

I invite you to open your Bibles to this morning's scripture text, which can be found in the book of Deuteronomy 8:11-14, 17-18; 1 Thessalonians 5:18. This can be found on page ___ and on page ___ in your pew Bibles. We continue in our series today "Respectable Sins". Today's text encourages us to have a grateful heart.

The word of God

(Deuteronomy 8:11-14, 17-18)

Be careful that you do not forget the Lord your God, failing to observe his commands, his laws and his decrees that I am giving you this day. 12 Otherwise, when you eat and are satisfied, when you build fine houses and settle down, 13 and when your herds and flocks grow large and your silver and gold increase and all you have is multiplied, 14 then your heart will become proud and you will forget the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery ... 17 You may say to yourself, "My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me." 18 But remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your forefathers, as it is today.

1 Th 5:18

give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

NIV

To be thankful is an attitude of gratitude. To be thankful means more than just saying "thank you". When we were growing up our parents taught us to be grateful. When someone did something nice, they taught us to say "thank you" so that eventually we would begin to associate the occasions in which we should say thanks. It seems that our parents wanted us to know to say "thank you" in such a way that it would become second nature and natural, that we would *develop a grateful heart*. They wanted us to learn to say "thank you" without having to think about it.

There is another way that we say "thank you" that defies what true thankfulness is about. When something goes wrong, we might hear someone say, "I have so and so to thank for this predicament". This is *not* what being thankful is about. When we say that we have someone to thank for the fact that something went *wrong*, then we are being *sarcastic* and placing blame on another or others. When we say "thank you" in a sarcastic way, what we are really saying is something that is the opposite of truthfully being thankful.

Have you ever given someone a gift and not received thanks for it? Have you ever been in a grocery store or restaurant and were not thanked for your business? Have you ever felt unappreciated by family or friends or in your workplace? If so, how did it make you feel? Probably not very good.

How do we say thanks? Do we say thank you with sarcasm? Do we say thank you in such a way that it is genuine thankfulness? Do we even say it at all? It is an important thing for us to ponder how we say thank you. More importantly, we need to ponder how we say thank you to God.

In today's fast-paced world, most people seem to not have time for thankfulness. Work, traffic, family, soccer practice, doctor appointments, and countless other things are their main priorities. They seem to have no time to thank others.

The ungrateful heart; "ingratitude" is an integral part of society. If you ask most people if they are ungrateful, they will probably reply, "Of course not!" However, this attitude is so ingrained in their lives, they cannot openly admit—or even realize—that they are ungrateful.

But how can you tell if you are ungrateful? Are there things that identify ingratitude? And if so, what can you do about it?

Webster's Dictionary defines "Ingratitude" as: "Forgetfulness of, or poor return for, kindness received." It can also be defined as not appreciating or valuing what you have or have been given. *Unexpressed gratitude* is also ingratitude!

Have you ever thought about where this mindset of ingratitude comes from? This is vital to understand in order to overcome this problem .

In America or any other nation descended from ancient Israel, we live in one of the most abundantly blessed lands in the world. This country enjoys plentiful food, shelter, electricity, running water, wealth, air conditioning, heating, transportation, sanitation, and many other blessings from God. We should take a moment each day to look around and fully take in all of the many blessings.

However, these lands are filled with ungrateful hearts of the chronic grumblers and complainers. Although there are countless blessings, there seem to always be countless things to gripe about—be it traffic, the economy, food prices, problems at work, difficulties with family, desire for additional material possessions, or ill health, the list can go on and on for those with an ungrateful heart. Never before in the history of man has the world shown this horrible characteristic as it does today!

The Bible records the experiences of another nation—the ancient nation of Israel—who also constantly complained and murmured. No matter what God did for them, it was never enough.

After 430 years of slavery to the Egyptians, the Israelites, through God’s miraculous intervention, were released from bondage. As they left Egypt, God allowed them to collect riches, cattle, food, gold, jewels and supplies. God performed many miracles as they traveled through the wilderness. He selected them as His people, promising to take them to a land “filled with milk and honey.”

Notice God’s plain words to the Israelites: “So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey — Ex 3:8-9- NIV

But *this* was **not** enough for them!

