

ALWAYS AND FOR ALL THINGS NO. 1094

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 2, 1873,
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*“Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father
in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.”
Ephesians 5:20.*

THE position of our text in the Epistle is worthy of observation. It follows the precept with regard to sacred song in which Believers are bid to speak to themselves and one another in Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in their hearts to the Lord. If they cannot be always singing they are always to maintain the spirit of song. If they must, of necessity, desist at intervals from outward expressions of praise, they ought never to refrain from *inwardly* giving thanks. The Apostle, having touched upon the act of singing in public worship, here points out the essential part of it which lies not in classic music and thrilling harmonies, but in the melody of the *heart*. Thanksgiving is the soul of all acceptable singing.

Note, also, that this verse immediately precedes the Apostle's exhortations to Believers concerning the common duties of ordinary life. The saints are to give thanks to God always and then to fulfill their duties to their fellow men. The Apostle writes, “Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God,” and then he adds the various branches of holy walking which belong to wives and to husbands, to children and to parents, to servants and to masters—so that it would seem that thanksgiving is the preface to a holy life, the foundation of obedience and the vestibule of sanctity. He who would *serve* God must begin by *praising* God, for a grateful heart is the mainspring of obedience. We must offer the salt of gratitude with the sacrifice of obedience—our lives should be anointed with the precious oil of thankfulness. As soldiers march to music, so while we walk in the paths of righteousness we should keep step to the notes of thanksgiving. Larks sing as they mount, so should we magnify the Lord for His mercies while we are ringing our way to Heaven.

My text is a very appropriate one for this cold morning when wind and snow conspire against our comfort. Let it peep up like the golden cup of the crocus out of the wintry waste. When the weather is unusually dull and dreary we should resolve to set a stout heart against the pelting storm and determine that if we shiver in body we will at least be warm in heart. Our thanksgiving is not a swallow which is gone with the summer. The birds within our bosom sing all year round and on such a morning as this their song is doubly welcome. The fire of gratitude will help to warm us—heap on the big logs of loving memories! No cold shall freeze the genial current of soul—our praise shall flow on when brooks and rivers are bound in chains of ice.

Let us see which among us can best rejoice in the Lord in ill weather! This morning I shall ask you to think over the pleasant duty prescribed. Then I shall lead you to think of its spiritual prerequisites, or what is necessary to help a man to give thanks always for all things. And we will close by dwelling upon the eminent excellencies of the duty, or rather of the privilege which is here described.

I. First, let us think of the PLEASANT DUTY which is here both prescribed and described. Think what it is—giving thanks. By this is meant the emotion of gratitude and the expression of it either by song, by grateful speech, by the thankful look—which means far more than words can express—or by any other method. We have, sometimes, been so overcome by the devout emotion of gratitude to God for His mercy that we could not help but weep. And strange it is that the same sluices which furnish vent for our sorrows also supply a channel for the overflow of our joys. We may weep to God's praise if we feel it to be most natural. We are to give thanks in our *spirit*, feeling not only resigned, acquiescent, and content, but *grateful* for all that God does to us and for us.

We are bound to show this gratitude by our actions, for obedience is at once the most sincere and the most acceptable method of giving thanks. To go about irksome and laborious duty cheerfully is to thank God. To bear sickness and pain patiently, because it is according to His will, is to thank God. To sympathize with suffering saints for love of Jesus is to

bless God. And to love the cause of God and to defend it for Christ's sake, is to thank God. The angels, when they praise God, not only sing, "Hallelujah, hallelujah," but they obey, "doing His commandments, hearkening to the voice of His Word." We must give thanks to God in every shape that shall be expressive of our hearts and suitable to the occasion. And although changing the mode, we may thus continue without cessation to give thanks unto God, even the Father.

