

ON THANKFULNESS

By Bill Irby

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ON THE MATTER OF THANKFULNESS ONCE MORE!

Next week we have just about my favorite time of the year. We ought to be thankful all the time for the way God blesses us, but I suppose it is natural that we have this emphasis each “fall”. It is the traditional harvest time and if ever there is to be a time of plenty it is at Thanksgiving.

There is the awareness this year of economic uncertainty. We pray that the least harm is done and that folks in trouble will be blessed with solutions to their problems. Those of a certain age know that these economic cycles of up and down come and go. At least the price of gasoline is down!

Christians are blessed with a perspective that allows us to be thankful at all times and in all circumstances. We “seek first the kingdom of God” (Matthew 6:33). Paul said that he knew how to be abased and to abound and that he could endure or “do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (Philippians 4:11-14). This perspective is itself something for which we should be thankful.

Take a look at the beginning of Paul’s letter to the church at Colosse: We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which you have to all the saints, For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel (Colossians 1:3-5). Notice that Paul was thankful for the Christians in Colosse because he had heard certain good things about them. These good things were the spiritual characteristics of faith, love, hope, and truth.

If it is the case that the apostle Paul was thankful for these Christians because they manifested these spiritual qualities, it follows that he would be thankful to see these qualities manifested in other Christians. Since Paul was inspired of God I am certain that his attitude was correct and pleasing to God. He was therefore

encouraging the Christians at Colosse and us today to continue to live within and show to others these spiritual characteristics. This would both please God and be a blessing to themselves and to the other people in their lives.

I have made this connection for a specific purpose. I hope we can remember that we have a great deal for which to be thankful separate and apart from our own material circumstance. I pray that all of us will continue to be blessed materially. But if the money runs out or runs away or does something else, we still have these things: faith, love, hope and truth.

Think about it: What else do we have anyway? Even if a man manages to obtain and keep tremendous wealth all the days of his life, what happens to his money or the rest of his material substance after he is gone? He may be able to leave some of it to his heirs and the government (whether he wants to or not). But one thing for certain, his money will no longer make any difference in his existence.

But his faith will make a difference. And who and how well he loved will make a difference. And what he hoped for and whom he hoped in will make a difference. And the truth will surely make a difference.

In light of these things, as we give thanks for the great blessings we enjoy, let's not forget to be thankful for the things that really make a difference in this life and surely in the next.