Upon approaching the Promised Land, the Israelites were instructed by God to send spies to survey the land. It was located between other nations that were enemies of Israel.

After forty days of spying the land, they returned. And presented to Moses, Aaron and the congregation of Israel the fruit from the land, saying, "We went into the land to which you sent us, and it does flow with milk and honey! Here is its fruit. 28 But the people who live there are powerful, and the cities are fortified and very large. (Nu 13:27-29)-NIV

Caleb, one of the spies, asked Moses for permission to take the land. But the other spies—except for Joshua—lied to the people, claiming that it was infested with strong, powerful giants.

Notice the reaction of the crowd: All the Israelites grumbled against Moses and Aaron, and the whole assembly said to them, "If only we had died in Egypt! Or in this desert! 3 Why is the Lord bringing us to this land only to let us fall by the sword? Our wives and children will be taken as plunder. Wouldn't it be better for us to go back to Egypt?" 4 And they said to each other, "We should choose a leader and go back to Egypt." (Nu 14:2-4 2 – NIV)

Israel was so blatantly ungrateful that they wanted to go back to Egypt—where they had undergone hundreds of years of brutal slavery. They didn't appreciate the blessings that God provided or the many miracles He performed for them.

Notice God's response to their attitude: The Lord said to Moses, "How long will these people treat me with contempt? How long will they refuse to believe in me, in spite of all the miraculous signs I have performed among them? 12 I will strike them down with a plague and destroy them, but I will make you into a nation greater and stronger than they." (Nu 14:11-12) -NIV

However, Moses reasoned with God, prompting Him to change His mind.

God called the Israelites an “evil congregation” for their sinful ingratitude. To God, the ungrateful heart, ingratitude, is sin—evil—which provokes Him to anger! Although God did not strike Israel with pestilence at that time or disinherit them, He did cause them to wander in the wilderness for 40 additional years, until those that demonstrated this attitude died! Their murmurings and unthankful attitude condemned them from ever seeing the Promised Land!

Most are familiar with the phrase, “Those that do not learn from history are doomed to repeat it.” This applies to the modern-day descendants of Israel—the United States, Britain, Australia and other democratic, primarily English-speaking people scattered throughout the world. These nations are foretold to relive history—and experience many soon-coming horrific events for much the same reasons as ancient Israel!

Deuteronomy 28 has been called the “Blessings and Curses” chapter. It records a sobering warning to those who will heed it. This prophecy, given almost 3,500 years ago, recounts what is foretold to happen to proud, arrogant and ungrateful nations!

The first 14 verses describe the many wonderful blessings that are to be poured upon the nations that obey and worship God. The remaining part of the chapter lists the countless curses that are reaped for disobeying God: “Because you did not serve the Lord your God joyfully and gladly in the time of prosperity, 48 therefore in hunger and thirst, in nakedness and dire poverty, you will serve the enemies the Lord sends against you. He will put an iron yoke on your neck until he has destroyed you.

49 The Lord will bring a nation against you from far away, from the ends of the earth, like an eagle swooping down, a nation whose language you will not understand, 50 a fierce-looking nation without respect for the old or pity for the young. 51 They will devour the young of your livestock and the crops of your land until you are destroyed. They will leave you no grain, new wine or oil, nor any calves of your herds or lambs of your flocks until you are ruined. 52 They will lay siege to all the cities throughout your land until the high fortified walls in which you trust fall down. They will besiege all the cities throughout the land the Lord your God is giving you. (Deut. 28:47-52). NIV

Ingratitude is just one of many sins that the people of this country have committed—and will be led into captivity for! This is the warning from the pages of your Bible! Under captivity, all the grumbling, murmuring and complaining that consume people's lives will be of no importance.

Ingratitude is a deadly sin! The consequence for this sin is grave—and not to be taken lightly!

Most of us are familiar with the many Bible accounts of Christ's miracles. He turned water into wine, walked on water, fed thousands of people from a small amount of food, cast out demons, raised the dead, and healed many people. But, although He healed many, how many do you think actually came back to thank Him? You will be surprised.

Luke's gospel records one such miraculous healing in the 17th chapter. In this account, Christ healed ten lepers. Verse 12 records "As he was going into a village, ten men who had leprosy met him. They stood at a distance and called out in a loud voice, "Jesus, Master, have pity on us!"

