

**Turning Grumbling into Gratitude**  
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There are many monuments in America that honor heroes or events. For instance – in Washington DC alone – there are over 160 monuments honoring people like George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, Thomas Jefferson, and Martin Luther King, Jr.

But the strangest monument in the entire world stands in the small town of Enterprise, Alabama. This monument consists of a 13-foot-tall woman in Grecian-style robes holding up a giant bug. That's right! It's called the Boll Weevil Monument and it's the world's only monument honoring a horrible, destructive pest.

Why would anyone want to honor one of the most feared insects in the world that destroyed thousands of farms throughout America? The boll weevil is a small beetle that totally destroys a cotton plant. It originated in Mexico and then moved across the Rio Grande to Texas when cotton became big in 1892. It migrated quickly and by 1915, boll weevils destroyed almost 60% of the cotton crop in Coffee County, Alabama, where Enterprise is located.

The boll weevil is extremely difficult to exterminate. Farmers tried huge amounts of pesticides, but nothing worked and since cotton was king – the south was almost destroyed by the boll weevil.

But not Enterprise Alabama! While other areas tried fighting the boll weevil with little success until the 1980's, the farmers of Coffee County made a huge decision. They decided to stop growing cotton and start growing peanuts, which was a risk since they were just becoming popular in America, with much credit going to George Washington Carver.

This experiment was hugely successful and by 1917, Coffee County became the Peanut Capital of the World by being the leading producer of peanuts. This was huge! The switch from cotton to peanuts did not just save Enterprise from destruction, but it brought great prosperity to the region.

So – on December 11, 1919, the town unveiled a statue in honor of the boll weevil for forcing the town to abandon one crop and adopt a far better one. The idea behind the Boll Weevil Monument was to be a tribute to how something disastrous can be a catalyst for change.

At the base of the monument appears the following inscription: "In profound appreciation of the Boll Weevil and what it has done as the herald of prosperity

this monument was erected by the citizens of Enterprise, Coffee County, Alabama."

Profound and public appreciation was expressed to the boll weevil! Get this – the Boll Weevil brought misery to millions of Southerners. But it brought transformation to Enterprise Alabama. Other communities saw the boll weevil as a curse – but the people of Enterprise Alabama saw it as a blessing. Other farmers saw boll weevils as causing poverty – but the farmers of Enterprise saw the boll weevil as a herald of prosperity. Peanuts were so profitable that farmers were grateful that the boll weevil gave them the opportunity to change in order to have greater success.

We are in a series called Transformations for Growth. Since it's Palm Sunday, I'm preaching a message entitled Turning Grumbling into Gratitude. That's a huge transition that many of us need to make!

So many times we grumble about things that happen to us like farmers grumbled about boll weevils. But the Lord often allows boll weevils into our lives for a purpose. Perhaps we are trying to grow cotton when we should be raising peanuts. If so, the delays and disappointments we experience are just the gracious "boll weevils" sent to redirect us so that we will plant the crop of God's choosing! For that – we should give praise to our God!

If you are in a tough situation where the boll weevils are attacking – how do you attract God to your tough situation? What is God looking for?

God is not looking for strong people or wise people or influential people.

God is looking for praisers who will boast in Him.

God is looking for worshippers!

Jesus said it in John 4:23:

*A time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks.*

We talk about seeking God – but this verse says God is a seeker. God is seeking worshippers who will worship Him in spirit in truth.

Whenever you need God in a situation, you need to begin to praise Him. He's looking for praise – so it gets His attention. Remember – Psalm 100:4 says:

*Enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise.*

Thanksgiving is the gateway to God's presence and your breakthrough! If you are not thankful, you will not praise and you will not attract God's presence into your situation! But my main point today is that with God's help, you can turn grumbling into gratitude.

Let me define those words: To grumble is to complain. Gratitude is to express thanks. Now, there is a place for justified complaining, but some people do nothing but complain. They have developed complaining to an art form. They have something negative to say about everything and everyone. Nothing's ever good enough. They are chronic complainers. And the people who grumble and complain a lot are usually those who are never content with what they have and/or they constantly compare themselves to others who have more than them.

