

Did You Forget Something? (The 10 Lepers)

By Kent Crockett

Luke 17:12-19

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Carol wanted to do something nice for her neighbor Mrs. Smith, so she baked a pie and carried it next door. When Mrs. Smith opened up her door, she was surprised to see her holding a pie. She replied, "For me? Oh, thank you so much! You just don't know how much I appreciate it! You are so thoughtful for doing this! Thank you!"

Because Mrs. Smith liked the pie so much, Carol decided the next week to bake another one. When she took it over, Mrs. Smith opened the door and said, "Thank you so much. You are so kind!"

When she took another pie over the following week, Mrs. Smith simply replied, "Thanks."

Carol took another pie over the next week and Mrs. Smith responded, "You're a day late with that pie."

The following week she baked her another pie. This time her neighbor said, "Try using a little more sugar and don't bake it quite as long. The crust has been a little bit hard lately. And I'd like cherry instead of apple filling next time."

The next week Carol was so busy, she wasn't able to cook for her neighbor. When Carol passed walked her house on the way to the store, Mrs. Smith stuck her head out the window, yelled, "WHERE'S MY PIE?"

It's easy to get used to receiving blessings, isn't it? After enjoying them for a while, we begin to think that we deserve them. Then instead of being thankful, we start complaining. It's a process that occurs so slowly, we don't even realize it's happening. Our attitude has changed from being grateful to being ungrateful.

Do you consider yourself to be an ungrateful person? Most people don't. Mrs. Smith probably didn't. I'm sure those nine lepers who were healed by Jesus didn't consider themselves to be ungrateful either. It's not that we don't want to be grateful. We just "forget" to be. The difference between being grateful and ungrateful is a lot more than two letters. It's the difference between pleasing God and grieving him. If you were one of those ten lepers on the road that day, would you have returned to thank Jesus?

1. Obedience goes the first mile but gratefulness goes the second mile.

Lepers were unclean according to the Law, so they had to be removed from society so they wouldn't defile or infect anyone. The Jewish Talmud instructed lepers to stay 100 paces or about 300 feet away from people. And they had to yell "Unclean! Unclean!" to anyone who came near, so they would stay away (Lev. 13:45). The Jews believed leprosy was a punishment for a sin they did.



One day Jesus was passing between Samaria and Galilee. When the 10 lepers saw Him, they realized this was their opportunity to be healed. They had probably heard of Him healing other lepers. If they were healed, they could go back to their families and back to work. They could rejoin society and enjoy life again.

So they cried out from a distance “Jesus, have mercy on us!” If you don’t know what to pray, that’s a prayer that God hears. “Have mercy on me!” When Jesus was going through Jericho, two blind men cried “Have mercy on us!” Jesus healed them. Now the lepers are crying out the same thing, “Have mercy on us!”

Jesus yelled back, “Go show yourselves to the priests.” Notice that He didn’t say, “You are healed.” But they knew that the priests were the only ones who could verify that they were cleansed and healed.

So they took a step of faith. As they started walking in obedience to go to the priests, God instantly healed them! Sometimes God doesn’t start working in our situations until we obey what He has told us to do. Notice that He didn’t instantly heal them, but the healing was delayed until they obeyed what He said.

Imagine their joy and excitement as they all watched their skin instantly clear up and their leprosy disappear. Now that they were clean, they could go back home. They could go back to work and start earning a living again.

Now think about this. All ten lepers **believed** Jesus’ words. All ten **obeyed** what Jesus commanded them to do. But did they forget something? Only one returned to thank Him. Most Christians put a great emphasis on believing and obeying, but very little is said about being thankful.

If you were to ask those 9 lepers, “Are you thankful for being healed?” They would probably say, “Of course I am!” They wouldn’t say, “No, I’m not thankful.” **For some reason, it doesn’t register in our minds when we are ungrateful.** If you were to ask everyone in church if they are thankful, probably everyone would say, “Of course I’m thankful.” But then ask them how many times did you thank God yesterday? Was it 20 times? 50 times? Or zero?

I’ll confess that there have been times when I’ve said a prayer of thanks before a meal, but it was out of ritual and not because I was really giving thanks. There have been times when I have prayed and prayed for something, and then when God answered I was joyful like the ten lepers, but I didn’t spend time thanking Him like the one leper.

I’ve prayed for safety on a trip, but when I arrived at my destination I didn’t thank God for keeping me safe. Thankfulness isn’t a ritual of saying a few words in a prayer, but an expression of gratitude that comes from my heart.

Whenever God blesses us, we will either respond with thankfulness or we’ll remain silent. Thankfulness always responds to the giver. Ungratefulness always ignores the giver.

