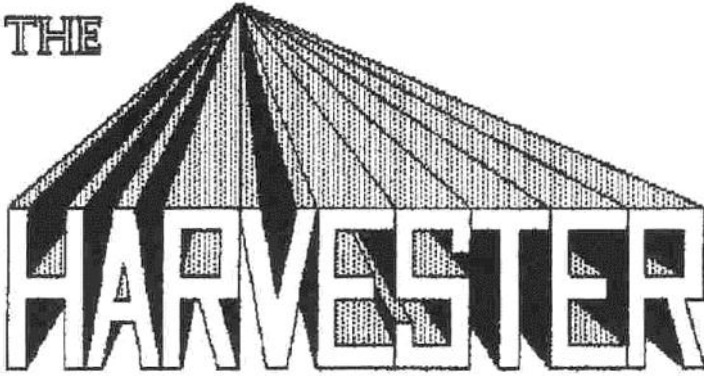


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"The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers into his harvest" (Luke 10:2)

February 2013

No. 326

THANKFUL?

The phrase "thankful Christian" makes about as much sense as saying "cold ice" or "wet water." While the latter two are so obvious and redundant that no one would bother to say them, what about the first one? Are you and the Christians you know so thankful that everyone who knows you believes that the two words go hand-in-hand? In America, despite our plenty, we tend to be given to worry, stress, envy, and sundry tempta-

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tions, such that happiness and thankfulness often appear to be lofty and unattainable goals.

"In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you" (1 Thes. 5:18). If it is the will of God, then we have to do it, right? Remember the word of Jesus? *"So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do"* (Luk. 17:10). If we have the mindset of simply keeping God's commandments, then are we any better than the Scribes and Pharisees?

Saying that something is the will of God is not another way of saying that it is a commandment. Something being the will of God means that is the way it is supposed to be. Christians being thankful is like grass being green, birds flying through the air, or the sky being blue. That is the way God made them and the way they are supposed to be.

In the first part of 1 Thessalonians 5:18, Paul said *"In every thing give thanks."* Not just when everything is going your way or when you feel like it. Even when problems and trials arise we still have much for which to be thankful. Even in times of despair faced by such men as Job or David, we can still lean on God as they did. And these men served God before He offered His Son. Now that we understand fully God's plan and we have the hope of salvation, how can we not be a thankful people?

In 2 Timothy 3:1-5 Paul speaks of "*perilous times*" (v.1) to come in which men's attitudes would become completely unholy and evil. Included in this list is being "*unthankful*" (v.2). Not being thankful for that given to us which we neither deserved nor earned, shows a complete lack of understanding and arrogance concerning one's own importance.

There are two basic mindsets possible for man. In the correct one, a man accepts that he is nothing more than a poor, wretched, sinful, and unworthy creature in the sight of an all-powerful and perfect Creator. This man is humble and is thankful regardless of his current situation in life. He realizes that God's mercy has given him peace and hope beyond anything he could earn for himself.

In the improper mindset, a man fails to truly acknowledge God's preeminence and his own feebleness. Anyone who denies God will automatically have this mindset but, strangely enough, even some Christians find themselves here too.

In Deuteronomy chapter 6, Moses gives the people God's admonitions about continuing to serve Him where they are comfortable and no longer struggling. In verses 10-11, He speaks of giving them cities and houses they did not build, wells they did not dig, and vineyards and olive trees they did not plant. He then gives the following warning: "*When thou shalt have eaten and be full; Then beware lest thou forget the Lord*" (v. 11-12).

Children who have few toys are thankful and tend to take better care of them. Children who get whatever they want tend to be thankful and have little regard for what they quickly cast aside or destroy. As adults we are no different.

How many of us live in houses we did not build with our own hands? How many of us eat from fields we did not plant? How many of us drive in cars we did not make, on roads we did not build? How many of us have been blessed to the point that it is often hard to remember to be thankful to the One who blessed us?

