



The President's Perspective



Gratitude

"When gratitude dies on the altar of a man's heart, that man is well nigh hopeless." The longer I live, the more I realize the absolute truth of that statement. Romans 1:18-23 describes the demise of a nation as it moves toward total self-absorption and anarchy. In verse 21, the second step downward in digression is INGRATITUDE ("neither were thankful"). Before a nation, or individual for that matter, becomes totally reprobate in lifestyle (1:24-32), they begin the path down by becoming "unthankful." This certainly is the path that our blessed America has traveled. An unthankful spirit permeates our homes, churches and culture. Every day, as we conclude our family devotions, I ask for, or mention, a list of things for which we should be eternally thankful. Always in that list is the opportunity we have had to live in America.

I was reminded recently of how thankful we should be for the privilege of living in the United States, even with all its imperfections and problems. Consider the following excerpts from a letter that we received from a dear Cuban Christian from Miami, Florida.

"I have never told the American people why I came to the U.S.A. because I really believed they knew and understood our feelings and problems. We came here, hoping to forget the nightmares we lived in Cuba, to live in peace, go to church and talk about our faith freely. One of the first things that Castro did when he came to power was to execute and assassinate the people who openly opposed him. He did this at the "Big Wall of Execution." Even before Castro entered Havana, his supporters (you didn't know who they were--they could be your neighbor, your friend or co-worker), started terrorist acts like fires and sabotage. They would place bombs in theatres, restaurants and parks where little children play. A Castro supporter was activating a bomb in the park across the street from where we lived and it exploded in his hands. Castro supporters were free to come into your house at any time. They would check your purse in the middle of the street. You couldn't sell or give anything to anybody because you owned nothing. Everything and everybody belonged to Castro, especially the children. The only hope of all of us desperate Cubans was to leave our homes and come to the U.S.A. to save our children from the Red schools. I have heard statements like "Why don't they go back to Cuba." It hurts because I came to this country to be free. Although I was a professional in Cuba, I wasn't ashamed to work in a factory or help my husband clean floors here. I came to this country to be a good citizen, to study and learn, and raise my children in the love of God. We came here because we believe in liberty and justice for all and in the motto: "In God We Trust." I really trust that God

will help us to reach the promised land here. He knows that we love America and we are grateful to this country who received us with open arms and gave us the opportunity to be free again. From the bottom of my heart, my thanks, and God bless America!"

That pretty much says it all, doesn't it? How can you not be grateful for all that you were born into in this country. While we, as Americans, are privileged people, we are not entitled people. We are not owed anything merely because we are American. As our President has so eloquently said, "Freedom is not America's gift to the world, its God's gift to humanity." May our gratitude find free and frequent expression in the presence of our children, as well as in the public arena. May we daily acknowledge our Creator and Savior for His manifold blessing on us and our nation.

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