

Be Thankful

“Offer unto God thanksgiving and pay your vows to the most High” (Psalm 50:14). As we are looking ahead to our Thanksgiving Day celebration, these are words by which to live, but notice that the Psalmist didn’t just say to offer thanks. He extended that exhortation to include being faithful to keep our vows (promises) to God. We can’t expect God to continue blessing us when we fail to be honest and true to Him. Thanksgiving must be twofold: we are to be thankful for that with which we’ve been blessed by God, but we must also do what will demonstrate our faithfulness to Him. You can’t just say that you are thankful, but you must also show your thankfulness by what you do.

We all know how our country’s national day of Thanksgiving came to be. It was begun by a free people who fled from oppression in the Old World. Sometimes I think that we forget what this day represents and are only interested in the big turkey dinner with all the trimmings, the family get-togethers, etc. Yet, as we prepare to celebrate this Thanksgiving Day, let’s not forget why we are celebrating this day, and let’s be truly thankful for what God has provided for us. Let us show our thankfulness by living godly lives and sharing the message of the Gospel with others. Other than our beautiful country and the freedoms we enjoy, we have so much more for which to be thankful. Paul was thankful for his brethren as he said, “We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, because your faith grows exceedingly and the love of every one of you all toward each other abounds” (2 Thessalonians 1:3). Paul thanked God for his Christian brethren and for the growth of their faith and their love for each other. I can’t imagine a world where I didn’t have the love and encouragement of my brethren because that love is crucial to my faith. However, we must love all men. “Love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you and pray for those who spitefully persecute you” (Matthew 5:44). Our faith dictates love for everyone.

Paul told the Roman brethren, “I thank God for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world” (Romans 1:8). Those Roman Christians were not known throughout the world because they had simply become Christians but because they were showing their faithfulness by spreading the “gospel of Christ which is the power of God unto salvation” (Romans 1:16). We must be thankful for the Gospel and its message of salvation. Further, we must demonstrate that gratitude by sharing it with others. We must be thankful for God hearing our prayers. Jesus, Himself, said to God, “Father, I thank Thee that Thou has heard Me” (John 11:41). If Jesus was thankful to God for hearing His prayer, how much more should we, as sinners, be thankful for God hearing our prayers of thanksgiving as well as our petitions.

Our hearts should overflow with gratitude that we have a means of salvation from our sins. Like Paul, we must say “thanks to God Who gives us the victory through Christ Jesus, our Lord” (1 Corinthians 15:57). Through Christ we have the promise that “this is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcomes the world but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?” (1 John 4:4-5). Through our faithfulness, we can defeat Satan and obtain the results of that promised victory.

There are so many things for which we should be thankful to God. We are a truly blessed people, spiritually and materially. We should even be thankful for adversities because they can make our faith and love for the Lord stronger. As Paul told the Ephesian brethren, “Give thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Ephesians 5:20). Give thanks for all things! We should always “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 faithfulness endures to all generations” (Psalm 100:4-5).

By Royce Pendergrass