

November 19, 2011 Florida Hospital Seventh-day Adventist Church  
2 Corinthians 7:9-15 No Thanks Necessary by Andy McDonald

The first Tuesday, September through May “Retirement Fellowship” happens here in Room 105. There’s a program and lunch for our retired members and friends. I stopped by the first Tuesday in November to see if I could get our seniors to help me with today’s message.

I gave them each a paper with just three sentences I started and wished for them to complete. At the top the paper was titled, “My Story of Thanks” followed by these three incomplete sentences

1. I’m thankful for...
2. I wasn’t sure if I could ever be thankful for this but now, looking back I’m very thankful for...
3. Being thankful is important to me because...

It was really that second question I was curious about. Having reached a certain level of maturity and now looking back I was curious about those occasions that were possibly resisted, or painful, or seemed to be headed in way we didn’t wish to pursue, but now years later looking back are actually experiences for which we give thanks.

One of our ladies wrote, “My dear husband has been gone eleven years and now I can look back and be thankful that he did not linger and suffer. He can’t see the world as it is today and I’ am truly thankful that I know I will see him again.” It took some time to move from grief to gratitude.

Another of our retirement fellowship people wrote about the challenge faced as a young person when the family was asked to move to South America. “I wasn’t sure I wanted to go” (Not thankful at that moment) but now in hindsight, “...the experience was good for our family, learning another language and culture—we grew in every way.”

One of the memories must have been painful at the moment , she writes: “When I was in my twenties I thought I was in love with a certain young man. However he wasn’t the one the Lord had chosen. After a minister friend, a girls dean, and family expressed their concern I broke up with him. Within a year I was introduced to a man who I eventually married and we’ve been married now for 49 years.”

Just like in the story of Joseph what may appear bad at the moment may later be cause for thanks.

Time and experience change our perspectives. Those life situations that seem difficult or unexplainable, often with time and experience transition into points of praise and gratitude.

In responding to why being thankful is important the responses sounded like this:

- Our health is better and we are so much happier
- Because being thankful is the stuff of life
- Being thankful makes my life complete
- Like a boat anchor in steadies my life
- Because a thankful heart is a joyous and happy heart
- Being thankful helps me not take life and health for granted.

But I especially found connection with scripture and temptation and righteousness in the one that wrote:

- Being thankful is important to me to keep me humble and aware that I really am not completely self-made or self-oriented.

When we say those two seemingly insignificant words, by our mouths we are confessing a stance of powerlessness. In fact they might be the most humble words we say, if we mean them. They really take all the credit and all the attention from us and place it all on the one to whom we say those two words, “Thank you.”

I don’t mean to create panic but Christmas is only 5 weeks away! And if you receive a Christmas gift all wrapped up and you open it and there’s the gift, “What do you say to the giver? Thank you.” That’s the proper response. Or maybe “Oh thank you so much!”

So let me ask you, when is “No Thanks Necessary?”

I think the question is relatively straight forward and simple—No Thanks Is Necessary when you earn, or sense you deserve what you receive.

I mean when you’ve worked hard and it comes time for your pay check, if the boss hands it to you, you might say thank you, but in truth that “thank you” is for them handing you the check not for the money on the check because you are clear you earned it!

But there’s another time when we are sure “No Thanks Is Necessary” and that is when we believe we are entitled.

I remember years ago attending a group exercise where the intention was for all members of the group to acknowledge that we are all prejudice! I think until that day I had always associated the word prejudice with racial prejudice so I was resisting the whole notion of being prejudice.

Of course the truth is we are all prejudice for or against a whole list of things; we have our preferences and we have those things about which we are indifferent and couldn’t care less.

I don’t remember if it was during the group exercise or later reflecting on it that I came to a self-awareness of my primary prejudice against a group of people. I discovered I was prejudice against people who think they are entitled.

I finally realized that it really didn’t matter what the race, or socio economic level, or educational or societal background, but when people act like they deserve something, that they are entitled, they have a right to something because of who they are inherently within themselves I know I have a prejudice against them.

The person who asks by words, or look, or action—“Do you know who I am” suggesting that that entitles them to something puts me on edge.

It may be as simple as driving along at the speed limit and someone pulling out in front of you, or merging into your lane, or grabbing that parking space you were headed to, as if their time is more valuable than yours and they are entitled to get their way.

If you believe you are entitled, No Thanks Necessary.

We see this played out at the church with our rentals. During the week this facility is used by lots of other groups. Many pay our full rental charges, and there are a number of groups we consider such a community service we allow them to use the building for free. It is interesting that we find both of these groups to be grateful for the space, they even say thank you and some write cards of thanks.

But between these two groups is the irritating group. It is those we are clear are not a community service to the degree we want to offer the place for free but who are sure they are entitled to get a room for free or at least at some greatly reduced rate. And with this group of renters we rarely can make them happy and I can assure you there is no thank you, they just don't see it as necessary because they deserve whatever they get!!

You may be familiar with Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the image of gold, silver, bronze, iron and iron mixed with clay in Daniel chapter 2. But Nebuchadnezzar had another dream about a tree in Daniel 4.

He dreamed of a large tree in the middle of the earth that grew very tall and strong, reaching \high into the heavens for all the world to see. It had fresh green leaves and it was loaded with fruit for all to eat. Wild animals lived in its shade, and birds nested in its branches. All the world was fed from this tree.

