

The Spirit of Thanksgiving

“Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name. For the LORD is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations.”
—*Psalm 100:4,5*

A day of thanksgiving, such as is designated in the United States each November, is a time to remember our loving Heavenly Father to whom we owe our very existence, and who continues to provide for our daily needs. For this, we turn our attention to the wonderful words and spirit of the psalmist in our featured scripture: “Enter into

his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name.”

The spirit of thanksgiving is that which encourages us to appreciate all that God has done on our behalf. As his children, we thank him for giving us an understanding of his plans and purposes. We realize our own unworthiness of the countless blessings that he has bestowed upon us. “God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners,

Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.”—Rom. 5:8-10

God’s Goodness Manifest

The Apostle Peter explained that our Lord Jesus was God’s wonderful gift to the sin-sick and dying human creation. “For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit.” (I Pet. 3:18, *New American Standard Bible*) God continually provides for mankind, yet as a whole they do not understand his character, authority, or the eternal plans for his human creation.

The Creator has given his human family many rich gifts that we may enjoy in our everyday lives. However, as Christians, this realization appeals not only to our physical and mental faculties, but we also learn to appreciate the abundant spiritual blessings that God has given to us in his Holy Scriptures. In proportion as we study his wonderful word of Truth and seek to attain understanding, so also does the Holy Spirit more richly abound in us as we strive to “walk in newness of life.” (Rom. 6:4) Thus does the child of God grow in the spirit of love, appreciation, and thanksgiving.

Every Good Gift

As we develop a more meaningful spiritual relationship with God, we grow in grace and knowledge. (II Pet. 3:18) However, we also realize our

insufficiency and dependence upon his love, mercy, and grace. (Eph. 2:4-6) Only after we have been for a considerable length of time in the Christian way can we comprehend the full force of the apostle's words, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures."—James 1:17,18

It is important that we go often to our Father in prayer and supplication as his child. (Col. 4:2; I Thess. 5:17) We may do so with the knowledge that he delights to give us his blessings. By his leading hand he has promised to guide us along the various steps of our Christian walk. His marvelous love and grace toward us is thus manifest: "For in him we live, and move, and have our being."—Acts 17:28

Those whose minds have been enlightened to the wonderful works of God see his riches of grace more each day and have many causes for thankfulness that others may not have. They have come into a very close and precious relationship with the Lord and know that all things are overruled for their spiritual welfare by a loving God. This is in accordance with the words of the psalmist, who wrote, "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty."—Ps. 91:1

In Everything Give Thanks

The Apostle Paul admonished, "In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." (I Thess. 5:18) Those who

have given their lives in consecration to God and the doing of his will, and who have accepted our Lord Jesus as their Head, consider every day as a time for giving thanks. (Ps. 42:8; 92:1,2) Thus the child of God rejoices with gratitude and thankfulness in serving our loving Heavenly Father daily and in every situation of life.

Every experience of life, whether it is one of joy or sorrow, is an occasion for thankfulness. It means being keen to have the Lord's will cost us something, knowing that in giving ourselves to the divine service, the greater our eternal joy will be. The deepest shades of sorrow may yield the richest fruitage of peace and joy in the Lord. (Ps. 34:18) Sorrow and trial may elicit a greater degree of thankfulness than may be true with more pleasant experiences. Indeed, we may more greatly appreciate God's grace in our spiritual life than if we had not undergone such an experience. Our trial has caused us to depend more upon the Lord, and this has resulted in our living closer to him, being ever conscious that "our sufficiency is of God."—II Cor. 3:5

A Thankful Heart

We are inspired by the zeal and determination shown by the Apostle Paul, when he wrote, "I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."—Rom. 8:38,39

Many of God's servants of the past were those who endured great hardship, but their hearts were

filled with humility and thankfulness. This was especially true in the life of the great Apostle Paul. He proclaimed, “We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us. We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus’ sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.”—II Cor. 4:7-11

Few of the Lord’s people have suffered more for the Gospel than Paul, but there is no indication of complaint in his writings, which form a major part of the New Testament Scriptures. Further on in the chapter quoted above, he explained, “Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you. For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God. For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.”—vss. 14-18

The apostle readily accepted his commission in the service of the Lord. However, this service brought him almost continuous suffering and trial, oftentimes

nearly costing him his life. Yet he did not waver in his commitment, and continued serving the Truth and the brethren with his heart filled with devotion to God. He had the assurance that these “light afflictions,” which he said were only for a moment in time, were preparing him for an abundant entrance into Christ’s glorious kingdom to which he had been invited to have a special part.—II Pet. 1:10,11

Untiring Zeal

Because of his untiring zeal in preaching the Gospel and assisting the Lord’s people to greater faithfulness, the Apostle Paul was taken prisoner to Rome. While in bondage, he wrote an epistle that has been a source of blessing and encouragement to all the Lord’s consecrated people. He said these comforting words: “To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colosse: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have to all the saints, For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel; Which is come unto you, as it is in all the world; and bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you, since the day ye heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth.”—Col. 1:2-6

