

Are We A Thankful People?

By Everett Hardin

Every day should be a day of thanksgiving on the Christian's calendar. We are taught by command to be grateful. *"Let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which ye are called in one body; and be ye **thankful**,"* Col. 3:15. *"Continue in prayer and watch in the same with **thanksgiving**,"* Col. 4:2. Paul says we are to be *"Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with **thanksgiving**,"* Col. 2:7. Surely our hearts are deeply concerned with how to overcome ingratitude.

The first American Thanksgiving Day was celebrated less than a year after the Plymouth colonies settled in the new land. In 1621, Governor Bradford made provisions for a day of thanksgiving and prayer. Gradually it grew into a custom. In 1864, President Lincoln proclaimed "A day of thanksgiving and prayer to our beneficent Father." I'm glad to be a citizen of a country where people thank God for their blessings. It is far better than living where people do not believe in God.

During the first long winter the pilgrims who landed at Plymouth Rock made seven times more graves for the dead than they built houses for the living! The ship from England which was to bring food and relief brought instead thirty five more mouths to feed and not any provisions. And yet our Thanksgiving holiday is dated back to those people who were thankful for what they had.

There are many things for which we should be thankful. As citizens of this nation we enjoy so many things that are not enjoyed by the majority of the people of the earth. The fact is that most of us have so many privileges which we take for granted, that is as much a part of our everyday life, so common to us, we may simply overlook them. When we really consider the provisions given for man's physical welfare and for the soul of man, and for eternity, it is overwhelming.

Yes, we are the recipients of so many, many blessings. We ought to be thankful for them. And we ought to give expression to our thankfulness. It was such a desire which caused Governor Bradford, more than 390 years ago, to call for the First Thanksgiving observance. Today, our nation observes a national holiday, *"**Thanksgiving Day**,"* each year. While all of this may be well and good we will do well to remember that the idea of thanksgiving did not have its origin in America. **God** has always wanted His people to be thankful and to give expression to their thankfulness. Under the Law of Moses provisions were made for various "thank offerings". Of the feasts provided for under this law, three were pilgrimage festivals, in which every male who was in good health was expected to return to Jerusalem to present himself to God. Each of these feasts was commemorative of significant events in the national history, and each of them came at the time of harvest, when the people were receiving benefits from the land God had given them, and hence, each of them was a time of joyful thanksgiving.

Ingratitude is all too common, many seem unaware of their blessings. *"Every good and every perfect gift is from above and cometh down from the Father of light, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning,"* Jas. 1:17. Few seem to recognize this and pause to thank the Giver. Once when Jesus healed a leper only one of them, a Samaritan, returned giving

Him thanks, causing Jesus to say, *“Were not ten cleansed? But where are the nine,”* Luke 17:11-19. In the first chapter of Romans Paul gives a long list of the sins of which the Gentiles had been guilty and indicates these were preceded by the fact that *“When they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were they thankful,”* Rom. 1:21. This is one of the many sins characteristic of the Gentile world. Too, in describing the perilous times of the last days, along with many other tragic transgressions, Paul says men will be *“unthankful, unholy,”* 2 Tim. 3:1,2. Indeed, God reckons ingratitude so detestable as to catalogue it with the most vicious of vices and the most tragic transgressions.

How often we **sing**, but seldom do we practice *“Count Your many blessings, name them one by one, and it will surprise you what the Lord hath done.”* We should try and count our *“spiritual blessings,”* Eph. 1:3. There is God’s Son, our Savior, John 3:16, the church He purchased with His Own blood, Acts 20:28, the Holy Bible, the exceeding great and precious promises, the sustaining hope of heaven, our conversion and on and on.

We should try and count our physical blessings. There is our families, our health, our food, shelter and clothing, our freedom, the beauty of the world and on and on. So great is the Giver that every gift is complete and provides all that we need. All are given with no desire to benefit by receiving something in return. Thankfulness is not selfish, merely desirous of the gift. It is the **attitude** of one who is humbled and drawn by love toward the Giver. And above all, it keeps in mind the footprints that lead to Golgotha, lest we forget how rich we are!

Do you have good health? Many people do not. One does not have to look far, to see the condition of others about him, to be reminded of how well he is, compared to so many others. Are you able to see, hear, taste, smell, have the sense of touch and etc.? Are you able to walk and engage in a reasonable amount of physical activity? Are you able to think remember, plan, make decisions, etc.? Often we take these things for granted and do not know how to appreciate good health until we have lost it. This ought not to be. We should take good care of our bodies and be thankful because of the strength and health we enjoy.

How grateful are we for the spiritual blessings made available for us through Christ? Our purpose for existing is to please God, Eccl. 12:13; when we sin we incur His displeasure, Rom. 6:23, and we are unable to devise a way of returning to His favor. *“Oh Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself; for it is not in man that walketh to direct his own steps,”* Jer. 10:23. This is the condition of all mankind. *“For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God,”* Rom. 3:23. Being thus helpless, *“God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us,”* Rom. 5:8. Christ died for us so that we would not have to suffer eternal death for our sins. This is the most desperately needed gift for all, but are men grateful? For the most part they are not. Many are so engrossed in the affairs of this life that they foolishly consider it foolish to give attention to eternal life; so totally absorbed in what they hope to do for themselves, they have no thought of gratitude for what God has done for them.

Express your gratitude verbally. We are instructed to *“give thanks,”* not “feel” or “think” thanks, 1 Thess. 5:18. *“Oh give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good; for his mercy endureth forever. Let the redeemed say so, whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy,”* Psal. 107:1,2. Express your gratitude by your life and by your lips. Thanks saying is not necessarily thanks **giving**, but thanks **living** is in response to David’s question, *“What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me?”* Psal. 116:2. It is easy to get caught up in all the pressures of materialism and lose sight of our heavenly home. We begin to think this world is all there is. Let us resolve that we will give unto God our love, our time, our talents, our money, our lives, yea, our all.

We should do away with murmuring and complaining. Instead of remaining continually grateful for their deliverance from Egypt, how soon did Israel start to murmur and complain, Ex. 15:24; Num. 14:2. Let us avoid duplicating this spirit. “*Neither murmur ye, as some of them murmured,*” I Cor. 10:10. Though he was in prison at the time, Paul still penned, “*Giving thanks always unto God and the Father, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,*” Eph. 5:20, and “*Do all things without murmuring and disputing,*” Phil. 2:14.

God is the source of life’s good things. He does not “set us up” by blessing us one day and sending some strong solicitation to evil the next. He sends only good things and He sends them constantly. Solicitation to evil comes from Satan and our own selfish desires, not from God. Trials and stresses of every day life are not allowed to come for our destruction, but for our strengthening.

Christians will do well to heed Paul’s exhortation, “*Be careful for nothing; but in every thing, by prayer and supplication with **thanksgiving** let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which passeth understanding, shall keep our hearts and mind through Christ Jesus,*” Phil. 4:6-7. Not only in this season, but in every area of life, we should be thankful for every blessing that our loving heavenly Father bestows upon us.
