

International FOCUS Ministries

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“Praise is awaiting You, O God in Zion”—Psalm 65: 1

True thanksgiving is the grace of gratitude and should be expressed as naturally and daily in our lives as a bird automatically tips up its head and chirps a song to its Creator. True thanksgiving is an attitude and posture of the heart while the poise of praise is an act of our will. David said, *“I WILL bless the Lord at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth.”* (Psalm 34:1) Please note continual praise was something David willed to do regardless of the circumstances he faced. Paul had this in mind when he penned the words, *“in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.”* (1Thessalonians 5:18) Paul didn't say, ‘For’ everything, but rather ‘in’ everything give thanks. It takes grace to do this!

The Grace of Gratitude

This marvelous grace of gratitude was well demonstrated by Paul and his companion Silas when they had been terribly beaten and thrust into prison at Philippi. They didn't show resentment for the treatment they received, nor did they resign to it, but rather they sang songs of praise at the mid-night hour! Such an attitude of praise and thanksgiving convicted the Philippian jailor and resulted in his salvation and the salvation of his household. (See Acts 16)

Psalm 65 is a beautiful illustration of this grace of gratitude. This Psalm is a “prayer without a petition”. It is full of praise and gratitude but no request.

The story is told of an Army Chaplain who was called to see a dying Christian soldier. The Chaplain asked the young man if there was a message he wished conveyed to his loved ones. After receiving this, he was asked to pray. The Chaplain then asked if there were any special requests that he should make in his prayer. The dying man replied: “Chaplain, thank God for a praying mother, thank Him that he has saved me, thank Him for His promises and thank Him that He gives me dying grace at this moment.” So the Chaplain knelt and prayed with never a request to offer, only thanks to God for His mercy and grace. **This is the grace of gratitude!**

Let me share another story from antiquity that bears relevance with our contemporary society. Two angels were sent out from heaven, so the story goes, each with a basket to bring back the prayers and thanksgivings of those on earth. The angel of Thanksgiving started out with a large basket, while the Collector of Petitions only had a small one. But when they returned, the petitions overflowed the basket

and filled a sack besides, while the Angel of Thanksgiving only had three in his large basket. Too often this is true of us as we are always ready to pray for the things we want, but having received them, we forget to thank and praise the Giver.

Oh, how God must be pained with our lack of praise and thanksgiving! Paul reminds us that one of the many signs that will be characteristic of the 'last days' is the prevailing attitude of ingratitude. He says, *"But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, UNTHANKFUL, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!"* (1 Timothy 3:1-5) NKJV (emphasis mine)

Although we may not be guilty of all these characterizations, to simply live an unthankful life places us in pretty bad company. I am concerned with the growing evidence of unthankfulness I see in the daily market place. Such kind courtesies as "thank you", "you are welcome", "excuse me, please", etc. etc., are rapidly disappearing. While this is unfortunate to see in the world, it is totally unacceptable behavior among Christians.

When we neglect being thankful, selfishness makes a deep inroad into our lives resulting in proud, arrogant, and selfish living. This manner of attitude is an offence toward God, and the beginning of a downward spiral to destruction.

Soon we will be given the privilege to observe another National Day of Thanksgiving. To make it MORE meaningful than another day of unusual feasting, T.V. football, etc., let me urge you to give serious thought to all the blessings and liberties we have enjoyed this past year. The exhortation in Psalm 103 is, *"Forget not all his benefits."* The benefits of God loom large upon the horizon in 2004. The first and foremost is this great salvation that He offers to sinful men through His Son, Jesus

Christ, and the privilege and opportunity we have to share it with all of the peoples of the world.

Donna and I are so grateful to God for you, our many friends and partners, who mean so very much to us and this missions ministry. Your faithful prayers and partnership support have been a vital 'life-line' to us as we continue supporting over 100 missionaries/national ministers, many crusade outreaches, leadership training, Bibles schools, children's homes, elementary schools, planting new churches, equipping workers, etc. etc.

WE THANK GOD FOR YOU and we pray that you and your family will have a blessed thanksgiving season and that you will *"prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers."* (3rd John v.2)

FROM THE FIELD

Progress continues to be made on the construction of the new four-story unit at our Malabar Theological College in India. We urgently need \$4,000 to complete the construction and another \$3,000 for the furnishings, equipment, etc for four floors consisting of a kitchen, dining hall, classrooms, library floor, guest apartments, and offices.

For all who will write and send the best gift possible to help me with this need, I will send you a copy of the late Rev. Jack Stewart's book, *"The Legalist."* Brother Stewart was a long time personal friend and has made an invaluable contribution to the Body of Christ through this book. Just ask for the book when you write. Until next time,

Your partners in harvest,

Harley and Donna Fiddler



Partners in Harvest