We note that the apostle’s letter was addressed specifically “to the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colosse.” This reflects the apostle’s sincere desire for their spiritual growth and development in Christ Jesus, and that they

may be built up in the faith. Paul was concerned for the spiritual well-being of these brethren although he had never met them personally. He had learned of them through the ministry of “Epaphras our dear fellowservant, who is for you a faithful minister of Christ; Who also declared unto us your love in the Spirit. For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God.”—Col. 1:7-10

Paul hardly mentioned in his letter the fact that he was living in a Roman prison and, no doubt, enduring trying circumstances at the time. Even in a casual reference, he mentioned it in perspective with the spiritual life of his brethren. He wrote, “Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving; Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds.” (Col. 4:2,3) Again, in closing his letter he said, “Remember my bonds. Grace be with you. Amen.”—vs. 18

Abounding with Thanksgiving

After their having been thoroughly established in the faith, he brought the Colossian brethren’s attention to the importance of giving thanks to the Lord for all of the blessings they had received. In his letter, he reminded them, “Though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the stedfastness of your faith in Christ. As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: Rooted

and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.”—Col. 2:5-7

Paul used a tree as an example to frame his inspiring thoughts. The rooting process goes on without any outward manifestation. Yet, a tree that is well rooted cannot be easily uprooted because of its powerful grip upon the soil that has nourished it. Thus the apostle warns us in another place, “That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive.”—Eph. 4:14

In the life of the consecrated Christian, the roots of faith reach ever deeper into the wonderful knowledge of God and his ultimate purpose concerning the development of the Christ class during this present age, and the future recovery of the entire human family from their sin-sick and dying state under the administration of Christ’s kingdom. As the tree develops, so does the mature Christian’s character grow stronger and more visible. In time, it will be manifest by the wonderful fruitage “unto holiness.”—Rom. 6:22

A Sure Foundation

Faithful Christians who are privileged to be living during the present time have received abundant mercies from our loving Heavenly Father. He has revealed more fully to these the mysteries of the Scriptures that were kept hidden for centuries, and the Lord’s people have been lifted up and established on a blessed and firm foundation in Christ. (Col. 1:26,27) David expressed a similar appreciation and thanks to God, when he wrote, “I waited patiently for the Lord; and he inclined unto me,

and heard my cry. He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings.”—Ps. 40:1,2

Our “Goings” Established

The psalmist said that his prayer had been answered and that he had experienced new hope and understanding in his life. He also said that God “established my goings.” What a wonderful thought, because we, too, can say that our “goings”—steps or path—have been established and that we have experienced a newness of life and purpose. Our Lord is the firm foundation upon which each of us has our standing. We have been raised out of the horrible and miry pit of clay, which represents sin, destruction, and death, and our feet are now placed upon the solid rock of Christ.—Matt. 7:24,25; 16:16-18; I Cor. 10:4

In his beautiful psalm, David further said, “He hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the Lord. Blessed is that man that maketh the Lord his trust, and respecteth not the proud, nor such as turn aside to lies.” (Ps. 40:3,4) The Lord has also given us a new song to sing. It is centered in the wonderful promises of God as revealed in the Holy Scriptures.

A New Song

Our firm foundation features the hope of our heavenly calling in Christ Jesus, and the establishment of Christ’s kingdom of righteousness under which all the families of the earth are to be blessed. (Heb. 3:1; Gen. 22:18; Gal. 3:8) John the Revelator wrote concerning this new song, “I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father’s

name written in their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps: And they sung as it were a new song before the throne.”—Rev. 14:1-3

The Apostle Paul experienced this wonderful change in his spiritual life and ministry. He proclaimed, “Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”—Phil. 3:13,14

Our Blessed Hope

When we learn the true meaning of the song which our loving Heavenly Father has given us to sing, we have much for which we may praise and thank him. If we are abounding therein with thanksgiving, it means that God has taken us into his tender confidence and has revealed some of the hidden treasures of the Bible concerning his ultimate plan and purpose for his human creation. Through his Word, we catch a glimpse of his marvelous glory, and see more clearly his abounding love, infinite wisdom, unlimited power, and unswerving justice.

The new song in our mouths grows distinctly more melodious and harmonious as we have opportunity to sing it aloud to others. It becomes more precious as our love for God and his beloved Son is fully established in our hearts and lives. From the words of the Prophet Isaiah, we read, “Thy watchmen

shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing: for they shall see eye to eye, when the Lord shall bring again Zion. Break forth into joy, sing together. ... The Lord hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.”—Isa. 52:8-10

Lifting Up Our Voices

We believe that we are now living in the closing days of this “present evil world.” (Gal. 1:4) As conditions around us continue to grow more desperate and violent, let us take advantage of the great privilege of lifting up our voices in proclaiming the long-promised kingdom of Christ soon to be established over the whole earth. Individually and collectively, let us hold forth the Word of life and proclaim with joy the glorious “gospel of the kingdom” to a sin-sick and dying human family that yet awaits its grand establishment here upon the earth.—Matt. 24:14

Let us each day give our heartfelt praise and abounding thanksgiving to our loving Heavenly Father for all of his benefits and blessings to us. “Make a joyful noise unto the LORD, all ye lands. Serve the LORD with gladness: come before his presence with singing. Know ye that the LORD he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture. Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name. For the LORD is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations.”—Ps. 100:1-5