

Give Thanks Unto the Lord

"Seek the Lord, and His strength: seek His face evermore. Let the heart of them rejoice that seek the Lord."—
Psa. 105:3-4

PSALM 105

We have for consideration a very beautiful Psalm. We value the Psalms more and more as we grow older. We see their reason and purpose. We recognize our need for what they supply.

The Psalms are deep spiritual food—divine nourishment—bread from heaven. If we do not regularly feed upon these things, then we are sick, weak, undernourished, carnal, fleshly. Failure to fully draw on this transforming nutrition is the cause of most of the fleshly weakness, and poor spiritual memory, and lack of faith and spiritual cheerfulness that we bemoan and profess to deplore.

The proper food is all there in abundance. We inadequately take advantage of it, and then make unworthy excuses for the inevitable result.

A deep, constant imbibing of these things God has provided is the ONLY WAY to life. It is impossible to be spiritually healthy and strong without it. There is no "light within"—only evil and corruption requiring constant treatment with strong spiritual medication to keep it in check.

The book of Psalms is frequently quoted or referred to by Christ and the apostles, not just as expressions of beautiful thoughts and feelings, but as specific, word-for-word, divinely-inspired doctrines and prophecies and commands. If we accept Christ, then the Psalms are for us—on his authority—imperative divine law, acceptance of and obedience to which are essential to salvation.

The basic theme of the Psalms is deep and unshakable thankfulness to God, rejoicing, spiritual peace in the midst of any sorrow, because of the infinite love and power and goodness of God to men. Thankfulness that we are in direct, personal, beneficial contact with the omnipotent power of goodness that rules the universe should overshadow every other consideration in our lives and minds.

Whoever really HAS this in truth has GOT to be happy. It would be impossible to be otherwise. And this is freely available to all—urgently pressed upon them by the appealing grace of God, but very few are willing to put the misguided thinking of the flesh aside and follow the way of life required.

The Psalms are full of God, full of Christ, full of what God has done in the past and will do in the future.

The Psalms represent the frame of mind—the ONLY frame of mind—that is acceptable to God. If we are not in tune with the spirit of Psalms, we are not the children of God.

Psalm 105 begins with 9 exhortations, 9 plain commands, and only if we sincerely endeavor to remember and obey these commands can we consider ourselves possible candidates for eternal life through the love of God.

These commands are as important as any others, perhaps much more important, though all commands are important, for our reaction to them immediately manifests the state of our heart toward God. The 9 commands of Psalm 105:1-5 are—

1. Give thanks to God.
2. Call upon His Name.
3. Make known His deeds.
4. Sing unto Him.
5. Talk about His Works.
6. Glory in His Name.
7. Rejoice.
8. Seek the Lord, and--
9. REMEMBER!

They begin with "Give thanks to God"—give thanks in everything, and always. They end with "Remember"—keep always in memory, in the forefront of the mind, where action and character are determined. Let us think upon these 9 points, one by one in order.

1. "Give Thanks Unto the Lord"

This is fittingly first, for it is basic; it is the most important. Cheerful thanksgiving based on an intense appreciation of God's infinite beauty and goodness, MUST be our basic frame of mind ALWAYS.

For this alone is life in the true sense—a living awareness of divinity and glory, an overflowing gratitude,

irrepressible love welling up from within in reciprocation of divine love poured down on us from above.

If we have not got this, we are dead. We are cold walking carcasses; mere creatures of flesh like the dead world about us.

Thanksgiving is a beautiful frame of mind—healthy, wholesome, upbuilding, beautifying, inspiring to others. It leads to all other beauties of mind. It drives away all contrary characteristics: self-pity, envy, dissatisfaction, dissension, criticism of others. True, humble thankfulness to God for His infinite patience and goodness makes us want to help others, not to criticize and condemn.

God's children are guaranteed perfect peace of mind, if they do their simple little part—

"Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them" (Psa. 119:165).

"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee" (Isa. 26:3).

If we do not have this, we are not yet deep enough in the Truth; we have not yet put down our roots deeply enough into the rich soil of the Spirit-Word.

If we do not have the perfect peace of mind that God promises all His children, and that only He can give, and that can only be found by seeking it from Him, then wisdom cries that we should apply ourselves to it while it is yet called today. We should make it our most urgent matter of attention.

We must look in the right place for the trouble—for the reason we lack peace. We must look within our own fleshly hearts and minds—within our own weakness of faith and love.

No one outside of us can make us happy or unhappy. Happiness or unhappiness is from within.

