

#71 “Count Your Blessings”

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Life comes at us fast. Some times good things happen, and other times we face an onslaught of difficulty after difficulty. When the waves of strife drive our faces into the dirt, we must not give up, lose heart, or stop trusting God. But lest “trusting God” becomes a mere cliché for us, God has ordained things for us to do to keep our minds fixed upon Him. It is a willful act that we must do to think upon Him and remember Who He is and what He has done. As Paul says in Colossians 3:2, “Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth.” We are vulnerable to getting overwhelmed by the nonsense of this world, and it is imperative that we remember some things, particularly, that which is true about the many blessings which we have in Christ.

Surely, we can think of instances of answered prayer, of God’s provision, of God’s graces, of God’s good and perfect gifts to us, and of the mercy of God. We have the memories of past acts of God on our behalf, and we have the promise of our future inheritance in Christ to look forward to. In the meantime, we have the Word of God to remind us of the good heart of God. We should benefit from all three. Many times in Israel’s history, after a wonderful work of God, the Israelites would dedicate a song or build an altar in memory of what God had done. They were to tell their children of the mighty acts of God lest future generations would forget His faithfulness. We, too, need to look back and remember what God has done for us. There is hope in remembering where we were and seeing how God in all wisdom delivered us from ourselves or from enemies. God is so gracious, and we cannot take His grace for granted. Rather, we should thank Him for His provision, trust Him in the present, and think on the great blessings coming to us in the coming kingdom.

Paul said in 1 Timothy 6:8, “If we have food and covering, with these we shall be content.” Elsewhere, we read that he learned to be content in any circumstance (Philippians 4:11), and it was the constant presence of Christ which made his contentment possible (Hebrews 13:5). Paul didn’t learn contentment overnight, but it was over time through a great deal of suffering. He learned not to overlook the basic, small provisions of God, but to be thankful for them. With mere food and covering, he could be content. Sometimes, God allows suffering to help us be mindful of all of the many smaller graces that He has given us in our lives. It is easy to overlook things and take them for granted. We should be thankful to God for them, as insignificant as they might seem. Just comparing our state to somebody who is in a worse state does not necessarily make us feel better. But if we thank God that we have the things that we realize that others might not be so fortunate to have, then our thanksgiving can change our perspective and bring us contentment. We need to maintain Paul’s attitude of thankfulness for all things and in even the most dire and unfair of circumstances. We need to make a point of it to thank God for the blessings that He gives us each and every day. One of the first steps into spiritual decay is to refuse to give God thanks after

experiencing His goodness and seeing His power manifested on our behalf (Romans 1:21). If we fail to acknowledge Him, we can begin to feel proud and self-sufficient, which is a dangerous road to be on. Rather, we need to acknowledge God's provision in everything (Proverbs 3:5-6) so that we can stay on the straight and narrow path.

God has been faithful, and He always will be. Even when we lack faith, still He is faithful (2 Timothy 2:13). Great is His faithfulness, and His mercies are new every morning (Lamentations 3:23). Every day God's thoughts toward us are so numerous that they cannot even be counted (Psalm 139:17-18). So already we have more things to be thankful for than we can even name or count. We have "every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ" (Ephesians 1:3). Eternity in paradise is ours. When all else fails, God never fails, and His mercy, love, and kindness endure forever (Psalm 52:1). As Paul knew firsthand, even in a dark, dank prison cell, these blessings stand fast.

There is so much to be thankful for, and so many blessings to count. In fact, if only we could see all that God does, we would have more mercies than we could ever account for. Let us not let the missiles of the devil knock us down such that we forget that we have Christ and the many blessings of God. We should never lose hope, and we should always have reason to be thankful. So what are you waiting for? Start counting!