By the way, do you know that God absolutely hates grumbling? When we think of the children of Israel wandering in the wilderness for 40 years – we think it's because of unbelief. That's part of it – but there are 5 other things that hindered them. They're listed in 1 Corinthians 10:5-11

*God was not pleased with most of them; their bodies were scattered over the desert. Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did. Do not be idolaters, as some of them were... We should not commit sexual immorality, as some of them did... We should not test the Lord, as some of them did... And do not grumble, as some of them did... These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us.*

God lists grumbling and complaining right up there with idolatry and sexual immorality. It's serious.

Think about this: the Children of Israel had been in the bondage of slavery in Egypt for 400 years when God set them free. They were happy and full of praise... for about 30 days. Then they started grumbling. They grumbled about their living conditions. They grumbled about being thirsty and hungry. So God gave them the miracle of manna. Then they grumbled about the manna. They grumbled so much God would have killed them without Moses' intercession. Grumbling is serious!

Today is Palm Sunday – named for the Triumphal Entry of Christ into Jerusalem the week before He was crucified. The arrival of Jesus meant different things to different people. Matthew 21:7-11 says:

*The disciples brought the donkey and the colt, placed their cloaks on them, and Jesus sat on them. A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. The crowds that went ahead of Him and those that followed shouted, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!" "Hosanna in the highest!" When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and asked, "Who is this?" The crowds answered, "This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee."*

We see that many people were grateful that Jesus showed up and they showed their gratefulness by shouting praise to Jesus.

But others grumbled! Matthew 21:15-16 says:

*But when the chief priests and the teachers of the law saw the wonderful things He did and the children shouting in the temple area, "Hosanna to the Son of David," they were indignant. "Do you hear what these children are saying?" they asked Him. "Yes," replied Jesus, "have you never read, 'From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise?'"*

Most of the priests and teachers of the law in the time of Christ never made the transition from the Old Covenant to the New. They had been looking for the Messiah for thousands of years and here He was standing in front of them and they rejected Him and eventually killed Him. They never made the transition from law to grace – from works to faith. And they grumbled and complained about everything Jesus did. Not only did they grumble, but they were indignant when people showed gratitude to Jesus by openly praising Him.

Indignant means very displeased and very angry. And that anger was fueled by jealousy. Listen! The enemy will use anything to keep you from praising because grumbling is to Satan what praise is to God!

So, let me ask you - are you grumbling or grateful? Would the people close to you say you are grateful or a grumbler? If I asked you to list the things you are grateful for and list the things you complain about – which list would be longer? If you're a grumbler, you can turn that around. Here's some practical ways to Turn Grumbling into Gratitude:

### **1- Make a list of your blessings and thank God for them**

We used to sing an old song - Count your blessings, name them one by one, and it will surprise you what the Lord has done. David said to bless the Lord and forget not His benefits! Many people forget what God has done and they concentrate more on what they don't have than what they do have!

The devil will do his best to keep your mind off the blessings of God. He will constantly tell you how bad you have it in life. The devil knows that an unthankful Christian is a defeated Christian. An ungrateful Christian has no joy of the Lord and as a result... An ungrateful Christian has no strength. That's why you need to turn grumbling into gratitude.

The way we turn grumbling into gratitude is through thanksgiving. The word thanksgiving is a compound word. That means it's a word made from 2 other words: thanks and giving.

The first key to turning grumbling into gratitude is to be thankful for what we have. What are you thankful for?

If any people in the world ought to be thankful, it ought to be Christians. Most Americans don't realize how blessed we are, or how thankful we ought to be. Many of us think we have it so bad, but we are clueless about what most of the world experiences.

We complain when there is a line in the drive-through at McDonalds. But did you know that 25,000 people in the world will die of starvation today and tomorrow and everyday. We should be thankful for food to eat.

We complain about our jobs, but did you know over 250 million people in the world have no job? We should be grateful for employment.

We complain that the music was too loud and the sermon too long, but did you know that over 360 million Christians in the world cannot worship at all without fear of persecution? We should be thankful for our freedoms.

We complain about our income, but did you know that half the world – nearly 3 billion people – live on less than \$7 a day? We have so much to be thankful for. In fact, statistically, almost every American is among the world's richest people. If you don't believe it, go to a website called [globalrichlist.com](http://globalrichlist.com) and type in your household income. They compare your income to the world. The median household income in America is \$48,000. That puts half of Americans in the top 1% richest people in the world. We are so blessed and most of us don't even know it. We need to turn grumbling into gratitude.