Beloved, after all it is but a light thing to render to our heavenly Father our poor thanks, after He has given us our lives, maintained us in being, saved our souls through the precious redemption of Jesus Christ, given us to be His children and made us heirs of eternal Glory! What are our thanks in the presence of all these priceless favors? Why, if we gave our God a thousand lives and could spend each one of these in a perpetual martyrdom, it were a small return for what He has bestowed upon us! But to give Him thanks is the least we can do and shall we be slack in that? He gives us breath, shall we not breathe out His praise? He fills our mouth with good things, shall we not speak well of His name?—

*“Words are but air and tongues but clay,
And His compassions are Divine.”*

Shall we fail even with words and tongues? God forbid! We will praise the name of the Lord, for His mercy endures forever. None of us will say, "I pray You have me excused." The poorest, weakest and least-gifted person can give thanks! The work of thanksgiving does not belong to the man of large utterance, for he who can hardly put two words together can give thanks. Nor is it confined to the man of large possessions, for the woman who had but two mites—which make a farthing—gave substantial thanks. The smoking flax may give thanks that it is not quenched and the bruised reed may give thanks that it is not broken. Even the dumb may give thanks—their countenance can smile a Psalm! And the dying can give thanks—their placid brow beaming forth a hymn. No Christian, therefore, can honestly say, "I am unable to exercise the delightful privilege of giving thanks." We may one and all at this moment give thanks unto God our Father. Brothers and Sisters, let us do so!

Now, as we have considered what it is we are to do, let us notice *when* we are to do it, for the pith of the precept lies very much in the two "alls" which are in the text—"always for all things." We are to give thanks *always*. To give thanks, sometimes, is easy enough. Any mill will grind when the wind blows. Brethren, we scarcely need exhorting to do this when the wine and oil increase, for we cannot help it. There are glad days when, if we did not thank God, we should be something worse than fallen men and should be only fit to be compared with devils. Anyone can give God thanks when the harvests are plentiful, the stalls full of fat cattle and the meadows covered with increasing herds. When the fig tree blossoms and the fruit is in the vines, when the labor of the olive fails not and the fields yield abundance of meat, then it is but *natural* to give thanks. When health enjoys life and wealth adorns it, who will not say, "I thank God"? When the wind blows soft on the merchant's cheek and wafts home his fleets of treasure, how can he do other than say that God is good?

But, to give thanks to God *always* is another matter. To bless the Lord in all winds and weathers and praise Him for losses and pains—this is a work of quite another character. "O," you say, "we cannot be always praising God with our lips." I have already said that and explained that *vocal* thanksgiving is not essential. Perhaps the most doubtful form of praising God is that which is performed by the tongue and the most sure and truthful way of giving thanks is that which is found in the *actions* of common life. But we are to be always praising God under some shape or other—the heart is always to be full of gratitude. At all times of the day we should be grateful—our first waking thought should be, "Bless the Lord." Our last, before we drop to sleep, should be, "Praise be the God of love, who gives a pillow for my weary head."

At all times of life we should give thanks. In youth we should praise God for godly parents and for early Grace. In our mid-life we should give thanks for strength, for household joys and for the experience of the Divine loving kindness. And, certainly, in those mature days, when the head, like the golden grain, bows down with ripeness, the aged saint should commence the employment of Heaven and should be always giving thanks. We should give God thanks when our wealth increases and also when it melts away—when it flows in and when it ebbs out. We must bless Him in success and also in disaster. We must give Him thanks when health departs. We must give Him thanks when, by gradual decay, the tabernacle falls about our ears. We must give Him thanks in those expiring moments when the sigh of earth is hushed by the song of Heaven.

It is easy to stand here and tell you this, but I have not always found it easy to practice the duty. I confess this to my shame. When I was suffering extreme pain some time ago, a Brother in Christ said to me, “Have you thanked God for this?” I replied that I desired to be patient and would be thankful to recover. “Ah, but,” he said, “‘in everything give thanks,’ not after it is over, but while you are still in it and, perhaps, when you are enabled to give thanks for the severe pain, it will cease.” I believe that there was much force in that good advice. It may have sounded rather strange at the time, yet if there is Grace in our hearts, we acknowledge the correctness of it. We struggle after the holy joy of heart which it depicts and at last, by God’s Grace, are able to attain to it, so as to give thanks unto God unceasingly.

