

THE CHRISTIAN'S THANKSGIVING

BIBLE TEXT : Psalm 107:1-43

LESSON 47 Junior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "Oh that men would praise the LORD for his goodness" (Psalm 107:21).

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

Psalm 107:1-43

¹ O give thanks unto the LORD,
for *he is* good: for his
mercy *endureth* for ever.
² Let the redeemed of the LORD
say *so*, whom he hath redeemed
from the hand of the enemy;
³ And gathered them out of the
lands, from the east, and from the
west, from the north, and from the
south.
⁴ They wandered in the wilderness
in a solitary way; they found no
city to dwell in.
⁵ Hungry and thirsty, their soul
fainted in them.
⁶ Then they cried unto the LORD
in their trouble, *and* he delivered
them out of their distresses.
⁷ And he led them forth by the
right way, that they might go to a
city of habitation.
⁸ Oh that *men* would praise the
LORD *for* his goodness, and *for* his
wonderful works to the children of
men!
⁹ For he satisfieth the longing soul,
and filleth the hungry soul with
goodness.
¹⁰ Such as sit in darkness and in
the shadow of death, *being* bound
in affliction and iron;
¹¹ Because they rebelled against
the words of God, and contemned
the counsel of the most High:
¹² Therefore he brought down
their heart with labour; they fell
down, and *there was* none to help.
¹³ Then they cried unto the LORD
in their trouble, *and* he saved
them out of their distresses.
¹⁴ He brought them out of
darkness and the shadow of
death, and brake their bands in

NOTES

Freedom of Worship

When our Pilgrim Fathers came to this country to make homes for themselves in a new land, they were looking for a place where they could worship God in righteousness and true holiness. They did not care that there were no cities to come to, no stores in which to buy the necessities of life. They were willing to endure hardships and suffering, to get along with the little they could make for themselves, in order to be free in spirit and to worship the Lord as their conscience told them was right.

It is hard for us in this land of liberty today to realise that everyone has not had the privileges we have of going to any church we want to, whenever we want. We shall be more grateful for the blessings of God if we stop to consider the toil and tears of some faithful saints of the Most High who were willing to die rather than give up their belief in the Almighty God. History tells us that an estimated 50,000,000 people died as martyrs because they stood for the truth of God's Word. They died cruel and inhuman deaths: crucified on crosses, torn in conflicts with wild animals, burned at the stake, pulled limb from limb -- all because they would not yield their faith in Christ, their hope of eternal life. They went to be with Jesus and received a glorious reward, while those who tried to stamp out Christianity will suffer the pangs of torment throughout a lost eternity.

Trust in God

The Pilgrims had faith in God that He would take care of His children in this virgin country. Their hardships and privations were severe that first winter. These early settlers besides having difficulty in getting enough to eat, found that the unfriendly neighbours would come upon them, steal from them, and sometimes burn down their houses which had been so hard to build. But the Pilgrims, although often discouraged, never lost their trust in God. When summer came their crops grew abundantly, and at the harvest time they gathered in produce to be stored for the winter. How grateful they were for the providence of God! They did not forget God when they had their houses built and food stored for the following winter. They proclaimed a special day of thanksgiving to their Saviour Who had brought them through grave trials and provided for their needs.

Grateful Hearts

That first Thanksgiving morning the people came from all around the settlement to the little church built of logs. They came with glowing hearts to thank God for the blessings of a home in which His name could be honoured, a church which no government would restrict. They knew there were still hardships ahead, but had not God brought them this far with victory, and would He not lead them on triumphant? Oh, the joy that filled them that day, that they were free in heart and conscience! In that clearing in the wilderness a group of people met and sang songs of praise to the Lord of the harvest Who had not forgotten His own.

The Song of Moses

They must have remembered other children of God who had stepped forth boldly on God's promises and been led into a

sunder.

¹⁵ Oh that *men* would praise the LORD *for* his goodness, and *for* his wonderful works to the children of men!

¹⁶ For he hath broken the gates of brass, and cut the bars of iron in sunder.

¹⁷ Fools because of their transgression, and because of their iniquities, are afflicted.

¹⁸ Their soul abhorreth all manner of meat; and they draw near unto the gates of death.

¹⁹ Then they cry unto the LORD in their trouble, *and* he saveth them out of their distresses.

²⁰ He sent his word, and healed them, and delivered *them* from their destructions.

²¹ Oh that *men* would praise the LORD *for* his goodness, and *for* his wonderful works to the children of men!

²² And let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving, and declare his works with rejoicing.

²³ They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters;

²⁴ These see the works of the LORD, and his wonders in the deep.

²⁵ For he commandeth, and raiseth the stormy wind, which lifteth up the waves thereof.

²⁶ They mount up to the heaven, they go down again to the depths: their soul is melted because of trouble.

²⁷ They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wits' end.

²⁸ Then they cry unto the LORD in their trouble, and he bringeth them out of their distresses.

²⁹ He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still.

³⁰ Then are they glad because they be quiet; so he bringeth them unto their desired haven.

