

INGRATITUDE: THE DOWNWARD PATH

(Romans 1:18-23, Philippians 4:6-7, 1 Thessalonians 5:18)

- ...Some of you have visited the Grand Canyon, that magnificent canyon formed when Noah's floodwaters drained from our continent. This thing of beauty, with all its colors, is a sight to behold. Often visitors to the canyon hike down one of the trails... down, down, down, all the way to the roaring Colorado River.
- ...Did you know that ingratitude is similar? When we refuse to be thankful and express heartfelt gratitude to the Lord, we begin the downward path that leads us into dark places. Thankfulness is not a small or insignificant matter! Don't think of it as a polite little social matter. It is huge!!!!
- ...Paul in writing to the Christians at Rome gives a thumb sketch of human history. It is not favorable. We participate in a human family that has rejected God from the beginning, and commonly refuse to give Him thanks.

TWO INSIGHTS WARNING US OF THE DANGER OF REFUSING TO THANK OUR WONDERFUL GOD.

..."For from Him, through Him, and to Him are all things"

- I. **God Has Made Himself Clearly Known In The Creation, But Universally Mankind Has Rejected Him. (Romans 1:18-20)** In this, God told that we are without any valid excuse.
 - A. How has God made Himself known to all men and women? In two realms:
 - 1. Internally: We have a built-in God awareness placed deep within the heart.
...Furthermore, being made in God's image provides us with a moral sense of right and wrong, for God has "written" His moral code upon our hearts. Animals do not have...
 - 2. Externally: We live in a world, in a universe, that provides overwhelming evidence of the glory, power, and existence of God. (v.20) (Psalm 19:1-6) (Acts 14:15-17)
...God's supreme power, existence, and mercy are seen rendering all without excuse.
...Consider the glory, mystery, and splendor of the universe. It shouts: "Glory..."
 - B. How has mankind responded to this glorious display of the Lord our God? In three ways:
 - 1. Rather than worship, humanity suppresses the knowledge of God through sin. (v.18)
...By nature we attempt to drown out "God's voice" through immoral acts.
...We try to cover the ears of our convicted heart with more and more evil.
 - 2. Next, rather than worship, we refuse to give God His rightful glory and honor.
...We do not honor God, in spite of a genuine knowledge of Him. (v.21a)
...Refusal to glorify God has to be the worst deed in the universe. (Westminster Conf)
...Instead, we now worship and glorify the creation...ourselves and other stuff.
 - 3. Finally, rather than worship, we refuse to give thanks to whom all blessings flow. (v.21)
...This naturally follows our refusal to honor God.
...Ingratitude, for we presume upon God, taking Him and His blessings for granted.
...One has rightly said, "Rebellion does not begin with a clenched fist of atheism, but ingratitude." Be very careful, your lack of thanksgiving is not a little matter.
...Ingratitude is the mark of those who reject God, thankfulness the mark of His own.
...The reality: Thankfulness strengthens our faith. (Philippians 4:6-7) A.C.T.S.

II. Ingratitude Takes Us Down...Down...Down Into The Darkness And Then Death. (vv.20-32)

...God lets rebellious, unthankful men and women merely go their own way...down! (vv.24, 26, 28)

- A. Refusing God His glory and gratitude results in perverted thinking. (v.21) "futile in their thinking."
 1. Paul: Rebellious man's reasoning is "empty." He is the ultimate: "No-where man!"
...He or she may be brilliant in their discipline of study, but in the end, rejection of God and His truth will lead to no-where but into the dark. Speculations...for sure!
 2. To reject God is to reject the greatest reality in the universe...God created everything and He alone gives it meaning. "Man is not the measure of all things!"
- B. Refusing to glorify God and give Him our thanks leads to a heart filled with darkness. (v.21c)
 1. Ingratitude leads not only to perverted thinking, but more, it leads to twisted heart values. Look at our country today: materialism, relativism, secularism...twisted!
 2. "Man the wise" becomes "Man the fool," stumbling into greater darkness until death.
...(vv.22-23) "Claiming to be wise, they became fools...and worship God's creation."

SO WHAT? WHAT DIFFERENCE SHOULD THIS MAKE IN YOUR LIFE?

1. This week we celebrate Thanksgiving Day by gathering around our tables to enjoy wonderful meals. Enjoy the meal and conversation with your loved ones. But also, be sure to express your deep gratitude to the Lord God, who not only made you, but more, has provided salvation through Jesus Christ our Lord.
2. Practice giving thanks to God in everything, and thereby, acknowledge His will and sovereignty over all things, even your very life. (1 Thessalonians 5:18)
3. Giving thanks in your prayers will increase your faith as you make your requests to the Lord. It will strengthen your trust in Him as you reflect upon all that He has already done for you...and your trust in Him for your current need will grow. You will say in your heart, "If God is for us, who can be against us?"
4. Does your cold, hard, and thankless heart reflect your need of Jesus as Savior? Most probably! Jesus invites every man, woman, boy, or girl to call upon Him to be saved from their sin, death, and hell. The Bible tells, "All have sinned, and the wages of sin is death...but the gift of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ our Lord." (Romans 3,6)