When he saw them, he said, "Go, show yourselves to the priests." And as they went, they were cleansed. **One of them**, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. He threw himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him — and *he* was a Samaritan. Jesus asked, "Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?" Then he said to him, "Rise and go; your faith has made you well." Lk 17:12-19 NIV

Of the ten lepers, only *one* returned to thank Christ. Think of that statement. Only *one* of the *ten* thanked God for healing them of an awful disease!

Notice Christ's rhetorical question. Understanding the characteristics of human nature, He perfectly understood why the others had not returned to thank Him.

But why is modern mankind so ungrateful?

From T.V. commercials, programs, movies, shopping malls and homes, a widespread attitude of *selfishness* is sweeping the nations of this world. So many people are becoming more ungrateful each day.

A main cause of this ingratitude is commercialism. Society has been caught up in the "Its all about you" mentality. So many people believe they work hard so they deserve a new car and a vacation in some exotic country. This has caused so many to believe the ideology that, if they don't acquire these extravagant luxuries, life is somehow treating them unfairly.

The current condition of our country even present, and very evident 151 years ago to president Lincoln, reflecting today's scripture so evidently. Deuteronomy 8:17-18

You may say to yourself, "My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me." 18 But remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your forefathers, as it is today.

Before calling for a national day of fasting, U.S. President Abraham Lincoln stated, *"We have been the recipients of the choicest blessings of heaven. We have been preserved, these many years, in peace and prosperity. We have grown in numbers, wealth and power as no other nation ever has grown; but we have forgotten God! We have forgotten the gracious Hand which preserved us in peace, and multiplied and enriched and strengthened us; and we have vainly imagined, in the deceitfulness of our hearts, that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own."*

This is a powerful statement! Since the time President Lincoln gave this speech, the wealth, prosperity and peace experienced by the United States is far greater—along with the attitude of pride, selfishness and ingratitude.

But if this same speech were given today, there would be quite an uproar!

The apostle Paul wrote, (2Tim3:1-5) "But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God— These attitudes are becoming increasingly evident in these "last days." (By these verses, even an atheist can recognize that we are living in these days by simply turning on the television!)

In contrast to Lincoln's day, or even to fifty years ago, today's ungrateful attitude is worse by far. If that generation forgot God, and the many blessings He provided for America, then this de-generation doesn't even know God exists!

In this world of being obsessed with what's "in"—from the newest fashions, to the latest songs and to absurd political correctness—gratitude has been all but declared unconstitutional!

To find the source of this attitude, we must look in the pages of the Bible to find the most selfish, proud, arrogant, self-centered and ungrateful being that ever existed— an archangel named Lucifer; Satan, the devil.

Before his rebellion against God, Satan was a perfectly created archangel. The prophet Isaiah records, "How you have fallen from heaven, O morning star, son of the dawn! You have been cast down to the earth, you who once laid low the nations! You said in your heart, "I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of the sacred mountain. I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High." Isa 14:12-14-NIV

Lucifer's heart was lifted up with arrogance—vanity. He was ungrateful to God for giving him life. He wasn't grateful to God for creating him so perfectly. Instead, he rebelled against God, choosing to believe that he was better than his Creator—that his way was greater than God's Way.

As the "prince of the power of the air" (Eph. 2:2), he broadcasts this same attitude into us.

It has been said that ingratitude is the most common sin. Although it is a part of our nature, there are ways that you can avoid being one of the many that commit the sin of ingratitude.

Thank God daily: God commands us to go to Him in prayer with praise and thanksgiving. Do you thank Him daily?

The Bible is filled with examples of God's servants showing their gratitude towards Him.

Paul writes, "Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks" (I Thes. 5:16-18).

Psalm 92 records a special Sabbath psalm used to praise God: It is good to praise the Lord and make music to your name, O Most High, to proclaim your love in the morning and your faithfulness at night, For you make me glad by your deeds, O Lord; I sing for joy at the works of your hands. How great are your works, O Lord, how profound your thoughts! But you, O Lord, are exalted forever. For surely your enemies, O Lord, surely your enemies will perish; all evildoers will be scattered.

