratitude. We must appreciate that gratitude is first and foremost an attitude of the heart. It is not primarily the outward action itself. Perhaps we can say that “gratitude is a great attitude” or “gratitude is a good attitude”: “great” in the sense of something noble, something that we should cultivate, and “good” in that it is meaningful and right morally. It is first and foremost an attitude of heart, that we do appreciate the kindness that has been shown to us, the help that has been given to us.

We know that the attitude in our heart would also be expressed in various forms. True gratitude is not just sealed up in our hearts: it will be expressed in various ways, but the appropriate manner of expression may vary with the context.

For this leper, his gratitude was expressed in his taking the step to come back to where the Lord Jesus was, to give glory to God and to

thank the Lord Jesus specifically. However, this expression of gratitude was not limited to that moment of time. For the rest of his life, he would be likely to remember this event – he would probably not forget what the Lord Jesus had done for him. If his gratitude was deep enough, he could also have considered, “What can I do that I may honour God in return for all His goodness to me?” We see therefore, that gratitude will be expressed, not just in the heart, but also in our lives: the way we live our lives.

Gratitude to God

Let us consider, first, our gratitude towards God, and then briefly consider gratitude towards people who help us.

Gratitude is a response in our heart, an attitude of appreciation for help that has been rendered to us. A person who is grateful may seek to “repay” in some form or other what he has received. We know that, most of the time, we cannot equally repay or exactly repay what we have received. The word “repay” is used in this context in the sense of seeking to do something in return that is helpful for the other person.

When we consider gratitude towards God, we should then ask ourselves these questions, “What can I do for God? What can I do that will mean much to Him? What can I do that will bring meaning in His sight? What can I do that will bring pleasure to Him?” I have used the phrase, “bring pleasure to Him” because God is perfect. Since God is morally perfect, whatever is of pleasure to God is of good quality; it is something good and noble. This would not always be true when applied to fallible men who may be pleased with many things that are not good. However when we seek to do things for God and live a life that is pleasing to God, this would certainly be an appropriate response of gratitude to Him.

We can also consider depth of gratitude to God from the perspective of how much we are prepared to do for Him in the direction of what He regards as meaningful. This bears a relationship with the quality of our worship of God. In this context, the issue involves not only gratitude but also the moral and spiritual goodness of God. If we were deeply grateful to Him, we would want to offer our lives to Him in worship because He is morally perfect and worthy of our worship. We would seek to please Him in all that we do, seeking to understand what He desires, and doing our utmost to accomplish what He desires. Gratitude is an important expression of what is in our heart. If we reflect on the way we respond to God, the things that we are willing to do for Him and the things we are not willing to do for Him, we can identify the depth of our gratitude to God and our appreciation of His moral and spiritual perfection.

In our response to God, we may sometimes "calculate" how much difficulty we have to go through to do something for God, how much inconvenience or pain that would involve. This kind of approach often indicates a very limited kind of gratitude. If we deeply appreciate that what God has done for us is infinite in moral worth and meaningfulness, then our response to God in our gratitude must be total and absolute. If we understand the meaning of the Cross and the sacrifice that God has gone through for our sake, we will recognize that there is nothing that we can ever do that will match what He has gone through for us. If our response is not total, it is an indication of inadequate gratitude or ingratitude. A sufficiently deep appreciation of what God has done for us should draw forth the kind of response where we give ourselves totally to Him, to love Him, to honour Him, to obey Him, to do whatever He desires, whatever brings pleasure to His heart. However small the matter or however great it is, we will not be frivolous, we will not be careless, and we will not be neglectful of whatever God has said.

If we are, it may mean a lack of gratitude on our part. While there can be other factors that contribute to such a response, we can also recognize that when our gratitude to God is deep enough, we will be prepared to overcome all difficulties in our path because of our love for Him, as we know that He is a God who is worthy of our total devotion.