We shall never come to a time in which we shall say, “I will thank God no more.” No. No! A thousand times No! We could sooner cease to live than cease to give thanks. This solemn determination enables Believers to play the man right gloriously. Was not it grand on Job’s part to say—“The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord,” even when he had torn his mantle and shaved his head for grief? Was not it noble on the part of Paul and Silas, when they were thrust into the inner dungeon, to sing praises there? None of us knows how foul the air was in an inner Roman dungeon—how full of fever the dismal vault, how dank the dripping walls—how foul the stony floor.

Yet, here were two poor creatures who had been beaten till their backs were bleeding. They were fastened in the stocks, probably made to lie upon their backs upon the floor! But, at midnight they sang praises unto God so loudly that the prisoners heard them. This, it is, to praise God aright—to bless Him in the dead of night! To bless Him with bleeding backs! To bless Him with feet in the stocks! Oh, to feel that nothing in this life and nothing in death shall make us cease to bless the Lord while thought and being last! This is Divine Grace, indeed!

The text next tells us the *why* of our gratitude—“Giving thanks always for all things unto God.” “For all things”—for whatever may happen to us. For the things which are of greatest moment we should always be grateful—for the new birth, for pardon of sin, for the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, for all Covenant mercies, for all the blessings of the Cross and of the Crown. Dear Friends, a Christian has infinite cause for gratitude! When I first looked to Christ and was lightened, I thought that if I never received another mercy except that one of being delivered from my load of guilt, I would praise God if He would but let me, forever and ever! To have the feet taken out of the miry clay and to feel them set on the Rock of Ages is a subject for eternal gratitude! But you have not received one spiritual mercy only, beloved Brothers and Sisters—nor two, nor twenty—you have had them strewn along your path in richest profusion! The stars above are not more numerous, nor the sands beneath more innumerable.

Every hour, yes, every *moment* has brought a favor upon its wings. Look downward and give thanks, for you are saved from Hell! Look on the right hand and give thanks, for you are enriched with gracious gifts! Look on the left hand and give thanks, for you are shielded from deadly ills! Look above you and give thanks, for Heaven awaits you! Nor is it alone for great and eternal benefits, but even for minor and temporary benefits we ought to give thanks. There ought not to be brought into the house a loaf of bread without thanksgiving. Nor should we cast a coal upon the fire without gratitude. We eat like dogs if we sit down to our meals without devoutly blessing God! We live like serpents if we never rise to devout recognition of the Lord’s kindness! We ought not to put on our garments without adoring God, or take them off to rest in our beds without praising Him! Each breath of air should inspire us with thanks and the blood in our veins should circulate gratitude throughout our system.

O, how sacred would our temporal mercies be to us if we were always thanking God for them! Instead of that, we too often complain because we have not somewhat more. We have a position which, in God’s sight, is the best for us. We could not have been better off than we are now, all things being considered—eternal things as well as present things—and yet we murmur and groan as though God had dealt harshly with us. The worst of all is that sometimes the poorest are the most thankful—those dear souls that are always sick and never have a waking moment free from pain are often the happiest and most grateful—while persons with wealth, health, strength and surrounded by every comfort are often of such a crooked disposition that they complain, they know not why, and are most disagreeable companions. God save you, who are His saints, from ever falling into a murmuring spirit! It is clean contrary to what God can approve of. Give thanks always for all things. Whenever the salt is put on the table let us see in it a lesson to us to season our conversation with thanks, of which salt we cannot use too much.

