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The Forgotten Commandment
"And Be Ye Thankful"

BY THE LATE: C. D. COLE

"And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful" (Col. 3:15).

If you were to ask some people how many commandments there are, they would promptly reply that there are ten, and would refer you to the decalogue in the 20th chapter of Exodus. Others would reply that there are eleven commandments, and call your attention to the words of Christ when He said, "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another" (John 13:34). But I call your attention to still another commandment which says, "Be ye thankful." This is, perhaps, the most disregarded and ignored of all the commandments. It is said of the heathen in Romans 1:21, "That when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful, but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened."

The first thanksgiving service, of which we have any record, was at the laying of creation's corner stone, when the morning stars sang together and the sons of God shouted for joy (Job 38:7). Another notable day of thanksgiving was when Israel had crossed the Red Sea, leaving their enemies in its depths. Standing there on the shores of sweet deliverance, they sang as one man: "The Lord is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation: he is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt him" (Exodus 15:2).

The observance of Thanksgiving Day in America had its beginning with the Pilgrims who came from England on the Mayflower in the winter of 1620. Of the 102 persons in the party, about half of them were dead by the close of the winter. But the following year, they were more prosperous. After a bountiful harvest had been reaped, they observed three days of thanksgiving. Following the first Thanksgiving at Plymouth the custom spread to other colonies. During the Revolutionary War, eight special days of Thanksgiving were observed after signal victories on the field of battle. In 1789, President Washington issued a general Thanksgiving Day proclamation. Some of the other presidents followed the example of Washington, but there was no regular day for Thanksgiving until 1864 when President Lincoln, at the close of the Civil War, appointed the last Thursday of November as Thanksgiving Day. From that time, the same day has been formally set apart as Thanksgiving Day.

1. Thankfulness should be a habit. "Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Eph. 5:20). "In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you" (I Thess. 5:18). "By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name" (Heb. 13:15). "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God" (Phil. 4:6).

It is not enough to be thankful one day of the year. He who saves his thanksgiving for the last Thursday in November does not have a thankful

spirit. We are perpetually indebted to God, from Whom all blessings flow, and thanksgiving should be continually given.

2. Thankfulness is a spirit born of the grace of God. Nobody but a child of God can have such a spirit. Others may think they are thankful when they are enjoying prosperity in material things, but let the wind of providence begin to blow contrary to their wishes, and they begin to fret and fume and complain.

The spirit of thankfulness was exemplified in the life of our Lord. We find Him thanking God under the strangest circumstances. In the very shadow of the cross, He instituted the Lord's Supper, giving thanks for the cup and saying, "This is my blood of the new covenant which is shed for many for the remission of sins." On another occasion, we see Him thanking God for His distinguishing grace, saying: "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight" (Matt. 11:25,26).

One of the greatest of the early Christian preachers was Chrysostom. His motto was "Glory to God for all things." In every thing he gave thanks and praised God. It might seem easy for him to say, "Glory to God for all things," when he was growing up in Antioch, petted and pampered by his widowed mother, with ample means, and the best instructors of his day. It would seem easy for him to say, "Glory to God for all things," when he was a famous preacher in Antioch and afterwards in Constantinople, as thousands crowded the churches to hear him. But Chrysostom continued to praise God when the court at Constantinople turned against him, when the wicked empress became his bitter enemy and banished him from her realm. When his friends would go to far off Armenia, and visit him in exile, he would say to them, "Glory to God for all things." And when he was banished to more distant regions, out of reach of his brethren, his letters were apt to end with his motto, "Glory to God for all things." And when the cruel soldiers were dragging him through winter snows; utterly worn out, he begged to be taken to a little wayside chapel that he might die. His last words, as he lay there on the cold stone floor, were "Glory to God for all things." Such a spirit is not native to the human heart and carnal mind, but it is born of the grace of God, and is a fruit of the Holy Spirit.