The second key to turning grumbling into gratitude is to give. Thanksgiving begins in the heart with an attitude of gratitude, but it is expressed through giving.

Literally, thanksgiving is giving thanks to God for things He's done. In order to turn ungratefulness into thanksgiving, we must become givers. When we give with the right heart – it will produce thankfulness in us and others. That's right - the Bible teaches that giving results in thankfulness. 2 Corinthians 9:7-11 says:

*Let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver. ...Now may He who supplies seed to the sower, and bread for food, supply and multiply the seed you have sown and increase the fruits of your righteousness, while you are enriched in everything for all liberality, which causes thanksgiving through us to God.*

Giving leads to thanksgiving. God wants to be first in our lives. Giving is a practical way we show our love for Him and our submission to His lordship. Giving turns grumbling into gratitude. There's so many "reasons" not to express thanks. It's easy to be ungrateful. We have to make an effort to be thankful people.

Gratitude is a choice. An attitude. A way of life.  
Gratitude is a habit that has to be developed.

## **2- Say thank you when others do something for you**

Children, when was the last time you thanked your parents for working and providing for you?

Husbands and wives, when was the last time you thanked each other or your children?

Employee, when's the last time you thanked your boss?

Boss, when's the last time you thanked your employees?

Don't wait for others to thank you. You start thanking others and you will reap a harvest of others thanking you.

## **3- Fast complaining**

Have a No Complaining Day. Then have a No Complaining Week. Then have a No Complaining Month. Then have a No Complaining Year. Then have a No Complaining Life!

## **4- Turn a negative into a positive**

So many times we focus on "have to" rather than "get to."  
"I have to go to work" rather than "I get to go to work."  
"I have to do chores" rather than "I get to help my family."

And, when you do have a legitimate complaint, add the word but and something positive to it. For instance:

I don't like driving to work in this traffic – BUT – thank God I have a car.

I hate my job – BUT – thank God I am employed. I don't like every school subject – BUT – thank God I'm getting educated. The more things you are grateful for, the more things you will have to be grateful for.

On Palm Sunday, when Jesus said out of the mouth of babes God ordained praise, He was quoting Psalm 8:2 which says:

*Out of the mouth of babes and nursing infants You have ordained strength,  
Because of Your enemies, that You may silence the enemy...*

He did not say, only out of the mouths of mature Christians, strong believers, or wise leaders I have ordained praise.

Who does the power of praise come through? Out of the mouths of babes and nursing infants. A nursing infant has absolutely no power or strength. None. They are helpless. They cannot do anything for themselves. And Jesus said – it's out of weakness and helplessness that I have ordained praise that silences the enemy.

It's not our strength that defeats the enemy.  
 It's not our wisdom or our goodness that defeats the enemy.  
 In fact, IT'S NOT ABOUT US AT ALL!  
 It's all about Jesus – who already defeated the enemy.  
 Through praise we enforce the victory that Christ already won.

God is not looking for strong people.  
 He is looking for people who know they are weak and He is strong.  
 He is looking for people who know they are foolish and He is wise.  
 God is seeking worshippers who worship in spirit and in truth!

So – don't be like those who criticized the people who praised. On Palm Sunday some religious leaders tried to stop people's praise. In Luke 19:40

*Jesus said to them, "I tell you that if these should keep silent, the stones would immediately cry out."*

Jesus taught us that He will be praised one way or another.  
 We were created to praise God and if we don't, He'll create something else to praise Him!  
 We are commanded to praise God and if we don't He'll command something else to praise Him!  
 I don't know about you – but I refuse to allow a rock to do my praising!  
 No stone is gonna do my shouting!  
 No boulder is gonna bless God for me!  
 No pebble is gonna do my praising.  
 No person is going to take my place of praise!  
 No circumstance is going to take away my praise!  
 No devil in hell is going to steal my praise!  
 I refuse to offer my Lord and Savior wimpy worship or patty-cake praise!

In all things I will give thanks rather than grumble! I choose to rejoice in the Lord no matter what because He is always worthy of praise.  
 I will praise the Lord because Jesus taught me that God has ordained praise to be our strength!  
 As long as I'm praising, I'm strong in the Lord.  
 Praise invites Jesus to show up and when Jesus shows up, everything changes!!!  
 Can you give Him glory for who He is? King of Kings! Lord of Lords!  
 Alpha and Omega! Beginning and End! Savior! Healer! Provider! Deliverer!