

Truth and Spirit Ministries

Having An Attitude of Gratitude

By Denise Bostic

Thanksgiving is a special day that has been set-aside in our beloved nation of America to honor the Almighty and express our thankfulness to him for all of the bounty and blessings that he has bestowed upon us throughout the year. As I was praying to the Lord this morning, a wave of thankfulness welled up in me and poured out to him. Afterward I felt especially inspired to read about what the Holy Scriptures teach us about being thankful to the Lord. It was not as though I had not studied this subject before because I had however I felt that the Holy Spirit was leading me to look at these scriptures in a fresh, new light.

All of us can go through times in our lives when we may feel that we don't have much to be thankful for and I am no exception. Most recent personal experiences have taught me that it's much easier for us to be thankful and joyful when everything is going good and smooth in our lives but when we are undergoing a season of severe trials and tests it becomes much more difficult for us to have an "attitude of gratitude" towards God. It often seems easier to gripe and complain about what is going wrong rather than being thankful to God *for what is going right*. The problem with this attitude though is that it pulls us down spiritually and weakens our faith in God. It brings us into bondage once again to our sinful nature that we should be counting ourselves dead to. It causes us to think carnally rather than have the faith and mind of Christ as God intends for us to. (Romans 6:1-14, Romans 8:1-15, I Corinthians 2:16)

Most often the reason behind this is due to the fact that we simply lack understanding as to the reasons why we must endure such hardships or the purpose behind them. We don't see the value that's contained within them or what it is that we are supposed to be learning. God, in his wisdom and faithfulness though, knows and sees what we do not and takes the time to patiently teach us and work all things out for the good in our lives. (I John 2:27, Romans 8:28) If we truly believe God and his Word, we will also believe this comforting and powerful truth. While we may be asking "why me Lord" (?), he is quietly behind the scenes working out a much greater purpose in spite of our present troubles.

It is wisdom for us to seek the Lord about not only how we are to handle trials, but also what we can learn from them. In times of life's stormy seas we can find comfort, understanding and yes – even thankfulness to God when we read his divine word, pray and simply trust that he is guiding us through his Spirit. (Colossians 2:6; 3:15; 4:2; John 16:13) His word gives us wisdom, direction and help in a way that is applicable to all of his children in general conditions but we can also have very *specific* help that is much more indicative of our personal relationship with God through the indwelling of his Spirit.

The Lord Jesus Christ spoke concerning the divine work of the Holy Spirit in the personal lives of his followers before he went to the Cross. He said:

“But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor, will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you... But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth...” (John 16:7, 13)

The Holy Spirit is our personal helper that comforts, counsels and guides us into all truth. We can trust that God will faithfully give us help through the Spirit when we most need it. Although we need the Holy Spirit’s help all the time, most believers can testify that help is most needed during times of severe trials or hardships. He will impart the strength and the understanding of what we need to know in the proper timing and then release that information to us. This is good news! Even if we feel that we lack spiritual strength or the understanding to see things as clearly as we should, we can trust that God will give us his might and wisdom to carry us *through* our present trials and hardships and bring us into victory. He is always faithful and will grant us understanding when we are best able to receive it. The Apostle Paul explained about the ministry of the Spirit in the personal lives of believers. He wrote:

“No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him – but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God... We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us. (I Corinthians 2:9-12)

When we are going through trials, tests or just need direction or answers, we always need help beyond ourselves. God has given us that help by sending us the gift of the Holy Spirit and he wants us to depend and rely on him. He will go to work to search through every good thing that God has already made available for us to receive through Christ. (Colossians 2:3) Just think how much God loves and cares for us! He has already anticipated *in advance* every need that we would ever have and there’s nothing that he can’t handle. The Holy Spirit simply takes what is of God and releases these things to us. He will go into the limitless depths of the things of God to find and reveal to us exactly what we need in any given situation or season of our lives. How great is that?

When we take our questions to God, we can rest assured that he will give us answers because it is his will for us to have them. The trials, hardships and tests that we endure are meant to serve many purposes in our lives and can benefit our overall learning process, character development and maturity in Christ. Trials and afflictions can provide us much needed correction, teach us obedience and bring discipline. God’s discipline in turn brings us a harvest of righteousness and peace. Should we be suffering affliction for the sake of Christ, we can also rejoice because we are participating in his suffering and this brings much glory to God. (James 1:2-4, Hebrews 12:7-11, II Corinthians 8:1-2, Hebrews 5:8, 10:32-36, I Peter 4:12-14)

Being a follower of Christ for many years, I can testify that there is great value in the trials, tests and hardships that we must endure as soldiers of Christ. (II Timothy 2:3) So many times in years past as I was going through various trials and tests I have sought God and

asked him what he wanted me to learn from them. Did I do this right away? Sometimes. Other times however I struggled to make it through on my own power or might. The Lord, in his love and faithfulness however, always gently reminds me that he is waiting for me to cast all my cares upon him because he truly does care for me. (1 Peter 5:7) He cares for all of his children and wants to take care of us. Throughout the years I have learned that in all things it is wisdom to seek the Lord first.

If we neglect to turn to him during times of hardship or seek his face, we will only find ourselves struggling to make it through on our own power or human might and failing to overcome as we should. God *wants* us to rely on his strength and power so that we may be assured of the victory that has already been given to us through Christ. This Thanksgiving we should all take the time to thank God for his love, generosity and kindness that he has so freely given to us by his grace. Whether we are going through good times or bad he is always deserving of our thankfulness because he is always faithful to keep his promises to us. No matter what we go through, he has promised that he will never leave us or forsake us. (Hebrews 13:5) When we have an attitude of gratitude we are showing him that we really do believe that.