We ought, also, to thank God for the mercies which we do *not* see, as well as for those which are evident. We receive, perhaps, 10 times as many mercies which escape our notice as those which we observe—mercies which fly by night on soft

wings and bless us while we sleep. You have heard, perhaps, of a Puritan who met his son, each one of them traveling some 10 or 12 miles to meet the other? And the son said to his father, “Father, I am thankful to God for a very remarkable Providence which I have had on my journey here. My horse has stumbled three times with me and yet I am unhurt.” The Puritan replied, “My dear Son, I have to thank God for an equally remarkable Providence on my way to you, for my horse did not *once* stumble all the way.”

If we happen to be in an accident by railway we feel so grateful that our limbs are not broken. But should we not be thankful when there is no accident? Is not that the better thing of the two? If you were to fall into poverty and someone were to restore you to your former position in trade, you would be very grateful. Should you not be grateful that you have *not* fallen into poverty? Bless God for His unknown benefits! Extol Him for favors which you do not see—always giving thanks to God for all things. Still, this is easy—the difficult point is to give thanks to Him for the bitter things, for the disguised blessings, for the love tokens which come to us from Him in black envelopes—for those benefits which travel to us *via crucis*, by the way of the cross, which are generally the most heavily laden wagons that ever come from our Father’s country.

We are to give thanks for the dark things, the cutting things, the things which plague and vex us and disquiet our spirits—for these are among the “all things” for which we ought to praise and bless God. Doubtless, if our eyes were opened, like those of Elijah’s servant, we should see our trials to be among our choicest treasures! If we exercise the farseeing eyes of faith and not the dim eyes of sense, we shall discover that nothing can be more fatal to us than to be without affliction and that nothing is more beneficial to us than to be tried as with fire. Therefore we will glory in tribulations! We will bless and magnify the name of the Lord that He leads us through the wilderness that He may prove us and that He may fit us for dwelling by-and-by in the Promised Land. “Giving thanks always for all things.”

I should like to be towards God of the mind that John Bradford was towards Queen Mary. When reviled as a rebel, that saint and martyr said, “I have no quarrel with the queen. If she releases me I will thank her. If she imprison me I will thank her. If she burns me I will thank her.” We should say of the Lord, “Let Him do what seems good to Him. If He will give us health we will thank Him. If He will send us sickness we will thank Him. If He indulges us with prosperity or if He tries us with affliction, if the Holy Spirit will but enable us, we will never cease to praise the Lord as long as we live.”

Augustine tells us that the early saints, when they met each other would never separate without saying, “Deo gratias! Thanks be to God.” Frequently their conversation would be about the persecutions which raged against them, but they finished their conversation with, “Deo gratias!” Sometimes they had to tell of dear Brothers and Sisters devoured by the beasts in the amphitheatre, but even then they said, “Deo gratias!” Frequently they mourned the uprise of heresy, but this did not make them rob the Lord of His, “Deo gratias.” So should it be with us all the day long. The motto of the Christian should be, “Deo gratias!” “Giving thanks always for all things.”

But the text has another word which is important—to whom is this gratitude to be rendered? “Giving thanks for all things to God the Father.” To God. To man we are bound to render thanks in proportion as he benefits us. God does not require that in order to be grateful to Him we should be ungrateful to our fellow men. To keep the first table it is never necessary to break the second. Gratitude to parents and friends is but gratitude to God if it is properly rendered with a view to the highest Benefactor. To neglect the lower would be to spoil the higher gratitude. Yet we should never end with gratitude to men—that were to thank the clouds for rain instead of blessing the Lord who sends both clouds and showers. Remember, if you have benefactors, God inclined their hearts towards you. Give thanks to God for He is good and does good. Give thanks to *God*. Let not your gratitude stop short of the Source from which the streams of mercy come.

