

June 1, 2018

Dear Brethren and Friends,

What would you say was one of the greatest failings that a true Christian could have? We are not short of choices as there is quite a selection to choose from. We may all have many areas to work on but is there a single one that readily comes to mind? I could give you a list to choose from which, perhaps, could give us all a reminder of those areas which the world at large may not take much notice of, but should be of great significance to us all.

I recall Mr. Herbert Armstrong (the late human leader of the—now defunct—Worldwide Church of God) saying, many years ago, that ingratitude was one of the worst sins we could commit. It is certainly a major failing in anyone purporting to be a Christian.

Those of us in the USA, Canada, the UK, Australia, New Zealand and other nations whose heritage can be traced back to the ancient Israelites, have enjoyed unprecedented prosperity, not through our own righteousness or favouritism, but because of the promises that God gave to Abraham and his descendants. However, almost everyone in these nations is unaware of the connection and think that all of the material prosperity has come about because of the hard work, initiative, ability and resourcefulness of their nations, their leaders and their people.

For those who think such things, nothing could be further from the Truth. There is no doubt that mankind, at large, has all of those qualities mentioned above, but without the mind of God that is given to true Christians through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit received at baptism, man can put himself in the place of God thinking that all these are done solely through his own abilities.

Ingratitude, the state of being ungrateful and unthankful, is something that none of us should have or display. The ancient Israelites who had greatly suffered under the tyranny of the Egyptians, were promised "a land flowing with milk and honey" (Exodus 3:8). After seeing all of the miracles that God had performed to extricate them from the servitude that they had endured for so long, they seemed to constantly moan and complain. They were, in short, ungrateful for their release from bondage, on many occasions. That same attitude of ingratitude continues unabated today with those who have so much, believing that they have an automatic right to all the benefits that life may offer today.

On the onlineparentingcoach.com website we read the following about entitlement in young people today:

"Teenagers born in the 1990s, for example, were born into a world of personal computers, cable television, compact disc players and other technological advances. Many parents have showered their kids with these wonderful toys and gifts. As a result, today's teenagers now feel entitled to all these devices and other privileges as a matter of course and not because of hard work or sacrifice. The adolescent may seem spoiled in comparison to older generations.

"Signs and symptoms of entitlement include: Expecting a certain standard of living without work or effort; Feeling entitled to move back home with parents because being an adult is 'too hard'; Feeling justified in supporting their lifestyle on credit, and expecting parents to 'help' pay their bills; Kids and teens who 'must have' the latest fads and fashions; Older teens entering the workforce feel entitled to start at the top; Older teens who feel they should be given handouts until they find jobs that 'suit' them; Teens feel entitled to a new car when they turn 16 and Older teens who just don't like their jobs feel entitled to quit and collect unemployment.

“When children have a sense of entitlement, they don’t see the world in real terms. When money and material goods have been handed to them their whole lives, they won’t have the idea that they should work to achieve their goals. Their view of the world will be, ‘If I want it, someone will give it to me.’”

I would hasten to add that whilst the above is talking about youngsters today, such attitudes manifest themselves in other age groups too. In fact it is the older generation who have given many young people this sense of entitlement and are now reaping the effects of such inadequate and poor training of our younger people.

We should all know the story of Sodom and Gomorrah and we certainly are living in similar times today. Very often, the sin of homosexuality is, quite rightly, concentrated on when reviewing what happened there thousands of years ago. God was not happy with their gross immorality and they were dealt with accordingly. What we often tend to forget is that Sodom had other problems too, that greatly displeased God as we read in Ezekiel 16:49-50: “Look, this was the iniquity of your sister Sodom: She and her daughter had pride, fullness of food, and abundance of idleness; neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy. And were haughty and committed abomination before Me; therefore I took them away as I saw fit.”

Today, many nations are pretty much the same with pride, plenty of food, idleness, ignoring the poor and needy, haughty and committing many sexual abominations before God and thinking that this is perfectly acceptable. As the well-known quote goes: “The one thing that we learn from history is that we never learn from history!”

We do have brethren in some countries around the world who don’t enjoy all that we have today in the Western World. We have a high standard of living and, with the freedom that allows us to enjoy it all, it can become very easy to take all of this for granted. When we think about these brethren, does this jolt our conscience and, perhaps, only temporarily, stir us to action? Many have very little and we can have so much—and we can take it all for granted if we’re not very careful. It can become our “entitlement” and, if that is the case, it can be a trait that true Christians must never have, or exhibit.

Ingratitude must be something that we have left behind, or are strenuously working at leaving behind. Are we grateful for our calling, first and foremost, and for the teaching we are constantly given for the Way of Life that sets us apart from the world? We should give God thanks for the physical food we have in such abundance and the protection and help that HE gives us, but does it stop there? Do we take for granted the weekly Update, weekly sermons and sermonettes and our weekly StandingWatch programs which can also be accessed on the Church’s website at a later time, the monthly letters and the increasing number of booklets which are prepared for members, and others?

Much preparation goes into providing all of this material for instruction, guidance and teaching, and it can be easy just to accept it as the norm rather than treasuring all that is provided. Let none of us fall into such a trap and let us appreciate all that God gives to us directly and through the efforts of others and never take anything for granted.

And when we succeed, we may then not be found guilty of the sin of ingratitude which is so prevalent in our societies today.

With Christian love.



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