

“And Be Ye Thankful!”

by Bill Crews

The heading of this article is taken from the closing words of Colossians 3:15; it is an appropriate exhortation for every accountable individual. Gratitude is required of every person; ingratitude is deplorable and inexcusable. And why should we be thankful? Because God has given to each of us “*life, and breath, and all things*” and because “*in him we live, and move, and have our being*” (Acts 17:24-25, 28). To put it another way, “*And yet he left not himself without witness, in that he did good and gave you from heaven rains and fruitful seasons, filling your hearts with food and gladness*” (Acts 14:17). In both of these passages the apostle Paul was addressing pagans (at Athens and at Lystra). As Christians we have far more reasons than these to be thankful.

A failure on man’s part to be thankful is sin. This is one of the sins charged against the pagan Gentiles in Romans 1:21 (“*they glorified him not as God, neither gave thanks*”). This is one of the sins to be expected among men in the last days (“*lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, haughty, railers, disobedient to parents, **unthankful**, unholy*” — 2 Timothy 3:2). Being unthankful goes hand in hand with being selfish and arrogant. Gratitude must be taught and learned; we are not born with it. We must **be** thankful, **express** our thanks, and **demonstrate** that we are thankful **TO GOD**. From the cradle to the grave, as long as we have our minds about us we should be thankful to God. We should also be thankful to other human beings to whom we are indebted.

Many of the Psalms bring out the importance of and the need for being thankful to God. “*That I may make the voice of thanksgiving to be heard, and tell of thy wondrous works*” (David in Psalm 26:7). The 50th Psalm is attributed to Asaph. Read verses 7-15; the reader is called upon to be mindful of the sovereignty of God, to be grateful for his blessings, to realize that God owns everything, to offer unto God the sacrifice of thanksgiving. “*I will praise the name of God with a song, and will magnify him with thanksgiving*” (David in Psalm 69:30). “*Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving*” (Psalm 95:2). “*And let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving, and declare his works with singing*” (Psalm 107:22). Read Psalm 100; verse 4 says: “*Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: give thanks unto him, and bless his name.*”

Among the sacrifices offered by the Israelites under the law of Moses were voluntary sacrifices of animals — part of which the worshipers ate in feasts that were called “*peace-offerings*” and “*thank-offerings*,” the latter of which were designed to help them to be thankful to God for their blessings and to express their thanks unto Him. See Psalm 50:14; 107:22; 116:17; Amos 4:5; and Leviticus 7:11-13. In Nehemiah 12 certain Israelites were by Nehemiah divided into two great companies that marched along the new wall that had been built around Jerusalem at the dedication of that wall; as they marched they gave thanks unto God.

In the New Testament a number of examples are commended for the benefit of the reader. Christ is never depicted as partaking of food (which at times He provided for others — the feeding of the 5,000; the feeding of the 4,000; and the feeding of the seven disciples) without giving thanks unto the Father for it. It is usually expressed as “*blessed*” (cf. our “*say the blessing*”), and “*blessed*” and “*gave thanks*” are used interchangeably. Notice that in Matthew 26:26 Jesus “*took bread, and blessed, and brake it,*” but in Matthew 26:27 He “*took a cup, and gave thanks.*” (“Eulogy” and “eucharist” are English words taken from the Greek words.) We are to give thanks for our food also (1 Timothy 4:3-5).

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