It is so easy to criticize and blame others because we lack peace of mind. It is so easy to shift the blame from ourselves to our external circumstances. This has been the miserable way of the world from Adam on.

But if we truly do believe what we SAY we believe, then continual, cheerful thanksgiving is not just the only reasonable and sensible frame of mind—it is the only possible frame of mind. We couldn't be unhappy if we tried.

In the light of the greatness and goodness of God, we should be overwhelmed with joyful thanksgiving continually. After all God has done, and is doing, and promises to do for us, if we are not happy we are reproaching God, ignoring and belittling His love and care.

If we are unhappy, we are unspiritual, we are carnal, we are dull and unresponsive to divine things. The infallible Word assures us, and the assurance should be all-sufficient for all time—

"All things—ALL things—work together for good to them that love God."

Do we BELIEVE this? It is God's Own guaranteed Word. Does our life and our attitude toward everything give evidence that we believe this? This is the essence of Faith—

"The assurance of things hoped for, the evidence of things unseen."

If we have not found this divine, unearthly peace of mind within ourselves, and largeness of heart toward others, then something is wrong. We are missing life's meaning and joy. We have not really found the saving Truth of God.

We take our own affairs too seriously. Our petty, passing affairs are not important. It is only God's purpose that matters.

The present is nothing—just a striving after wind. The future is everything. The present with all its ridiculous little concerns will be gone in a moment. The future will last forever.

If we are wrapped up in ourselves, we have never grown up. We are mentally stunted. The whole purpose of life is to grow up, to mature and develop spiritually by the study and absorption of the Word of God.

We cannot be self-centered infants all our lives. We must get our minds on something real and worthwhile, outside of ourselves and our petty little affairs and problems.

Now the Psalms will do this for us—IF we will let them, if we will get down to work and take advantage of them.

As natural creatures we are no use to God. He pities us but cannot use us eternally.

There must be great changes made in our minds and our characters. He has given us the tools. He has furnished us the power. He tells us how. All we have to do is to follow the instructions and USE the tools.

What must we do? We must read more, we must meditate more, we must think more, we must DO more.

"Faith"—the power that moves mountains and overcomes the world—that turns sorrow to joy, and frustration to peace—"comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God."

Our baptism is just the beginning, the very barest, most elemental beginning. The preparing process takes the whole life—all our strength, all our interest and attention.

The difference between being dyingly natural and livingly spiritual is simply a matter of nourishment: spiritual food, spiritual growth, spiritual exercise, spiritual interests, spiritual activity.

We are still considering this "giving thanks" to God—what it really means, what it involves, how it must be the permanent, consistent basis of our mental outlook at all times. Paul says (1 Thess. 5:18)—

"In everything give thanks, for this is the will of God."

—in EVERYTHING—good and bad. It takes faith and understanding to give thanks for trouble and suffering, but Paul could do it. He had enough spiritual understanding to see the reason and purpose and necessity for trouble.

We have got to learn this too, if we want to be any eternal use to God. Any position of usefulness and responsibility takes learning and practice, and this is the highest position in the universe.

It is not easy. No real learning is easy. Look at the effort the people of the world will put into passing, worldly things. They do it because their heart is there. They love money, or fame, or power, or importance, or the sense of achievement.

Look at the effort and time Christadelphians are willing to put into things they want and are interested in.

Yet so many seem to assume that they will just coast automatically into eternal life without any real effort and application at all.

EFFORT is the secret, and LOVE is the power. What are we doing for God? If we haven't this kind of consuming thankfulness to and love for God that will drive us to joyful action and service to the limit of our ability, then let us have wisdom to do something about it without delay.

Let us put this down on our daily schedule as No. 1 at all times: "Give thanks!" We should carry these 9 commands with us always, and refer to them frequently—keep them in the forefront of our minds. And first of all is, "Give thanks!"

We cannot be unhappy when we are giving thanks; we cannot be sorry for ourselves; we cannot be angry at or unkind to others.

Truly we can alternate with marvelous inconsistency and breathtaking rapidity between blessing God and cursing man, as James points out. This is a highly-developed fleshly accomplishment, but such have not truly found God, or peace, or the joyful reality and power of true thanksgiving.

2. "Call Upon His Name"

—His Name Yahweh. What does it mean to "call upon His Name"? How would we specifically define it?

The basic meaning of this word "call" is to call out to someone to get their attention, to address by name, to greet or accost, to make contact with someone. It is derived from the word meaning "to meet, to come together."

