

The Promise of Gratitude

In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. —1 Peter 1:6

If we wait for circumstances to change before we heed God's command to rejoice, we may wait a long time! If then we begin rejoicing only when circumstances change—but only then, what kind of gratitude is that? If we promise to show gratitude, we can only make good that promise if we maintain a positive sense of being thankful no matter how adverse the circumstances.

What, then, is the consequence of rejoicing and showing thanks when you don't feel like it? It glorifies God. It shows a highly developed faith. It is observed by the angels. It is the greatest threat to our enemy, the devil. It shows how deeply we believe what we claim to believe. "If you falter in times of trouble, how small is your strength!" (Prov. 24:10). Rejoicing in the Lord, the proof of our gratitude, regardless of circumstances shows that we are genuine and that our faith is real.

What is more, it has an extraordinary way of moving God to act. This is the promise of gratitude. I never tire of reading or repeating the account of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, who was told that a vast army was coming against him. Alarmed, the king called a fast for all the people. A prophet of God stepped forward. "He said, 'Listen, King Jehoshaphat and all who live in Judah and Jerusalem! This is what the Lord says to you: 'Do not be afraid or discouraged because of this vast army. For the battle is not yours, but God's'" (2 Chron. 20:15). Jehoshaphat and all the people fell down and worshiped. The battle began. There had never been a battle quite like it.

After consulting the people, Jehoshaphat appointed men to sing to the Lord and to praise Him for the splendor of His holiness as they went out at the head of the army, saying: "Give thanks to the Lord, for his love endures forever" (v. 21).

The result: God stepped in. The enemy was suddenly overturned.

Gratitude thus contains an inherent promise. The promise is, show thankfulness and you get God's attention. Show gratitude, and God gets involved. He is moved by praise and can't keep from showing it!

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