

“The Evil Deeds That Are Done Under the Sun”

Sermon Notes

➤ **Not gonna lie...the Preacher today’s got really bad news, so let’s meet it with the gospel which is really good news**

1. Every ounce of injustice under the sun will ultimately face perfect justice under the Son (vv.16-17; Matthew 23:23-34; Acts 17:30-31; Luke 18:13-14)
2. The curse of death under the sun will one day be reversed for all who come under the Son (vv.18-22; Psalm 49:15; Isaiah 26:19; Daniel 12:1-3; Romans 6:23; 1 Corinthians 15:20-58)
3. Oppression is real under the sun, so let us make every effort to engage it wisely with the resources of the Son (4:1-3; Proverbs 24:10-12; James 1:27; 2 Samuel 11-12)

Next Week: Ecclesiastes 4:4-16 - “A Man’s Envy of His Neighbor”

MEFC Community Group Study Guide

For the week of November 22nd - 28th

The following is an excerpt from an article published just about a year ago at Desiring God.¹ Written by Jon Bloom, it's titled: "The Lovely Insufficiency of Gratitude: What Thanksgiving Can't Do For You". If the ideas here intrigue you, run (don't walk) to pick up John Piper's classic, book-length exposition of these concepts in: Future Grace: The Purifying Power of the Promises of God.² Enjoy this timely resource for personal study or in Community Group!

Thankfulness is a wonderful virtue. It is among the most morally beautiful of the human affections, and perhaps among the most undervalued. When we really feel grateful, we find it a delightful and refreshing experience. When we observe it authentically in someone else, we find it admirable. Like a glorious sunset, we don't need to be convinced of the loveliness of thankfulness.

What makes gratitude so beautiful is its rare combination of humility and joy. Like real love, real thankfulness displaces human selfishness — it's impossible to feel conceited or conniving and feel truly thankful at the same time. When thankfulness should be present but isn't (in us or someone else), we know something is wrong or disordered.

But there's something gratitude was not designed to do: motivate our obedience to God. If this sounds wrong, you may, like me, have been on the receiving end of some mistaken teaching about how gratitude really works.

Numerous times in my early life I heard Christians say some variation of *God has done so much for you; you should be willing to do much for him*. In other words, out of thankfulness for all God's grace toward me, I should follow and obey him. Something about the idea always seemed a bit off to me. I knew that feeling gratitude for all God had done for me was right, even if I wrongly didn't feel it, but trying to make gratitude inspire a life of obedience just wouldn't work. All the effort seemed to inspire was a sense of demotivating guilt.

Then John Piper filled in some missing pieces to my puzzle by explaining the biblical concept of "future grace." He said, "Nowhere in the Bible is gratitude connected explicitly with obedience as a motivation. We do not find the phrase 'out of gratitude' or 'in gratitude' for acts toward God." What do we find instead? That when God wants to motivate us to obey him, he calls us to live by *faith*.

Text after text after text showed that the Bible describes Christian obedience as an "obedience of faith" (Romans 1:5), a "work of faith" (1 Thessalonians 1:3), "[living] by faith" (Galatians 2:20), "[walking] by faith" (2 Corinthians 5:7), "faith working through love" (Galatians 5:6), and more. The Bible never describes Christian obedience as the obedience of gratitude. It's faith in what God promises to be for us and do for us now and in the future that motivates our obedience, not gratitude for what God has done in the past.

1 <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/the-lovely-insufficiency-of-gratitude> . Accessed 11/20/20 @ 8pm.

2 <https://www.desiringgod.org/books/future-grace>

The lights really came on for me when John explained it this way: Grace is not only a past experience of pardon; it is a future experience of power to do what God commands us to do. This is why gratitude for past grace is not the fuel for today's obedience. You can't run your car on gratitude for yesterday's gas. You need today's gas for today's trip. You need today's grace for today's obedience. And the pump is not gratitude but faith in future grace.

Thankfulness and trust, gratitude and faith, have a dynamic relationship, but distinct functions in the soul. That's why we frequently see them mentioned together in Scripture, like in Psalm 9:

“I will *give* thanks to the Lord with my whole heart; I will recount all of your wonderful deeds. I will be glad and exult in you; I will sing praise to your name, O Most High.” (Psalm 9:1–2)

“The Lord is a stronghold for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble. And those who know your name *put their trust in you*, for you, O Lord, have not forsaken those who seek you. (Psalm 9:9–10)

Do you see the connection? The psalmist recounts with thankfulness all the past wonderful deeds of the Lord and therefore resolves to put his trust (faith) in the Lord in the troubles coming his way. He's not trying to make gratitude motivate his ongoing obedience; he's stoking his faith in God's future grace by remembering with thankfulness the past grace God has provided.

Thanksgiving is wonderfully healthy for our souls. It redirects our attention from focusing on life-depleting and faith-shrinking concerns to focusing on God in Christ, who is our life (Colossians 3:4), by recalling the varied graces we have received from him through the supreme grace of the cross. Gratitude inspires joyful worship and sparks our faith.

But we can't run our car on gratitude for yesterday's gas. We need tomorrow's gas to keep going tomorrow. And the gas that keeps us going is faith in God's “precious and very great promises” (2 Peter 1:4), faith in God's future grace. So, give thanks today with your whole heart for all you have received from God, and let it do its work to encourage your trust in him for all you will need tomorrow.