If we compare this root meaning with the way it is used in Scripture, we shall get the full picture. These are the 2 steps in studying:

1. Get the real meaning of the word according to the best authorities.
2. Compare the uses of the word throughout Scripture.

The latter is the most important, for how God Himself uses the word is the final determination.

This is why all modern versions are useless for satisfying and profitable study. They are not direct translations but just vague paraphrases according to the ideas of men. We cannot dig into man's conclusion as to the meaning. They might be right, but we have no way of comparing and checking, so they are dangerous.

A word derived from this word "call" means exactly the same in Hebrew as "ecclesia" does in the New Testament—"A group called out to assemble in worship." As, for example, Ex.12:16—"An holy convocation."

Now, proclaiming God is covered in the 3rd command; talking together about Him in the 5th; asking for help in the 8th. What then is specifically meant here in the 2nd?—"Call upon His Name."

It appears to mean identifying ourselves with God—making ourselves His—separating ourselves unto Him in allegiance and worship. The first use of this phrase is significant—To Seth was born a son... "Then began men to call upon the name of the Lord" (Gen. 4:26).

This clearly does not mean the first appearance of worship, but it does appear to mean the beginning of SEPARATION in worship—the clear, healthy separation between the sons of men and the sons of God, which was broken down later and led to the worldwide corruption that brought the judgment of the Flood.

3. "Made Known His Deeds"

We must speak of God to those around us: not simply as a matter of preaching, but naturally and inevitably as the greatest and most basic fact of life. No thought or conversation has any relation to reality that is not built on this foundation.

If our belief is real and living, then it will color and control ALL our conduct and conversation. If it doesn't, we are living a lie.

David in the Psalms speaks naturally of God in all aspects of his life. In ALL that befell him, both for good or ill, he could vividly discern the loving and guiding, though often chastening, Divine hand.

And for the benefit of all subsequent generations he was caused to record his inmost thoughts, making known God's wonderful works among the children of men. The Psalms are the outpouring of this desire to make the greatness and goodness of God known, that all men may come in joyful wisdom to the beauty of holiness.

We must, like David, fill our minds and thoughts with God and His goodness, and then we too shall be moved to speak in the fullness of our hearts—not in contention and condemnation but compassion and invitation.

4. "Sing Unto Him"

The Psalms are songs. They go beyond mere proclamation of God. They go beyond mere prayer. They have far greater depth and intensity and feeling than mere words.

Singing is a vital part of worship: both public and personal, both with the lips and silently in the heart. Paul speaks of—

"Making melody in your hearts unto the Lord."

People who do this are beautiful people, desirable people, people whose company is joyful and inspiring. The truth of God is a living thing. It must fill the heart as well as the understanding.

Could OUR normal frame of mind be described as "making melody in our hearts to the Lord"? If so, we have found the secret of life. If not, let us find out what is wrong and what we are missing, before it is too late!

5. "Talk of His Wondrous Works"

This is best illustrated by the words of Malachi (3:16)—

"Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another."

This is the bond of their communion together—the "wondrous works of God." What we say is the measure of what we are. The content of our normal conversation is the indicator of the spiritual fruitfulness or barrenness of our mind.

This Psalm, like many others, speaks of God's wondrous works in delivering His people from Egypt. Why is this theme repeated over and over—the blood, the frogs, the lice, and the firstborn slain?

Some feel they must pass quickly over these things. They are embarrassed and uncomfortable. They prefer to dwell only on God's love and mercy. Others glory and rejoice in these terrible judgments, with personal pleasure and vindictiveness.

Both views are wrong. We are told (Eze. 33:11)—"God hath no pleasure in the death of the wicked."

—nor should His servants. They should sorrow and grieve, like Christ over Jerusalem, though Jerusalem cruelly slew him. The judgments of God on wickedness are dwelt upon in the Psalms, and we meditate upon them, because—though sad—they are essential to the world's salvation—

"When Thy judgments are in the earth, THEN will the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness."

It is an undeniable desirable thing that the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness. Therefore His judgments that lead to that righteousness are desirable.

But He calls on US to learn from the recorded lessons of the past, and to learn the wisdom of righteousness

without the necessity of judgment.

The judgments on Egypt are a great type of the judgment of the world in the last day, when fleshly folly will be wiped out, and godly righteousness established.

We meditate upon these judgments upon Egypt, and take comfort from them—especially in this foolish, evil, violent day—because they show, not only that God can control all things, but that at the proper time He will control them. It seems today that vice and violence are expanding unrestrained, and things going rapidly from bad to worse throughout the earth.

