

Expressing Appreciation

***“It is a good thing
to give thanks
unto the LORD,
and to sing praises
unto thy name,
O most High.”
—Psalm 92:1***

EXPRESSING APPRECIATION to God for all his goodness to us is, as the psalmist suggests, a ‘good thing,’ one that consecrated, Truth-enlightened Christians should be glad to do throughout their walk of life. Indeed, if we are living up to our privileges, we will be giving thanks to the Lord every day. Paul wrote, “In everything give thanks,” and since we know that “all things” are working “together” for our good, thankfulness will be welling up in our hearts and finding expression through our lips for every experience of life.—I Thess. 5:18; Rom. 8:28

All the LORD’s people appreciate the blessings that he continuously showers upon them. Giving thanks is the expressing of this appreciation—first to the LORD, and also as a testimony of the LORD’s goodness to those with whom we come in contact. ‘It is a good thing,’ our text says, ‘to give thanks unto the LORD, and to sing praises’ unto the LORD’s name. Here the thought seems to be that we express our thanks to the LORD, and sing his praises

to others; and certainly our songs of praise are expressions of thanksgiving.

David wrote, "That I may publish with the voice of thanksgiving, and tell of all thy wondrous works." (Ps. 26:7) This expression is found in a very interesting and revealing context. Opening the psalm, he wrote, "Judge me, O LORD; for I have walked in mine integrity: I have trusted also in the LORD; therefore I shall not slide." (vs. 1) Neither David nor any other member of the fallen human race has been capable of living up to God's standard of perfection. As the consecrated people of God it is essential that we maintain our integrity before him in the sense of always being willing to do right. Maintaining such an attitude before the LORD, we will want him to judge us, and to reveal to us those things in which we are not pleasing to him.

He continues, "Examine me, O LORD, and prove me: try my reins and my heart. For thy loving-kindness is before mine eyes: and I have walked in thy truth." (vss. 2,3) The LORD referred to David as a man after his own heart. Here we see why; for the psalmist was so desirous of being right in the LORD's sight that he invited him to 'examine' and 'prove' him. This was asking a lot, for David would have no way of knowing what severe methods the LORD might use to prove him, or what experiences the answer to this prayer might bring. But for two reasons, David was confident: (1) God's loving-kindness was before him as a bulwark of strength; and (2) he was walking in the LORD's Truth and knew that the Truth would be his "shield and buckler."—Ps. 91:4

David then expresses some of the aspects of his integrity. "I have not sat with vain persons," he

wrote, “neither will I go in with dissemblers.” (Ps. 26:4) With David it was not a matter merely of refraining from fellowshiping with ‘dissemblers,’ while at the same time secretly wishing that the Law of his God did not prohibit him from doing so. It was more than this! “I have hated the congregation of evildoers; and will not sit with the wicked.”—vs. 5

Not being acquainted with the circumstances that prompted this expression of hatred for evil, we can only apply it in principle to our own stand for God and righteousness. We can apply this principle to all evil, to everything that is out of harmony with the LORD. We are not to have fellowship with any of Satan’s works of darkness, not merely because we are forbidden to do so, but because, like David, we hate them. This is implied in being conformed to the image of God’s dear son, of whom it is written that he “loved righteousness, and hated iniquity.”—Heb. 1:9

David further wrote, “I will wash mine hands in innocency: so will I compass thine altar, O LORD.” (Ps. 26:6) We find him praying, “Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults. Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression. Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer.”—Ps. 19:12-14

David knew that the only way he could be truly ‘innocent’ was to have his God cleanse him from ‘secret faults,’ and keep him from committing

‘presumptuous sins.’ His own part in this was in humbly and sincerely looking to the LORD to examine and prove him. Even then, David could not be innocent in the sense of being free from all sin. But his heart could be pure; and upon the basis of this purity of heart intention, he knew that the LORD would accept his devotions and his sacrifices. It was in such an attitude that he could ‘compass,’ or embrace, the LORD’s altar; that is, offer sacrifice to God.

This, the psalmist indicates, would result in his publishing with “the voice of thanksgiving,” and telling of all the LORD’s “wondrous works.” (Ps. 26:7) Paul expressed a similar thought when he wrote, “By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name. But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.”—Heb. 13:15,16

A FRUIT OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

As David reveals, his thanksgiving to God was the inevitable result of his longing desire and resolute determination to maintain his integrity before him. This indicates—and we believe that every consecrated child of God will affirm from personal experience—that true and spontaneous thanksgiving can come only from the heart that is in tune with him. We cannot be in rebellion against the LORD’s instructions, resisting his providences, and at the same time have our hearts overflowing with true thanksgiving to him. Thanksgiving is the overflowing of hearts that have been emptied of self, and by the Holy Spirit, through the written Word and the providences with which we are surrounded,

filled with the love of God. If the love of God has thus been “shed abroad in our hearts,” we will find that it is indeed a good thing, a very delightful thing, to give thanks unto the LORD.—Rom. 5:5

Viewed in the proper light, every experience of life is an occasion for thanksgiving. We are thankful for God’s keeping power in our lives, that he has not permitted us to fall. We are thankful for the assurance that he will never leave us or forsake us (Heb. 13:5), that having begun a good work in us, he will finish that work in his own due time, and through whatever agencies he may deem wise to choose. (Phil. 1:6) In this, our thanksgiving is both retrospective and prospective. We thank God for past mercies, and for the hope of future blessings, blessings that we know will continue to flow from him to “us-ward” in ever mounting streams of his loving-kindness and grace.—II Pet. 3:9