We also see the spirit of thankfulness exemplified in the life of the Apostle Paul. He was a great sufferer, but he was also great in the spirit of thankfulness. He could praise God in the darkest hours. His prison letter to the Philippians was an epistle of joy. He was not only happy in the Lord himself, but he wanted others to "rejoice in the Lord always." Paul had a spirit of thankfulness that could not be chilled by the wintry blasts of adversity. He had learned to be content in all circumstances.

A thankful spirit is the nightingale of the soul. Its voice can be heard in night's sorrow, saying, "The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." In the midst of trying circumstances, when the Lord's judgments are unsearchable and His ways past finding out, the thankful heart can be heard to say: "Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight."

The story is told of a man who had some terrible skin disease, like exzema, going to a magician for advice about a remedy. He described his feelings and told of his inability to sleep. He was told to go in search of a happy man, secure his shirt and wear it. He was assured this would effect a cure. So he set out to find a happy man, and after much searching, he found his man, but he was without a shirt. This fable illustrates the truth that happiness is not in possessions.

3. Thankfulness can be cultivated. Every one of us can become more thankful than we are. And we are commanded to be thankful. We can cultivate a thankful spirit by being more thoughtful. A young man, without noticing his pronunciation, used to pray for the Lord to make His people more "thinkful". His teacher was reluctant to correct him, because he realized if we were "thinkful" we would be "thankful". We must treasure certain facts in our memory.

REMEMBER THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD

Things do not happen by chance or by fate, but they come to pass according to the will of God. Webster defines an accident as an undesigned, sudden, and unexpected event. We can properly speak of accidents from our point of view, but with God, nothing comes to pass "undesigned, sudden, or unexpected". His positive will brings good things to pass, and when evil comes, it is by His permissive will. But nothing comes to pass independent of God, not even the falling of a sparrow. God has His plans and purposes and they cannot be overthrown. He is supreme and worketh all things after the counsel of His own will (Eph. 1:11). This is why He is to be thanked for all things. This is why He could say that all things work together for good to them that love Him and are called according to His purpose. If things happen by chance, or fate, or impersonal fixed law, then we have no personal Being to thank for all things. To be sure, providence is mysterious to us. We cannot understand His ways, but we can trust His wisdom, enjoy His love, and rejoice in His power.

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REMEMBER THAT GOD IS YOUR FATHER

This comfort is for believers only. None other are His children. As our Father, God is interested in us. He gave His Son as an expression of His love, and having given us His Son, He will freely give us all things we need. And our Father is able to control all things in the interest of His children. Earthly fathers cannot control earthly things for the good of their children. But our heavenly Father is supreme in all places, and is in all things for His children's good.

REMEMBER TO PRAY

"Pray without ceasing." Hold communion with God. There are two sources from which human gladness may come; the one is circumstances of a pleasant and gladdening nature, the other is communion with God. It is like some river that is composed of two tributaries, one of which rises away up in the mountains, and is fed by the eternal snows; the other springs on the plain, and is but the drainage of the surface water. When hot weather comes, and drought covers the land, the one tributary is dried up. But this does not cause the river to go dry. The heat that dried the surface stream has only loosened the treasures of the snows on the mountain peak and poured water more abundantly into that stream that fed the river. The stream of circumstances that pours joy and gladness into our hearts is fed from the surface waters of earth and often goes dry. We cannot always thank God for national peace, for war may come and our country may be bathed in blood. We cannot always thank God for material prosperity, for frost and wind and rain may destroy our crops. We cannot always thank God for a happy home, because death or other things far worse may come. But he who holds communion with God can thank Him for what does come. There are streams of mercy that never run dry.

TEACH US

Said the sparrow to robin: I would
Really like to know
Why these anxious human beings run
Around and worry so.
Said the robin to sparrow:
Well, I guess that it must be
That they have no Heavenly Father
Such as cares for you and me.

Jesus Outshines Them All!

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