

Keeping an Attitude of Gratitude

The December sun had begun its lazy plunge toward the western hills by the time my brother Heath and I parked along the little gravel road that snaked its way through the vast expanse of government woods. Gathering up our rifles we jumped the ditch and plunged into the deep briar thickets that lined the forest's edge. They raked loudly against our camouflage, announcing our arrival, and ruling out any slip we may have pulled on a buck.

Ten grueling minutes later we had still not broken into open woods. We stopped for a breather; our chests heaving, the crisp winter air stinging our lungs. Heath looked like a Ninja turtle with that big climbing stand strapped to his back, and I said as much. Steam was rising from his collar, and fire shot from the look he gave me.

"Whose idea was it to try this place? It ain't nothing but a briar patch," he spat.

"At least we're going down hill," I countered.

"Yeah... Well that's great Nimrod. What does that say for our trip back?"

I bristled and stomped off through the briars. "Just follow me," I huffed, "You're the one don't know where he's going."

As we proceeded the grade became steeper, and nearly as thick and ornery as our attitudes. Soon we found our path blocked by some fallen timber. As I paused to consider our path, Heath made a move to go around, intent on recovering his spot at point.

In desperation, I leaped up on a stump and scoffed, "What? You a sissy? Scared to climb over?" With that I inched out warily onto a decaying old branch. "We'll just tightrope this limb and then swing down into that little clearing below." Granted, it wasn't much of a plan, but you could say I was already out on a limb.

I reckon Heath had watched enough 'America's Funniest Home Videos' to recognize a set up for the \$10,000 clip when he saw it, so he shucked out a quick 'double dog dare' on me. I grit my teeth and inched forward.

"What am I doing," I thought, "I'm going to kill myself! Unless..." Suddenly I had an idea. If I could break off this old limb we could use it as a bridge to cross over. Maybe there was a chance I could do it with hardly any aerial acrobatics.

I began hopping up and down on the old limb like a rabid monkey. The dry wood creaked and popped until that rare moment came that Heath would've traded his rifle in for a video camera. The limb snapped clean! It crashed to the ground just in time to cause another sharp stick to jut straight upward to await my dismount.

It might be said that I stuck the landing! A perfect 10. In fact, I came within one literal inch of becoming a human shish kebob! I balanced on that stout little stick for several excruciatingly long seconds, suddenly grateful for that little bone running along my undercarriage that had kept me from becoming impaled.

The whole experience made my ensuing plop to the ground and head over heels tumble down the ridge seemed like a walk in the park. "Thank you Jesus! Thank you Jesus! Thank you Jesus," I cried the whole way down. Over the loud cackle of Heath's laughter of course.

There was a time in my life I might've cursed Heath, the limb, the tree, and every other inanimate object out there in the forest that day. But this time, in light of Scripture, I believe I actually did the right thing for once. (*In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.* **1 Thessalonians 5:18** KJV)

Taking a fall here and there is just part of living in this fallen world. They happen to all of us. The best we can do it to just get back up and dust ourselves off with an attitude of gratitude. Why stay down? As Christians, we know we have the ultimate victory.

But anyway- Things could always be worse you know. You could be dumb ole' Heath still stuck up there in the briars! Hee hee hee... Who's laughing now Ninja boy? See, there's always a reason to give thanks.