

**ERIC BUTTERWORTH
PAPERS (3014)**

BOX 5

FOLDER 40

**GRATITUDE: ATTITUDE
OR PLATITUDE**

NOVEMBER 22, 1970

"GRATITUDE: ATTITUDE OR PLATITUDE"

Sunday, November 22, 1970

Thursday is Thanksgiving Day. Of all the holidays we celebrate, Thanksgiving is by far my favorite. Maybe it is the only one that I can really get completely turned on about.

(Holy day) *(less than holy)*
Holidays have a way of getting commercialized, or of becoming simply the good excuse for a vacation from work. This may be true of Thanksgiving, but less so than any other. It is still a simple, sane and quiet time of remembrance.

In Psalm 100 -- "old one hundred" to many lovers of the Bible -- the theme is set for the religious observance: "ENTER INTO HIS GATES WITH THANKSGIVING, AND INTO HIS COURTS WITH PRAISE."

Today I want you to ask yourself some very pointed questions. Is your Thanksgiving really a holiday day or is it a hollow day? (~~holiday comes from holy day~~).

Is your heart really thank-ful, or do ~~the~~ mouth the lines of thanksgiving with a heart that is worry-full, lack-full, fear-full, hate-full, etc?

Do you really have an attitude of gratitude for the blessings of life, or do you simply engage in what Gilbert and Sullivan called, "platitudes in stained glass attitudes."?

A little girl was once staying overnight with her aunt and at bedtime she knelt down by the bed and said her prayers. The aunt said, 'It's a pleasure to hear you saying your prayers so well. You speak so earnestly and seriously, and you mean what you say.'

The little girl replied, "But Auntie you should hear me gargle." PRAYER WITH HER WAS AN ACCOMPLISHMENT OF MEMORY AND IMITATION. Is Thanksgiving more than that for you?

We are told, "IN ALL THINGS GIVE THANKS." It is to be a perpetual state of consciousness, an attitude of gratitude.

But how can we give thanks for everything? Can we give thanks for the War in Viet Nam? For the confusion and dissent in our land? For poverty and pollution and floods and famine? For personal challenges and affliction and human relation problems?

Perhaps we can repeat the prayers and slogans in a parrott-like manner, but can we really enter into the gates with praise and thanksgiving from the bottom of our hearts?

What is the basis of Thanksgiving? Does God demand it? Will God's feelings about us be lessened if we do not thank Him for our good?

I like the witty comment of Meister Eckhart: "I NEVER GIVE GOD THANKS FOR LOVING ME, BECAUSE HE CANNOT HELP IT; WITHE HE WOULD OR NO, IT IS HIS NATURE TO."

Thanksgiving is not for God -- He doesn't need it. As long as we have the old idea of God "up there" to whom we bow down, our thanksgiving is very likely to be a ritual of worship, "a little habit we've acquired."

Gratitude is not simply a virtue, something you do to earn points. It is a state of consciousness in which we are lifted to a new experience of life. God doesn't need our gratitude, but we do.

Long before the time of Jesus Plato wrote: "HE ENJOYS MUCH WHO IS THANKFUL. A GRATEFUL MIND IS A GREAT MIND WHICH EVENTUALLY ATTRACTS TO ITSELF GREAT THINGS."

X
1
A grateful person is GREAT because he has turned on all the lights in himself. We think of gratitude and thankfulness in terms of something to give thanks for. But the attitude of gratitude is not a ^{simple} reaction to good things. It can be the cause of them.

2
When we are grateful we radiate a light that enables us to see things for which to be grateful. More than this it actually attracts the good things to us.

Maybe this is what true GREATNESS is - the ability to appreciate the good in people and events, and thus to exact the very best from life and the experiences of life.

George Bernard Shaw said, "GOD HAS GIVEN US A WORLD THAT NOTHING BUT OUR OWN FOLLY KEEPS FROM BEING A PARADISE."

God has given each of us the potential of abundant life and ~~"equality"~~ living but our own lack of perception and our own folly keeps us from finding it and experiencing it.

X The folly is in our thoughts. We have the choice to be great or small. When we are grateful, we are great. When we lose sight of the importance of Thanksgiving, we become little people, with little minds, leading little, inconsequential lives.

