

Thanksgiving Reflections: Giving Thanks in Times Like These

Some of you may have seen your life savings evaporate in the financial chaos that has brought down some of the pillars of our economy. Some may have lost your homes in a hurricane or foreclosure. Many of us have a personal stake in the battles against terrorism, and thousands of families are grieving for brave soldiers who have sacrificed their lives overseas. Most of us are anxious about the upcoming elections and what the future holds.

And that's just the national headlines—not to mention individual tragedies like cancer and divorce that overshadow many of our lives.

In times like these, when nations are desperate for someone they can trust, Christians know we can always find strength and hope in the Word of the Lord. He tells us through the apostle Paul, "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you" (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18).

Paul knew what it meant to praise God in the midst of suffering. He gave up a relatively comfortable and prestigious lifestyle to become an itinerant preacher who was repeatedly persecuted, beaten, shipwrecked and imprisoned. When he prayed to God for relief from a thorn in the flesh—what he called "a messenger of Satan to buffet me"—God answered, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9).

As the world struggles to cope with disease, famine, war, disaster and poverty, it is our responsibility as Christians to assure the world that God is still in control and that He

has a plan to rescue all who repent of their sins and trust Jesus as their Lord and Savior. Not only has He suffered on our behalf, but He has promised to bear our burdens. "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28, NIV).

For that, we can be eternally thankful.

This old world may be falling apart, but ultimately this is not our home. "Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe" (Hebrews 12:28, NIV).

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