

Thanksgiving

by Wayne Goff

Can we ever be too thankful? I think not. We can remember the wonderful blessings of God at this time of year and give thanks to Him from Whom all blessings flow. The irony of it all is this ~ the more we look upward to God and heaven, the greater we are blessed while we live here upon the earth.

Jesus: A Thankful Man

During His earthly humiliation, Jesus was profoundly thankful to His heavenly Father. He gave thanks over the loaves and fish which He distributed to the four thousand, **Matthew 15:36**. He set the perfect example for our own thanksgiving when He instituted His own memorial supper and gave thanks for the bread and the cup, **Mark 14:22-23; Luke 22:19-20**. Jesus gave the Father thanks when He raised up Lazarus from the dead, **John 11:41**. And Jesus was supremely thankful that God had kept great spiritual truths from the worldly wise and had revealed them to babes! **Luke 10:21**.

If we are the disciples of Jesus, then we should be thankful creatures as well, imitating the humble life and example of our Lord and Savior. We can do no less.

Paul: A Thankful Apostle

When you begin studying the epistles, the apostle Paul's disposition jumps out at you with obvious emphasis – "I thank my God" over and over again. See **Romans 1:8; 7:25; 16:4; 1 Corinthians 1:4; 14:18; 15:57; 2 Corinthians 2:14; 8:16; 9:15; Ephesians 1:16; Philippians 1:3; Colossians 1:3; 1 Thessalonians 1:2; 2:13; 3:9; 1 Timothy 1:12; 2 Timothy 1:3; Philemon 4**. And for what was Paul giving continual thanks? His converts and the churches which he established. When you think about it, that was all that mattered. He had zealously gone all over the Roman Empire preaching the gospel, saving some, and establishing local churches. The book of Acts records most of those events, and Paul is the center of attention in that book, as well as the thirteen epistles he wrote to those churches and saints.

Paul knew that he "planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase" (**1 Corinthians 3:6**). But he also knew that "he who plants and he who waters are one, and each one will receive his own reward according to his own labor" (**1 Corinthians 3:8**). The "reward" of the faithful gospel preacher is **the saved souls** at the end of time. He knew that some converts were as strong as "gold, silver, precious stones" and would endure the fiery trials of persecution and temptation. He also knew that other converts were so weak that they could only be described as combustible "wood, hay, straw" – destined for destruction when the "Day" of trial and temptation arrived. So he worried about his converts and the churches he helped to establish: "besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches" (**2 Corinthians 11:28**). So he never ceased to pray for them, and to give thanks to God for them, perhaps that God might find a way to keep them faithful to the end.

Paul was thankful for other things, too. He was most appreciative of his own personal salvation and the apostleship with which he was entrusted. He proved that thanksgiving by the sacrificial life he lived! Paul was thankful for the various spiritual gifts that were given to the various saints and churches for their establishment in the faith (see **Romans 1:11-12**).

You and Me: Thankful in 2020

So for what can you be thankful this year? By all accounts it has been a most difficult year physically, mentally, and spiritually. We have lost many beloved brethren to the current virus. We have lost beloved saints due to age and infirmity. We have lost a portion of our freedom as we are compelled to wear masks, practice social distancing, and staying at home as much as possible. Yet in all these things we are "more than conquerors" through Him who loved us and gave His life for us. Because when we are physically weak, then we can be spiritually strong! The choice is up to each one of us. Are you thankful?

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