We saw that the leper thanked the Lord Jesus for one specific thing, that is, for healing him of his leprosy. While this is meaningful, it is important for us to appreciate that a heart of deep gratitude to God will not be limited to only specific events but will be present at all times in our lives. In 1 Thessalonians 5: 18 the apostle Paul says: "in everything give thanks..." What is the implication of this verse for our lives? "In everything give thanks" means that in all circumstances, in all situations, in all events, whatever may be taking place in our lives, we should give thanks. We should not give thanks for the evil things that take place in our lives, the harm that people have done or the evil that is going on in this world. We do not give thanks for such things but we should always be giving thanks to God for the way that He deals with our lives in every situation. Our thankfulness is directed to God in all circumstances, and is not based on the specific events taking place.

Why is it important to give thanks to God in every situation rather than only for specific situations where we have benefited in a way that we can obviously recognize? If we understand this sufficiently deeply in our lives, it can make a great difference in the attitude of our hearts, the way we live each day, and how meaningful we will find life to be. It is because we have not learned to give thanks to God in everything that we may find that we are often very miserable. We may think, "I will give thanks to God when the trial is over, when He has seen me through it, when He has delivered me from this difficulty." When we are going through very difficult times, we may find it difficult to give thanks to

God. Our concept of giving thanks is often very limited because the gratitude in our hearts is rather limited. It then applies only to specific things that the Lord has done for us. If we ponder over the reality that God is morally perfect, and all His intentions towards us are good continuously, then we can see that it is appropriate to give thanks to Him in every situation. Though at times we may not recognize it, God is actually caring for us all the time. If this is so, then we should be thankful to God all the time. We should not wait till the problem is solved before we thank Him.

This approach does not mean that we do not fight against evil. It does not mean that we go through life situations passively. We are involved in a spiritual warfare, and we must fight against the powers of evil and destroy their fortresses. However, beyond all this, can we see the majestic sovereign hand of God leading us through? Can we submit to Him and praise Him and worship Him and give thanks to Him in the midst of all the suffering that we are going through? This is very important; it is a measure of the gratitude of our heart and our trust in Him.

Let us look at a passage from the Scriptures that tells us specifically how God deals with His children.

Hebrews 12: 5-7, 10-13

- 5 and you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons, "MY SON, DO NOT REGARD LIGHTLY THE DISCIPLINE OF THE LORD, NOR FAINT WHEN YOU ARE REPROVED BY HIM;
- 6 FOR THOSE WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE DISCIPLINES, AND HE SCOURGES EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVES."
- 7 It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom *his* father does not discipline?

- 10 For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He *disciplines us* for *our* good, that we may share His holiness.
- 11 All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.
- 12 Therefore, strengthen the hands that are weak and the knees that are feeble,

- 13 and make straight paths for your feet, so that *the limb* which is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed.

This passage refers to situations that we go through in life that are painful and sorrowful; they do not seem to be joyful. Verse 11 says: "All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful..." but it is in the midst of these seemingly sorrowful situations that we are to appreciate verse 6 "For those whom the Lord loves He disciplines". The word translated as "disciplines" is associated with the principle of bringing up of children, the training and the teaching, the instruction of children, to bring them up so that they learn to grow up well. It includes chastening them for their well-being. Those whom He loves He disciplines, He chastens: He trains us to build us up. This takes place because He loves us. The objective is explained in verse 10: "...that we may share His holiness". The goal is for us to be partakers of the holiness of God and we are told that if we are exercised and trained by God's discipline, there will emerge the peaceful fruit of righteousness. God's intention is to transform our character. In situations of life, various moral weaknesses in us can surface and become more obvious. If we submit to God's discipline, obey Him and trust Him, we will be transformed, and we will share His holiness, bearing forth the fruit of righteousness. Can we give thanks to God in such times of discipline, in such times of difficulty? It is obvious that we ought to, because we can see that God loves us, and He is doing it for our good.

When God disciplines us when we have gone astray, He may at times allow the powers of evil to attack us so that we may be purified in the process. As we cry out to God and we learn to live a life of purity, we are transformed in the process. As God responds to our call, He may deal with the powers of evil and their influence on our lives. On other occasions, it may be situations where others do not treat us well. God may sometimes allow this when we have not been patient in our lives, or

when we have been complaining and grumbling. He may allow several of such difficulties to come our way to train us.