In the 17th Century the Pilgrims paused to give thanks - but they were not Thanking God for what was on their table or in their barns - for it was meager indeed. THEY WERE THANKING GOD FOR WHAT WAS IN THEIR HEARTS -- their vision and faith in what for the most part we have today.

But we should never forget the key to our greatness. Van Loon wrote: "America is a great nation, but we have yet to become a great people."

A missionary to Africa told of a strange tribe that he encountered in his travels -- a strangely poverty stricken tribe that seemed to have absolutely nothing in the midst of other tribes who were quite prosperous

After spending several months of research with them he found that in their language they had no word with which to express gratitude, thankfulness, or appreciation. They had forgotten how to say "thank you." Could this loss of the spirit of THANKSGIVING have been responsible for their poverty.

It is an interesting point isn't it? This would seem to indicate that we GROW RICH BY THANKSGIVING AND WE GROW IMPOVERISHED BY LOSING THE SPIRIT OF GRATITUDE.

The real essence of THANKSGIVING, then, is not some exciting situation or thing about which to be thankful. The old "count your many blessings" idea - which is a fine practice -- but it is more than that.

Thanksgiving is not dependent upon outer things.
It is dependent only upon an awareness of the Great-
ness of God within us. The attitude of gratitude is
a key to the inner Kingdom of human potentiality.

When Jesus was faced with 5,000 hungry people, it
is said, "He lifted up his eyes and gave thanks..."
Then he proceeded to feed the hungering multitude
with what was available.

It was not a thanks for food on the table - for
there was only five small loaves and seven little
fishes. It was a technique by which Jesus attuned
himself to more Infinite possibilities - to the
opulence of the universe which is always at hand.
And in that attitude he became great - and, of course,
did great things.

Principal
GREAT ACTS FOLLOW GREAT THOUGHTS WHICH COME FROM
GRATEFUL HEARTS.

Thinking about Viet Nam and economic *crisis* ~~problems~~ and
personal problems -- how do we give thanks for them?
We don't! In a very real sense these things have
come because we haven't been great in heart and mind.

The command is, "In everything give thanks" - not
"for everything..." We don't want to give thanks
for war and famine and failure. "HE LIFTED UP HIS
EYES...AND GAVE THANKS."

If we could lift up our eyes high enough, and give
thanks deeply enough, and open the greatness of our
own God selves completely enough, we could set off
a chain reaction of peace and power that could stop
the war and resolve the inharmonies and heal the ills.

Concept
There is a ~~fundamental~~ principle that I refer to
often -- perhaps so often as to be redundant -- but
we need to remind ourselves of it again and again:
LIFE IS LIVED FROM WITHIN OUT.

Thus if you are not satisfied with what you have or
of what you haven't, instead of complaining about it,
you need to open the door to release more of that
infinite potential that is ever within you.

It seems obvious that one can never get something from nothing. It is what you have that is the starting place from which the great abundance may be acquired. Whatever you BEGIN WITH determines to a large extent WHAT COMES FROM IT.

If you pore over all the things you haven't you start from less than nothing. For to what you haven't, you have added a spirit of complaint.

No intelligent person will believe that a focus of attention on what he hasn't is the way to get what he wants. You must turn your thought on how to gain what you want - turn from the concern of what you have not to the anticipation of what you want.

This would seem so logical as to be a universal practice. But it isn't. Far more people submerge themselves in displeased concern for their lacks. The lives of millions are riddled with self-undoing because of this morbid rebellion. Such people are angry at others, at life, and at God because they do not have what they want. And at any time they can turn from lack and open the way to abundance.

The key to turning is the basic spirit of "Thanksgiving", the attitude of gratitude -- where you are grateful for the good you do have, no matter how little it may seem at the time. Even more you are just grateful as a way of life.

Marcus Aurelius "Think not so much of what thou hast not as of what thou hast: but of the things which thou hast select the best, and reflect how eagerly they would have been sought if thou hadst them not."

Instead of stewing and fretting over your problems and your needs - how much better to turn from these areas of lack to the evidence of divine intelligence and life and substance in the good things of your life

Let the good you have be a symbol of the goodness of God. Let the dollar bill (your last one) be a symbol of the currency of divine substance. Then lift up your eyes and give thanks - for the inexhaustible all-sufficiency of God.

