

Articles and Sermons :: Being Thankful is one of the Signs of Spiritual Growth by Zac Poonen

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I read of a young man who was converted, but who was not wholehearted for the Lord. One day he had a dream in which he saw himself dying and entering heaven. There he saw the word "FORGIVEN" written across the record of his life. He rejoiced that he was forgiven and in heaven. But in heaven he saw some believers with a special aura of glory about them. They were the martyrs, who had laid down their lives for the Lord on earth. They had given up everything for the Lord and for His church. They had sacrificed money, position, honour, and everything that the world valued. This man saw their great glory in heaven and envied them. Then Jesus came to this man in his dream and told him that he would find himself totally out of tune with these glorious people he had just seen, because unlike them, he had lived only for himself on earth. He was broken hearted when he heard that and realized that he would have to live with the memory of his selfish way of life throughout eternity. He pleaded with the Lord to give him a second chance. But the Lord told him that there was no second chance after death. Then he woke up - and he was thankful that he was alive and that all that he had seen had only been a dream. He determined thereafter to live the rest of his life wholly for the Lord and became a great man of God.

If you have valued the spiritual food that you have received in the church through the years, then you will appreciate the church very highly. Consider how grateful you are to those who invite you for a single meal. How much more grateful you should be for the spiritual food that you have received constantly, year after year, in the church.

Or consider this matter in another way. Supposing there was someone who looked after your children, protected them from danger, cared for them when they were sick, encouraged them when they were discouraged, and helped them with their studies so that they got good marks. And suppose this person did all this not just for a day or two but for a number of years. Wouldn't you be grateful to him?

Are you at least equally grateful to the church for protecting your children? One reason why many believers have not grown spiritually is because they have not been grateful for what they have received in the church. The ones who have fallen away from the church are those who have been thoroughly ungrateful for all that they have received so freely for so many years in the church.

In Luke 17:15, we read of ten lepers who were healed. But only one of them returned to the Lord to thank Him and to glorify God. When they were in need, they had all raised their voices asking for mercy. But after they were healed, nine were thoroughly ungrateful for the benefit they received. Only one raised his voice in thanksgiving.

There must have been thousands of others too who were healed in Palestine who never bothered to thank the Lord. But this Samaritan man returned and thanked the Lord. He might have told the Lord something like this, "Lord what a different life my life is going to be in future, now that You have touched me. I can go inside the city. I can go back to my family. You have brought joy into my life. I don't want to take any of these blessings for granted. I owe everything to You and I am deeply thankful for all of Your blessings on my life".

Jesus appreciated the man for this spirit of gratitude that he manifested.

Then Jesus gave him something more. He told him that his faith had saved him. That cleansed leper got something more than just healing from the Lord. He had already received healing. But because he was grateful, he got salvation as well. I am certain that I will meet this Samaritan in heaven. But I am not sure whether I will meet any of the other nine there. When you come back to thank the Lord you get something more than what the others get.

The Lord is in the midst of His church, which is His body on earth. We show our appreciation for the Lord now by valuing His body. If you don't appreciate and value the church, it is you who will be the loser, not the church. God has mightily blessed those who have valued the church and who have been thankful for what they have received from the church.