When we are in a healthy state, God will still bring us through difficult times in order to help us build greater strength and maturity in our lives. This will also help us to understand the wiles of the evil one, and teach us to identify with the Lord. When we are in a healthy state, the kind of difficulties would be different from that which may arise when we sin against Him. We see then that whether we are in a spiritually healthy state or not, difficulties have a significant function in the development of our lives. We should therefore not be preoccupied with asking God to remove problems from our lives. While we should resist whatever is from the powers of darkness, and we should also learn to avoid unnecessary suffering, we must first learn to submit to God and worship Him and be thankful to Him in all circumstances.

Ingratitude

What about ingratitude? Why is it that ingratitude is such a common feature in Christians, as seen in their responses to God's dealings in their lives?

When there is a lack of thankfulness in our hearts towards God, it is a manifestation of ingratitude. This is seen in the way we live for Him. How much are we prepared to do for Him? Any hesitancy to do the will of God, any disobedience to Him involves ingratitude to Him (even though other issues may contribute to it) because it indicates that we have not sufficiently appreciated the meaningfulness of what He has done for us and what He desires for our good.

Why is there so much of ingratitude? One very basic reason is a self-centred and self-seeking life. These ten lepers came to the Lord Jesus because they had a need. The Lord Jesus helped them in their

hour of need. When their need was satisfied, nine of them went away. Why should they bother to go back and thank Him, what further benefit would they receive? Perhaps if they had calculated that they might have another need of His help, they might have come back, just in case they needed Him again, but would that be gratitude?

We often come to God because of our need. In our need, we call upon Him to help us, sometimes with great urgency. When He has helped us, we may readily forget what He has done for us. We can see it so clearly in the lives of the Israelites. God did many great things for them, delivering them from severe bondage in Egypt, providing for them every day in the wilderness, giving them water out of the rock, and sending quails to feed them. Yet they readily forgot what God had done for them when they went through some suffering. Why did they forget God's goodness when they suffered? Basically, it was because they were self-seeking. When they were in pain, they no longer remembered God's goodness. When they went through difficulties, they did not remember what God had done for them in the past and they murmured and grumbled.

Do we also question God and complain when we go through difficult times? Are we sufficiently conscious of what He has done for us and what He desires for our good? The apostle Paul emphasizes this in Romans 8: 32: "He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?" Are we conscious that it brings much pain to God when He sees His children with such ingratitude in their hearts?

Gratitude to man

I want to briefly consider the issue of gratitude to man and then go on to consider why it is often the "foreigner" who is thankful.

Our gratitude to man needs qualification in that we need to distinguish different kinds of helpfulness that people show to us. Many people may help us in the course of our life, but we need wisdom to understand why they are helpful to us. There are many people who are “helpful”, but they have ulterior motives. There is something that they want from you and they help you, not because they genuinely care for you, but because they want to obtain something in return. In this situation they may appear quite positive and helpful. We know that Satan is the master-deceiver. He may promise us many good things but in reality they are not good and his intention is to destroy us.

For the people in the world, they may sometimes do things that are helpful to us, for example, helping us to find a job. We are thankful that we have found the job but the kind of attitude that we should show towards the person who helps us will depend upon our understanding of that person, whether it is genuine kindness or there are ulterior motives behind what is being done. In many instances, there is a mixture of positive helpfulness together with some aspect of self-seeking, at times looking for appreciation and gratitude for what he has done. The degree of our appreciation should bear a relationship with the meaningfulness and the quality of help that is rendered.

If it is genuine kindness, we should have gratitude for whatever we have received. But there is a difference in terms of response, compared with our response to God. In our response to God, our gratitude to Him should result in a life that seeks to please God, but gratitude to someone who has genuinely helped us does not mean that we should always please that person. This is an important qualification because man is morally fallible. What man may be pleased with may not be good and what we should seek to do for them may not be what they want us to do. So while we should seek to please God absolutely

because He is perfect, our response to man concentrates on a proper attitude of gratitude in our heart if it is genuine goodness to us, rather than to please them, unless it is meaningful to do so in some situations. The manner of expression of our gratitude must be based on the principles of God's kingdom.

