

Giving Thanks

*“Whatsoever ye do
in word or deed,
do all in the name
of the Lord Jesus,
giving thanks to
God and the
Father by him.”*

—Colossians 3:17

THIS YEAR PEOPLE FROM all over the United States will again celebrate the annual Thanksgiving Day holiday on Thursday, November 24, 2011. It will be a special day for many people, and church services will be held in various communities to give thanks to our loving Heavenly Father for his bountiful blessings to them. Some will observe the day with a true spirit of thanksgiving. Others will simply accept it as another holiday, and a time to gather with friends and relatives, but with little thought of giving thanks to our Lord. Those who truly reverence him are wholeheartedly thankful for their many blessings.

PAUL'S LETTER

In his letter to the church at Colossae, the Apostle Paul took the opportunity to encourage and strengthen his brethren to a deeper sense of thankfulness and appreciation to our loving Heavenly Father for all of his bountiful blessings. He told them, “Let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly

in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.” (Col. 3:15,16) Then, as recorded in our featured scripture concerning giving thanks, he reminded them, “Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.”—vs.17

While it is honorable and appropriate to set aside a special day for thanksgiving to the Lord, those who are genuinely dedicated to him and to the doing of his service, should consider every day as being one of thanksgiving. The blessings that are provided by the Lord, which we value so highly and cherish so fondly, are showered upon us on a daily basis. Therefore, our thanksgiving for these blessings should not wait, but be expressed to the Lord before the close of every day in which they have been received. We read, “It is of the LORD’S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness.” (Lam. 3:22,23) Because our Lord’s mercy is manifested toward us every day, it is our privilege to express our thanks to him daily.

THE COMING KINGDOM

For those who may not be acquainted with the wonderful plan and purpose of God concerning the future reconciliation for the sin-sick and dying world, there may be a slackness in rendering thanks to God. Some may be distracted with the many problems and difficulties of everyday life. However, the truth-enlightened and consecrated child of God is not discouraged with the many acts

of violence and inhumanity that we see all around us. They recognize these events as being part of the foretold pattern of trouble with which this present Gospel Age is now coming to a close. They see this great time of trouble as a time of preparation for Christ's future kingdom, and that mankind is being prepared to welcome that kingdom of righteousness that will soon be established over all the earth. Therefore, the storm clouds of trouble do not dampen our spirit of thanksgiving, but rather increase it.

One of the great causes of our thanksgiving is that the Lord has opened the eyes of our understanding to recognize the significance of what is now taking place all around us. We are thankful that we are living at such a time, and can witness to our friends and neighbors concerning the rapidly approaching kingdom of Christ. This is in harmony with what the Psalmist David wrote. "All thy works shall praise thee, O LORD; and thy saints shall bless thee. They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom, and talk of thy power; To make known to the sons of men his mighty acts, and the glorious majesty of his kingdom."—Ps. 145:10-12

GOD'S LOVE AND MERCY

In addition to being thankful that the Lord has given us the Truth, we can also be thankful that in his love and mercy, and by the power of his Holy Spirit, he has kept us in his loving care through another year, and from falling away from our faith in our High Calling in Christ Jesus. If we have been living up to all of our blessed privileges, this Thanksgiving Day, 2011, will find us standing more firmly

in our consecrated walk than ever before. Truly, we have much cause for giving thanks to God.

It is through the Truth of God's wonderful plan that is revealed to us through his precious Word, that we have come to catch a glimpse of some of the glory that is manifest through his marvelous character—his love, wisdom, justice, and power. How precious indeed is this knowledge. The prophet Jeremiah wrote, "Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD."—Jer. 9:23,24

THE BLESSED ASSURANCE

God assures us that he delights in exercising his "lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness" to those who love him. Through our knowledge of the message of Truth, we realize that God has displayed his great love toward the human family by sending his only begotten Son, our Lord Jesus, to be the Redeemer and Savior of the sin-sick world of mankind. We are told in the Scriptures that ultimately this wonderful gift will be appreciated by all people, and its untold blessings will lead to the restoration of life to all who will then accept the provisions of his divine love and obey the laws of the righteous kingdom that is now drawing near.

Concerning God's gift of our Lord Jesus, the Apostle Paul proclaimed, "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift." (II Cor. 9:15) We, too, are

thankful for Jesus because of what his ministry means to us who are striving to follow in his footsteps of sacrifice during the closing years of this present Gospel Age. We also give thanks for the knowledge of what his ministry and ultimate sacrifice will mean for the whole world of mankind during Christ's future kingdom. He will then be earth's new king who will be manifest in power and great glory. Under his rulership, all the enemies of God and of man will be destroyed, even the greatest enemy death. "He must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death."—I Cor. 15:25,26

RESTORATION TO LIFE

When the human creation are awakened from the sleep of death during that future time, and in keeping with the ultimate plan of God, each one will be given the opportunity of being restored to perfection and to live forever on a perfected earth. The people will then understand that, while temporarily they have suffered as a result of the reign of sin and death, the plan of God through Jesus has been steadily progressing for their everlasting joy. They will learn, too, that God delights to exercise his loving-kindness on their behalf, for which they will gladly give thanks.

The true followers of our Lord Jesus during this present Gospel Age have the great joy and privilege of suffering and dying with him, with the promise that, if we remain faithful to our covenant of consecration, we shall also live and reign with him in his future kingdom. In the second letter to his beloved Timothy, the Apostle Paul said, "It is a faithful saying:

For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us.”—II Tim. 2:11,12

COMFORTED BY THE ROD AND STAFF

One of the most important aspects of our Christian faith for which we may give thanks, is our Lord Jesus—our sympathetic and loving High Priest who was touched with a feeling of our infirmities. He is also our Good Shepherd who tenderly leads us. The Psalmist David wrote, “The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name’s sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.”—Ps. 23

Jesus is our Head and we are members of his body. As our Head, he directs us in the way in which we should go, and in the manner in which we may serve him. If we walk in his steps faithfully and are subservient to him, we will no longer exercise our own wills, or seek to walk in our own ways. We will seek to know the will of God and watch for his guidance in our lives.