Think of the Lord, also, under the relation which the text sets before you—namely as the Father—as *your* Father. Remember that God is the Creator. It is He that made us and not we, ourselves. As the Father, He is the Sustainer and Preserver of men. As the Father He has elected His people, for it is the Father who has chosen His people in Christ Jesus. And, as the Father, He is the Progenitor of the spiritual seed, for He has begotten us, again, unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Think of God the Father in those various capacities and you will have so many reasons for giving thanks always unto Him. Never give thanks to the Lord Jesus Christ in such a way as to dishonor the Father. You owe much to Jesus, but Jesus did not make the Father gracious to you since, “the Father Himself loves you,”

Jesus is the gift of His Father's love and not the cause of it. Bless the Father, then, and, give honor and praise unto Him who has made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.

There is an old Jewish tradition that when God had made this world and the six days' work was over, He called the angels to behold it and it was so very beautiful that they sang for joy. Then the Lord asked them what they thought of this work of His hands. One of them replied that it was so vast and so perfect that there should be created a clear, loud, melodious voice which should fill all the quarters of the world with its sweet sound and, both by day and night, offer thanksgiving to the Creator for His incomparable blessings. We ought to be of the same mind as the angel—not that there is a defect in creation—but that everywhere in creation intelligent beings should be that voice of ceaseless song which the angel desired.

Once more, in describing this duty the text tells us how to give thanks, namely, "in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." Now here we have directions to present our praises always through the Mediator, Jesus, our great High Priest, who stands between us and God. We are to put our thanks into His sacred hands, that He may present them before the Father with something of His own, "not to our loss," even with His precious merit which shall sweeten all. But the text means more than that. We are to give thanks to the Father in the name of Jesus, that is, because Jesus bids us to do so and we are commanded and commissioned by Christ. We have His example as well as His precept for blessing God for all things.

I think the text means more than this—we are to give thanks to God in the name of Jesus as though we did it in Jesus' stead—as though we stood where Jesus once stood when He said on earth—"I thank You, O Father." You Christian people are sent into the world as Christ was sent into the world. Christ's office was to glorify God and such is your office for His sake and in His name. Think—how would Jesus have given thanks? How would He have praised God? In what sort of spirit would the ever adorable Son, whose meat and drink it was to serve His Father, have praised God? After *that* fashion and in that same way you are to give thanks unto God and the Father. It is a high position for a poor son of man to occupy, but if the Lord has called you to it—by His Grace be not slack in the performance of the heavenly service! The day will come when we shall fulfill our text in the widest sense—then we shall give thanks to God at the winding up of the drama of human history, for everything that has happened—from the Fall even to the destruction of the wicked.

We may not be able to do so now. Our eyes see the gigantic evil and do not see the overruling good which, like a boundless sea, rolls over all. The dreadful mysteries of evil make us tremble as we think of them. But the day will come when, with the Lord Jesus, we will not only bless God for electing love, but will even say, "I thank You, O Father, Lord of Heaven and earth, that You have hid these things from the wise and prudent." The day will come when even the darkest side of the Divine decrees and the most profound depths of the Divine action shall cause us to adore with gratitude. And then that which can least be understood in Providence shall no longer be the subject of awe-struck wonder, but of unspeakable delight.

We shall trace the line of perfection along the course of the Divine decrees and workings and though the way of the Lord may have seemed to us to be inscrutable, we shall then adore Him for that wondrous display of all His attributes—Justice, Love, Truth, Faithfulness, Omnipotence—which shall blaze forth with tenfold splendor! In Heaven we shall give thanks unto God always for all things, without exception—and throughout eternity we shall magnify His holy name through Jesus Christ our Lord! Let us do it as best we can *today*, God's Spirit helping us. Thus I have expounded the duty itself.

