

“AND BE YE THANKFUL”

Bill Jackson

Someone told of the fine old brother who always began his prayer with, “Father, we thank Thee for this fine day!” He would thus pray, in a flood, or when the sun was oppressively hot, or when the snow was four-foot deep. It was always, “Father, we thank Thee for this fine day!” And then, one day the rains came, and came and came. Each day was cloudy and dark, and it went on and on...people became depressed, out of sorts, dismal. When this had gone on for days and days, our brother was called on for prayer one Sunday. Naturally, many wondered, “What will he say now?” His prayer began, “Father, we thank Thee that it is not always like this.” A slight change, yes, but the point is that he was still thankful!

One at peace with his God, so says Paul, has that proper basis on which to stand and be thankful! (Col. 3:15). Thanksgiving will be in the heart of the child of God, and it will be there, and undiminished, regardless of things that happen in life to momentarily dampen the spirit. Surely it is the same in regard to joy. Christian joy is a constant and permanent thing, and the instances of pain and sorrow that come to us do not at all remove the joy. Here, we must think of Job, and his being notified of the great and hurtful losses of his goods and children. His response: **“The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; Blessed be the name of the Lord”** (Job 1:21).

It is striking that when Paul warns the young preacher of **“times of peril”** to come (2 Tim. 3:1ff), men being “unthankful” is listed among the items like fierceness of disposition and blasphemy. It would be clear to anyone that times of adultery, times of murder, times of drunkenness, and times of theft would be times of “peril” for God’s cause and God’s people. But here we find, as a mark of such times, a lack of thankfulness! Similarly, in Romans 1 and in giving us a picture of the filthy avenues the Gentiles took away from God, it is in sum stated as they’re not liking **“to retain God in their knowledge”** (Rom. 1:28). If they do not desire even to think of God, they will most certainly not be thankful to God!

In teaching concerning true Christianity as it is seen in life, we need always to stress the spirit of thankfulness. We think of our own times, and how too few people of our day seem to want to look upward toward God. We indeed can become like the beast, in that we will take our daily food, along with all other benefits the Almighty provides, and never even consider the source of it. The Lord’s model prayer point is so fine here: **“Give us this day our daily bread”** (Mat. 6:11). We should be so thankful, and for so many things, that we immediately know that it is beyond our ability to number them. We should teach our children the same. As stated, we do fear that we are living in a world now so unthankful. The lack of a spirit of thanksgiving will always be present when the times are such that men are **“lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God”** (2 Tim. 3:4). To be properly thankful, the priorities of life must be in order.

For effect, notice these passages:

Ephesians 5:20—Give thanks always for all things.

Philippians 4:6—In everything by prayer, supplication with thanksgiving.

1 Timothy 4:3-4—Receive our table items with thanksgiving.

Colossians 2:7—Abound in the faith with thanksgiving.

1 Timothy 2:1—For all men, supplications, prayers, intercession, with thanksgiving.

2 Corinthians 9:12—Benevolent work, causing many thanksgivings to be made.

And, these only touch the hem of the garment, when it comes to the spirit of thanksgiving to be in the heart of God's child, and we note that in faithful service rendered to others, there is the occasioning of thanksgiving on the part of others. How much of the Bible is devoted to the matter of offering of thanks!

It is probably true, everywhere the saints meet, that so many men who lead prayer begin with, "we thank thee." One once criticized this, stating that we are saying the same thing over and over again. I would be most reluctant to offer any criticism, because I think the person offering the prayer begins with the proper frame of mind: Thanksgiving! I also would be reluctant because I note in John 11, when Jesus began to pray, in appreciation of the power wherein Lazarus was raised from the dead, He said, "**Father, I thank thee**" (11:41). That is completely satisfying to me!

The spirit of thankfulness does not abound, we fear, in our world. It never does when men turn away from spirituality. But it will be, and it must be, within the saints of God! They wish to abide by all things taught of God, and they wish to heed this: "**be ye thankful!**"~

Deceased