

439 Our Thankfulness

In this Reflection we begin briefly with Israel once again, where things are changing rapidly in this tiny nation which holds such a key place in unfolding scriptural prophecies.

A very odd coalition of political parties may soon be sworn in to form the new Israeli government. It consists of three Jewish parties, Yamina (“right-wing”), Yesh Atid (“center-left”) and Meretz (“far-left, anti-Zionist”), plus the Arab-Israeli Ra’am party (Muslim Brotherhood), this being the first time that a Muslim party may have a place within an Israeli government. As Avi Abelow of “Pulse of Israel” comments – “They call it a ‘unity government, yet it is anything but ...”. The long-term survival of such a coalition government is highly unlikely, meaning that Israel remains politically hamstrung, a fact recognised by Israel’s enemies and exacerbated by the Biden administration’s appeasement of those enemies. These are clearly dangerous times for Israel, and we continue to follow developments with care, prayer and thankfulness, for the “peace of Jerusalem” of Psalm 122.6 will surely be achieved in God’s good time and manner.

Now we come on to the Covid-19 pandemic, also once again. This pandemic was caused very likely by human malice or ineptitude, and we can assume that the Lord God our Creator is allowing it to run as a warning to sinful mankind to return to Him in repentance while there is still opportunity.

Clearly Covid-19 has not yet gone away but we see that that divine warning remains largely unheeded. Instead, “science” is praised to the rafters, “vaccines are king”, and the brave new post-Covid world is eagerly anticipated amid the cries of “Man’s ingenuity has triumphed again!”; (and, thanks be to God, in some ways, Yes, it has triumphed once again, but the Creator of all that ingenuity is brushed aside). Does not this old, wilful ignoring of Almighty God precisely prove His point in letting this pandemic run? – so the steady ticking of the clock towards divine judgment quietly continues. We bear a responsibility to make these things known as and when we have opportunity, in a world which seems heedless of where things are going.

Slowly restrictions are being lifted, allowing us to meet up with others once more as in pre-Covid times. This return to normal social interaction may well not be as straightforward as it sounds for some of us, who will have been coping through the months of isolation perhaps with

loneliness or depression; for such folk, the effort of “bouncing back” to the old times is a challenge in itself.

To help ourselves and one another in this task, we can follow Paul’s example found at the start of his various epistles, which are being written of course to people he has not seen for some time, if ever. Here we will use the two Thessalonian epistles as our example, though this pattern is worth finding in his other epistles too.

After introducing himself and his companions, Paul lovingly greets his fellow Christians - “Grace unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ” (eg., I and II Thessalonians 1.1b & 1.2) – not a bad version of “Hello” for us also to use these days with one another!

Then straightaway Paul encourages them with his thankfulness and prayers. In I Thessalonians 1.2-10 and II Thessalonians 1.3-4 he mentions their faith, labour, love, patience, hope, joy, example and perseverance in times of affliction. We can just imagine how such affirming words - that Paul was thankful for them and was praying for them - brought blessing and encouragement to his readers, especially when they were passing through times of difficulty.

Just so for us today as we start to reach out again to each other, also with loving encouragement, thankfulness and prayers. We know how this attitude of simple thankfulness can be such a “balm to the soul”, our thanks being expressed first to the Lord for all our solid and unchanging blessings in Christ; and then expressed to each other – for being each other! For, praise God, we “are all one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3.28b): we have our different characters, backgrounds, outlooks and gifts, but in Christ each of us belongs, and matters, and is needed within the one body of Christ (Romans 12.5 / I Corinthians 12.12-14).

Keeping these spiritual realities in mind makes it much easier for us to be genuinely thankful for one another! – happy to take our place and play our God-given part, be that grand or obscure, for the well-being of others, and for the greater glory of God Himself through Christ our Lord.

We are clearly living in chaotic times where steady, bold, thankful Christian lives, deeds and words, all founded on the Lordship of the risen Christ, are needed as much as ever. “And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, [do] all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him” (Colossians 3.17, KJV).

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(See also on the This Week page of the website, TWR 168 “In everything give thanks”)