

Text: Romans 1:21

**Believe it or not, after reading that verse, I want to speak today on gratitude/thankfulness!**

- even though the context of this passage of scripture is really entirely negative!
  - Paul is speaking here of pagans, those who simply don't believe in God - I doubt there are any of us fit that category
- but it is this very statement we just read that 'turned the lights on' for me as to the **power** of a grateful heart
  - because Paul is explaining how these people first became pagans
  - he says, they started out knowing God, but they didn't put Him in His rightful place - & they weren't grateful
  - so, they began to seek fulfilment in other places & other things - their minds went off track & their hearts darkened
  - they weren't satisfied & grateful for what they had, so they lost their way - & their lives dried up

<but, with that understanding, I learn something positive from this scripture - simply:>

**It pays to have a thankful spirit - an attitude of gratitude**

- that's why all throughout your Bible you will read the words "give thanks" over & over again
  - ★ because it is the attitude of thankfulness that causes your heart to remain open & sensitive to God & to others

**3 words of advice I would give you today, regarding having an 'attitude of gratitude':**

**1. Remember to be thankful to the Lord for the way He has led you**

- I choose that statement carefully - because there are good things you have experienced in your lifetime
  - & there are things that are not so good, in fact some are downright horrible - why should I be thankful for those?
- **illus.** "4 words of wisdom" - no.1 was "give thanks" - my response, "Why? - just coming off the back of the most difficult period of my life  
 Lord spoke to my heart: "you don't understand"  
 I've blessed you with many good things, & I've also allowed you to face things that have made you stronger  
 it's everything together that has helped me shape you & make you who you are - "all things work together for good..."  
 but you're a work in progress, & I need you to maintain an attitude that allows me to continue my work  
 "be thankful", live a life of gratefulness - "in everything give thanks" (1 Thessalonians 5:18)
- the Lord was saying to me: live in the power of a thankful heart, because a thankful heart is a responsive heart
  - ★ there is power in your gratitude that allows Me to work in your life

**2. Be thankful to those who have blessed you along the way**

- those who have influenced your life in a positive way
  - there are people who've done you wrong - don't get hung up on them - put them aside
- what about the ones who have given you a leg up? because I guarantee there are at least a few of them as well
  - **quote:** Alex Haley/author of "Roots"/speaking of his life - "if you see turtle perched on a fence post, you know it didn't get there by itself";
  - show your gratitude - & in a timely way
  - **illus.** Self - health concern: Rob & Ros; Cf. Trent G - how it made me feel; why should we wait until it's too late?
  - husbands & wives love to hear expressions of love from each other
  - **illus.** husband overheard saying to wife - "you know, you've been such a wonderful woman there are times I can hardly keep from telling you"
- to express thanks & gratitude to those who have influenced & blessed you does something good for them
  - ★ but you know something? it will do just as much for you - just do it, & see how it opens up your heart

**3. Be thankful for what you have**

- count your blessings, not just your lacks
  - in our consumer-driven society it's too easy to fall into the trap of focussing on what I don't have rather than what I do
  - **illus.** "Thankfulness" - Dale Carnegie; then he looked at blessings he did have
- **Hebrews 13:5** - listen to this: <this is my paraphrase, but this is exactly what it's saying>  
 "let your talk not always be about wanting 'stuff', be content with what you have - because God is not going away - He will take care of you"  
 ★ can you imagine how releasing it would be not to have to worry about just surviving, or keeping up?
- the only way that happens is if you can look at your life through God's eyes
  - & instead of worrying about what you don't have, use what you do have to be blessed, & to be a blessing
  - God has placed a desire in you to succeed/to be the absolute best you can be - channel that desire
  - sin has left in us feelings of discontentment/not measuring up/having to have more - like we're missing out
  - but take that drive for success & turn it around to bring blessing - don't lose the drive, just change its' focus

**& it's on that thought of success I want to come back to our scripture this morning:**

- I could have chosen any number of texts to preach on "thankfulness" today
  - but this is the verse that opened my eyes as to the actual **power** of having a grateful heart
  - if you're someone who has a thankful disposition you will automatically be a happier person - that's obvious
- but a spirit of gratitude not only causes you to lean towards happiness, it also leads you to success!
  - ★ because whereas ingratitude causes you to close up to life's opportunities & be less sensitive to God (that's what this verse says), the opposite is also true
  - a grateful heart makes you open & sensitive - open to truth, & sensitive to God's revelation
  - & that's the simple thought I want to leave with you today - a thankful heart is the pathway to happiness & success