"promised land." Perhaps they read the song of Moses, which the Children of Israel sang when they came out of Egyptian bondage: "I will sing unto the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea. The LORD is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation: he is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt him. ... Thou in thy mercy hast led forth the people which thou hast redeemed: thou hast guided them in thy strength unto thy holy habitation" (Exodus 15:1-19). The Pilgrims could say Amen to that song, for surely the mercy of the Lord had led them forth, just as He had led the Children of Israel.

Jerusalem's Walls Rebuilt

Nehemiah had also been the leader of a group of God's children when he took them from Babylonian captivity to rebuild Jerusalem. One day as he was performing his duties as a servant in the palace of a heathen king, he felt the call of God upon him to repair the Holy City that had lain waste for many years. He gathered a few followers around him, and, with the permission of the king, set to work to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. After much opposition and toil, the work was completed, and the people gathered for the dedication, "with gladness, both with thanks-givings, and with singing, with cymbals, psalteries, and with harps." "Also that day they offered great sacrifices, and rejoiced: for God had made them rejoice with great joy: the wives also and the children rejoiced: so that the joy of Jerusalem was heard even afar off" (Nehemiah 12:27, 43).

David's Gratitude

In David's time, when the Ark of the Covenant was brought to Jerusalem after the Children of Israel had triumphed over the Philistines, there was great rejoicing among the people. David was the writer of many Psalms, and he wrote one on this occasion: "Give thanks unto the LORD call upon his name, make known his deeds among the people. Sing unto him, sing psalms unto him, talk ye of all his wondrous works. ... Sing unto the LORD, all the earth; shew forth from day to day his salvation. ... For great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised" (I Chronicles 16:8-36). Blessed is the people who give glory to God for His deliverance, who recognise the hand of God in their victories.

The Happy Man

All these people worked hard, fought battles and won them, denied themselves physical comforts to do the will of God; and they found joy in their sacrifices. What is it that makes people happy? It is not having all the money they want, nor the things that money can buy. Many poor people think if they had as much money as the rich they would surely be happy, but the Bible says that the love of money is the root of all evil. Where there is sin there is no happiness. "Even in laughter the heart is sorrowful; and the end of that mirth is heaviness" (Proverbs 14:13). Solomon had very great riches; he said at one time that whatever his eyes desired he took unto himself. He built great houses, planted beautiful gardens, made pools of water for his pleasure, gathered silver and gold about him. He had more than anyone in Jerusalem had ever had. But was he happy? This is what he said: "Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, ... and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun" (Ecclesiastes 2:11). All the works of our hands, all the things we possess will never make us happy.

Then who is the happy man? "Happy is that people, whose God is the LORD" (Psalm 144:15). "Happy is the man that findeth wisdom" (Proverbs 3:13). That means godly wisdom: "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom" (Psalm 111:10).

³¹ Oh that *men* would praise the LORD *for* his goodness, and *for* his wonderful works to the children of men!

³² Let them exalt him also in the congregation of the people, and praise him in the assembly of the elders.

³³ He turneth rivers into a wilderness, and the watersprings into dry ground;

³⁴ A fruitful land into barrenness, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein.

³⁵ He turneth the wilderness into a standing water, and dry ground into watersprings.

³⁶ And there he maketh the hungry to dwell, that they may prepare a city for habitation;

³⁷ And sow the fields, and plant vineyards, which may yield fruits of increase.

³⁸ He blesseth them also, so that they are multiplied greatly; and suffereth not their cattle to decrease.

³⁹ Again, they are minished and brought low through oppression, affliction, and sorrow.

⁴⁰ He poureth contempt upon princes, and causeth them to wander in the wilderness, *where there is* no way.

⁴¹ Yet setteth he the poor on high from affliction, and maketh *him* families like a flock.

⁴² The righteous shall see *it*, and rejoice: and all iniquity shall stop her mouth.

⁴³ Whoso *is* wise, and will observe these *things*, even they shall understand the lovingkindness of the LORD.

When a man is happy he will naturally praise God; he cannot help but praise God; the praises will bubble up in his heart even when he is distressed or afflicted. Someone asked Haydn, the great composer, why his church music was always cheerful. He answered, "I cannot make it otherwise. I write according to the thoughts I feel: when I think upon God, my heart is so full of joy that the notes dance and leap, as it were, from my pen: and since God has given me a cheerful heart, it will be pardoned me that I serve Him with a cheerful spirit."

That happiness which the love of God puts into our hearts makes our labours lighter; one will not get so tired at his work if he has a song in his heart. Nehemiah said, "The joy of the LORD is your strength" (Nehemiah 8:10). The joy in the heart will be reflected on the face; and when others see that smile they will smile, too. Oh, the joy that comes in full surrender to God! "For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands" (Isaiah 55:12). (Refer to Lesson 31, Book 3.)

QUESTIONS

1. Why did the Pilgrims come to America?
2. Were they the only people who suffered for God?
3. What did the Pilgrims do after their crops were harvested?
4. Who led the Children of Israel out of Egypt, besides Moses?
5. When Nehemiah completed the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem, who took part in the dedication?
6. Who is the happy man?

