

Thanksgiving to God for His Gifts

*“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.”*

—James 1:17

THERE IS NOTHING WHICH

man possesses that did not originally come from God as a gift of his bountiful love. This is especially true of the Christian, who, in addition to the spiritual gifts with which he is blessed, may properly think even of the material things of life as being gifts of

God. Ecclesiastes 5:19 reads, “God hath given riches and wealth [to every man], and hath given him power to eat thereof, and to take his portion, and to rejoice in his labor; this is the gift of God.”

Here we are reminded of how good God’s gifts really are. The food we eat is a gift of God, but those who have imperfect health and cannot properly digest their food do not, of course, rejoice so much in this particular gift. This reminds us that even our health is a gift of God. If we properly appreciate what God is doing for us along these material lines, we will find daily cause for rejoicing, for every

function of a healthy body gives pleasure and cause for thanksgiving.

When God created our first parents he planted a garden for them “eastward in Eden,” in which was placed “every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food.” (Gen. 2:8,9) It is significant, we think, that the beauty of the Garden of Eden is placed ahead of its food-sustaining qualities. God wanted his human creation not only to live, but to live in surroundings which were in themselves conducive to happiness and well-being. The Scriptures tell us that the earth was created to be man’s home. “The heaven, even the heavens, are the LORD’S: but the earth hath he given to the children of men.”—Ps. 115:16

So far as the earth and its blessings are concerned, God has been impartial in the distribution of these blessings to all mankind. Jesus explained that God “maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.” (Matt. 5:45) This means that God’s earthly gifts of sunshine and rain are oftentimes distributed to those who do not appreciate them and, indeed, might well be resented in cases where human plans may be disturbed by the elements of the weather.

The followers of Jesus should be and are the most appreciative of God’s material gifts. The Apostle Paul, writing about this, said, “I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound ... to be full and to be hungry.” (Phil. 4:11,12) Here is the case of a faithful servant of God whom he permitted at times to go hungry. But to the Christian even an experience of this kind could well

be considered a gift from God, because it is an experience from which he learns the more fully to put his trust in God and in his overruling providences. Along this same line Paul wrote, “Godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.”—I Tim. 6:6,7

SPIRITUAL GIFTS

While a Christian sees all about him the gifts of God which without partiality are distributed to all men, he treasures especially God’s spiritual gifts, of which there are so many. In Ephesians 2:8 the Apostle Paul writes, “By grace are ye saved through faith: and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.” Many students of the Bible have been uncertain in reading this text whether it is grace that is referred to as the gift of God, or faith. Actually, the apostle is saying that our salvation—being saved through our Lord Jesus Christ—is the gift of God. (Rom. 5:15) This is the gift of God’s grace, and it reaches us on the basis of our faith and of meeting the conditions of the gift, which is the full dedication of ourselves to do the Lord’s will.

Romans 6:23 reads, “The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” The word “wages” indicates something that is earned. But he did not say that the wages of righteousness is eternal life. There is nothing that anyone can do to earn eternal life. So he stated it correctly when he said that eternal life is the gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord. This is very much in harmony with that precious text which reads, “God so loved the world, that he gave his only

begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”—John 3:16

DISCERNMENT

Psalm 119:144 reads, “The righteousness of thy testimonies is everlasting: give me understanding, and I shall live.” One of the very precious gifts of God to every faithful follower of the Master is the gift of discernment with respect to his plans and purposes as revealed in his Word. And it is only through this gift of discernment that we can understand God’s plan of the ages. The Apostle Peter confessed to Jesus, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” And to this Jesus replied, “Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.” (Matt. 16:15-17) In other words, the great truth expressed by Peter concerning Jesus’ being the Christ was not based upon the discernment of the human mind but had been revealed to Peter by his Father in heaven. What a wonderful example this is of the gift of discernment! Jesus said to his disciples, “It is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven.”—Matt. 13:11

The gift of discernment is given to God’s people through the power of the Holy Spirit, and this is one of the outstanding gifts of God. Jesus said, “If ye then, being evil [or sinful by nature], know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?” (Luke 11:13) Every true follower of the Master knows the value of God’s gift of the Holy Spirit. We are begotten by the Holy Spirit; we are anointed by the Holy Spirit; we are

baptized and sealed by the Holy Spirit; we are led by the Holy Spirit, and we will finally be born of the Spirit.

