

A Lord's Day Snippet!

Biblical And Southern Studies

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Thanksgiving Prayer

(Taken from a Virginia Grade School *Elementary Music Book*, 1936)

1 We gather together to ask the Lord's blessing;
He chastens and hastens His will to make known;
The wicked oppressing cease them from distressing.
Sing praises to His name, He forgets not His own.

2 Beside us to guide us, our God with us joining,
 Ordaining, maintaining His kingdom divine;
So from the beginning the fight we were winning:
Thou, Lord, was at our side, Let the glory be Thine!

3 We all do extol Thee, Thou leader in battle,
And pray that Thou still our defender wilt be.
 Let Thy congregation escape tribulation;
Thy name be ever prais'd! And Thy people be free!

Theodore Baker (1851-1934)

A Thankful Entrance before God

"Enter into his gates with thanksgiving."

Psalm 100:4

It is certainly fitting that nations give thanks, that congregations give thanks, that families give thanks, and that individuals give thanks! The way to enter the presence of God is through His Son the Lord Jesus Christ and His redemption being accompanied “with thanksgiving.” The Psalmist, for example, gives reasons for your giving thanks in Psalm 65. If our entrance before our God is with thanksgiving, then this Psalm gives some of those reasons. Yes, we should give thanks to God for who He is and for what He has done. So, consider some of those reasons from Psalm 65:

The *first* reason for thanksgiving is because the Lord our God hears our prayers—“O thou that hearest prayer” (v. 2). To hear prayer is to answer prayer. A *second* reason for thanksgiving is the purging of the sins that overpower us—“Iniquities prevail against me: as for our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away” (v. 3). Sin separates us from God,

and its removal removes that separation. The *third* reason for thanksgiving is the divine choice of God—“Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee” (v. 4). Oh, the sovereign work of God in bringing His own unto Himself as Jesus said, “No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him.” One who is saved by grace is saved “with full consent against his will” [R. Erskine]. A *fourth* reason for thanksgiving is our God answers us—“By terrible things in righteousness wilt thou answer us, O God of our salvation” who is our confidence, our strength, and the controller of providence (vv. 5-8). A *fifth* reason we give thanks is because of the Lord’s interest in us—“Thou visitest the earth” by watering it, enriching it, and blessing it with germinating crops (vv. 9-10). And *lastly* a final reason for thanksgiving is our God crowns the year with goodness—“Thou crownest the year with goodness” causing rejoicing and joy in creation (vv. 11-13). Even creation praises God—“The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth His handiwork” and so should we lead in this declaration of the glory of God.

Psalm 65 reminds us that we should not only give thanks but if we fail, we lose the blessings of doing so, you may rest assured that the earth will not fail its Creator in doing so. We are responsible for being thankful. Consider the words the Holy Spirit gave to the Apostle Paul, “In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you” (1 Thee. 5:18). Yes, we are told that under all circumstances we are to give thanks whether persecution or bereavement or in rejoicing. And why should we? “This is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.”

The first president of this Republic, called these United States, was a Christian gentleman from Virginia by the name of General George Washington and he believed in entering the courts of the Lord with thanksgiving. So much so that he made the first *National Thanksgiving Proclamation* in 1789. In that proclamation he declared:

Whereas it is the duty of all Nations to acknowledge the providence of Almighty God, to obey his will, to be grateful for his benefits, and humbly to implore his protection and favor—and whereas both Houses of Congress have by their joint Committee requested me “to recommend to the People of the United States a day of public thanksgiving and prayer to be observed by acknowledging with grateful hearts the many signal favors of Almighty God especially by affording them an opportunity peaceably to establish a form of government for their safety and happiness.”

Now therefore I do recommend and assign Thursday the 26th day of November next to be devoted by the People of these States to the service of that great and glorious Being, who is the beneficent Author of all the good that was, that is, or that will be—That we may then all unite in rendering unto him our sincere and humble thanks—for his kind care and protection of the People of this Country

previous to their becoming a Nation—for the signal and manifold mercies, and the favorable interpositions of his Providence which we experienced in the course and conclusion of the late war—for the great degree of tranquility, union, and plenty, which we have since enjoyed—for the peaceable and rational manner, in which we have been enabled to establish constitutions of government for our safety and happiness, and particularly the national One now lately instituted—for the civil and religious liberty with which we are blessed; and the means we have of acquiring and diffusing useful knowledge; and in general for all the great and various favors which he hath been pleased to confer upon us.

And also that we may then unite in most humbly offering our prayers and supplications to the great Lord and Ruler of Nations and beseech him to pardon our national and other transgressions—to enable us all, whether in public or private stations, to perform our several and relative duties properly and punctually—to render our national government a blessing to all the people, by constantly being a Government of wise, just, and constitutional laws, discreetly and faithfully executed and obeyed—to protect and guide all Sovereigns and Nations (especially such as have shewn kindness unto us) and to bless them with good government, peace, and concord—to promote the knowledge and practice of true religion and virtue, and the encrease of science among them and us—and generally to grant unto all Mankind such a degree of temporal prosperity as he alone knows to be best.

Given under my hand at the City of New York the third day of October in the year of our Lord 1789.
Go: Washington

And the first proclamation for the Confederate States of America by its first president a Christian gentleman from Mississippi, Jefferson Davis:

WHEREAS, it hath pleased Almighty God, the Sovereign Disposer of events, to protect and defend us hitherto in our conflicts with our enemies as to be unto them a shield.

And whereas, with grateful thanks we recognize His hand and acknowledge that not unto us, but unto Him, belongeth the victory, and in humble dependence upon His almighty strength, and trusting in the justness of our purpose, we appeal to Him that He may set at naught the efforts of our enemies, and humble them to confusion and shame.

Now therefore, I, Jefferson Davis, President of the Confederate States, in view of impending conflict, do hereby set apart Friday, the 15th day of November, as a day of national humiliation and prayer, and do hereby invite the reverend clergy and the people of these Confederate States to repair on that day to their homes and usual places of public worship, and to implore blessing of

Almighty God upon our people, that he may give us victory over our enemies, preserve our homes and altars from pollution, and secure to us the restoration of peace and prosperity.

Given under hand and seal of the Confederate States at Richmond, this the 31st day of October, year of our Lord, one thousand eight hundred and sixty-one.

By the President, JEFFERSON DAVIS

Oh, how things have changed since those times.