

# #16 Northside Natter

8 July 2020

Today I want to look at **Gratitude**.

Gratitude is defined as being in a state of thankfulness; a warm and friendly feeling in response to a favour received. Gratitude is heart-felt.

We have experienced many gifts from the Lord due to his favour towards us. How many times have we gone back to thank him? Do we thank him daily, hourly?

Dietrich Bonhoeffer said: *In ordinary life we hardly realise that we receive a great deal more than we give, and that it is only with gratitude that life becomes rich.*

How true! When we go before the Lord and thank him for what he's done for us, something astonishing happens. Other than pleasing the Lord with our heart-felt thanks, we are changing our own hearts. This is a miraculous event. When we appreciate and thank the Lord, our lives change forever as our hearts become malleable flesh rather than the hearts of stone that a thankless world creates.

When we feel grateful and express that gratitude, we also chase away the human condition that often besets us. Imagine this for just a moment. Things like resentment, jealousy, anger, or pride flee from us when we are in a grateful state. There is no longer room in our hearts to harbour such things. We become pleasant to be around. We become kind and thoughtful towards others. We are like a shining light in a dark world. In short, we are (amazingly) fit to do the work the Lord gave us to do.

Who doesn't want to be around a positive, caring and happy person? When a person is thankful, kind and thoughtful towards others, they make friends easily. People want to hang out with them. People are more likely to listen to what comes from a grateful heart. Our lives become rich!

There might be many instances in our walk when we will revert to our old ways, with our brain's muscle-memory kicking into the old coping mechanisms we once fostered. Eventually, (and thankfully!), new and better ways overwrite the old coping mechanisms of the past, but it can take a lifetime. If we exercise an attitude of gratitude to fast track that change, we will have less of those moments in our lives and more moments that reflect a solid walk in the Lord. Remember: we will never be perfect until that which is perfect comes and makes us so (see 1 Cor 13:9-10). In the meantime, we rely on our daily choices and attitude to do the very best we can with what we have. Incredibly, that is all the Lord requires of us.

**1 Cor 13:13** *and now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.*

Charity is love and who is that love for if not for those around us? If we have not love we are as a sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal (or as one Pastor once said, "a ding-a-ling"). (See 1 Cor 13:1).

Without charity, we are less likely to witness to others, or to preach the gospel, because we don't care about their future. Admittedly, some people are really hard to love. They can make it almost impossible to love them, but that's when we especially need our attitude of gratitude to work for us. If we have never softened our hearts through the exercising of gratitude, we have missed the mark.

Being thankful and grateful for the things the Lord has done for us and is still doing for us every day has another powerful side-benefit. Not only does it remind us of who we were and where we came from to get to this point, it also provides us with a huge dose of empathy for those in our lives.

Why is having empathy for others important? Many of us have been through the same thing these people are going through. We've felt what they feel and lived what they are living. We've struggled and striven to get out of the mire just as they are trying to do now. Our gratitude taps into our past experiences, and through empathy, helps us to help others, just as others helped us. Where would we be today if someone in the Lord hadn't shown us love, understanding and acceptance at the beginning?

When we are grateful to the Lord for his generous favour and blessings, we become humble and acknowledge our limitations as overlords of our own lives. We recognise how much we need him. We can clearly see that his way is the only way to go – it becomes so obvious to us. We've been picked up out of the miry clay and our feet set upon a rock, and our goings have been established (see Psalms 40:2).

We should never neglect to tell the Lord how grateful we are for the life he has given us and the blessings he has bestowed on us. He has protected us, healed us, provided for all our needs, including our hearts' desires, and never left us hopeless or helpless. A heart full of thankfulness is our gift back to him. Let's start each day with a grateful heart and thank the Lord for all he does.