

LET US BE THANKFUL

The Psalmist cried out, “*Oh that men would praise the LORD for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!*” (Psalms 107:8) He emphasized these words by repeating them in verses 15, 21, and 31. David’s heart was full and he was expressing it in praise and gratitude.

He also encourages us to, “*Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name.*” (Psalms 100:4) And again he testifies, “*It is a good thing to give thanks unto the LORD, and to sing praises unto thy name, O most High:*” (Psalms 92:1)

In one of Dr. John Rice’s songs he wrote, “What words can I find to tell Jesus I love Him because He first loved me?” The Bible is full of terms such as “*unspeakable,*” “*unsearchable,*” “*passeth all understanding,*” “*fullness of joy,*” “*exceeding riches of grace,*” “*love that passeth knowledge,*” and “*abundant life.*” Where can we find words or terms to express our thankfulness to the Lord *for His wonderful works to the children of men?*

In reading through my Bible some major works of the Lord cause me to cry out in gratitude. I marvel at:

I. The work of creation

“*For he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast.*” (Psalms 33:9) “*For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him:*” (Colossians 1:16) He put the earth and all the heavenly bodies in their orbit. He also put the laws of gravity, centrifugal force, aerodynamics, the first and second laws of thermodynamics, law of

reproduction, sowing and reaping, variety and regularity, evaporation and condensation, and the law of cause and effect into motion. He created everything with balance. There is just the right amount of heat and cold, rain and snow. He gave the animals and the birds and bees instinct. He arranged for fish to live under water and birds to fly in the air, and squirrels to climb trees. He covered every base with the words, “*Let there be.*”

The masterpiece of His creation was to make man in His own image. “And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.” (Genesis 2:7) With trillions of cells, genes, chromosomes, personal DNA count, and the five senses, each person is the same as the next one, but at the same time no two have ever been exactly alike. The psalmist thought of this creation and said, “*I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well.*” (Psalms 139:14)

II. The work of inspiration

“*The writing was the writing of God, graven upon the tables.*” (Exodus 32:16) When Moses came down from the mountain after meeting with God, he shared with the people what God had said. His message to the people was not a commentary on what God had said, but the Lord’s actual words.

The apostle Paul wrote, “*All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:*” (2 Timothy 3:16) John the beloved disciple added, “*These are the true sayings of God.*” (Revelation 19:9)

God has given us a message. He wants us to understand that we have inherited a sinful nature and that He will not allow us into Heaven unless something is done about that condition. He tells us that there is a Heaven

and a Hell. He explains that He came to earth and was born of a virgin, lived without sin, died on a cross, was resurrected from the grave, ascended to Heaven, and will come into our heart and register us in the Book of Life if we will come to Him and allow Him to be our Saviour. We would do well to remember the words, *“God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?”* (Numbers 23:19)

III. The work of revelation

God has revealed Himself to us in three different ways as seen in Psalm 19.

First, *in the sky*. *“The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork.”* (Psalms 19:1)

Then *in the Scriptures*. *“The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul:”* (Psalms 19:7)

Also *through the Servant*. *“Moreover by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward.”* (Psalms 19:11)

“But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.” (1 Corinthians 2:9,10)

However, God has shut the door of Heaven to the unbeliever. Not only has God shut out Heaven (Jn 3:18), but He has also closed the Bible to them. Paul explained, *“But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.”* (1 Corinthians 2:14) Then he adds, *“In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them*

which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.” (2 Corinthians 4:4)

IV. The work of salvation

Jesus came to get people saved. *“For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.” (Luke 19:10)*

It is exciting to read the stories of people in the Bible being saved: The account of the Ethiopian eunuch being led to Christ by Philip; the story of Paul’s miracle conversion on the Damascus road; Cornelius turning to the Lord and causing several hundred of his soldiers and their families to get saved; Lydia, the seller of purple, opening her heart to the Lord along with several of her lady friends; the Philippian jailor getting saved at midnight along with his family and his deputies; and the woman at the well receiving living water, then getting several men to accept Christ.

It is also such a blessing to think back on all the souls saved in the two years I worked as a soul winner for Dr. Lee Roberson while I was in college. Several hundred people accepted the Lord up and down the roads in the first town where I pastored my first church. Then several thousand were converted, baptized and joined the church in my big city church in Louisville, Kentucky. Several hundred more were saved in Murfreesboro, Tennessee, in my final pastorate.

Then, of course, every day of my life I think of my own salvation and thank God for a young man who believed in confrontational evangelism. He approached me on the assembly line at a General Motors plant, shared the gospel message, and changed my life and eternity. He was responsible for my children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren also coming to know the Lord.

Recently I was able to assist a young man on a flight to Atlanta to receive Christ. Then on the next leg of my journey into Illinois a young female

college professor opened her heart to the Lord. At the motel the desk clerk prayed with me and invited Jesus into her heart, and on my way to the room a hotel maid did the same.