One little boy came home from school all excited. “Dad, today I learned how to say please and thank you in Spanish!” His father said, “When are you going to learn how to say it in English?”

Some people have never learned how to say “thank you” to the Lord in any language. And God really wants to hear it from us.

2. Thankfulness requires us to take some extra steps.

Luke 17:15 “Now one of them, when he saw that he had been healed, turned back, glorifying God with a loud voice.” He “turned back.” He had been walking in one direction to show himself to the priests, but he did an about face and started walking the opposite direction.

Thankfulness takes extra steps beyond obedience. When he turned around, he had to walk an extra distance out of his way to thank Jesus. He had to take some extra steps to thank Him, and then extra steps to return. He took some extra time out of his schedule to thank Him.

Thankfulness is always expressed in a tangible way through words, deeds, and gifts—but it must be expressed in some tangible way or it is not thankfulness.

Tanya Gentz was a 12-yr old girl who traveled with her parents 1,300 miles to thank a person that she had never met before. They drove from Galveston, Texas to Charlotte, North Carolina through a record snowstorm in Tennessee that held them up for two days. Why did the Gentz family go through all of that trouble? They wanted to hug the man who gave his bone marrow to cure her leukemia.

How do we know that Tanya and her parents were thankful? Because they took a lot of extra steps to cross the country to say thank you. Thankfulness will always, always, always take extra steps!

What have you done to take some extra steps to thank God? We show thanks by saying thank you to Him. That’s the place to start. But then we can show thanks by giving our offerings to Him. We show thanks by serving Him in various ways. Gratitude comes from the heart and is always expressed in a tangible way.

3. Thankfulness is always voluntary and cannot be forced.

Luke 17:16 “He glorified God with a loud voice, and he fell on his face at His feet, giving thanks to Him.” God never forces anyone to be thankful, because then it wouldn’t be true thankfulness. Thankfulness is always voluntary and always arises from inside our hearts.

Jesus didn’t heal the lepers and then beg them to thank Him. “Now what do you s-a-a-a-y?” Have you ever done that with a child? “Now what do you s-a-a-a-y?” Do you continually have to remind your child to say thank you?

One man gave some candy to a little girl. The girl didn’t say anything, so her mother said, “What do you say?”

The little girl said, “Do you have any more?”

Sometimes we’re like that little girl. God blesses us and blesses us and we are surrounded by blessings—but instead of thanking Him we say, “Do you have any more stuff for me?”

Jesus healed this Samaritan, and he looked at his new flesh which grew back in front of his eyes—and he cried out with a loud voice glorifying God. He didn’t whisper it. He shouted!

This was a voluntary response that came from inside his heart—he started praising God with a loud voice. And he ran back to Jesus, (I know the Bible doesn’t say he ran, but I can hardly imagine him walking), and then v.16 says “he

fell on his face.” He is so thankful, he humbles himself with his face in the dirt, and says, Thank you! Thank you! Thank you Jesus!”

Nobody told him to do this. Jesus didn’t tell him, “I want you to cry out with a loud voice, then I want you to run to me, then I want you to put your face in dirt...” No, this former leper **did it spontaneously**.

4. God expects to be thanked.

Luke 17:17 Jesus said, “Were not ten cleansed? But the nine—where are they?” He was expecting the other nine lepers to come back and thank Him as well. Jesus doesn’t force us to thank Him because it wouldn’t be true thankfulness. But He does earnestly desire to be thanked, and it pleases Him when we do.

If someone were to buy you a \$5 million mansion, wouldn’t it seem a little strange if you never thanked that person? These lepers lives were changed by this miracle. They could fellowship with people again. Yet nine of them never even thought about personally thanking Jesus for healing them. Don’t you know that grieved the Lord?

What price tag can you put on Jesus saving you from hell so you can spend eternity with Him in heaven? You would be surprised as how few Christians have ever thanked God for this. I thank Him every day for saving me—because I never want to forget what He did for me. It’s so easy to forget.

I read about a church that needed parking space. A large department store next door had a large parking lot that wasn’t used on Sunday. The church asked the owner of the store if they could use his parking lot. The owner said yes, but he wanted to make an agreement in writing with one stipulation. He granted them permission to use the parking lot for 51 Sundays a year. But one Sunday a year, they couldn’t use it. They had to designate it as “no parking” Sunday.

The leaders of the church asked him why he wanted to do that. The owner said, “For 51 Sundays you can use it free. But one day of the year you can’t because **I don’t want you to forget what I’m doing for you**. I want you to remember what it’s like to not have it so that you’ll appreciate it.”

Deuteronomy 6:12 says, “Watch yourself, that you do not forget the Lord who brought you from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.” “Don’t forget the Lord” means don’t forget to thank Him for what He has done for you.

So now I ask you, have you forgotten something?

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