

GETTING INTO HIS PRESENCE

By Phil Arms

“Let us come before His Presence with Thanksgiving....(Ps. 95:2)

How long has it been since you sat down with pen and paper and made a list of the things for which you are thankful? Most of us are pre-occupied with the daily tasks of dealing with the urgency that plague us—paying the bills, handling conflicts, and or dealing with the pressing demands of family and jobs. Most usually fall into bed exhausted every night, too tired to spend any quality time with the Father. At best, they go through their “Now I lay me down to sleep...” prayer routine or beg God to intervene in some pressing need that threatens to overwhelm them.

Then there are those who only seek God when they face an emergency. Their prayer life is regulated by the latest occurrence of catastrophic events that befall them. Certainly, such times are a good time to seek the Lord but perhaps such emergencies would not occur so often if our reaching out to God was a daily experience rather than a cry of desperation during times of stress. It is Biblical to suppose that God keeps some people in a pressure cooker because that is the only time they seek Him.

Do What?

Since this is the time of year when we have a special day devoted to Thanksgiving it would be a good time for you to list those things for which you are thankful. And do remember any and all good things that touches our lives emanates from the Lord God.

James wrote, “Every good and perfect gift is from above and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variableness or shadow of turning.” (James 1:17)

Let me assure you that nothing on earth moves heaven as quickly as praise and thanksgiving to the Father. In fact, God’s Word declares that God inhabits the praise of His people. (Psalms 22:3)

If you want to put yourself in the presence of God then find a quiet place where you cannot be distracted or interrupted and begin to seriously praise and thank God for His bountiful goodness to you. You may be in dire straits with overwhelming problems but if you will look away from the trouble for a moment and contemplate all the ways in which God's grace and goodness have touched your life you will discover a new depth in your prayer life and circumstances. The Psalmist declares, "Enter His gates with thanksgiving and enter His court with praise."(Psalm 100:4)

Obedying this principal will quickly bring perspective to any situation we face. It bears repeating, God moves with speed to make His Presence real when anyone begins to worship, adore and acknowledge His goodness and blessing upon them. Such obedience places one in an atmosphere where he senses God's majestic presence and feels His benevolence.

It's God's Fault?

But, then there are many, yes, even among Christians who have fallen into the trap of blaming God for every negative event or ill wind that blows into their life. Such individuals fail to understand that but for the grace of God, circumstances could be much worse.

Years ago, Suzanne and I were on our way to speak somewhere and a woman ran a stop sign and plowed into us. Thanks to God, no one was hurt but the two cars were badly damaged. The woman who hit us was distraught beyond measure and while we waited for the police and the tow trucks, Suzanne began to minister to the woman. Within the hour the woman had accepted Christ and had her life and eternal destination changed.

As we filled out the paperwork we found that the woman had no insurance on her car. To shorten the story, a week later her husband called pleading with me to sign a release from liability so he would not lose his license. I told him if he would come to church the next Sunday and attend the services that I would then sign the release. He most appreciatively agreed to do so.

The day he came to church God spoke to him about his need for Christ and he, too, gave his life to Jesus.

Had we not “accidentally” been run into these two would not have been exposed to the Gospel. So, understand God uses what we may consider tragedy to advance His Truth and purposes.

The Bible tells us, “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose.” (Romans 8:28) It does not say all things are good but rather that God will redeem any situation and turn it around to bring greater good to us.

Seeing What God Sees

Do not be a grumbler only focusing upon the negative in your life. Fall in love with Jesus and the eyes of your understanding are opened and you will begin to see the glory and purposes of God in all things that touch your life.

Each of us has so much to be thankful for if we would but take the time to dwell upon God’s goodness and blessings to us. His gift of His only begotten Son, His atoning death and resurrection that brings us redemption, forgiveness and salvation is a good place to begin when we want to express our thankfulness. Realize the eternal significance of just that. It’s overwhelming.

We have so much, so very much to thank Him for, such as our life, our family, our freedom, our home, our daily sustenance. Then there are the multitude of ways, some we are aware of and many which we are not, when He has intervened in our lives and the lives of our family and children to keep us from tragedy and destruction. And what of those throughout our lives that God has brought into our lives to be God’s voice and provide God’s guidance?

Have you praised Him today for the clothes on your back, the gas in your car, the shoes on your feet, the roof over your head or food on your table?

Little wonder the Psalmist proclaims, “Oh, give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good, for His mercy endures forever.” Psalm 107:1.

God ahead, I challenge you, make the list and then after you realize you need more paper to continue the list, you will begin to not only be overwhelmed with thankfulness but you will also begin to sense the presence of God in a new way. Ultimately, no matter how long our list becomes there is no way for us to know just how benevolent and gracious God has been to us in a million and one ways that we have not considered or even have knowledge of.

The multitude of tragedies He has steered us around, the numerous catastrophic illness He has kept at bay, the constant protective hand of God upon us, our families and our resources are all but a small part of God's non-stop intervention in our lives.

Little wonder that Paul wrote, "...it is the goodness of God that draws us to repentance." (Romans 2:4)

To Whom Much is Given, Much is Required

As you contemplate the wondrous blessings, protection and presence of God in your life, I pray that you would hasten to remember that you are not only a part of His glorious family but that you are also called to be part of His army. You are among the called. You have a purpose, a mission.

We and our obedience is all that stands between people and their eternal damnation. It is our time, our day and our responsibility to step up to the plate and stand in the gap to point those stumbling in a dark world to the Light of God and the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Consider that among your greatest ways to express thanksgiving to God for His precious gift of true life to you is to participate in making it available to those who know Him not.

It is my urgent prayer that there will be a renewed commitment among all of God's people and particularly among the friends of this ministry to sacrificially give of their resources in order to touch hearts.

It is impossible to truly recognize the blessings of God's goodness upon us and then to refuse to share His goodness and life to a dying world that surrounds us.

I close by saying that I am so thankful for all those, such as yourself, who have prayed for, stood by and helped support this ministry. You are a blessing beyond words to me and I daily thank God for you.

"Oh, magnify the Lord with me and let us exalt His Name together." Psalm 34:3