

SPIRITICITY November 1954

THANKSGIVING

By Alden Truesdell

The race is reluctant to acknowledge good. This has been conceded through the ages and published in all records of history and literature. The Psalmist cried, "Oh that men would praise the Lord for His goodness!" God said to Jeremiah, "They have turned their back unto me, and not their face: but in the time of their trouble they will say, Arise, and save us." David insisted that the Levites should "stand every morning to thank and praise the Lord, and likewise at even." Jesus emphasized the practice of praise when He taught us to say, "Hallowed be Thy name." And Paul added, "With thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God."

Fundamental principles are involved in the encouragement of the attitude of gratitude. Healing energies are invoked by the practice of giving thanks. Gratitude is a mark of superiority, which is practiced by the wise for the benefits attained and for the joy of giving thanks. Giving thanks to Nothing for everything is the practice that brings forth fruits of the Spirit and causes the earth to yield her increase.

Jesus said, "Father, I thank Thee that Thou hast heard Me." And He called Lazarus forth from the grave. He took five loaves of bread, and "when He had given thanks, He distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down." And five thousand men were fed. How powerful must be the practice of thanksgiving if a simple "Thank you" can expose such hidden abundance and restore life itself! Because Jesus knew Him in whom others believe, because He knew as all-providing and all-powerful Father Him whom others worship ignorantly, He knew what He had to be thankful for. He knew that God is everything anyone has ever claimed Him to be - and more.

All the old alibis must be relinquished. We may no longer say, "We are only human." We must say, "We are little less than divine, little lower than the angels. We are the sons of God, created in His Image and Likeness." We must say, "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God; and if children, then heirs; heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ."

It is not required that one pray as the pharisee and say, "I thank thee, that I am not as other men are." It is profitable to give thanks that we are all better than we know; that the race itself, with all its perversity and reluctance, is better than it will let itself admit.

If the giving of thanks is known to be profitable, how about celebrating Thanksgiving by actually cultivating gratitude as a practical, usable commodity at this time? How about giving heartfelt thanks for obvious benefits we have enjoyed as individuals and as a group? Each one has his individual blessings for which he is grateful and may make his own list to count his own blessings. There are also the more general benefits affecting the group as a whole. If we were to make up a list of these general blessings, God would head the list, as God is first in all things. Our concepts of God have changed many times from the rather vague Something of our first timid attentiveness in His direction. We may look back to these first findings to realize the distance we have come and find memory itself to be a blessing, as it shows the progress we have made.

Going back in memory to the low tide of our lives, when we were so distraught that we had nothing to turn to but God, we can better appreciate having a God to whom we can turn. What if there were no God?

We do not go far toward God before we begin to value the service given to the race by Jesus Christ. We might then give thanks to God, the Giver of all good and perfect gifts, for Christ, His greatest gift - as it is written: "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

For God, our Heavenly Father, we give thanks.

For Jesus the Redeemer, we are thankful.

For Christ in us, our "hope of glory"; for the Holy Spirit which teaches us all things, we are grateful.

For that eternal life of which we become aware because we are God-taught, we could not give adequate thanks.

For the strength to endure "as seeing Him who is invisible," we rejoice in our hearts.

For the integrity to stand fast, we thank God.

For protection as a race and as individuals, we give thanks.

For the understanding of God's Presence; for love, without which no other quality is adequate; for that joy of the Lord which is strength; for "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding"; and for all other fruit of the Spirit, we are grateful.

We are told to do all things "heartily, as to the Lord"; and surely this applies to the giving of thanks to God for seen and as yet unseen blessings. We press on with perfection as our goal and with a great appreciation of each development and unfoldment.

"Thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ."

"Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift."

oo0oo

SPIRITICITY November 1954

PAUL'S LETTER TO THE PHILIPPIANS

By Robert Applegate

In his Letter to the Colossians, which we considered last month, Paul wrote of "Christ in you," explaining how in this indwelling Christ is contained all that man is seeking. "For in Him dwells the whole fullness of Deity bodily, and you have come to fullness of life in Him."

In his Letter to the Philippians, which was written about the same time as Colossians, Paul reveals much of his own personal relation to Christ. And,

since it is true that one example is worth a thousand words, we can learn a great deal by listening to what Paul tells of his own experiences.

This Letter to the Philippians is unique among Paul's letters in two ways. It is unique, first, in the nature of its recipients. The Christian community at Philippi was founded by Paul when he first crossed from Asia Minor to Europe. It was the first Christian congregation on European soil. More important, of all the churches that Paul founded and ministered to, only this one at Philippi made any return for his services. This is remarkable. Paul never asked for financial assistance; but it would have been a small return for any one of the churches that he served to have given him a gift to help him carry on his work. Only the Philippians did. They did so repeatedly, and they went to considerable trouble to do so. As soon as Paul had left Philippi, they sent him a gift of money, not once but twice. Again, when he was in Corinth, they sent him an offering. How often they did this, we do not know. However we do know that they continued the practice; for the occasion of our Letter to the Philippians was the arrival in Rome of a messenger from Philippi with a gift of money for Paul.