II. Now, briefly, let me speak to you upon THE SPIRITUAL PREREQUISITES which are necessary for the performance of this very pleasant work. And let it be solemnly remembered that no man can give thanks always to God through Jesus Christ till he has a new heart. The old heart is an ungrateful one and even if a man should try with an unrenewed nature to give thanks to God, it would be like the impossible supposition of the dead struggling to make themselves alive, which cannot be. The old heart is a putrid fountain. It cannot send forth sweet streams. It is opposed to God and it cannot bless Him in a way that He can accept. Looking at this fair and lovely duty, I would say to all who wish to practice it, "you must be born-again." Unless you are made new creatures in Christ Jesus, you can never give thanks to God always for all things.

And next I would remind you that in order to perform this duty aright a man must have a sense of God. To give thanks to God aright a man must believe that there *is* a God. He must go further than that—he must feel that God is the Author of the good things which he receives and, to give thanks always, he must advance yet further and believe that even in seeming evil love is at work. He must also come to believe in God as present to hear his thanks, or he will soon tire of presenting them. “You God see me” must be printed on the new-born heart, or else there will be no constant giving of thanks to God. Let me ask you, dear Friend, you believe in God and you do well, but have you done better than the devils who also believe in God? They tremble—have you gone as far as that?

There are some who have not. Devils cannot, however, love God and give Him thanks—have you gone beyond the trembling of a devil up to the giving thanks and the adoration of a truly loving heir of Heaven? Answer that question—is God as real to you as your wife or child? As real as yourself? He must be so and you must know Him to be always present with you or else you will never continue praising Him. A man who gives thanks to God always, for all things, must have a sense of complete reconciliation to God. You cannot bless God till you have heard Him say, “I have blotted out your sins like a cloud, and like a thick cloud your transgressions.” Lean and false are the thanks which come from an unforgiven heart. A soul condemned for its unbelief is not a soul that can be accepted for its gratitude—it cannot be condemned for one thing and accepted for another.

As I came here, this morning, I was thinking very joyfully of another morning many years ago, which was, as to snow and cold, precisely like it. I remember when the family to which I belonged felt unable to go up to the House of God, for the snow was deep and falling heavily as it is now. I, also, was unable to go up to the place of worship where our household usually attended and, by reason of the snow, was drifted into the little Methodist Chapel where I heard of Jesus and found peace with God! I have learned to bless His name since then—but before that, though I could have sung as others sing—there was no giving thanks unto God by Jesus Christ in my *heart*. I wondered, as I came along, whether God might not lead to this House someone whom He would bring to Himself this morning—to whom this cold day should become as memorable as that day of snow was to me!

That morning in that Methodist Chapel there was a good work done, for though there were but few of us, *one* at least was called, and that one God has made the spiritual parent of many thousands of His children. I am surprised to find this House so full today, it is clear proof that you love to hear the Gospel and it encourages me to hope that there may be one here whom God shall make eminently useful when He has saved him. This we shall be sure of—whoever it may be, if he is reconciled to God by the death of God’s dear Son—he will give thanks to God, indeed, and of a truth! If nobody else does so, he will, from this day forward, sing—

*“I will praise You every day
Now Your anger’s turned away.
Comfortable thoughts arise
From the bleeding Sacrifice.”*

We cannot give thanks to God through Jesus Christ unless we have accepted the Mediator! All the thanks commanded in the text are to come up to God through Jesus Christ. If we reject Him, or if we associate Him as a Mediator with somebody else, we have gone contrary to God’s way and we cannot praise God.

Virgins and saints and martyrs must never be made rivals to Jesus. To praise God, even the Father, does it not strike you that we must feel the spirit of adoption? Who could praise a person as father whom he does not recognize as father? But he who feels—“Yes, I am the Lord’s child, erring though I am, and my heart says, ‘Abba,’ ” he can praise God, indeed! To the fullest performance of this duty there must be a subordination of ourselves to the will of God. We must not desire to have our own way. We must be content to say, “Not my will, but Yours be done.” I cannot give thanks to God always for all things till my old self is put down. While self rules, the hungry horseleech is in the heart and that is fatal to gratitude. Self and discontent are mother and child. But when you say in your heart, “I am perfectly resigned to the will of God, my will consents to His will,” then shall your praise be as the continual sacrifice and your thanksgiving shall rise before Him as incense.

