

Roots of Gratitude

"Praise the LORD. Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good; His love endures forever." Ps.106:1NIV

How would you feel if I thanked you all the time for the things you did for me and the gifts you gave to me, but had no deep and genuine regard for you as a person? You would feel insulted, no matter how much I thanked you for your acts of kindness and gracious gifts. If your character and personality do not attract me or give me delight in being around you, then you will feel 'used'...like a tool or a machine, to produce the things that I really like.

So it is with GOD. If His character and person do not grip us, then all our declarations of thanksgiving are delighting in the things that He gives and though that certainly is a part, it falls short of the greater reality. The roots of gratitude that are pleasing to GOD are in the beauty and excellency of GOD's character, not in the benefits He gives. We must guard our hearts from rejoicing in the gifts at the expense of neglecting the Giver, so that the pragmatism and utilitarianism of our day does not erode our heart in seeking the LORD.

If our hearts are not taken captive by the excellencies of the Person of our GOD, then our gratitude can become like that of a wife to a husband for the money she gets from him to use in her affair with another man. This is what we see in James 4:3-4...

"When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures. You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God."

Why does James call these praying people "adulteresses"? Because, even though they are praying, they are forsaking their husband (GOD) and going after another 'lover' (the world). To make matters worse, they are asking the husband in prayer to fund the adultery.

Everything in our lives as followers of CHRIST, including our expressions of gratitude and thanks, should be for the glory of GOD.

Remember the words of 1 Corinthians 10:31...

"So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God."

- Is your gratitude rooted in the beauty of GOD or in the gifts that He gives?
 - Consider some of the gifts that GOD has given you. Now trace the gift to the fountain of His character and praise Him for His glorious perfections!
 - Maybe its time that we express our appreciation to others by focusing more on their character rather than on their performance; in so doing we may remember to do the same with our Heavenly Father.
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