In those days, the making of an offering was not simply a matter of slipping a check into an envelope. Someone had to carry the gift to its destination. The trip was certain to be long, tedious, and expensive; and often it proved to be dangerous as well. It was so in this instance; for Paul writes of Epaphroditus, who was the messenger from Philippi and who carried his letter on the return voyage: "Receive him in the Lord with all joy; and honor such men, for he nearly died for the work of Christ, risking his life to complete your service to me."

The Letter to the Philippians is unique, then, in that it was sent to a community that valued the priceless instruction that Paul had given, and responded generously. It is unique also in that it was not written primarily to give instruction (although Paul can never refrain from doing so), to settle disputes, to correct errors, or to arrange a visit, but simply to express thanks. It is a thank-you letter, written by Paul from his prison in Rome to his loyal and appreciative students, who had once more proved their generosity and their concern for their teacher. The letter, accordingly, is one of joy; and it is also one in which Paul gives expression to his own inner feelings and aspirations.

We know little of the latter years of Paul's life. We do know, however, that in the year A.D. 60 he was taken as a prisoner to Rome. While awaiting trial, he was permitted to stay in a rented house, but was bound by a chain and continuously guarded by a soldier. The account of his activities in Acts ends with the words: "He lived there two whole years at his own expense, and welcomed all who came to him, preaching the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ quite openly and unhindered."

Any further information has to be got from the letters that were written from his imprisonment and particularly from Philippians. From what he says in this letter, we can see that he remained active, even though he was bound and confined to his house. He had always attracted young men, and many came to Rome from distant parts of the Empire to consult with him and even to stay with him. Mark, Luke, Timothy, Epaphras, and many others were with him at one time or another. They came to him for instruction, for encouragement, or simply because they were irresistibly drawn to him. In turn, he sent them out with his letters to the various churches and on other missions.

The Christian leaders of Rome also came to Paul, to whom they naturally looked for guidance. He testifies: "Most of the brethren have been made confident in the Lord because of my imprisonment, and are much more bold to speak the word of God without fear, . . . Christ is proclaimed; and in that I rejoice." Even the soldiers who guarded him caught the contagion of his faith, and many were converted to his way of life. For he writes: "I want you to know that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel, so that it has become known throughout the whole praetorian guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ."

Thus Paul's house, in which he was a prisoner, was the center of Christian activity throughout the Roman Empire. What was it that gave Paul this power? Why did all look to him for guidance? How was he, who externally seemed a failure, able to guide, comfort, encourage, and inspire all who came to him? He reveals the answer in his letters and especially in his letter to Philippi. Paul had such tremendous power because he did not seek it, but rather sought Christ. His life is a living testimony to the validity of the promise: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God; . . . and all these things shall be added unto you." The Kingdom of God is the awareness of Christ in you. To seeking this awareness, to preaching it to all who would listen, Paul had given his life. He had lost his life in Christ, and in losing it, he had found it. Listen to what he says of Christ;

"For me to live is Christ. . . .

"Whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For His sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as refuse, in order that I may gain Christ. . . .

"One thing I do, forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Let those of us who are mature be thus minded. . . .

"I can do all things in Him who strengthens me."

It was Paul's devotion to Christ that gave him the power that he had. It was this that enabled him to write living words, to found church after church, to harmonize all factions, to settle disputes, to draw all men to himself, and to fill them with courage and faith.

It was Paul's knowing of Christ - the result of thirty years of devotion - that enabled him to say with conviction: "The peace of God, which passes all understanding will keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." He knew this peace.

It was Paul's own experience that enabled him to say: "My God will supply every need of yours according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus." It should be noted, however, that he made this statement to those who valued the teaching of Christ highly enough to go to some pains to make a return for it. For such the promise is automatically fulfilled.

Paul's words with respect to the offering from Philippi are worth repeating; for they reveal well his attitude, and the attitude of every true Christian minister, in respect to such matters:

"Not that I seek the gift; but I seek the fruit which increases to your credit. I have received full payment, and more; I am filled, having received . . . the gifts you sent, a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God. . . . To our God and Father be glory for ever and ever."

For these Philippians, for whom Paul so reveals his love, he has only gentle exhortation, which is appropriate for all who value the Truth of Christ:

"Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ.

"Do all things without grumbling or questioning, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life.

"Rejoice in the Lord."

oo0oo

SPIRITICITY November 1954

A GIFT OF LOVE

By Nell Truesdell

From the day of our call into ministry in Truth, we gave up all means of worldly support. We went apart for more than a year from friends and relatives and studied the Principle of Truth that was revealed to us by Jesus Christ. After we used up our supply of money, we were forced to rely on God for support; and, because we did, we proved that He will provide for anybody who trusts Him.

When God gives to man, the gift is sure to fit the need of the hour. How does God give to man? He gives in countless ways, in ways that cannot be anticipated nor imagined. Let me illustrate this point with a true story.

Many, many years ago we had to make a trip from New Orleans to Kansas City. We chose a bus route; for that was the most inexpensive mode of travel, and we were young and adventurous. On the date of our departure, in faith we packed our trunk and sent it to the station, though we did not have sufficient money to pay our fares.