But remember, the gratitude isn't for God. It is the key to getting you tuned in to the transcendent forces of your being.

Emilie Cady, in LESSONS IN TRUTH, says, "You do not change God's attitude toward you one iota by either importuning or affirming. You only change your attitude toward Him. By thus affirming, you put yourself in harmony with divine law, which is always working toward your good."

X There is a depth of possibility within every person which is a constant resource wherever he is or whatever may be his need. John Milton refers to it:

"THERE IS NOTHING THAT MAKES MEN RICH AND STRONG BUT THAT WHICH THEY CARRY INSIDE OF THEM. TRUE WEALTH IS OF THE HEART, NOT OF THE HAND."

X It is the attitude of gratitude that makes this inner wealth real and tangible as an influence in human experience. Jesus talked about it when he said, "I have food to eat ye know not of."

Actually, life has several dimensions beyond the three dimensional plane of human sense. The fourth dimension is a reality that the eyes do not see, but which the heart can sense and which faith can lay hold of.

This is the Kingdom within that Jesus talked about. The attitude of gratitude draws upon this inner power, this transcendent guidance and strength.

And it is based on this deeper dimension that Jesus says, "All things whatsoever ye pray and ask for, believe ye receive them, and ye shall have them."

Jesus came into Bethany and met the sorrowing family of his friend Lazarus. Lazarus was dead, and had lain in the tomb for four days. The weeping sisters said with a hint of reproach, "LORD, IF THOU HADST BEEN HERE, OUR BROTHER HAD NOT DIED."

Jesus went to the tomb with them and after having the stone removed, he lifted up his eyes (turned away from the appearance to the fourth dimension and said, "FATHER, I THANK THEE THAT THOU HEAREST ME."

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Can't you imagine people thinking, "Thanksgiving!" ^{Wh}
What is there to give thanks for. Lazarus is still
dead. Why doesn't this Galilean wait and see if
he can perform the miracle before He gives thanks?"

But Jesus knew that the key to power was acknowl-
ding the availability of power - and giving thanks
is the key. He then spoke the word, "LAZARUS COME
FOORTH" -- And we have no record that He gave any
further thanks after the once dead man came from
the tomb. He believed and gave thanks first -- and
with that key the result proved inevitable.

He lifted up his eyes -- he opened his eyes to see
the added dimension of life - and made it real thru
thankfulness.

A woman had an only son who was involved in drugs
and was living the kind of life she just couldn't
accept or understand. For months she had prayed
in agony of soul, "OH GOD, SAVE MY BOY FROM DESTRUC*
TION, FROM WEAKNESS, FROM SIN."

But how could God hear that kind of prayer any more
than the sun could hear or understand the prayer of
a man with his eyes shut: "Oh sun, stop shedding
rays of darkness, and send me one ray of light"
(but the trouble is not in the sun, but in the man
who would not open his eyes.)

concept of thankfulness as key to prayer

This woman finally was introduced to the unity
concept. She began to see something of the divinity
within her son. She changed her attitude and her
manner of prayer. She stopped beseeching God and
started giving thanks for good instead.

She began to affirm: "I give thanks that you are
God's perfect child...I give thanks for guidance
and strength in your life, and for love and under-
standing in me."

Then she began to praise the boy, silently at first,
and later openly as he started to respond. She
continued to declare, "I give thanks for faith to see
the good in you. You are God's perfect child."

The son continued to go the drug route, but she
changed. She didn't rebuke or criticize him. She
just held to the Truth and kept thanking God.

After a few weeks, with no seeming change the faithful mother never swerved from her use of praise and gratitude -- The boy came home one evening and said, "Mother, I have just realized that there must be a higher way to get turned on, and I have a feeling that you know the way. I am going to try that way." That was the beginning, but it was a beautiful demonstration of transformation.

Let us remember that God has given us a world that nothing but our own folly keeps from being a paradise, and God has given us tremendous power which nothing but our limiting thoughts keeps from expressing through us.

Let this Thanksgiving day be the beginning of a whole new thing for us -- the regular use of the spirit of thankfulness and the attitude of gratitude. Instead of fretting over darkness in the world, let us give thanks for light..

Remember that the giving thanks is the key to turning on the life and light and wisdom and substance and love -- from within. And that is really what life is all about.