If we do the will of God as he called of him, all things will work together for our good and we will have peace of mind and heart. What a blessing this

is in this world of chaos and fear. It is the peace of God which rules in the hearts of all those who, through Christ, trust in the merit of his sacrifice as a robe of righteousness. We thus yield ourselves fully to the doing of the Heavenly Father's will as expressed through his unspeakable gift. Paul said, "It became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren."—Heb. 2:10,11

THE LORD'S SOLDIERS

As soldiers under Jesus our Captain, we must avoid the entanglements of this present evil world. "The things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also. Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ."—II Tim. 2:2,3

The Apostle Paul thus admonishes, "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."—Eph. 6:11,12

The apostle has also outlined the necessary armor that we will need to fight a good fight of faith. He says, "Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore,

having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”—vss. 13-17

OUR CAPTAIN

We are very thankful that we have, as the Captain of the great salvation to which we have been called, our dear Lord Jesus. By following his leadership and by keeping on the whole armor of God, as we have been admonished to do, we will be kept from falling. We continue to rejoice in the glorious hope that is set before us in the Gospel. Another important feature of that great hope is that in due time, if we are faithful unto death, we will be associated with Jesus as our heavenly Bridegroom. As prospective members of his bride, we will have the blessed privilege, through the power and authority of Christ's future kingdom, to invite the poor groaning creation to partake of the wonderful blessings that have been prepared for them. We read, “The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”—Rev. 22:17

THE HOLY SPIRIT

We should be thankful for the ministry of the Holy Spirit on our behalf. Having been begotten by God's Holy Spirit to a new life as New Creatures in Christ Jesus, we are anointed by the Spirit to

proclaim the glad tidings of the kingdom. The witness of the Holy Spirit assures us that we are now the children of God. "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together."—Rom. 8:16,17

The seal of the Spirit is God's assurance that if we do our part he will not permit anything to hinder us from attaining that to which he has called us through Christ Jesus. Paul thus encourages, "That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ. In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise."—Eph. 1:12,13

The Holy Spirit ministers to us through the word of Truth as set forth in the Scriptures, and we give much thanks for the precious Word of our loving Heavenly Father. Without that Word we would know nothing concerning the glorious Truth in connection with the divine plan. Let us always cherish the Bible because it is the bread and water of life that continues to sustain us. Its prophecies enlighten us concerning the times in which we are living, and its promises inspire and encourage us to continue on in the narrow way of sacrifice faithfully, even unto death. The Bible also outlines the divine will for us, and explains the meaning of our trials. The psalmist wrote, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."—Ps. 119:105

The Word of the Lord and his abundant providence in our lives are great causes for our thankfulness

to him. “O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day. Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies: for they are ever with me. I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts.”—Ps. 119:97-100

THE ENDURING WORD

God’s wonderful Word gives new meaning and purpose in the lives of his people. Its perfect law, the testimonies, its statutes, and commandments are guidelines of Truth. In this connection, the Psalmist David wrote, “The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes.” (Ps. 19:7,8) To this, he adds, “The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward.”—vss. 9-11

Let us all be thankful for the privileges of service that we have enjoyed during the past year. It is a joy to make known the glad tidings of the kingdom, and to lay down our lives for the brethren. It is by this labor of love that we demonstrate to our Heavenly Father the genuineness of our desire to know and serve him. It should be a great cause for giving thanks that we have been given opportunities to

demonstrate that we are dedicated to service and to the doing of his will in our lives.

Faith will permit us to move mountains of difficulties that could otherwise hinder us from letting our light shine out for the blessing of others. We want a faith that will not permit us to hide the light of truth under a bushel with the spirit of indifference.

PRAISE AND THANKFULNESS

Praise and thanksgiving are closely associated in the Bible. Thanksgiving is an expression of appreciation to God for all the rich blessings which he showers upon us from day to day. We can express our thanksgiving to him in the privacy of our own minds and hearts, and in the presence of his people. We can also praise God in our prayers, and we can also praise him by making known the virtues of his glorious character.

Peter wrote, "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises [virtues, Margin] of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light."—I Pet. 2:9

We show forth the Lord's virtues by speaking of his wondrous works, and as shown in the precious doctrines of the divine plan. We praise him by bearing witness to his love, as exemplified in the gift of his Son, and to what this unspeakable gift means to us now and will yet mean in terms of the blessings and joys soon to come for all mankind.

While it is thus appropriate to express our thanks to the Lord in our prayers and to praise him for his goodness, we also demonstrate our appreciation

for all he has done for us by faithfulness in doing his will. We give thanks to God for his loving care when we demonstrate by our attitude that we have faith in his promises of grace to help in every time of need. This is a rich blessing which the Lord showers upon those who give themselves wholly to the doing of his will. Our words of thanksgiving would lack vital meaning if our hearts were not fully surrendered to the Lord and were not trusting him completely to supply all of our needs.

Paul wrote, “Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice. Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand. Be careful 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. Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.”—Phil. 4:4-9

Let us take the opportunity to give much thanks to our loving Heavenly Father who has called us out of darkness and into the marvelous light of Truth. The Apostle Paul expressed it well in our featured scripture. “Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.”—Col. 3:17 ■