Even in our relationship with fellow human beings, there is too much of ingratitude. The many kindnesses that people have shown to us are very easily forgotten when they hurt us a little. Sometimes, in their moment of faltering they may hurt us, but in that moment of hurt we may forget all the kindness that they have shown to us. At other times, we mistakenly think that the person has done wrong to us when it is not so. Even that may remove from our memory the goodness that has been done in the past. That also is an expression of ingratitude. So let us bear in mind that even in our relationship with people, God expects us to learn to be grateful, to remember genuine kindness that has helped us but the way we express our gratitude needs wisdom and a prayerful spirit.

Familiarity

Let us come back to the gospel of Luke 17 and look at the last few verses. We are told in verse 16 that this man was a Samaritan and in verses 17 and 18, the Lord Jesus said, "Were there not ten cleansed? But the nine - where are they? Was no one found who turned back to give glory to God, except this foreigner?" This man was a Samaritan and the Samaritans had less knowledge of God and His ways compared with the Jews. Although they knew so much less, we can see that this man showed much greater gratitude and a healthier faith than the others. Why is that so? There are various factors that can contribute to this kind of response. One of the factors is the influence of familiarity: when we are very familiar with a situation, we tend to take things for granted and fail to properly

appreciate what is of true value. We can see some examples of this in other parts of the Scriptures.

In Matthew 11: 20-24 the Lord Jesus Christ was angry with many people who had seen His miracles and were unrepentant.

Matthew 11: 20-24

- 20 Then He began to reproach the cities in which most of His miracles were done, because they did not repent.
- 21 "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles had occurred in Tyre and Sidon which occurred in you, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.
- 22 "Nevertheless I say to you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in *the* day of judgment, than for you.
- 23 "And you, Capernaum, will not be exalted to heaven, will you? You shall descend to Hades; for if the miracles had occurred in Sodom which occurred in you, it would have remained to this day.
- 24 "Nevertheless I say to you that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in *the* day of judgment, than for you."

The Lord Jesus said that if these miracles had taken place in those non-Jewish cities, they would have repented. On the other hand, many of the Jews did not repent in spite of the Lord Jesus manifesting His divine presence through many miracles done in their midst.

In Matthew 13: 53-58, we are told that when the Lord Jesus came and taught in the synagogue in His home town, the people were astonished and their response was: "Is not this the carpenter's son?" And verse 57 tells us: "And they took offense at Him, but Jesus said to them, 'A prophet is not without honor except in his home town and in his *own* household.'" We notice here that when the Lord Jesus came into His own home town, many of them did not believe Him, did not appreciate Him, and did not recognize what He was doing for them. These were people who should have known better – they had seen the life of the Lord Jesus and they should have recognized His moral quality, but they did not appreciate Him.

In both of the above incidents, the influence of familiarity affected their response. The Jews who saw the miracles could have been very familiar with many of the things that were taking place. The people in Nazareth were familiar with the Lord Jesus Christ; He was always with them over those years. And because of this familiarity, they did not appreciate Him as they should have.

Among the ten lepers, the Jewish lepers could have been affected by the degree of familiarity with the Lord Jesus and His constant presence in ministering in the midst of the Jews, while the “foreigner” was deeply appreciative of the grace shown towards him. However, familiarity in itself need not lead to ingratitude or diminished gratitude – this is basically an expression of a self-centred life.

Self-gratification

Related to this point is that very often, we do not appreciate things when our self-gratification is satisfied. Yes, we may have a certain need, a certain longing, and when that need has been satisfied, we may not want help any more and we may not appreciate what has been done for us. For example, when you are very poor and you find it so difficult just to have enough to eat every day, when someone comes and provides for you just one meal, you are so very thankful, you are so very appreciative towards the person who has provided for you. If he were to give you food every day, you may be constantly grateful to him. But if this same person, after having provided you one meal, also helps you to get a job such that you can provide for yourself as well as contribute to the needs of others, would you continue to appreciate what he has done? In such a situation, there may be a tendency to be grateful for only a while, but soon to forget what has been done for us. Why is that so? Again, it is because of the self-centred kind of life – what we want is our own gratification, and when we have obtained what we want, what we need,

we may become less conscious of our need and we may soon forget the help that has been rendered.