He then saw in his dream a messenger a holy one coming down from heaven. The messenger shouted, “Cut down the tree; lop off its

branches! Shake off its leaves, and scatter its fruit! Chase the animals from its shade and the birds from its branches. But leave the stump and the roots in the ground, bound with band of iron and bronze and surrounded by tender grass....for seven periods of time let him have the mind of an animal instead of a human.

He has this dream and doesn't know what it means and so Daniel comes to Nebuchadnezzar and explains the dream. That Nebuchadnezzar was the tree and what was going to happen was that he was going to be driven from human society and live in the fields with the wild animals eating grass like a cow and be drenched with dew for seven periods of time---until you learn that the Most High rules over the kings of the world and gives them to anyone he chooses. But the stump and root means that you will receive your kingdom back again when you have learned that heaven rules.

So Nebuchadnezzar has this dream, gets the interpretation and then life goes on and nothing happens. One month later everything is the same as before and another month and another and the seasons change and still all is well. It is not until a full year after he has the dream that he was taking a walk on the flat roof of the royal palace in Babylon. As he looked out across the city, he said, "Just look at this great city of Babylon! I, by my own mighty power, have built this beautiful city as my royal residence and as an expression of my royal splendor."

While he was speaking the word came to him from heaven that he had heard in his dream and for what most commentators believe the next 7 years he was like wild beast in the field. After 7 years his sanity returned and he praised and worshiped the Most High.

His own words, "Now I, Nebuchadnezzar , praise and glorify and honor the king of heaven. All his acts are just and true, and he is able to humble those who are proud."

Gone is the sense of entitlement. Gone is the sense that he has made himself okay! Gone is the pride of I by my mighty power. I imagine

that all Nebuchadnezzar could say was thank you over and over and over.

Could it be that our lives are not more filled with thanks, that we are tempted toward a “no thanks necessary” position because of a spiritual sense of entitlement? Could that be possible?

Do you know what I mean? It is clear that God has his work cut out for him to reel in the drug dealer, the pedophile, the abuser, the murderer, the porn producer. I mean obviously if any of those were to get turned around, well of course it would be necessary for them to say and sing and shout THANK YOU! To God.

But we aren't that bad. In our minds don't we imagine that God doesn't have to expend as much energy, doesn't take as much effort and that less work and sacrifice on his part are required because we aren't so bad! In fact we are pretty good people, truth be known we sort of deserve to be saved in his kingdom.

I mean really if you blowout one of your tires and you aren't carrying a spare and a person comes along picks you up and drives you to tire store and even buys you a tire and takes you back to your car and helps change the tire, that's generous, and hopefully you would say thank you.

But it would only demand a small thank you compared to if you were driving along and your tire blew out and then the car caught on fire and totally burned up. And someone came along and picked you up and took you to the car dealer and bought you a new hybrid car and then took you to the mall and replaced everything for you that got burned up in your suitcase, and then wanted to take you to supper before you get back on the road in your new car. Now when you hear that story you know that person is going to say thank you, but if they get a car is a thanks even necessary for just a tire?

Listen—we don't need a new tire or even a new car we need a full rescue.

We are like a man overboard in the middle of the ocean.  
Without a chance,  
Without hope,  
Without answers  
Without the means to alter our situation.

It is impossible for us, of ourselves to escape from the pit of sin.

Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots neither can you do good who are accustomed to doing evil.

I don't know how much clearer God could have communicated it,  
There is no one good not even one. As it says in Romans.

We can go get educated and education is a wonderful gift  
We can go soak up good culture experience and become culturally enriched  
We can put our will power on a great exercise program to strengthen it  
We can grit our teeth and put all our human effort to the task.

There are some who will do that so well that if you just look at the behavior, the outside stuff, there can be an appearance of goodness, but all that human stuff cannot change the heart, it cannot purify from the inside out.

Jesus understood this that's why he said that it wasn't what went into a person that made them unclean but it is what comes from a person.

We need something to work on us from the inside out. In our most honest moments we join Paul in crying out "Who shall deliver me from this body of death." And the only answer is Jesus, the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

There is only one way, just one answer to the good life and that is to say yes to God.

John writes, “Behold (it is so indescribable that he doesn’t even try but just invites us to look and see) Behold what manner of the love the Father has given to us that we should be called the children of God, and that is what we are.”

God has all the paper work done. Everything is ready for the adoption and all that is needed is our saying yes to God. He wants you. He wants me. And he invites us into his royal family.

Not because we are good enough  
Not because we are entitled by some performance of ours but

Because of Jesus. And when we get in touch with our human depravity, When we realize we aren’t entitled but it is only by grace then our lives will be marked and identified by the necessity of those two simple words, Thank you.

Thank you, I don’t deserve it.

Thank you, I didn’t earn it.

Thank you, for your actions

Thank you, for your unmerited favor toward me

Thank you Jesus.

This week as we spend time a little more focused on giving thanks Above the blessings of this year, above family, living in a free country, having understandings of Bible truth, spend some time imagining being lost at sea a 1000 miles from shore, no life raft, no life vest, in water too cold to survive, and then imagine being rescued. You didn’t call, you didn’t build the helicopter, you didn’t teach the team of rescuers to do their job, all you did was get lost at sea and you didn’t fight those who came to save you. You don’t deserve it, you didn’t earn it, but you just receive it and say Thank you, and that is what Jesus does for you. Don’t ever imagine No Thanks Necessary but instead my the cry of your heart be those two humble words to Jesus, Thank You.