After preaching twice in Chicago recently, I flew home. A lady on the plane told me she had just buried her mother; then in despair her father had taken his own life; then she had spent several days in the hospital. As she wept, I suggested that she needed to allow the Lord to help her bear all of these troubles. She said, "I would like to be a Christian." It was a joy to help her receive Christ. After the plane landed, I took my wife to the Cheesecake Factory for her birthday, and I told our waitress about the woman. She started weeping and said, "I would like to do that too."

All saved the same way but in different circumstances! Jew and Gentile! Moral and immoral! Religious and non-religious! Men and women! Hallelujah, what a Saviour! "*For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.*" (Ephesians 2:8-9)

V. The work of sanctification

The apostle Paul names ten of the worst of sinners, then writes, "*such were some of you.*" Then he states, "*but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.*" (1 Corinthians 6:11) What is sanctification and how does one go about obtaining it? The Bible speaks of three different stages of sanctification.

A. Positional sanctification

The word "sanctified" means "separated" or "set apart." The first of these stages is at the moment of salvation when we are "*delivered from the power of darkness and [He] has translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son.*" Col. 1:13. This is positional sanctification, our position "in Christ."

We are in the world but we are not of the world. That is also the moment of justification. At this time the believer is a babe in Christ and will desire the milk of the word. *“As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:”* (1 Peter 2:2)

B. Progressive sanctification

"Progressive" or "practical" sanctification takes place as we are separated from the world in our daily living and separated unto God in our holy living for God. *“Come out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord...let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”* (2 Cor. 6:17-7:1) This is a growth process. We are to be *“changed into the same image (of Christ) from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.”* (2 Cor. 3:18) That change is progressive sanctification.

C. Perfect sanctification

"Perfect" or "permanent" sanctification will take place when we are taken out of this world and we see Jesus *“as He is”* (1 John 3:2) and we are *“like Him,”* speaking of the church, the body of Christ, all of us believers. The Bible says, *“That he might sanctify and cleanse it . . . and present it to himself a glorious church not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing but that it should be holy and without blemish.”* (Eph. 5:26, 27)

VI. The work of preservation

Eternal life is eternal and everlasting life is everlasting. These words mean exactly what they say. The words eternal and everlasting are inspired and infallible words and were used by Jesus to explain the gift He was giving to us. Paul stated, *“the gift of God is eternal life.”* (Rom. 6:23) We don't stop doing bad things and start doing good things to earn this gift. The gift is given to us based on believing, not doing. *“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.” (John 3:16) “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.” (John 3:36) “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.” (John 5:24) If we should lose it or if it should be taken away then it was not eternal, but conditional life. John recorded the word of Jesus when He said, “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.” (John 10:27-28) Once again the word “never” means “never.” This eternal life is in the hand of Jesus and in the hand of God, not our hand.

He promises us that we are destined to be conformed to His image. *“For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.” (Romans 8:29) He promised that we will have a glorified body. “Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.” (Philippians 3:21) Our glorified body will be like His glorified body. “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.” (1 John 3:2)*

VII. THE WORK OF GLORIFICATION

Only two in almost fifty times the word *glorified* is used in the Bible it is referring to God or Jesus being glorified; Paul’s statement in the book of Romans refers to believers: *“Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.” (Romans 8:30) He mentioned also that believers will get a glorified body. “For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house*

not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.” (2 Corinthians 5:1) When Moses and Elijah appeared on the mount in Matthew 17, they were in their glorified bodies. Jesus also was transfigured into His glorified body. Matthew wrote, *“And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light.”* (17:2) Mark stated, *“And his raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them.”* (9:3) And Luke tells us, *“And it came to pass, as they were much perplexed thereabout, behold, two men stood by them in shining garments:”* (24:4) Daniel gives us some light on this when he says, *“And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.”* (12:3) An added note on this is, there is no sun, moon, or stars in Heaven because the Lord in His glorified form is the light thereof. *“And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.”* (Revelation 21:23)

VIII. The work of culmination

The Bible clearly teaches that the Lord will wrap things up on the earth by taking His people out before the tribulation judgment comes. Before the flood, God spared Noah and his family. Before the fire and brimstone, the Lord spared Lot and his two daughters. *“And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man.”* (Luke 17:26) *“Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all.”* (Luke 17:28, 29)

We read also, *“Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.”* (1 Corinthians 10:11) After the Rapture will come the Judgment Seat of Christ for believers. *“For we must all appear before*

the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.” (2 Corinthians 5:10)

This is followed by the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. *“Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb.”* (Revelation 19:9) The Tribulation Period or the time of Jacob’s trouble will take place while the Judgment and the Marriage Feast are taking place in Heaven.

The Lord will appear after that in power and great glory to destroy the antichrist and his army and set up his thousand-year kingdom on earth. *“And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming:”* (2 Thessalonians 2:8) Also, *“the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ:”* (2 Thessalonians 1:7-8)

The devil will be cast into the Lake of Fire. *“And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.”* (Revelation 20:10)

The Great White Throne judgment will bring things to a close before the Eternal Day begins. *“But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.”* (Revelation 21:8) *“And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.”* (Revelation 20:15)

This is the end of time and the beginning of the Eternal Day. As we read in the model prayer, *“For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.”* (Matthew 6:13)