

Gratitude: the little things that matter

A sermon by Asaolu, O.S. (asaolu@yahoo.com) delivered at COC, UNILAG on Aug 4, 2024

Definition: *Gratitude is expressed appreciation, the state of being thankful for something, the feeling or quality of being grateful.*

The little things that matter are actually everything about and concerning us, especially things we consider as not a big deal, stuff we feel are insignificant or felt entitled to! Such minute things make up the big picture, often we forget that the forest is a composition of single trees. So is life made of events, deeds received and acts we make.

Text: 1 Thessalonians 5:18 *“In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.”*

Reading: The Psalmist understands gratitude; did it on a personal level and called others to do same.

Psalms 103:1-5 *Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies; Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's.*

Psalms 105:1-4 *O give thanks unto the LORD; call upon his name: make known his deeds among the people. Sing unto him, sing psalms unto him: talk ye of all his wondrous works. Glory ye in his holy name: let the heart of them rejoice that seek the LORD. Seek the LORD, and his strength: seek his face evermore.*

Psalms 136:1 *O give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever. [x6 in scripture]*

Introduction: Only he who carefully reflects shows gratitude [*eni to ba monu ro, a mope da!*] Gratitude is to intentionally recall and express the grace or mercy received from an entity, be it from God or man or a community or organization or even an animal [*remember Balaam's ass and what it said?*]. It is to acknowledge that we receive benefits we do not really deserve and are delivered from troubles we invite on self. Gratitude is a feeling that thrives only in an atmosphere or mind in which **both contentment and hope** abounds. In the Bible, gratitude is the word, *eucharista*, which stems from the word, *charis*, meaning 'grace.' The Lord's Supper sometimes called the *Eucharist*, is one of our highest forms of expression of gratitude aside singing praises.

Thesis: We can and should express gratitude for simple things as life itself, the weather, the traffic, our rivals, our opportunities, challenges, etc. All these help us to find purpose and grow into whom we are meant to be! Yeah, it is difficult to be grateful especially now that things are extremely hard economically! Do not take God, others or things for granted rather be grateful even for the smallest things. The opposite of gratitude is to ignore or even disdain a benefactor or source of providence or benevolence. It manifests progressively via overlook, murmur, grumbling, and rebellion, such thrives in those filled with a sense of **entitlement or pride**.

Below are few instances where people are blessed or otherwise for showing or refraining to express gratitude:

1. David as a shepherd boy acknowledged God's help to slay a bear and a lion and extolled the LORD thus, was able to overcome Goliath (1 Samuel 17:33-37). He was ever thankful and humble and was a man after God's heart despite his shortcomings. He was not pleased that he dwelt in a palace while God's Ark was kept in a tent and wanted to build a house for God. God stated that David's son would erect the temple and also gave David a promise and covenant to be a progenitor of the Christ. David's reaction in 2 Samuel **7:18** is telling! Solomon too was quite grateful at succeeding his father and did not ask for personal benefits when offered to make a wish [*as per the Lord's appearance in a vision, what do people ask in hypothetical Genie appearances?*], he asked for wisdom and God gave more than he requested (1 Kings 3:5-14).
2. King Nebuchadnezzar wasn't grateful to God but gloried in self, he learned the hard way (Daniel 4:30-37).
3. Ten lepers were healed by Jesus but only the deeply grateful one was made whole (Luke 17:11-19).
4. The Philippian Church was grateful for Paul's ministrations unto them as well as unto others. They thus supported him repeatedly with material things (aside from prayers) even after he was no longer with them! Paul too was grateful and blessed them from the depth of his heart in **4:19**. Would it not be 419 for anyone to just claim that prayer today without doing unto others, especially unto faithful ministers what the Philippians did?
5. Diotrephes abused his leadership position and wasn't grateful, he attracted apostolic rebuke (3 John 9-10)

Conclusion: Be grateful in all situations, even for little things (1 Corinthians 12:**22-24**). He that is thankful for little will get more. *Count your blessings though the world wants you to count the losses and Satan want us count our sorrows*. It could have been worse. Recall that *'happiness comes from what happens around you while joy comes from within based on what you know.'* If you know God a little, that should spur you to be thankful a lot!