Don't Waste Your Isolation - Part 14

Thankfulness and Love

Every passing day provides more opportunity to waste any spiritual benefits available to us during our isolation. Cabin fever can result in tempers rising in our home. Boredom can lead to sinfulness as our eyes wander on the internet. Imbibing a plethora of new information, reports, and forecasts can lead to fear. Disagreements with politicians' decisions can lead to anger. Loneliness can lead to depression that saps you of energy and desire. Extra time can lead to worthlessly wasted time. And the list could go on.

We must realize that most of these temptations to walk away from opportunities to grow in Christ are only temptations because we think something else is more satisfying than Jesus Himself. We use our extra time to pursue all sorts of activities that we somehow convince ourselves will be more satisfying, more beneficial, more sustaining than Jesus.

One way to combat these temptations, whether to sin or to give in to the detrimental effects of things like depression, is to live a life of thanksgiving. Being ready to combat temptation with a list of things for which you are thankful is a way to redeem the time.

Consider that the words thank, thanks, and thanksgiving occur 163 times in the Bible (ESV). The Psalms, our book of worship, contains 55 occurrences.

It is informative to realize that we are commanded 20 times to link our thankfulness to God's steadfast love. Take a moment to write down all the ways you are thankful to God for His steadfast love and the fact that it endures forever (15 of the 20 times use this formula). What blessings do you receive from knowing and experiencing God's unfailing, steadfast, covenant love? In what ways are you encouraged, strengthened, and undergirded by God's steadfast love? Is there any possible alternate world in which pursuing something other than this God, who loves you with an everlasting, steadfast love, and His Son Jesus is more satisfying, more sustaining, more enjoyable?

The only negative use of these words I was able to find is in Romans 1:21 where Paul speaks of those who knew God (through general revelation) but "did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened." Do you see the connection? One of the things that led to those outside of Christ becoming futile in their thinking and darkened in their foolish hearts was a lack of thanksgiving to God for revealing Himself to them through His creation. Thanksgiving is a mark of those who know and worship God.

Living a life of thanksgiving also facilitates worship, both private and corporate. Did you realize that Asaph and other Levites were "chosen and expressly named to give thanks to the Lord, for his steadfast love endures forever" (1 Chron. 16:41), "to invoke, to thank,

and to praise the Lord, the God of Israel" (1 Chron. 16:4)? Even their jobs as musicians were described in terms of thanksgiving: they were those who led "thanksgiving sung to the Lord" (1 Chron. 16:7), "those who prophesied with the lyre in thanksgiving and praise to the Lord" (1 Chronicles 25:3), "it was the duty of the trumpeters and singers to make themselves heard in unison in praise and thanksgiving to the Lord" (2 Chronicles 5:13), or those "in charge of the songs of thanksgiving" (Nehemiah 12:8).

When the ark was brought back to Jerusalem, David responded with a song of thanksgiving. He began his song with thanks, "Oh give thanks to the Lord, call upon his name; make known his deeds among the peoples!" and ended it with thanks, "Oh give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures forever!" And in case we missed his point, he adds this: "Say also: Save us, O God of our salvation, and gather and deliver us from among the nations, that we may give thanks to your holy name, and glory in your praise. Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting!" (1 Chronicles 16:8, 34-36 ESV).

According to Paul, thanksgiving is to be inherent in our prayers (Philippians 4:6, Colossians 4:2), our speech (1 Corinthians 14:16, Ephesians 5:4), our reception of God's gifts (1 Timothy 4:3-4), and our lives in general (Colossians 2:7).

If you are still in doubt about the priority of thankfulness in the believer's life, consider Colossians 3:15-17:

"And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him."

So the next time you are tempted to waste your isolation with frivolous or sinful activities, return to the realm of thanksgiving by praising God with thanksgiving for everything He has done. Your list will never end.

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