

THANKFUL IN EVERYTHING

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

The American custom of observing one day in the year as a national day of Thanksgiving is a good one. While its observance is often defective, it is a public acknowledgment of Divine sovereignty and human dependence, implying obligations to God and to our fellow men. In so far as it is observed in the right spirit and with suitable conduct, it has a salutary effect upon individuals and upon society as a whole.

While this day of national thanksgiving has become one of the fixed institutions of our fair land, it should be more than a mere festival observed out of habit. Thankfulness should be our daily attitude. If there be no such undersong of gratitude in the life, then there is no genuine gratitude at all. Not pleasing unto God is that thanksgiving which is occasional unless it is the expression of a thanksgiving which is continuous.

Thanksgiving wells up most profusely in the hearts of those who do a lot of thinking. Permit me to remind you that the words think and thank come from the same root. Those who take time to think also take time to thank. Unthankful people are unthinking people. It is a matter of choice whether we are thankful or thankless. It is even possible to judge another's refinement by his sense of gratitude. In fact, gratitude is one of the most beautiful and fragrant flowers that grows and blooms in the soil of the human soul. On the other hand, ingratitude grieves the heart of God. Even a human heart, with all its weaknesses and inconsistencies, is hurt by ingratitude. How much more, then, must it be displeasing to God when we neglect to thank Him! Having been the recipients of so many blessings, it is certainly appropriate for us to thank and to praise the Giver for what has been and is being received from Him. Therefore, our thanksgiving is an expression of gratitude for blessings received. Such thanksgiving cheers the heart of the Giver and makes glad the heart of the receiver.

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. We have so much for which to be thankful.

Paul wrote the Thessalonians to the effect that whether in sickness or in health, in adversity or in prosperity, in prison or at liberty, whatever their outward circumstances, they were to be thankful.

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 person to be right in itself. If anyone bestows a gift on us, the least we can do is to thank the donor for it. 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 everything give thanks."

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 He is in the other. Nothing can happen without His knowledge and permission. If you do not see God in everything, you will find it difficult to thank Him for everything.

With loving care God provides for all His creatures, and exercises over them the utmost attention. He cares for His children, seeks their welfare, grieves over their transgressions, and desires their comfort.

Various things afford us abundant reasons for genuine thanksgiving.

I. Our Material Blessings.

1. This wonderful world.

Let us be thankful for this beautiful and glorious world in which we live; for the wonder of seedtime, summer and autumn harvest; for the spur of necessity which impels industry; and for the stores of material good for our use and welfare. For us the rains descend; for us the brooks murmur; for us the rivers flow; for us the seas open their bosoms to admit our commerce; and for us the sun sheddeth abroad its creative beams. We enjoy the splendors of the sunrise, and the ordered coming of the seasons. Proof that this is a wonderful world is indeed abundant when we take note of the chirping of the birds outside our bedroom windows at the break of day, the fragrance of the beautiful flowers wafted in the morning breeze, the fleecy clouds changing from one color to another in the early dawn, the fertile valleys, beautiful hills, quiet lakes, rippling rills, rushing rivers, restless seas, mighty forests, towering mountains, glorious sunset, silvery moon, and twinkling stars.

2. This great nation.

There is much in our land to arrest the attention, excite the interest and admiration, and to swell with pride the heart of every citizen. There is its great extent from ocean to ocean, its vast and varied productions, its diversified scenery—which is beautiful, attractive and picturesque, as is seen in its wide-spread, waving forests, its boundless flower-decked prairies, its rolling rivers, rushing cataracts, stupendous waterfalls and numerous lakes, its snow-capped mountains, its great institutions, and its wonderful progress in all the elements of national greatness. I call you to a new appreciation of the privileges and responsibilities that are yours.

II. Our Physical Blessings.

Have you ever thanked God for the physical blessings you enjoy? Have you ever expressed thanks for a strong healthy body? Have you thanked Him for your good eye sight which enables you to see so many wonderful things? Have you thanked Him for good hearing? Have you expressed your gratitude to Him for your material comforts? Let us thank God for every beam of light that delights our eyes, every breath of air that cheers our spirits, every drop of water that quenches our thirst, every bite of food that satisfies our hunger, and every minute of comfortable repose.

III. Our Spiritual Blessings.

1. The Saviour.

Christ was born as nobody else was ever born. None other was ever heralded, honored, or hated at his birth as was Jesus. He lived in poverty, and was reared in obscurity. He worked in a carpenter shop until He was thirty, and then for three years, He was an itinerant teacher and preacher.

He lived a divine life along with the human life. He possessed neither wealth nor political influence. His relatives were uninfluential, and without education. In infancy, He startled a king; in childhood He puzzled the doctors; in manhood He ruled the course of nature, walked upon billows as if pavements, and hushed the sea to sleep.

To take Him out of history is like taking the matter out of physics, the heat out of fire, the fragrance out of flowers, and the numbers out of mathematics. The

searchlight of criticism has been focused upon Him, and yet it has failed to find in Him one suggestion of sin, one ill-advised word, or one selfish deed.

While still a young man, the tide of popular opinion turned against Him. His friends forsook Him, and He was turned over to His enemies. He went through the mockery of a trial. At 9:00 o'clock one morning He was nailed to the cross. "Christ died for our sins." Joseph and Nicodemus removed His body from the cross and prepared it for burial, and laid it in the tomb. Until early Sunday morning, His body was in the tomb. Then Christ arose, laid aside His grave clothes, and walked out of the tomb a living Christ. For forty days He was here among men. Then He went back to the Father where He is now making intercession for us. He stands forth upon the highest pinnacle of heavenly glory, proclaimed of God, acknowledged by angels, adored by saints, and feared by demons as the living Christ, our Lord and Saviour.

Let us thank Him with the gratitude of our hearts, with the praise of our lips, and by the obedience of our lives. Let us consider it a joyous privilege to love, to obey, and to 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.

2. The Scriptures.

For the matchless light and power of the Holy Scriptures let us offer our thanks to God. To try to pay rhetorical tribute to the scriptures is like the needless task of painting the lily or of decorating a sunset. 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 supernatural in origin, universal in appeal, unerring in guidance, regenerative in force, timeless in appropriateness, deathless in destiny, with man's hand behind its penmanship but with God's heart behind its authorship. It has Christ for its subject, our good for its design, and the glory of God for 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 to guide us in our glooms, to direct us in our doubts, to help us in our hazards, to prompt us in our perplexities, and to be a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our pathway. The Scriptures ought to be in our homes, our hands, our heads, our hearts, and our habits.

3. The Churches.

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" II 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.