

BUILT 2 BLESS #7

Focused Living Ministries

A vendor sold pretzel for 50 cents at a street corner stand. Every day for months a certain jogger would throw a couple of quarters into a bucket. But he didn't take a pretzel as it was his desire to simply encourage his friend who was enduring a hard season in life. One day the jogger paused in front of the pretzel stand to



rest. He asked, "You probably want to know why I always put money in the bucket but never take a pretzel?" "No," said the vendor, "but I do want to inform you that the pretzels have gone up and they're now a buck!" (Adapted Cindy Kasper). Every day the Father jogs through our lives showering us with His grace, goodness, love, forgiveness and faithful care. But too often, we are ungrateful for what He's already given and demand even more! The Lord has *"blessed us with every spiritual blessing... and even when we were dead in our sin, He made us alive together with Christ...and raised us up with Him and seated us with Him in the heavenly places...so that He might show the riches of His grace."* (Eph 1:3; 2:5-7) As the Lord jogs through your life this week, put aside your demands and simply thank Him! For what blessings have you taken for granted?

HEART OF THANKS *"We give **THANKS** to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, **praying always for you**" (Col 1:3). "**Joyously giving THANKS to the Father Who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints**" (1:12). "**As you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, and overflowing with GRATITUDE**" (2:6-7). "**Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be THANKFUL. Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with THANKFULNESS in your hearts to God. Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, GIVING THANKS through Him to God the Father**" (3:15-17). **Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of THANKSGIVING**" (4:2).*

Even while imprisoned, Paul challenges the men of Colossae to be thankful. How does God use thankfulness to build us so we can bless others?

What honestly would you have if God only gave you tomorrow the things you thanked Him for today?

TAG TEAM Read/discuss the following writing out a prayer in response. (Paul Trip *New Morning Mercies*. July 22nd) Every day of your life you will find reasons to complain and every day of your life you will have reasons to be thankful. These two themes, complaint and gratitude, pull at the heart of each of us. They form fundamentally different ways of viewing the world because they are rooted in fundamentally different ways of viewing yourself. What is your default language? Do you find it easier to complain than to give thanks? Is grumbling the ambient noise of your existence? Are you easily irritated and quickly impatient? Do mundane things get under your skin? Would the people who live nearest to you characterize you as a thankful person or one who complains? (Have you ever asked?) Or do you look at your world and find yourself blown away at the many reasons you have every day to give thanks? Do you see yourself as one who has been showered with blessings? Are you humbled by the myriad of things in your life that you regularly enjoy, but that you could never argue that you deserve? How often do you whisper thanks to God or communicate thanks to those around you? The lifestyle of complaint and that of gratitude are both rooted in the way you view yourself. **Complaint really is an identity issue.** If you have placed yourself in the center of your world, if you have reduced your active field of concern down to the small confines of your wants, your needs, and your feelings, if it really is all about you, then you will live with an entitled, "I deserve _____" attitude, and because you do, you will have constant reason to complain. You will be constantly focused on what you want, you will have an inflated sense of what you need, and you will be so conscious of how you feel, that you will grumble your way through life. Why? You will grumble because the reality is that you are not at the center; life is not about you. The universe doesn't operate to satisfy your desires. It's a dark and discouraging way to live. But if you humbly admit that as a sinner you deserve nothing but God's wrath, that in acts of outrageous grace He has turned His face of mercy and kindness toward you, and that every good thing in your life is an undeserved blessing (James 1:16-17), you will find reason to be grateful everywhere you look. Feelings of thankfulness rather than entitlement and disappointment will fill your heart. As the Gospel puts you in your place, it also puts praise in your mouth, and that is a very good thing. **Respond in prayer below!**