

THE CALL AND THE CAUSE FOR THANKSGIVING  
1 Chronicles 16:23-34

Intro: Next Thursday our nation will be observing Thanksgiving Day. It is a national holiday set aside every year by Presidential Proclamation in which we are asked to give thanks to God for His blessings upon us. It is a day which goes back to the foundations of our nation, expressing, as it did then, the fact that our nation would not be where it is today without the blessing of God.

None of us would question the wisdom of having such a national day of thanksgiving. But we might wonder what our thanksgiving amounts to when we as a nation have chosen to deal with the things of God as we have, and, on the other hand, when we have chosen to turn from many of the great moral principles which made our nation great.

But it is not my purpose this morning to talk about those things. I want to talk about a Christian's thanksgiving. My text is 1 Chron. 16:34.

You will find this very same statement repeated in Psa. 106:1; 107:1; 118:1, 29; 136:1. You will find similar statements in 2 Chron. 5:13; 7:3; 20:21; Ezra 3:11; Jer. 33:11.

Undoubtedly, then, it was a well-known statement to the Israelites, and one that was heard often during their times of worship. Let us examine it in detail this morning.

It is very likely that they were originally the words of David. In the passage before us the Israelites under King David's direction has just succeeded in bringing the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem. It was a time of unparalleled joy. David and his people were jubilant. It seemed to be a sign that great blessings were ahead of Israel as a nation because it meant that the presence of God was being restored to the people.

So David wrote this Psalm. In it he traces very briefly the history of Israel. But right from the very first we can see that he was issuing

I. A CALL TO GIVE THANKS TO GOD.

It is especially prominent in our text: "O give thanks unto the Lord."

A. To whom is the call issued?

It was issued to the people of God--to all of them,

and only to them.

All men need to give thanks to God, but believers have things to thank God for that the world knows nothing about.

This is one gift all of us can give.

The Bible does not indicate that just one day out of 365 should be given to thanksgiving, but instead Paul says, "In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you" (1 Thess. 5:18).

- B. Why should such a call be issued? Why should it be found so many times in the Word of God?

Does not your own heart give you the answer to this question? It is because there is no other thing we are all more negligent about doing.

Thanksgiving is one form of prayer. Our greatest weakness is prayer. But of all of the kinds of praying we do, this is the one which we do the least.

It is practically unheard of for believers to spend a time in prayer occasionally when all we do is "give thanks."

- C. What are the important features of this call?

There are two.

1. First, we are to give thanks to "the Lord." This is Jehovah.

There is nothing I would like to do more than to stop here for an investigation of the meaning of this name, but I must resist the temptation. However, I must point out two things about the name, Jehovah.

- a. It is a name formed from the Hebrew verb, to be. And basic to the idea in the name, Jehovah, is the truth that our God is one who never changes.
- b. Since this name is first emphasized in Ex. 6 and related back to Abraham, it seems to bring together all of the revelations of God from Abraham to Moses, and say, that all that

God was revealed to be during that time, HE ALWAYS WILL BE!

So, the praise is to be offered to Him--not to Abraham, not to Moses, and not even to David for bringing the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem!

How much David here is like Moses in Ex. 15.

But let us look at the second important feature in this call.

2. What does it mean to "give thanks"?

The Hebrew verb literally means, with an extended hand, point out, one by one, the blessings for which you are thankful.

Have you ever done this? This is the idea in the hymn,

"Count your many blessings, name them one by one, And it will surprise you what the Lord hath done."

Ill. Going through the Custis Lee Mansion in Arlington Cemetery--the detail with which the guide pointed to everything, and explained all about everything.

But, now, when we turn to see

II. THE CAUSE FOR THANKSGIVING

we are surprised to find, not blessings (as such), but two wonderful things about the One from whom all blessings come.

What are they?

A. "For He is good." This seems to be a synonym for kind.

No evil ever came from Him because He is good. All blessings ultimately come from Him. Let us not spend our time praising second causes while we ignore the original cause.

Spurgeon once said, "Those who only praise God because He does them good should rise to a higher note and give thanks to Him because He is good" (Vol 3, p. 101).

Cf. Matt. 19:17.

The second reason for giving thanks is

B. "For his mercy endureth for ever."

I mentioned in the beginning this morning how many times this verse is found in the Bible.

Psa. 118 begins and ends with it, BUT in the first four verses of that Psalm each verse ends with these words, "his mercy endureth for ever."

In Psa. 136 every verse of all 26 ends with, "for his mercy endureth for ever."

Why, I ask, do we have all of this repetition?

Ill. The reason Pharaoh's dream was repeated. Joseph said, "And for that the dream was doubled unto Pharaoh twice; it is because the thing is established by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass." Cf. Gen. 41:32.

Listen! One of the most established truths in the Word of God is this: "HIS MERCY ENDURETH FOR EVER." It is not repeated just once, but again and again and again.

We need to have this repeated. We forget it so easily.

Jehovah cannot change. He always has been, and always will be kind. Therefore, His mercy is inexhaustible, and it will never, never change.

God's kindness implies that man is needy, and His mercy indicates that he is unworthy of help. As long as we are capable of sin, we will have needs. And as long as God is merciful, He will meet us in our needs.

Concl: What tremendous truth in this verse! How we need to make this the starting point of our thanksgiving, then go on to praise Him for what He has done.

And these great truths will always stand regardless of the difficulty of the way.

For many of you, this has been a year of testing. In some cases, the testings still exist. Some of you have lost loved ones through death. Whatever the trial may be, this verse is just as much for you as it is for anyone else.

Whenever I study the Psalms I like to consult the

works of Charles Spurgeon. He spoke to the hearts of men. In his comments on Psalm 136 he has included a poem written by someone else, and I would like to close with the words of this poem this morning to emphasize what I have been saying.

"What! give God thanks for everything  
 Whatever may befall--  
 Whatever the dark clouds may bring?  
 Yes, give God thanks for all;  
 For safe he leads thee, hand in hand,  
 To thy blessed Fatherland.

"What! thank him for the lonely way  
 He to me hath given--  
 For the path which, day by day  
 Seems farther off from heaven?  
 Yes, thank him for he holds thy hand  
 And leads thee to thy Fatherland.

"Close, close he shields thee from all harm;  
 And if the road be steep,  
 Thou know'st his everlasting arm,  
 In safety doth thee keep,  
 Although thou canst not understand  
 The windings to thy Fatherland.

"What blessing, thinkest thou, will he,  
 Who knows the good and ill,  
 Keep back, if it is good for thee,  
 While climbing up the hill?  
 Then trust him, and keep fast his hand,  
 He leads thee to thy Fatherland.