III. I only want your attention a few minutes more while I speak upon THE EMINENT EXCELLENCIES of continually giving thanks to God, even the Father. And the first excellency is, it honors God. A thankful spirit glorifies the Most High. “Whoever offers praise glorifies Me,” says the Lord. We might have imagined that whether we grumbled or complained it would make no difference to God. It would be of no consequence to any one of us what might be the

opinion of a little community of ants about us. But God is infinitely more superior to us than we are to ants! He considers that our praising and blessing Him renders glory to His name. Let us render it to Him, then, without stint.

There is no higher commendation for any course of action or for any virtue to a Christian man than to tell him that it will honor God. Will it dishonor God? He will shrink from it though mines of gold should tempt him. Will it honor God? The Believer rushes forward to it though floods and flames lie in his way. A grateful spirit is a blessed and yet a cheap way of honoring God, for it brings to us its own return. Like mercy, it is “twice blessed.” It blesses us in the giving and honors God in the receiving. Let the Christian see to it that he abounds in it. Obedience to our text will tend to check us from sin—“Giving thanks always for all things.”

Very well, then, there are some places that we must not enter, for it would be blasphemous to be giving thanks there. There are some things which I must not do, for I could not give God thanks for them. Suppose I have ground down the poor—how can I give God thanks for the miserable shillings which are the blood of these men? Suppose I have gained my living by an evil trade—how can I give thanks to God for the gold as I hear it chink in my bag? Suppose every day my prosperity brings misery to others—how can I give thanks for it? To give thanks for the fruit of sin were practically to blaspheme the thrice holy God! O, no! If the Christian is always to give thanks, he must always be where he can give thanks—and if he is to give God thanks for all things, he must not touch that which he cannot give God thanks for. I must never grasp the fruit of covetousness, the gain of dishonesty, the profit of Sabbath-breaking, the result of oppression—for if I do, I have that for which I may weep and howl before God—but certainly not that for which I can give Him thanks.

Brothers and Sisters, I say that if we looked well to our text, it would, by the power of God’s Holy Spirit, restrain us from sin. But one of the truest excellencies of a spirit of perpetual thanksgiving is this, that it calms us when we are glad and it cheers us when we are sorrowful—a double benefit! It allays the feverish heat at the same time that it mitigates the rigorous cold. If a man is rich and God has given him a thankful spirit, he cannot be too rich. If he will give thanks to God, he may be worth millions and they will never hurt him. On the other hand, if a man has learned to give thanks to God and he becomes poor, he cannot be too poor—he will be able to bear up under the severest penury. The rich man should learn to find God in all things. The poor man should learn to find all things in God and there is not much difference when you come to the bottom of these two causes!

One child of God will be as grateful and as happy, as blessed and as rejoicing as another, if he is but satisfied, still, to give God thanks. There is no overcoming a man who has climbed into this spirit. “I will banish you,” said a persecutor of the saints. “But you cannot do that,” the saint said, “for I am at home everywhere where Christ is.” “I shall take away all your property,” he said. “But I have none,” said the other, “and if I had any you could not take away Christ from me, and as long as He is left I shall be rich.” “I will take away your good name,” cried the persecutor. “That is gone already,” said the Christian, “and I count it joy to be counted the off-scouring of all things for Christ’s sake.” “But I will put you in prison.” “You may do as you please, but I shall be always free, for where Christ is there is liberty.” “But I shall take away your life,” said he. “Yes, well,” said the other, “then I shall be in Heaven which is the truest life, so that you cannot hurt me.”

