

Thanks Be To God!

by Eric E. Jordan in "Herald of Holiness"

Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift (II Corinthians 9:15).

Paul's writings personify gratefulness. Thirty-four times he gives thanks or encourages others to be grateful. I learn from Paul some of the things for which I should be thankful.

Paul was ever grateful for the reality of personal salvation. It was difficult for him to understand how God could "enable," that is, trust him with the glorious gospel. He marveled that he had "obtained mercy"; that God had saved him, the "chief" of sinners (I Timothy 1:11-17). He realized that in his case grace had been "exceeding abundant."

This gratefulness for salvation led to appreciation that others were included in God's plan. He thanked God for the "faith" of the believers at Rome. When he saw some of them, he thanked God and took courage (Acts 28:15). He thanked God for the "grace" that was given the Corinthians. He never ceased to give thanks for the "faith and love" of the Ephesians. The Colossians had "faith" and "love" and "hope"; they "knew the grace of God in truth"; had with him been made "partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." Hence, he gave "thanks unto the Father" for them. He urged all to whom he wrote to follow his practice, "Be thankful."

Divine providence was among the things for which Paul thanked God. In the midst of a shipwreck, Paul and his companions in voyage gathered to eat bread and meat. God had appeared to him and said, "Be of good cheer: for there shall be no loss of any man's life among you, . . ." (Acts 27:21-36). Paul was grateful for this and many other divine providences in his life.

Paul was grateful for the assurance of victory in his conflicts with Satan. "Now thanks be unto God," he declared, "which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place" (II Corinthians 2:14). Satan had tried to "get an advantage" of Paul, but he says, "A door was opened unto me of the Lord." It looked like Satan would defeat him, but God always caused him to gain the upper hand.

Paul was a realist when it came to the problem of sin. By sin, death had entered the world. "The sting of death" was sin. But Christ had died for sin; hence Paul had no fear of the future. He was thankful for the final victory he knew would be his at death. "Thanks be to God," he wrote to the Corinthians, "which giveth us the victory" (over the presence and hence power of sin) "through our Lord Jesus Christ" (I Corinthians 15:57). "O death, where is thy sting?" (v. 55) Before he died, he could thank God for the victory he would feel in his soul when death placed its chilly hand upon him.

Underneath these areas of gratefulness was appreciation for the One who made gratitude possible. Second Corinthians 9:15 tells us the source, "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift"—an obvious reference to Christ. Because of this supreme Gift, Paul found release from his sin—salvation became a reality in his life. Likewise he saw its reality in the lives of others. It was "the Lord" who stood by him in his providences. It was "through Christ" he lost the fear of death. Paul had met and received God's greatest Gift. That relationship resulted in a life of thanksgiving.

I want to join Paul this Thanksgiving season. I too am grateful for the fact of salvation from sin and the privilege of being His minister to others. I am grateful to God that He has saved others; now I have fellowship in the gospel. I thank God that to this day He has caused me to triumph over Satan. I thank God for His daily

providences. He has surely watched over me in my journeys oft. I thank God that the "sting of death" has been cleansed. There is no fear of entering His presence.

"Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift." Christ is the Source of all my thanksgiving.

I THANK GOD FOR HIS PROMISES

This Thanksgiving season I want to thank God for His promises. For a number of years I traveled as an evangelist—not as my choice, but as God's choice. During that time my wife acted as both mother and father to our family, but no parent can be both mother and father. As a result one of my boys drifted away from me and out into sin.

Many a night the devil stood by me and said, "If you were not away trying to get other people's children to God, and were home looking after your own, your boy would still be in the church." His reasoning was logical, but I stood on God's promise and was faithful in prayer.

One night I was holding a meeting down in one of our southern states, when a small, dark, curly-haired boy stepped out and knelt at the altar. I knelt down beside him because he was the same age as my boy. I laid my hand on his head and prayed, "Dear God, save this little boy and use him." The Lord saved him that night.

Nine years later two boys entered one of our colleges. One was a tall boy with dark, curly hair; he maintained a fine Christian experience. The other was a tall, talented, well-built boy who had lost his faith in God; he was my boy. Late one night, during the college revival, this tall, dark, curly-headed boy went up to my son's room and talked to him about Christ and led him to the Saviour. He was the same boy I had laid my hands on and prayed with nine years before. God is true to His promise.

—By a Father

THE FIRST THANKSGIVING

(Continued from Page One)

The Pilgrims issued a formal invitation to Massasoit, grand sachem of the Pokanoket Indians, to join them in a feast of Thanksgiving. Massasoit arrived with 90 of his followers and stayed for three days! There was a great round of entertainment and feasting.

As with all Thanksgiving Days since that first celebration at Plymouth, it was an occasion that combined gaiety with solemnity. The devout Pilgrims added prayers of thanks to their feasting.

The days of suffering, however, were not over yet. Famine was to come to Plymouth again in succeeding winters. But for the Pilgrims, once they had set foot on Plymouth Rock there was no thought of turning back. They came to build a society of free men in the inhospitable wilderness and this they were determined to do.

In later years, Governor Bradford wrote in his famous *History of Plymouth Plantation*: "Out of small beginnings greater things have been produced. As one small candle may light a thousand, so the light here kindled hath shone onto many."

He, of course, could not know that the light he helped to kindle would one day shine throughout the earth.

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ENTERING EVANGELISTIC WORK

Rev. Stafford Hutchinson, former pastor of our Church at Norton, N. B., is open for calls to evangelistic work. We recommend him to our churches. His address is Havelock, N. B.