**Ingratitude**

In the book, *Gulliver’s Travels*, Jonathan Swift gives us his opinion of ingratitude toward friends and benefactors when he thus describes the laws of the Lilliputians thusly, “Ingratitude is reckoned among them a capital crime; for they reason thus, that whoever makes ill return to his benefactors must needs be a common enemy to the rest of mankind, from whom he hath received no obligation. And, therefore, such a man is not fit to live.” Though severe, the reasoning is sound: If a man does ill to one who has helped him, how much more will he do to those who have not helped him in any way?

The lack of *gratitude-* whether we call it *ingratitude* or simply refer to it as being *ungrateful,* though perhaps not viewed as a capital offense as in Lilliput, is pretty much disdained by everyone… especially by those presume they possess it themselves and other do not.

Perhaps no biblical account more clearly manifests the problem than Luke 17:11-19. Points of interest and emphasis from the encounter:

* At least one of the men was a Samaritan, vv.11,16,18; cf. John 4:9;
* The helpless, hapless, and hopeless nature of leprosy, v.12; cf. Lev.13:45-46; cp.Psa.38:1-11;
* Despite their condition and its consequences (or perhaps *because* of it!), from v.13, note that they: 1) Recognized Jesus, perhaps having heard of the hope he offered, cf. Matt.8:1-4; Luke 7:22; 2) Acknowledged His power/authority; and, 3) pled for *mercy*, or based their appeal on His *mercy* rather than their *worthiness;*
* Jesus’ requirement in v.14a was exactly what the Law required ***after*** the leper had *become clean,* cf. Lev.14:2ff; which helps to explain v.14b and v.19;
* *Gratitude* (in its proper form of *glorifying God*) was displayed by *one* of the ten men, a *Samaritan,* vv.15-16;
* Obviously, the other *nine* men manifested *ingratitude,* or an *ungrateful* spirit, vv.17-18.

As much as we can and should learn from the *one, grateful* man, we can also learn from the *nine ungrateful* ones. Why were they lacking in *gratitude* for their miraculous healing from this dreaded and deadly disease? The record does not say. Perhaps they were so excited and relieved they simply forgot. Perhaps they couldn’t wait to go show themselves to the priest as the Law required (and Jesus instructed) so that they could rejoin their families and society that they put off expressing their gratitude for the time being. Perhaps… we just don’t know.

But, although we all recognize *ingratitude,* and understand something of the additional problems it can spawn, do we really stop to think what produces or causes it? Before we can *prescribe* treatment to correct it, we have to identify a *root cause…* and *ingratitude* can have a variety of *causes.*

So, think with me briefly regarding some potential *causes* of *ingratitude* in hopes of not only *correcting* it in our ourselves or our children, but perhaps even in *preventing* it. **Ingratitude:**

* Can come from ***selfishness****;* an over-emphasis of or pre-occupation with *self* that is usually combined with a *myopia* (short-sightedness) regarding others, cf. Phil.2:3-4. But if its “all about me” all the time, then…
* A **sense of** ***entitlement***can result wherein we think we *deserve* everything we have or receive, and are therefore *ungrateful* for any of it, cp. Rom.3:9-18,23; 6:23 and Acts 14:16-17; Jas.1:17.
* **Affluence** can also be a root-cause of ingratitude. If we’ve never had to “make do” with little or next to nothing, or just “go without,” its that much harder to appreciate what we have or have been given. All the things these *lepers* has *gone without-* simple health, contact with family, societal interaction, spiritual fellowship and encouragement, all of these *deprivations* should have made them ALL extremely *grateful-* and it did so for ONE of them, cf. Phil.4:10-13!
* An **over-emphasis of *the present*** (aka, *impatience*) can also contribute to ingratitude. Oftentimes, what we *want right now* prevents us from acknowledging what we *have been given in the past,* and also precludes what we *might attain in the future,* cf. 2Pet.1:2-11. Ancient Israel complained about and was certainly ungrateful for their sustenance in the wilderness, in part at least, because they had *forgotten* what God had delivered them from, which in turn prevented them from receiving the future blessings He prepared for them in Canaan. All they could “see” was their *present lack* (at least from their perspective), cf. 2Cor.4:16-18!
* A mistaken sense of ***self-reliance*** or ***self-assertiveness*** (excessive *pride*) can also contribute to ingratitude. If we believe we don’t *need others,* or don’t *need God,* we usually falsely assume that “did” or “are doing it all on my own,” and will thus be prevented from *seeing-* let alone acknowledging through *gratitude,* the assistance of others. In short, if we don’t think we need anyone or God, we will never be truly grateful for what they do for us, cf. Rom.1:21-23.

**Conclusions:**

1. **If we follow Christ’s example, we will be *kind* uneven to the *ungrateful,* Luke 6:35;**
2. **But we will never be one of them (the *ungrateful*) ourselves, 2Tim.3:2. So,**
3. **Don’t be *selfish-* you’re not *entitled* to anything; “do/being without” is good for us and our children from time to time at least; never allow “right now” to overshadow past and future provisions God has and will make; and never assume you have or can “Do it all on my own.”**
4. **“Just be kind”? Yes, but that *kindness* usually stems from *gratitude!***