A SOUND MIND

In II Timothy 1:7 Paul, writing to Timothy, explained that God had given him the spirit “of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.” The context of this statement is very revealing. Toward the end of this final letter of Paul’s to Timothy he invites his beloved spiritual son to visit him in his prison cell in Rome. Paul knew that this would involve a certain amount of risk and danger; so he explains to Timothy that God had not given him the spirit of fear. If he felt fearful over this request by Paul to visit him in Rome, he could be sure that that spirit of fear did not come from God, but that God had given him the spirit of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

It would take courage to respond to Paul’s invitation, and also great love on Timothy’s part for Paul and for the Lord, to expose himself to the danger that was involved. However, this, Paul assured Timothy, would be the manifestation of the spirit of a “sound mind.” How correct Paul was! Actually, every Christian has dedicated himself to lay down his life for his brethren. (I John 3:16) The Holy Spirit would be guiding Timothy in making the proper decision to accept Paul’s invitation, even though it might cost him his life. Coming through the inspired Apostle Paul, Timothy could consider it as spoken directly by the Lord and as giving him an opportunity to demonstrate the sincerity of his consecration.

THE SCRIPTURES

Another precious gift of God to his people is the Holy Scriptures, and these Scriptures are provided through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. The Apostle Paul wrote, "All Scripture, divinely inspired, is indeed profitable for teaching, for conviction, for correction, for that discipline which is in righteousness; so that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly fitted for every good work."—II Tim. 3:16,17, *Wilson's Emphatic Diaglott*

Further detail is given as to how the Holy Spirit ministers the Word of God to us. In Ephesians 4:7-13 the Apostle Paul explains, "Unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led a multitude of captives [marginal translation], and gave gifts unto men. (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.) And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

The function of apostles, prophets, pastors, etc., is to expound the Word of God. The apostles are the inspired expositors of God's plan, and the other servants mentioned are the uninspired ones, but they all function to illuminate the body of Christ as

a whole that they might know more perfectly the will of God and be brought together in the unity of the faith. What a marvelous gift, then, is the gift of the Holy Scriptures through the power of God's Holy Spirit!

ALL THINGS

The Apostle Paul wrote, "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" (Rom. 8:32) How comprehensive, indeed, are the gifts of God, beginning with the gift of his dear Son to be our Savior and Redeemer! Through him we have the gift of justification, the gift of fellowship with the Heavenly Father and with one another, the gift of the Holy Spirit, and many other gifts which are given to us to be freely used to the glory of God.

We even have the privilege of suffering with Christ. Paul mentioned this. He said, "Unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake." (Phil. 1:29) The value of this gift lies in the fact that if we are faithful in suffering with Christ we shall, in God's due time, have the privilege of living and reigning with him.—Rom. 8:16,17

There are many gifts of God to his people of the Gospel Age which are referred to in the Scriptures. There are, for example, those wonderful gifts mentioned in Revelation, chapters 2 and 3. In these chapters we are promised that, if we are faithful unto death, we will be given "a crown of life." Then there is that wonderful promise—again depending upon our faithfulness—that in due time we will be given to eat of the hidden manna.

Also, there is the promised gift of “power over the nations,” and the gift of the “morning star.” If faithful, we will be clothed in “white raiment” and made “a pillar in the temple of our God.” Jesus also said, “To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.” (Rev. 3:21) What a marvelous prospect is thus held out to us, and what an encouragement to faithfulness it should be!

In Luke 12:32 Jesus gives us a summary of what is implied in all of these wonderful gifts of the future when he said to his disciples, “Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.” The crown of glory, the hidden manna, power over the nations, the morning star, white raiment, being a pillar in the temple, and sitting with Jesus in his throne, are all aspects of participation with Jesus as joint-heirs in his kingdom—the kingdom which has been promised by the Heavenly Father and assured to us through Jesus and the merit of his redemptive sacrifice.

We cannot purchase such gifts, and there is nothing which we possess that we could give up which would merit our receiving all these blessings of God, except our appreciation and our devotion to the great Giver. So he invites us to give him our hearts, and to have our eyes observe and obey his ways. (Prov. 23:26) We do this through obedience to all the conditions attached to God’s gifts, and it is through our obedience that ultimately we will hear the words, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.”—Matt. 25:21 ■