Because the bus was scheduled to leave the station at 10:30 that night, we quietly set about the business of eating supper and of leisurely packing our bags. All the while our hearts offered mute thanks to God for abundant supply. Ultimately, the time to leave drew close, but though we felt a twinge of apprehension, our faith remained strong.

We spoke little, for we believed that somehow God would aid us. We were alone in the house that we were leaving; so, fortunately, we did not have an outsider's fears to quench.

At 9:30 our doorbell rang. There on the porch stood a well dressed colored woman, to whom we had given much instruction in Truth. She apologized for being so late and explained that a business deal (she was with an insurance company) had prevented her from coming to see us earlier. We had no idea why she had come, but we smiled our welcome and invited her into the house. She refused, but extended her hand toward Mr. Truesdell and said that she hoped that

we would accept her parting gift. With that she pressed a twenty dollar gold piece into his hand. She turned and left immediately, for she knew that we had a thirty-minute street car ride to the station. With a depth of understanding that is rare in human relations, she would not detain us.

How we blessed God for His care! How our hearts leaped with joy and then settled at once into the quiet of awe mingled with veneration that is beyond description! God had sent an abundance that more than covered our immediate need. His gift had come in a most unexpected way. The fruits of our willing labors among people of another color had matured, though it never would have occurred to us to look to them for help. The wealthiest member of the group had had an undeniable urge in her heart to do something for the teachers who had opened a new way of life to her. In those days, street cars were the only means of transportation. She had come, after having been detained by a business deal, a long, long way that included a transfer from one line to another, fervently hoping that she would not miss us. She prayed that she might have the opportunity to give an offering of money to the two teachers she loved so much. And over her and over us, there was God - God watching and waiting and responding to the silent cry in each one's heart: the cry of one to give, the cry of the others to receive. Though the hour of our departure had been fast drawing near, we had not once wavered in our confidence in God's loving care; and our benefactor, though beset by trial, had fulfilled her honest desire to bless her true friends.

We never again returned to that city to teach Truth; and we never had a contact with the woman by letter, for we had not kept records of names and addresses of the class members. But, in our hearts, we have never ceased to love and bless that person. Though she has not known what she did for us, we have always known that she has received the return of her blessing, increased and multiplied a thousand fold; for our prayers in her behalf have never ceased.

After we had arrived in Kansas City, we took a room at a hotel. In another miraculous way, our needs were taken care of, not by some person in Kansas City, but by an unexpected gift of money of ample amount to sustain us until the next step in our life experience led us into fields of continuous, bountiful supply.

Whenever a true service is given without any thought of return, a reward is sure to follow, sometimes immediately, but more often a little further along the line in human experience. As the Scripture says, "Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days."

The Good is imperishable. Whoever casts forth his supply of Good is bound to reap. The Good has no set form; one is a good mechanic, another a good musician, another a good minister - it makes no difference. When a person gives out what is in him for the benefit and success of others, he guarantees his own success and his own reward.

Give your gifts. And make your gifts worthwhile by selecting with thoughtful care whatever it is that you wish to share with another. Give for the blessed privilege of giving - not to be seen of men, not to be thanked by men. Give any gift as though you were offering it to God, and your reward will burst upon you in some unforeseen hour, when in time of need you cry in secret to the Living God and He rewards you openly.

oo0oo

Alphabet of
DAILY MEDITATIONS
For Every Week Day Of The Month

NOVEMBER 1954

1. ADD to your faith, virtue.
2. BLESSED is he that watcheth.
3. And this is love, that we walk after His COMMANDMENTS.
4. Be DILIGENT that ye may be found of Him in peace.
5. God hath given to us ETERNAL Life, and this Life is in His Son.
6. Truly our FELLOWSHIP is with the FATHER.
- *
8. He received from GOD the Father honour and GLORY.
9. If our HEART condemn us not, then HAVE we confidence toward God.
10. Greater IS He that IS IN you, than he that IS IN the world.
11. He is faithful and JUST to forgive us our sins.
12. The Lord KNOWETH how to deliver the godly out of temptation.
13. The LORD . . . is LONGSUFFERING to us-ward.
- *
15. Grace and peace be MULTIPLIED unto you.
16. NOW Thou hast lifted me up.
17. To the ONLY wise God OUR Saviour, be glory and majesty.
18. PROSPER and be in health, even as thy soul PROSPERETH.
19. Behold, I come QUICKLY.
20. He that doeth RIGHTEOUSNESS is RIGHTEOUS.
- *
22. (He) STRENGTHENED me with STRENGTH in my SOUL.
23. TRUE and righteous are THY judgments.
24. Ye have an UNCTION from the Holy One.
25. This is the VICTORY that overcometh the world, even our faith.
26. It is the Spirit that beareth WITNESS, because the Spirit is Truth.
27. YE might be partakers of the Divine nature.
- *
29. Be glad, ye children of ZION (peace).
30. Keep yourselves in the love of God.
- * * *

"When thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly."

* * *

As electricity is the working power of the electrical principle,
SPIRITICITY is the working power of the Spiritual Principle.