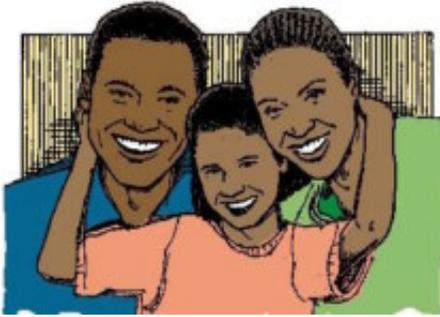


LESSON 7



BEING THANKFUL

Scripture Texts: Psalm 92:1-2; Philippians 4:4-7; 1 Thessalonians 5:18; Hebrews 13:15

God's people have always been a blessed people. A blessed people is made up of happy individuals. Happy, blessed individuals are a thankful people. God looks for and is pleased with continual thanks and praise in our hearts and frequent expression of it. The Presence of Christ in one's heart is necessary to produce acceptable thanks. Thanks from our lips alone will not reach the ears of God. The aim of our thanks and praise is to bring pleasure to God.

MEMORY VERSE: *Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving.* — Colossians 4:2

A Good Thing

Psalm 92:1-2. **It is a good thing to give thanks unto the LORD.** When there is a **good thing** to do, saints are interested. Goodness comes from God. Read Matthew 19:17. Truly, good acts are godly ones. It is good **to give thanks . . . to sing praises** to the Lord. Thanks and praises are similar but different. To *thank* is to express gratitude for benefits received. To *praise* is to extol the virtues of. God loves to receive both. It is the return He desires for His uncountable blessings to men. To praise continually—**in the morning . . . every night** and in between—is pleasing to God and good for our souls. Those with thankful hearts always have something to be thankful for. As we exercise thankfulness and praise, they grow stronger, and so do we. Thanks should fill the heart and frequently break out at the lips. The heart's offering of thanks is expressed in prayer and testimony and song. See Psalms 26:6-7; 95:2.

Our hymns are songs of praise to God. Our meetings are called worship services. With minds withdrawn from other matters and hearts lifted to Him, we offer thanks and praise unto God. What determines how God accepts the song? How many of the prayers can He hear? Does He rejoice over that which we offer Him? The time of prayer is not a time to catch up on last-minute preparations, to whisper a message, or to look around to see who is in attendance. When one is not the leader in prayer, he should be in agreement with the one who is. Seek how our praise can bring pleasure to God.

Joy Accompanies Thankfulness

Philippians 4:4-7. **Rejoice Be careful for nothing** Here we read of emotions and acts which may not be exactly parts of thankfulness but which accompany it. **Rejoice.** Unless we feel joy at God's blessings, thanks will be weakened. True joy, as goodness, can only be given by God. **Let your moderation be known**—use self-control. An appreciation of God's goodness (which is the basis of thankfulness) calls for separation from everything that pulls us toward the world. **Be careful for nothing**—do not worry. Worry is distrust. To truly value God's love and goodness is to trust Him to supply needs.

Would we be showing thanks to our earthly fathers if we depended upon others and asked them for our earthly needs? No. It is wrong to ask without gratitude. It is selfish and covetous. We thank God for both past and future benefits. Read Psalm 105:5. The heart with these attributes is filled with **the peace of God, which passeth all understanding** [human understanding], **shall keep your hearts and minds.** His peace is protection against doubt, worry, vain thoughts, and wrong feelings. It comes **through Christ Jesus** only.

Thanksgiving in Everything

First Thessalonians 5:18. **In every thing give thanks.** *In* everything, not *for*. We do not thank Him for a tragedy, but in it we thank Him for the good He brings in spite of it, or the way He uses it for good. Gratitude should not be a fair-weather matter. God blesses His people in joy or sorrow, calm or suffering, freedom or prison. Many suffered martyrdom and thanked God for the privilege. In all the varied conditions of life, thanks should rise to God for His faithfulness. Read 2 Corinthians 9:11-12. Circumstances should never lessen our thanks and praise to God. Thank Him for temporal blessings, whether they be plentiful or meager. Thank Him for spiritual blessings that the world cannot give, neither can it take away. Thank Him for what He is.

Thanks to God is fitting in both big things and small: for saving a soul or for finding a lost needle; for salvation's plan or for a warning from conscience. If God sees a matter as great enough for His attention, is it too trivial for thanks? Paul, who was headed for prison at Rome, "thanked God and took courage" (Acts 20:15) to see brethren to fellowship. Peter and John, just out of jail, beaten and threatened, rejoiced "that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name" (Acts 5:41). Starving ones are thankful for a crust. Do thankful ones complain? A thankful one is thankful that he has a thankful spirit.

The Fruit of Thankfulness

Hebrews 13:15. **By him . . . let us offer . . . the fruit of our lips.** As we desire natural fruit from trees, Jesus desires spiritual fruit from our lives. "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created" (Revelation 4:11). One fruit we can return to Him is the **sacrifice** of thanks and praise from our lips, issuing from our hearts.

By him—referring to Jesus. Only Jesus in our hearts can produce the quality of praise God wants. Thanks must be more than words. Acceptable thanks comes out of a holy life. **Continually**—a thankful spirit should be our constant possession; then expressed thanks and praise will be spontaneous as occasions arise. What would our nation be if the thanks and praise that is due God were given to Him instead of to man?

JUST A THOUGHT

**It is not he who has little,
but he who wants more, who is poor.**

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