Likewise with the principle of familiarity, we do not really appreciate truth for the sake of truth; we do not appreciate goodness because it is goodness. Very often, our appreciation of things is in relation to our natural thinking and ourselves. We may say, "I already know these things." Since we already "know", the value is diminished. Is it not true that for many young Christians, when they first learn the basic principles of the Scriptures and how God cares for them, that God does hear and answer prayer, they are excited and eager, and they come to God with earnestness to read the Scriptures and to pray to Him? After some time, when they begin to learn and become familiar with the things of the Kingdom of God, they no longer have the same kind of appreciation and eagerness.

When we grow in maturity, our enthusiasm for the things of the Kingdom of God (though it may not be manifested in the same form) should have far greater impact and meaning in our lives. We should be more eager for the truths of the Scriptures, and we should find it more meaningful to pray to God, than when we were young Christians. However, it is often not so. We become unhealthily familiar with God. We may think, "I can readily come into God's presence; I can do so at any time; so why should I make so much effort to spend time in prayer?" Consider the Israelites in the Old Testament times: they were very conscious of the awesomeness of God's presence, and they often approached God with trembling and fear. In contrast, many people come before God today with very little reverence for Him and at times with a spirit of frivolity. When God allows us the freedom to gather together to worship Him, we may not appreciate the seriousness of the time of worship as we come before God. Think of the Israelites when

they “perceived the thunder and the lightning flashes and the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw *it*, they trembled and stood at a distance” (Exodus 20: 18). Does it require such things to bring into our hearts that kind of reverence and awe of God? It is a sad thing that very often it does require such things to wake us up and to help us to have a proper regard for God and to be grateful to Him and to love Him. It need not be like this if we learn to re-orientate ourselves morally.

Instead of being self-centred in our lives, we should concentrate our attention on God and who He is. We should learn to deeply appreciate what God has revealed, and what He has done for us. If our concentration is on God and His goodness, we will always be thankful to Him every day of our lives and in every situation. We would appreciate the kindness that He shows to us each day. Every little thing would become very meaningful to us. We would not demand anything from God, but instead, we would give thanks to Him for everything that He gives us, for everything that He leads us through in His wisdom and in His love, and we would want to do all things to please Him.

I do hope very much that we will ponder about this because it is of great importance for our lives. Are we grateful to God? How do we respond to Him? What kind of attitude do we have towards Him each day of our lives? If this attitude towards God is correct, then we will also find that our attitude towards our fellow human beings will also be very positive. We will also be able to help others, and care for them with genuine love, not with ulterior motives for our own ends, but love them with the love of God.

Summary

In the incident of the healing of the ten lepers, we have seen how the Lord Jesus loved the people, and how He cared for them. Though

He was busy and He was on His way to attend to other matters, He had enough time to help these people in need.

We notice that these lepers in their time of need cried out to the Lord earnestly for help. The Lord required their obedience and faith to go and show themselves to the priests. As they obeyed and they believed in the words of the Lord Jesus, they were healed. But out of the ten, only one turned back to glorify God and to give thanks to the Lord Jesus, and he was a Samaritan.

We considered the importance of gratitude in our hearts, and that while it is primarily an attitude, it will, if it is deep and genuine, result in a life that will express itself in all the things that we do. So the way we live our lives is an indication of the kind of gratitude in our hearts. Can we, like the apostle Paul, say with our hearts and live by this: "in everything give thanks, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus"? Or, are we living lives that are basically so self-seeking and self-centred that all we want is self-gratification, and we easily forget all the good that is done when the self is hurt?

As we ponder about this, let us remember the cost to God to bring about the Cross. What God did for us, can we ever repay Him? We know that we cannot. The least that we can do is to sincerely and fully give our lives to live for Him, worship God only, and serve Him always, to the utmost and to the end. Let us ask the Spirit of God to search our hearts and help us to understand ourselves and to respond to Him according to truth, that He may work in our lives, that we may be able to bring joy to Him, and that our lives will be useful in helping others.