But God is just as deeply interested, and just as closely in command, as He was when Egypt oppressed Israel, though He was silent until the appointed time arrived. There are no mistakes. Nothing goes beyond its appointed bounds. God is working His will in the Kingdom of Men as surely as He was in the terrible days of the Exodus from Egypt. That is why the Psalms say so much about that time.

God only rarely openly bares His arm. But those rare times are the key to all history.

Therefore His people talk often one to another of all His wondrous works. This is the central command of the nine. Let us be ever found so engaged.

We all can talk at endless length upon what interests us and fills our hearts—mostly things to do with ourselves. But how much of our talk is idle chatter, because our interests are so shallow!

6. "Glory in His Holy Name"

Three deep and wonderful things are combined: glory, holiness, and the Memorial Name of Yahweh.

What does it mean to "glory"? What are we here commanded to do? Is it more than rejoicing, for that is the next command. "Glory" as a noun means "supreme splendor or excellence." The highest, finest attribute or characteristic of anything is its glory—

"The glory of young men is their strength."

Of course, here more than physical strength is meant, for John says—

"I write unto you, young men, because ye are strong."

The young have strength and vigor to accomplish. The old have wisdom and experience to direct. These are their respective glories.

To "glory in His Holy Name" is to make it our highest aim, to "seek FIRST the Kingdom of God," to—

"Set our minds on things above, not on earthly things"

—to center and focus our lives upon attainment to an eternal part in that glorious Memorial Name of Yahweh, the manifestation of God's glory in a purified multitude.

"Glory ye IN His holy Name."

Shine forth that Name and purpose in all you do. Put off the Old Man of the flesh; put on the New Man of the Spirit.

7. "Rejoice Ye That Seek Him"

WHAT else could they do than rejoice, if they are truly seeking Him? What other possible frame of mind is there that fits the situation? Paul said (Rom. 5:3)—

"I rejoice in tribulation"

And James said (1:2)—"Count it all joy when ye meet various trials."

Why? God is thereby working out our glory. Jesus said—

"Rejoice and be exceeding glad."

—when you suffer in faithfulness. "Leap for joy" about it, he says (Matt. 5:12; Lk. 6:23).

"Leap for joy" because of suffering! What a strange thing to say! Why such strong and striking language? Clearly he is trying to impress us with something very important.

"Leap for joy" when you encounter tribulation. Not just bear it well. Not just be patient. Not just control yourself and see you are not provoked to retaliation and wrong doing.

These are all negative virtues. Jesus' approach is positive: rejoice, be thankful, welcome it, leap for joy, praise

God for your rigorous spiritual training and discipline that is lovingly preparing you for eternal glory.

Have we really comprehended the full picture of what our holy calling means, or are we still groping on the outer fringes of the glory of godliness? Let us ponder these marvelous things, and extract their transforming power, especially this strange command to "leap for joy" at tribulation.

8. "Seek God and His Strength"

"Seek and ye SHALL find," said Jesus. And through Jeremiah, God said (29:13)—

"Ye shall find Me when ye shall search for Me with ALL your heart."

"Seek His face forevermore," the Psalmist says. Clearly then the seeking is a perpetual activity.

Truly we have found much. We have been called out of darkness into His marvelous light. We have found the Way of Life.

But seeking the Lord is an endless duty and an endless pleasure—a constant striving for deeper understanding, greater comprehension, fuller discernment of God's great revelation of Himself and His Word.

And finally—

9. "REMEMBER!"

"Remember his marvellous works that he hath done: his wonders, and the judgments of his mouth."

His works: the marvels of Creation. His wonders: the specific manifestations and working out of His purpose. His judgments: that which He has recorded for our instruction, training, and guidance.

"Remember!" How often the Scriptures sound this warning note!

Some things we remember indelibly from childhood. Some things we forget the next day. How clear our memory often is for worldly things, while so forgetful in spiritual things!

Why? What is the answer? We reveal where our heart is by what we remember and what we forget. We remember worldly things best because our minds are on worldly things.

Let us face it and not make excuses, or blame it on "poor memory." We shall never cure it if we do not face it. Let us test our heart by this rule—

"Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

What are we fluent in—remembering all the details, and able to chatter on endlessly about? Is it the things of God, or our own passing, personal things? This 9th command says:

"Remember HIS marvellous works, HIS wonders, and the judgments of HIS mouth."

Fill the mind with God, and we shall gradually become like God. Fill the mind with the things of the flesh, and we shall be mere creatures of the flesh.

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