

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FROM JOEL (11/18/17)

Q: Much is stressed on the importance of gratitude. How is this expressed when one is alone and in quietude by one's self, or not in the company of personalities? Just praying daily, "I thank you, God, for blessings I have already received" seems insufficient.

A: Now praying "I thank thee, God, for blessings already received" is not gratitude. Gratitude is never **for** something. If we say, "I thank you for your kindness;" "I thank you for your generosity;" "I thank you for the gift you have given me;" whether we say it to God or to man, this is not gratitude. This is human thanks, or human appreciation, and it's all right. As a matter of fact, without it the world would be a sad place.

Let's all be thankful; let's all be appreciative always, but never let us think that that is gratitude. Gratitude is always **for** nothing. Gratitude is an inner feeling of joy. For what reason? No reason. If there is a reason for gratitude, it isn't gratitude. It's just human thanks and appreciation.

It's like joy—the joy you read about in Scripture. If you're joyous because somebody gave you a thousand or ten thousand dollars, that's not the joy the Bible is referring to. If you're joyous because you received a Cadillac, that's not the joy the Bible referred to. What joy does the Bible refer to? The joy that you feel for no reason. This is the real joy, and this is the real gratitude, and this is the real love.

If you love someone for a reason, be assured it is not spiritual love. You cannot spiritually love anybody *for a reason*. You can humanly love them, and like them, and appreciate them, but when you *spiritually* love, it is for no reason whatsoever. There can never be an object of love when love is spiritual. There can never be an object of gratitude when gratitude is spiritual. There can never be an object of joy when joy is spiritual. In other words, I'm just joyful. Why? I don't know—because there's a song in my heart. Why is there a song in my heart? I don't know—because I'm joyful.

If I'm only joyful because it's a beautiful spring day, how long will my joy last? Until winter comes. If I'm grateful *because* someone gives me something, how long will I be grateful? As long as they're giving. And we go back to politics again, don't we—what did you do for me lately?

Oh, no. No. Our joy, our gratitude, must never be for a reason, and more especially when it comes to God! If you're grateful to God for a gift, you're bargaining—you're bargaining. If you're grateful to God for a healing, what gratitude is that? Even the Scribes and the Pharisees do that. They are the best contributors to the church there are, but they're not spiritual. No.

Gratitude is just a feeling. Again, it's an attitude and an altitude. Joy is just a feeling. There is something that prompts joy, and there is something that prompts gratitude, and there is something that prompts spiritual love, and that is the indwelling Spirit. When it's there, you have it, and when it isn't there, you haven't.

If you have the Spirit of God dwell in you, there's a joy in your heart and a song in your heart. If you have the Spirit of God dwell in you, there's a feeling of gratitude always, but you can't look out and say why. It's just a feeling; it's just there.

When you have the Spirit of God in you, you love, but you can't say, "Oh, I just love you." You can't say, "Oh I just love my family," or "I just love the members of my community," or "I just love the members of my religious body." Ah, no. That's not spiritual love. That's personal and human.

When the love of God is in our hearts, we just love, and then everybody that comes into our orbit and everything that comes into it gets a share of that love in one way or another. Can't help it, because if you have love, you could be riding in a train, or a ship, or a plane, and people around you would feel it, and yet you would not be aiming it at them because it isn't your love. It's God's love flowing through you to whomever may be around and receptive and responsive.

Do you not see that we can never spiritually direct love or prayers? You can't direct prayers to Jones, Brown, and Smith. God wouldn't tolerate such a thing. If you're going to pray, pray for your enemies as well as your friends. In other words, acknowledge that God's grace is available to everyone. Then you really are praying.

When you have an object of prayer, it makes your prayer selfish—"Heal *my* child." At the same minute you are praying to heal your child, a billion other children are sick, dying, hungry, unhappy—and here you are praying for *your* child. That's kind of a selfish attitude—thinking that God is going to select your child out of the four billion. That isn't knowing God aright. God isn't that way.

God won't select your child or mine for His particular grace. God's grace falls on the just and the unjust. God's grace falls on the friend and the enemy. God's grace falls universally. His rain falls universally on all.

So prayer, to be a real prayer, is one that acknowledges God to be the love and the life unto all mankind. Gratitude is just a gratitude within that has no other reason except the basis that God is in the midst of me and I feel it. I *feel* the presence of God and the power of God.

(Excerpt from Recording #409: 1961 Washington, D.C. Special Class, Side 2: "The Attitude and Altitude of Prayer, Part Two." This excerpt is posted with kind permission from the Estate of Joel Goldsmith, which holds the copy protection on the recorded classes and the copyright on the transcripts. The full transcript of this recording is available at www.joelgoldsmith.com.)