

Unexpressed Thanks, Love, & Faith

David Halbrook

How would you react if your child believed that, as long as he was inwardly thankful, outward expressions of gratitude were unnecessary? It is wise that past American leaders chose a day of "Thanks Giving" wherein citizens would *express* thanks, not content with inward thankfulness alone. It is tragic that many people do not express thanks to God—a problem with dire consequences (Romans 1:21-22). Do you see that true "thanks" must be "given" (expressed)?

Isn't love like that? God's love is always expressed, not a mere state of mind (1 John 4:9). He expects this of you also-- *If you love Me, keep My commandments* (John 14:15).

Faith, like thanks and love, that is only in the mind is dead. The walls of Jericho fell by faith but would have stood if Israel had faith alone (Hebrews 11:30). The paralyzed man would have remained paralyzed unless his faith motivated him to find Jesus (Matthew 9:1-8). By faith alone, you are spiritually dead until you obey from the heart Jesus' doctrine—the gospel (Jam. 2:20-26; Rom. 6:17; 10:16; Mk. 16:16).

Learn God's way to express thanks, love, and faith. May we help you learn?

Editor's Note: Could America's Thanksgiving Day provide an opportunity to help someone understand that thanks that is unexpressed (thanks alone) is just as useless as faith that does not work (faith alone)? It could if you will hand someone this week's article (*Arkansas Weekly*) or make the same points to someone in your own words.

Simple opportunities to teach the lost and assist each other.

Pray for: Janice White, The Ledgerwoods, Novela Puckett, Noleka Hopper, Samuel Southall, others with ongoing trials, and new Christians among us.

Mike Chatman, who was baptized a few weeks ago, has expressed his desire to join us in the Lord's work. Let's welcome, encourage, and work together with him.

We continue to rejoice with **Emma Kemper** who was baptized Wednesday, November 12. She's a student at Lyon College. Let's find ways to strengthen her.

After a few years of financial uncertainty, our giving has recently exceeded our regular expenses. As part of our effort to be faithful stewards of what we have, we are sending \$1000 to Steve Wallace, a gospel preacher, who be preaching in India for a little over two weeks in January. He has been there before, so he understands the needs of brethren there and how he can help. Let's pray for him, in addition to our financial fellowship in this work.

The Exhorter

Acts 11:23 *Exhorted them all... cleave unto the Lord*

Church of Christ--Quail Valley

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Can We Withdraw from the "Withdrawn"?

Edward O. Bragwell, Sr.

Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition he received from us (2 Thess. 3:6).

A brother or sister "quits the church," or more correctly quits the Lord. Is there anything the church can do beyond urging him to return? Usually when we suggest that maybe the church should consider withdrawing from such a one, we are faced with: "You can't withdraw from those who have withdrawn themselves." We do not believe that those who raise this objection are willfully trying to avoid responsibility for discipline. I have heard it from some of the finest and more conscientious brethren that I know. But, I do believe that they have a misconception of the withdrawing process.

There is more to "withdrawing yourselves" than making a formal announcement at church and then no longer "using them" in a public way. Many seem to think that since the quitter no longer attends and participates in congregational activities that this constitutes his having withdrawn himself so we cannot "withdraw our fellowship" since the quitter has already withdrawn himself. But this solution to the problem will not do.

We suspect that part of the problem is that of referring to discipline as "withdrawing fellowship." The Scriptures refer to "withdrawing yourselves." There is a difference. When one withdraws himself it is true that his spiritual fellowship is withdrawn, but it goes beyond that. One withdraws his person, his company, or his social association from the offending party. Surely one can do this even though his brother or sister no longer attends the meetings of the church. Such withdrawal or isolation is designed to make the offender ashamed of his conduct and produce repentance. If Christians refuse to have any social association with such a one and let him know why he can

have none then many would feel the pressure and be restored that probably would otherwise be lost. Of course, this severing of company does not preclude contacts for the purpose of admonishing (2 Thess. 3:15) and/or fulfilling other obligations one may have toward the person.

I have known many who have "withdrawn themselves" who continue to enjoy the day-to-day association with Christians. That association has not been severed at all. It is precisely the company ("mixing up with" - Vine's Dictionary) that must be withdrawn (see 1 Cor. 5:9-13; 2 Thess. 3:14). Such a person can still be "marked" or "noted" by the church and then each member can withdraw his company (association) that the one might be ashamed.

The concept that we cannot withdraw from the withdrawn (meaning one who no longer attends) because he has withdrawn himself presents still another problem. Suppose a brother (or sister) becomes an adulterer but still attends all services, sings, bows in prayer, eats the Lord's supper, etc. (we have known this to happen)—can the church withdraw from him?

"Of course, they can," you say.

But wait a minute. Does the fact that he still attends regularly and participates in worship not mean that he refuses to be withdrawn from? How can the church withdraw from one who refuses to be withdrawn from?

"But, we can't keep him from coming and participating," you say.

Right again!

"Each member can refuse to associate with him on a day to day basis."

Right one more time!

"After all, we can 'withdraw ourselves' from him even though he is regular in attendance and participates in the worship."

Now, my brother, you are beginning to get the point! If the fact that one quits means that he has "withdrawn himself" and we cannot withdraw from him - if one refuses to quit it must mean that there is nothing further we can do, since he refuses to be withdrawn from. If not, why not?

I believe that we can mark and refuse to company with a brother who walks disorderly whether or not he attends services. In fact, the very refusal to attend faithfully is walking disorderly and is grounds for marking and withdrawing ourselves.

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Thanksgiving *"—and be ye thankful" Col. 3:15* *Jesse Fleming*

In our country we have a day set aside as a national holiday for the giving of thanks.

This practice was first instituted by Governor Bradford of the Plymouth colony in 1621 and by 1630 it became an annual observance following the gathering of the harvest each year. New York was the first state to make it a state holiday and in 1864 Abraham Lincoln issued a proclamation calling upon the nation to give thanks and fixed the fourth Thursday in November as the day (Encyclopedia of Religion, p774).

We are interested in thanksgiving as an expression of gratitude for the manifold blessings that we have received.

Ingratitude has no place in the life of a child of God. (Rom. 1:21)

Col. 3:15 "----and be ye thankful" Being thankful involves being mindful of the favors and blessings we receive and not forget them (Ps. 103:2) and being grateful and expressing our appreciation.

Some things we should be thankful for:

Necessary things of life: material things, food, shelter, family, health.

Examples and influence of those who encourage us.

God's unspeakable (inexpressible) gift

The Bible---God's revealed will to us.

The Church---the blood-bought institution of Christ.

The Victory that we have in Christ. (1 Cor. 15:57)

A little leaven leavens the whole lump. (Galatians 5:9)

This adage is easily understood. Just as it takes only a small amount of leaven to affect an entire loaf of bread, a little sin has a saturating influence on one's life. The encroachment of sin may begin almost imperceptibly, yet its mark is always left. Do not be deceived into believing that "a little sin will not hurt"; Sin always hurts. Even a little sin endangers your soul and opens the door to still more sin. Left unchecked, sin's influence permeates your heart and your life - hardening you and destroying you as it goes. Be on guard and do not be deceived by sin's deadly influence. Give sin no safe haven in your heart, for if you do, its destructive influence will be swift and complete. Choose instead to be influenced by the truth of God (Phil. 4:8).

(Sword Tips, #339; Joe R. Price; <http://swordtips1.wordpress.com/>)