This was a brave defiance to throw down at the feet of the foe! It is not in the power of the enemy to injure the men of God when once self is dethroned and the heart has learned to be resigned to the will of God! O, you are great, you are strong, you are rich, you are mighty when you have bowed yourselves to the will of the Most High! Stoop that you may conquer! Bow that you may triumph! Yield that you may get the mastery! It is when we are nothing that we are everything—when we are weak that we are strong! It is when we have utterly become annihilated as to self—and God is All in All—it is *then* that we are filled with all the fullness of God! May the Holy Spirit conduct us into this spirit of perpetual thankfulness.

One thing I am sure of, that the more we have of this, the more useful we shall assuredly become. Nothing has had a greater effect upon the minds of thoughtless men than the continued thankfulness of true Christians. There are sick beds which have been more fruitful in conversions than pulpits. I have known women confined to their chambers by the space of 20 years whose remarkable cheerfulness of spirit has been the talk of the entire district! And many there have been who have called to see poor Sarah in her cottage—knowing that she has scarcely been a single day without distressing pain—and have heard her voice and looked into that dear smiling face and have learned the reality of godliness. The bedridden

saint has been a power throughout all the district and many have turned to God, saying, “What is this which enables the Christian to give thanks, always, to God?”

Beloved, our crusty tempers and sour faces will never be evangelists! They may become messengers of Satan but they will never become helpers of the Gospel. To labor to make other people happy is one of the grand things a Christian should always try to do. In little things we ought not to be forever worrying, fidgeting, finding little difficulties and spying out faults in others. I believe that to a faulty man everybody is faulty. But there are better people in the world than you have dreamed of, Sir, and when you are better you will find them out! If you were always grateful to God, you would thank Him that people are as good as they are. If you would be thankful when you meet, even, with bad people—thankful that they are not worse than they are—and try to get hold of the best points in them and not their worst points, you would be much more likely to gain your purpose, if your purpose is to glorify God by doing them good.

If you want to catch flies, try honey—they will be more readily caught with that than with vinegar—at least if they are *human* flies. Put into your speech, love, rather than bitterness and you will prevail. There are times when you must speak with all the sternness of an Elijah. There are proper seasons when there must be no holding back of the most terrible Truths of God. But, for all that, let the general current of your life, the natural outflow of your entire being, be a thankfulness to God which makes you loving towards men. I am sure in this way, when you come to speak of Jesus, you will get a more attentive ear. And when you tell your experience you will recommend the Gospel by your own conversation.

Beloved, I pray the Lord will give us a thankful spirit always and when we talk to each other, let it not be our habit as it is ordinarily with Englishmen—to complain of this and of that—but let us thank God and testify of His goodness. I have heard that farmers are greatly given to grumbling. Well, if they are more apt at complaining than trades people are, they are very far gone in it, for generally wherever I go I hear that trade is bad—it always has been ever since I have been in London and commerce has been constantly going to ruin! I have known some who have lost money every month and yet are richer every year! How is this? Had not we better change our way of talking and dwell not upon our miseries but our mercies? Let us speak much of what God has *given* rather than of that which He has in love withheld from us. Let us bless *Him* rather than speak ill of our neighbors, or complain of our circumstances.

But alas, there are some to whom I speak who will never undertake this duty, till, as I have already said, they have new hearts and right spirits and have become reconciled to God by Jesus Christ. Now, to you, this one word—You are guilty and must be punished unless you find forgiveness! There is before you, this morning, an Altar of Sacrifice in the Person of Jesus Christ! There are four horns on the altar, looking either way, and whoever touches the horns of this altar shall live and live forever! Jesus Christ is the great Altar of Sacrifice, a touch of Him at this moment will save you! It is the whole Gospel—believe, trust and live, for “whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God”—whoever trusts in Christ shall be saved!

Come to the Altar, where His blood was spilt! Come, *now*, and lay your hands upon its horn—you can but perish there. No, I must correct myself—you *cannot* perish there—you must perish anywhere else! Come, then, and rest in Jesus and the Lord bless you for His dear name’s sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Ephesians 5:1-21.

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