

Having the Spirit of Thanksgiving

Ephesians 5:18-21, “*And be not drunk with wine, [or, use false stimulus] wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.*”

1 Thessalonians 5:18-19, “*In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. Quench not the Spirit.*”

I want you to notice how the attitude of thanksgiving and the “*spirit*” of a person are closely connected in these verses.

Ephesians 5 says, “*Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.*”

And, 1 Thessalonians 5 says, “*In every thing give thanks.*” Then note, how closely it is connected with, “*Quench not the Spirit.*”

There is a ministry of feeding the hungry – a ministry of visiting and relieving the sick – a ministry of providing for the poor and the orphans – and – a ministry of comforting those who sorrow. These are all blessed ministry that we all ought to be engaged in whenever God opens the door of opportunity.

However, there is another ministry. It is the ministry of blessing others by a “*spirit of cheerfulness.*”

There is a legend of the useful corn spurning the lily, saying, “*You may be beautiful to look at, but you are not useful because you can not feed the hungry.*” However, Jesus, when He wanted an illustration to picture God’s loving care, said, “*Consider the lily of the field!*”

God’s standard for *usefulness* is not the same as man’s prevailing notion.

Every man carries a certain “*spirit*” – an atmosphere about him. His spirit can be healthful and invigorating to others, or it can be unwholesome and depressing to those whom he meets. Everyone can make a little spot of the world sweeter, or bitter and disagreeable, simply by the spirit he carries around within him.

God says we are responsible for this atmosphere we carry with us. 1 Corinthians 14:32 tells us that the spirit of the man is subject to the man. That means that we are responsible for our attitude. God can, and desires, to enable us to always be cheerful, with a thanksgiving spirit, but He will not override our will. We must decide to do God’s will

How can we be cheerful, and thankful, when things go wrong? It’s not a simple as just making up our mind that we are going to change. Like all the rest of our personality, it is

developed through lessons learned, experiences lived and the impressions and influences that we learn to respond to in the manner that God's Word commands us to.

There are those who are discontented and unhappy. They have allowed this type of spirit to rule them. They cannot, truthfully, blame their heredity, environment or influences around them.

God commands, and demands, cheerfulness of all of us. However, God also supplies, for Jesus said, "*These things have I spoken unto you, that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full*" (John 15:11).

We all believe that, in a person's character, truthfulness, honesty and kindness is imperative. However, there is another duty – the duty of spreading happiness and cheerfulness to those whom we meet.

True, Jesus was "*a man of sorrows,*" but His life was always radiant. He always had an inner joy. He never cast a dark shadow on others by His presence. There was never anyone who was depressed because of His presence – maybe convicted, because of his or her sin, but Jesus never spread the spirit of depression.

Some folk seem to think that religion makes one solemn, but the Bible tells us to "*rejoice in the Lord!*" God commands us to rejoice, then He puts the source of our rejoicing within our hearts.

Jesus said, "*In the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world*" (John 16:33). God has never promised to take all the pain and sorrow out of our life, but He said, we could be – ought to be – joyful in the midst of tribulations.

This does not mean that we are insensitive to our surroundings – we will feel grief and be tender toward the trials of others, as well as our own – however, we can "*be of good cheer*" through it all – because Jesus has overcome the world – He has met the world and come out victoriously! And, now, "*in Him*" we "*can have peace!*"

I am not speaking of "*self-improvement.*" This cheerfulness is not something we have of our self. It is like God's love, or God's power – it is not something that is "*given,*" that becomes our property to own, but rather, something that Jesus is – and – because he lives *within* us – it is an expression of His life within.

For instance, love is not something that God gives to us and it is our property, but God IS love and, because He lives within us, we have His love expressed through our life. Scripture does not teach that we are *given* God's life, and it becomes our property, but rather, Jesus said, "*I am Life,*" and, because He lives within our hearts, our life become an expression of His life. God desires to manifest Himself in His perfect life through our life! It is the height of marvel, that God manifests Himself through us!

"*Like*" can only fellowship with "*like!*" Man cannot have true fellowship with an animal, even his pet dog. The greatest marvel, or the greatest height, of personality is to look at a person and say, "*God is there!*"

Jesus said, “*In the world ye **shall have** tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world*” (John 16:33). We need troubles. The test of a Christian is how he reacts to adverse circumstances. Do you magnify unhappy experiences, or, is your heart filled with joy, hope and cheerfulness?

What do you keep on record?

Do you let trials spoil your gladness, or the blessings of the Lord? We need to learn to see beauty in unsightly trials, and learn to be secure in Christ Jesus. What do we see in others – their shortcomings and faults? Does bad manners, lack of respect and discourtesies annoy you?

Being critically of others and looking for their faults, judgment them, will rob us of our cheerful spirit. If we can't learn anything else from them, we can learn patience. We can be like a doctor, who is present, not to criticize, or find fault, but rather, to be a healer who helps them.

God's Word tells us, “*A merry heart does good like a medicine, but a broken spirit dries up the bones*” (Proverbs 17:22). Another translations renders this verse as, “*A cheerful heart is does good like a medicine, but a broken, dejected, spirit makes one sick.*” A discouraged spirit will weaken one's energies.

To allow God to enable you to be habitually cheerful, you will find life is not half so bad and, life will be a lot easier and being much encouragement to others.