THANKFUL FOR SPIRITUAL VISION

As our minds turn backward we thank God that he “inclined” unto us, heard our cry for help, lifted us up out of the “horrible pit” and set our feet upon a “rock.” (Ps. 40:1,2) There are millions of sincere people in the world who are seeking after God who do not—and in this age, will not—find him. It will not be until the Millennial Age that he will ‘incline’ toward these. That will be the time of their visitation. It is only a little flock that the LORD is now seeking, and happy are we if the LORD has given us the “new song” to know and to sing.—Ps. 40:3

Think what this means! While in the ‘horrible pit’ and the ‘miry clay’ we were alienated from God through wicked works—originally the wicked works

of Adam through whose sin condemnation came upon all men. But the LORD opened the eyes of our understanding and, thus enlightened through the Truth, extended to us the high and holy calling of this Gospel Age. Through faith in the blood of Christ, which alone could make us acceptable—a faith that was demonstrated by a full consecration to do God’s will—we received the assurance of reconciliation with God, and of no longer being alienated from him. What a continuous cause for thanksgiving this should be!

This “peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” opens the way to further blessings that the LORD has provided in his plan. Paul wrote concerning “this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.” (Rom. 5:1,2) Not only do we now have peace with God, and enjoy fellowship with him, but he has established our goings in the narrow way that leads to “glory and honour and immortality.” (Rom. 2:7) We know we shall have tribulation, but this will help to develop patience, and if we continue patiently to endure these experiences they will lead to a hope that maketh not ashamed “because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us.”—Rom. 5:3-5

Having ‘peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,’ by continued faith in his promises and in their fulfillment, we gradually acquire the peace ‘of’ God. God enjoys peace because he knows that he is in perfect control of every situation in his entire universe. We can have this same peace, this same tranquility of mind, through faith in his promises to love and care for us. We know that he will never

leave us nor forsake us. We know that there is no circumstance in our lives that he is not capable of overruling for our highest good. We know, moreover, that while at times his providences may frown upon us, behind the frown is his smiling face of love that will not permit us to be tested above that which we are able to bear.—I Cor. 10:13

Paul expressed a similar thought when he wrote, “Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice. Let your moderation [*Wilson’s Emphatic Diaglott*, “gentleness;” and in the *Revised Standard Version*, “forbearance”] be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand. Be careful [anxious] for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”—Phil. 4:4-7

This ‘peace of God’ is a part of our present inheritance. What a glorious portion it is! The world is filled with confusion and fear. The strife of nations, the conflict of arms, real and threatened; economic insecurity; and the uncertainty of the future all contribute to turmoil in the hearts of the unconsecrated. But it is not so with those into whose hearts the LORD has shined with the Gospel, and who have accepted this message and acted upon it. Just as God knows that in due time he will lead the world into its desired haven and that nothing can interfere with the outworking of his plans and purposes, so these know that he is fully capable, and abundantly willing to hedge them about with his love and care, and that day by day he is doing so. Is this not cause for the continual giving of thanks?

FOR EVERY EXPERIENCE

Our thankfulness should not be merely along general lines. Rather, each experience that comes to us affords an opportunity to give thanks. If we have availed ourselves of the provisions the LORD has made through his Word and the help of the brethren to increase our understanding of his plans and purposes, we will want to give thanks to God for the better understanding we have thus acquired of him and of his will, which makes our fellowship with him more intimate and blessed.

If we have been faithful in the use of the various opportunities we have had to show forth the LORD's praises by making known the glad tidings of the kingdom, we will be thankful for the experiences we have enjoyed in thus bearing witness to the Truth. Perhaps the LORD has used us to communicate the Truth to one whom he has called. Truly this would be cause for thanksgiving. On the other hand, it may be that all our efforts to make known the glad tidings to others have failed. Perhaps those to whom we have witnessed have turned away with indifference, or possibly have scorned or even persecuted us. But this also is a cause for thanksgiving, for such experiences are among the witnesses of the Spirit that we are the children of God.—Rom. 8:16,17

Jesus explained that no one could come to him unless drawn by his Heavenly Father. (John 6:44) So, if those to whom we witness do not respond, and show no appreciation of the message, it is because they are not now drawn by God. We can be thankful for the realization that a time is coming in the Divine Plan when they will be enlight-

ened and given an opportunity to walk on the highway of holiness, the return road to human perfection and to reconciliation with God. At the same time, we can also be especially thankful that the LORD has drawn us and that we have been given eyes to see and ears to hear the joyful sound of present Truth.

Not only are we thankful for God's loving-kindness to us as individuals, but we give thanks to him for the wonderful manner in which his favor continues upon his people as a whole. He blesses us in our ecclesias, and in our conventions. We are thankful for the privilege we enjoy of working together in a general ministry of the Truth. We are thankful that in the LORD's providences his people are provided with many methods with which they can spread the message of Truth as opportunity affords.

Truly the LORD is good to all of his people. The psalmist wrote, "Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O LORD, in the light of thy countenance. In thy name shall they rejoice all the day: and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted." (Ps. 89:15,16) That we have been given to know the 'joyful sound' of present Truth is, in itself, an evidence that we are walking in the light of the LORD's countenance, that his favor is upon us. Therefore we rejoice in the God of our salvation 'all the day.' We know that we are not worthy of such high favor; but, through the righteousness of Christ, our Heavenly Father has made it possible for us to be exalted, in his own due time, to 'glory and honour and immortality.' So, for present blessings and for the hope of future glory, it is a "good thing to give thanks unto the LORD." ■