NIV (vs. 1-2, 4-5, 8-9).

You should never run out of things to thank God for! Go to Him in prayer and continually thank Him for all the blessings He has provided you!

The Bible records God's faithful servants continuously doing so. We also find that the Bible commands us to always give thanks and praise to God.

Why? Why does God command that we praise Him with thanksgiving? Does He require this because He needs our praises? NO!

This command is repeated throughout the Bible because WE need it! In order for us, as Christians, to be more like God—the most thankful Being in the universe—WE need to learn to be thankful and give praises every day!

- ***Another vital way*** to demonstrate gratitude towards our great God is through tithes and offerings. The prophet Malachi records God's words: "Will a man rob God? Yet you rob me. "But you ask, 'How do we rob you?' "In tithes and offerings. You are under a curse — the whole nation of you — because you are robbing me. Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the Lord Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it. - NIV (Mal. 3:8-10).

Although God provides absolutely everything that we have, He promises to provide more—through pouring out blessings from heaven—if we merely do our part by paying tithes and offerings! Through our heartfelt dedication in supporting His end-time Work, He promises us much more than we can possibly desire!

- ***Say "Thank you" often:*** Many people fear thanking others. They often fall into the mentality that, by thanking, they are somehow in debt or owe something to that person. But the truth is far from this!

Throughout history, great men have been known for specifically thanking others. It is not a sign of weakness—it is a sign of meekness!

Think of the things that people do for you—from opening a door for you, to giving you a ride to the store, or providing a kind and reassuring word. We live in an age when common courtesy and politeness are all but extinct!

Say “thank you” and “please” often. You should never run out of people to thank. You would be surprised how happy those little words can make others feel!

- ***Count your blessings***, not your worries: Look around you. When was the last time you lost a loved one to starvation or rampant disease? When was the last time you gave up eating to make sure your children had food? When was the last time you had to sell your children because you did not have the money to survive or even provide for them? Chances are you have never experienced these things. Unfortunately, these are grim realities that many around the world face each day. Thank God each day for all the terrible things that you have not had to endure!

It is common to fall into the routine of constant “grumbling” and complaining about problems and worries. When you find yourself complaining about finances, traffic, problems at work, family issues, car troubles, or whatever other difficulty or trial you may be experiencing, remember that everything God does and allows is for a reason. Although difficult, it is for a greater good—if you overcome them!

Consider the following analogy: Each ingredient used in making cookies is not always sweet or good to the taste. By themselves, their tastes can range from bitter, to salty, to sweet, to chalky. But the end result—the cookies—are delicious and sweet!

King Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived, recorded, “**To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven**” (Ecc. 3:1).

Although it is difficult to do, when you are experiencing trials, look for the good that God wants you to learn from them. For example, if you are having car problems, and will need an expensive repair, perhaps you are mishandling, or wasting money on other things, and God wants you to re-examine your budget.

Many of the difficulties that you encounter can help you realize whether or not you are living properly. You can learn from these experiences!

When people grumble, they are complaining about a situation that God has allowed—and sometimes even caused—them to be in!

Paul admonishes us to **Do everything without complaining or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe. NIV (Phil. 2:14-15).**

Finally, consider Paul's example of dealing with trials and afflictions: **I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who gives me strength. Yet it was good of you to share in my troubles. Php 4:11-15**

We must learn from experiences—both good and bad! Let us all be dedicated to do as Paul instructs us to do so that we will have a grateful heart, **“Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks.”**

Heavenly Father,

We lift up our hearts to you with great gratitude for what you continue to give us, providing for our lives and our needs in every way.

We thank you for our salvation through our Savior Jesus Christ, and the promise of an eternity in heaven with you because of His sacrifice.

Thank you Lord for revealing to us a way to live a life of blessings in your favor by remaining a good steward of your grace.

Forgive our ingratitude, when we fail to remember that it is you, and you alone, That is the source of everything that we have in our lives.

Give us a grateful heart offering you praise, adoration, and thanks for these provisions.

So that we will be the witness you asked us to be, to an ungrateful world that needs you in their lives, to find life, and salvation through Jesus Christ.

We pray this, in the precious, and heavenly name of Jesus.

Amen.