Materially, even people of moderate means in this nation have access to luxuries that powerful and wealthy kings of old could not have. The local supermarket holds a treasure-house of food that no amount of money could acquire just a few generations ago. But are we thankful and, if so, do we show it?

What type of conversations do we normally have with our coworkers, neighbors, and friends? What about with our spouses or our children? Whether the topic is politics, sports, or even the weather, what type of attitude do we express in conversation?

In political discussions, do we give thanks for the government and our leaders, or do we complain? What is there to be thankful for you might ask? Many in high political office appear to be self-serving and ideologically opposed to much that Christians feel to be important to our faith. What is there to be

thankful for? How many of us have been arrested for assembling? Had our property confiscated for trying to convert an unbeliever? Or many of the other things faced by the early Church? Paul instructs us to be thankful for ALL men in 1 Timothy 2:1-4:

I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.

What is our attitude when involved in a seemingly innocent discussion about the weather? Are we complaining that it is too hot or too cold? Too wet or too dry? In the past year, how many of us lost our homes in a tornado, hurricane, flood, or other natural disaster? How many of us could not feed our families because our crops failed?

We are often quick to complain about our health and physical discomforts. How comfortable was Jesus when He was hanging on the cross for OUR sins? And no matter how frail our physical body becomes, always remember this: "*But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us*" (Rom. 5:8). In so doing, He provided for us eternal bodies that will never know pain, sickness, or any type of discomfort.

Rather than giving in to our tendencies to complain, we need to do as Paul encouraged.

Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. (Php. 4:8)

These are all things to be thankful for. Meditating on these things will help us to be thankful people and appear so to others: the light that Jesus told us to let shine in Matthew 5:16. Will we better glorify God and attract others to Him through a light that exudes thankfulness and praise or one of worry and complaining? Remember that God's will is that we *"In every thing give thanks"* (1 Thes. 5:18).

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SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

1. The church at Laodicea was accused of being "luke-warm, and neither hot nor cold" therefore God would do what?
2. Where was Paul headed when he was involved in a shipwreck?
3. "Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these." To what was Jesus referring?

4. "It is better to dwell in a corner of a housetop than _____"
5. Why did God consume part of the outskirts of the Israelites' camp with fire?

and remember last month's questions?

1. Hebrews said that Jesus is a high priest according to the order of what early Old Testament priest? MELCHISEDEC (Hebrews 5:6)
2. During a famine, Isaac and Rebekah stayed in a place called Gerar. The Philistine King issued a decree that anyone who molested them would be put to death. Can you name this king? ABIMELECH (Genesis 26:11)
3. How did Agag, the King of the Amalekites who was defeated, die? HE WAS CUT INTO PIECES BY SAMUEL (1 Samuel 15:33)
4. How did Nehemiah plan to call the people in case of an attack? WITH A TRUMPET BLAST (Nehemiah 4:20)
5. What instruction was given by Paul regarding health? USE A LITTLE WINE FOR THY STOMACH'S SAKE AND THINE OFTEN INFIRMITIES. (1 Timothy 5:23)

SOME THINGS YOU WILL SEE AT THE JUDGMENT

The greatest crowd ever assembled -

“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ...” (2 Corinthians 5:10)

The greatest judge that ever sat in judgment -

“...a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me ...” (2 Timothy 4:8)

“...I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.” (Revelation 2:12)

The greatest judgment books that were ever opened -

“... and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life...” (Revelation 20:12)

The most precise judgment ever made -

“... every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.” (Matthew 12:36)

“...the word of God is ... discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” (Hebrews 4:12)

The greatest separation ever known -

“And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.” (Matthew 25:33)

“And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.” (Matthew 25:46)

Copied from a monthly handout by BILL PRINCE, JR.

THE HARVESTER is a monthly publication intended to encourage all men everywhere to become laborers into God's harvest (Luke 10:2). This paper is mailed free of charge to anyone who wishes to receive it. Please submit name, address, address changes and all correspondence to:

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