

## Giving Thanks in Adversity

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**O**n Thanksgiving Sunday, it is very meaningful to ponder the message of giving thanks to the Lord. The grace of thanksgiving is a pre-requisite among all Christian attributes, and it is also a thermometer or gauge to measure our spiritual life. Dear brothers and sisters, it is good to remember to give thanks and glory to the Lord when your life is sailing along smoothly. However, it is even more important to learn the lesson of giving thanks in times of adversity like sicknesses, unemployment, trials and iniquity. For the Bible says, *"Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus"* (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18).

How can we give thanks in adversity? We can look at scripture for

guidance. For example, Psalm 42 is a Maschil. This Hebrew word, Maschil, expresses the function of "teaching" and "warning" at the same time. Therefore, a Maschil is the psalmist's suggestion on how to handle emergencies, distress and dire circumstances with wisdom and special insight. If you read this Psalm carefully, you will notice the extreme disappointment and deep burden of the psalmist at that point of his life. He enlightens us on how to confront the situations and be able to give thanks in the midst of suffering.

### Seize God's Promise

Psalm 42:6 laments, *"...My soul is downcast within me; therefore I will remember you from the land of the Jordan, the heights of Hermon - from Mount Mizar"*. The psalmist is filled with grief, but he refrains from being burdened all day long. Instead, he insists on seizing God's promise. Jordan is God's promised land for the Israelites; Hermon is the peak of Palestine. Standing high on Mount Mizar, one could catch a glimpse of the Canaan land from a distance, which is God's promised land of milk and honey.

In the past, God promised Abraham the wonderful land of Canaan to Israel, and it has materialized. Therefore, with that assurance, the psalmist can rejoice and give thanks when he remembers God's promise. The theme of the Psalmist is to count God's blessings: His blessing would startle us; we would never be disheartened, nor mistaken that God's love has left us.

The Bible reminds us that **God's wrath is transient; His grace is sufficient and everlasting**. David says, *"You crown the year with your bounty, and your carts overflow with abundance"* (Psalm 65:11). The subtle meaning is that in every step we walk, there is God's grace. Brothers and sisters, please seize God's promises, hold on to God's grace, so that we can stand strong and give thanks at times of adversity.

### Look Up to God's Omnipotence

Psalm 42:5 records, *"Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him my Savior"*. The author of this psalm could give thanks in adversity because he had learnt the lesson of looking up to the Almighty. Looking up to God means putting your hope in God, for He is the source of all hope. When our hope and faith is put unto God, we will be able to give thanks in adversity.

Jeremiah says so in Lamentations 3:22-26, *"Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. I say to myself, 'The LORD is my portion; therefore I will wait for him.' The LORD is good to those whose hope is in him, to the one who seeks him; it is good to wait quietly for the salvation of the LORD."* Jeremiah was constantly caught in adversity because he was deeply burdened by the people of his time. Yet, when he looked up to the Lord, he was

assured that every morning is a new morning. "A new day" signifies not "just another day", but a day with renewed grace, because God's love is the redeeming grace, only if we seek Him and wait for Him.

### Ascertain God's Love

*"Deep calls to deep in the roar of your waterfalls; all your waves and breakers have swept over me. By day the LORD directs his love, at night his song is with me a prayer to the God of my life"* (Psalm 42:7-8). This section of Psalm depicts a very meaningful moment. "Deep calls to deep at the roar of your waterfalls" describes a scene where the psalmist is standing on top of the snow-capped Hermon, with the thunder of the waterfalls and the depth of the valley calling and echoing around him. What a stunning view! The scene of the melted snow of Hermon rushing down to become the roaring waterfalls seemed to reflect his deep sorrows. Amidst the thunderous storms, the psalmist is calling out to God: O God, **with your unfathomable love, save me and toss my deepest sorrows away. I want to praise you in the dark; I pray to you, my Creator of eternal life.**

Brothers and sisters, hold fast to God's love under all circumstances. Though we may face trials and temptations, please ascertain that our Jesus Christ is the unchanged Truth. *"No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord"* (Romans 8:37-39).

### Praise God for His Help

*"Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your*

*hope in God, for I will yet praise him my Savior and my God,"* (Psalm 42:11). The psalmist is saying: God is my help. I can give thanks and sing in the night because of your help.

It is against human nature to be able to sing in dark moments of our lives. It is usually natural to complain, sigh or cry in dark moments. Truly, it is rare to be able to praise at times of difficulties. However, Psalm 77 shows that it is possible. Psalmist Asaph expresses it well, *"When I was in distress, I sought the Lord; at night I stretched out untiring hands and my soul refused to be comforted. I remembered you, O God, and I groaned; I mused, and my spirit grew faint. You kept my eyes from closing; I was too troubled to speak. I thought about the former days, the years of long ago; I remembered my songs in the night. My heart mused and my spirit inquired... I will remember the deeds of the LORD; yes, I will remember your miracles of long ago. I will meditate on all your works and consider all your mighty deeds"* (Psalm 77:2-6; 11-12). Asaph uses his experience to encourage us: Counting God's blessings in the past as an assurance for the future is the only exit for depression. Praising the Lord can dissipate sadness and help us face adversity in an optimistic way.

There was once an exceptionally bright girl who was preparing for graduation when disaster struck. She was rushed to the hospital because of a rare disease. When her father arrived, she had passed away. Her father was totally devastated, for she was the only child. He kept on asking, "Why would God take away my only daughter? Why would such calamity befall our family? She was such a beautiful and intelligent young woman; so willing to serve the Lord. Why would God take her away at her prime, right before graduation?"

The father had no peace, so he kept on questioning, "O Lord, why?" Some Christian brothers and sisters faithfully interceded for him. One time, while reading Job 1:21, God's Word dawned on him, *"Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; may the name of the LORD be praised."* The father now realized that his daughter belonged to God. She was a gift from God; now it was up to God's time to take her home. The father finally accepted that the daughter was truly a gift from God, "When He took back the gift, we needed to give thanks; for in that eternal garden, God will look after my daughter. There will be neither sickness, sorrow nor toil."

Dear brothers and sisters, when we have learnt to praise and give thanks, we will understand that everything belongs to God. In God's time, even if something precious to us is taken away, we shall give thanks. If we enjoy a faithful walk with Christ, our life will be blessed with joy, peace and thanksgiving.

God has not promised that the sky will always be blue; we will face adversities, iniquities and hardship. Let us learn to abide by our faith in times of adversity, for our Creator and Savior is omnipotent - He makes us sing at night.

*"Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will be joyful in God my Savior. The Sovereign LORD is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer, he enables me to go on the heights."* (Hab.3:17-19)

**Blessings,  
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