

American Decency Association

PO Box 202, Fremont MI 49412 231-924-4050 www.americandecency.org
Encouraging Christians to guard their heart November 2023

Thanksgiving in Times of Trouble

By Steve Huston



On Christmas morning, before opening gifts, my wife and children gather around to actively listen as I read the “Christmas Story” from Luke chapter two. I assume that many other lovers of Christ have a similar tradition. This month, my family will “gather together to ask the Lord’s blessing” and read the “Thanksgiving chapter,” 1 Chronicles chapter sixteen. Inside is found a wonderful “Thanksgiving” meal, bountiful praises to the most high God, a reminder that “he cometh to judge the earth,” and the real reason for all this praise and thanksgiving: **“O give thanks unto the Lord; for he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever.”** (v. 34)

It’s vital that we learn this truth and hide it deep within our heart and

mind; it must be our constant reminder of who God is. No matter the circumstance, regardless the hurt, turmoil, or trouble, our God IS good; his mercy endures FOREVER! This is reason enough to give Him thanks; He is worthy of all glory, honor, and praise.

With the unimaginable horrors of Hamas’ attacks upon Israel and her innocent civilians, we continue to believe that He who keeps Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps; God is still sovereign and allows such trial and hurt for His purpose. Even as I write these words, my heart is burdened for Israel and over the very real prospect of such tribulation coming to America and what that would mean for myself and my own friends and family. Even so, I am reminded and comforted by the words of Methodist preacher John Wesley and puritan divine John Flavel, as they point to the goodness and mercy of God as His sovereign hand of providence inter-

cedes in the lives of men and countries. I imagine that much of what we suffer can be attributed to God’s enduring mercy.

John Wesley, in writing to a young person regarding the various trials she was going through, encouraged her with these words: *“We know indeed that these as well as all things are ordered by unerring wisdom, and are given us exactly at the right time, and in due number, weight, and measure. And they continue no longer than is best, for chance has no share in the government of the world. The Lord reigns and disposes all things, strongly and sweetly, for the good of them that love him.”* Do we trust our God enough to give thanksgiving and praise in the midst of our storm?

John Flavel reminds us that: **“Sometimes God uses the hand of enemies. He has bowed the hearts of many wicked men to show great kindness to his people that were intended for evil and**

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*mischievous. Joseph's brothers designed his ruin, but God used it for his advancement. The design and scope of providence must not escape our thorough consideration. Above all others, this is the most warming and melting consideration—'And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose' (Rom. 8:28). ... Consider also the relation providence bears to our prayers! This is sweet meditation. **Prayer honours providence and providence honours prayer!**" O that our prayers would show our trust in the Creator of heaven and earth; let our heart echo that of the centurion, with tears, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief!" **Dear Reader, His mercy endureth forever!***

From a sermon in the late 1700s, we are reminded that God can send things which are in and of themselves "bad" and work

them to the "best ends" and that "things very bitter may work pleasant effects." He goes on to say that "*Even from the most wicked act that ever was committed, from the most lamentable event that ever happened, fruits admirably glorious, and immensely beneficial sprung; yet usually so blind are we as to be offended at such things, and from them to raise exceptions against Providence.*"

Later this same preacher reminds us that God "*meaneth thereby to exalt and improve our faith, being the less seen, that He may be the more believed: faith never rising higher, than when it doth soar to objects beyond our sight; when we can approve God's wisdom and justice in occurrences surmounting our conceit; when we can rely upon God's word and help, although the stream of His proceedings seemeth to cross our hopes.*"

In the midst of sorrow and heartache, when God's working "seems to cross our hopes," let us trust God's sovereignty and mercy. When the unimaginable becomes our

distinct reality, let us see beyond ourselves, trust in our Lord's eternal good, and rest in His abundant grace.

Times of trouble will come: international/national upheaval; disease and death; emotional, financial, mental strains; relational issues; sin, and a host of things too numerous to list. None of it matters in regard to our response to it. In the midst of the pain, sadness, or even devastation, **trust in God's goodness and mercy.**

Remember God's will for you as described by Paul in I Thesalonians 5:18. "*In every thing give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.*" When anxiety creeps in, remember to "*Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.*" (Phil. 4:6)

Come what may:

"O give thanks unto the Lord; for he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever."



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