

THANKFUL IN EVERYTHING

"In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." I Thessalonians 5:18.

There are very few duties which the Bible enjoins in terms in so large a requirement as the duty of thanksgiving. Under the watchful care and guidance of the Lord we have been carried safely through another year. God has graciously opened His hand and dealt bountifully with us, far beyond what we deserved. Consequently, we should bow in gratitude to Him for His many favors and blessings. As children of God we have so much to be thankful for. It is a duty that we be thankful every day. We simply cannot crowd sufficient gratitude for a whole year into any single day. Neither can we be thankful in every thing unless the Lord fully controls our hearts and lives.

A genuine Christian has three indubitable marks:--

- (1) He rejoices in the mercies of God.
- (2) He is fervent in prayer.
- (3) He gives thanks to God in all things.

Next to the blessing of a pure heart is a thankful heart. We always have something for which we can be thankful. I admire the spirit of the old Negro, who after working hard all day and receiving his wages went to the store and bought some meat for his supper. As he walked along toward home his shoestring broke. He sat down on the curb, laid his meat down, and tried to tie his shoestring. A hungry dog grabbed his meat and ran away. He went on home, and as his custom was he went to prayer service at his church. In the testimonial meeting his pastor said, "Well, Uncle, what have you to praise the Lord for tonight?" In giving his testimony the old fellow told about losing his beef steak, but concluded in his usual manner, "Praise the Lord," his pastor said, "Look here, Uncle, what will you praise the Lord for about that?" "Because I have got my appetite left." So, there is always something for which to be thankful.

Paul wrote the Thessalonians to the effect that whether in sickness or in health, in prosperity or in adversity, in prison or at liberty, in the full exuberance of life or in the bitter pangs of death, whatever their outward circumstances, whatever the outward surroundings of their lot, they were to be thankful.

Our most common notion of thankfulness is of gratitude for some obvious benefits bestowed upon us. We are thankful for food when we are hungry, for kind words when we are sad, for money when we are poor, and for health when we have been sick.

(I) The Injunction To Give Thanks.

Now we all know that to give thanks to God is a duty. It is a duty that is not only inculcated in the Bible, but it is felt by every man to be right in itself. If anyone bestows a gift on us, the least we can do is to thank him for it. Since we believe in a personal God, and that from Him we receive every good and perfect gift, it follows; naturally, that we are bound to give Him thanks for that which He bestows upon us. It is a duty incumbent upon all to render thanksgiving unto God for mercies received and enjoyed. We are to be thankful in the midnight darkness as well as in the bright sunshine. "In every thing give thanks."

Whence arises this difficulty of giving thanks to God in everything? It arises from two sources.

1. The Difficulty of Giving Thanks in Everything.

- (1) It arises from our fancied knowledge of life.

We imagine that we know life when our knowledge of it is very imperfect. Life is a vast and complicated scheme and is not to be judged from any of its parts.

- (2) It arises from our limitation of God.

We acknowledge God's government in certain cases but not in all. When things go well with us it is comparatively easy to say, "My prosperity comes from God." But when things go against us the hand of God is not so clearly seen by us. And yet God is as much in the one as in the other: nothing can happen without His knowledge. We do not see God in everything and hence we find it difficult to be able to give thanks to Him for everything.

2. The Solution of This Difficulty.

There are two views of life that Christ has revealed to us.

(1) That all life is the providence of a Father.

With loving care He provides for all His creatures, exercises over them the utmost attention. The whole revelation of God which Christ has given us is the revelation of a Father caring for His children, seeking their welfare, mourning over their transgressions, desiring their comfort.

(2) Life is a discipline.

It is a school of training for a larger and higher life. All things, unpleasant as well as pleasant, work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose. If we could only believe that this life is a discipline, that it is a school of training for a higher and a better life, would not our bitterest and heaviest trials be more meekly endured by us?

(II) The Motive For Giving Thanks.

"For this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you."

Personally, I am especially thankful for four things:--

I. The Saviour.

There are seven facts about the Lord Jesus Christ that make me thankful for Him.

- (1) He lived.
- (2) He died.
- (3) He was buried.
- (4) He arose from the dead.
- (5) He ascended.
- (6) He is interceding for us.
- (7) He is coming again.

It is a joyous privilege to accept, love, obey, and serve Him who for more than nineteen centuries has been the center of the best thought, the inspiration of the best sacrifice, and the motive of the best living.

II. The Scriptures.

The Scriptures contain the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of sinners, and the happiness of believers. Their doctrines are holy, their precepts are binding, their histories are true, and their decisions are immutable. They have light to direct, food to support, and comfort to cheer. The Bible is the traveler's map, the pilgrim's staff, the pilot's compass, the soldier's sword, and the Christian's charter. Christ is its subject, our good its design, and the glory of God its end. It involves the highest responsibility, it will reward the greatest labor, and condemn those who trifle with it. It is the loveliest and best of all books.

III. The Church.

I think of my church as a spiritual body, a redemptive force, a company of disciples, and a group of friendly helpers. It is an institution which concerns conscience, convictions, character, consecration, conduct, and charity. It urges understanding, unselfishness, and usefulness. It calls for courtesy, cheerfulness, compassion, courage, and cooperation. I think of it as the place where the Word of God is preached, the power of God is felt, the spirit of God is manifested, the love of God is conceived, and the salvation of God is received. It is a place to go for communion with God, for Christian fellowship with the best and most devout people, for Bible instruction, for spiritual inspiration, and for real service. The church is a necessary institution, the best teacher of righteousness which we have, the friend of childhood, the inspirer of youth, the strengthener of middle life, and the comforter of old age.

IV. The Assurance of A Home In Heaven.

"For we know that, if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. 2 Corinthians 5:1. This is a description of our new home which is the best home of all. I am so thankful that I have made my reservation for a home in Heaven. I am also thankful that I have the assurance that when He calls me home I shall have a rest from my labors, a reward for my service, a residence with the Lord, and will enjoy a reunion with all of the saved.