

“THINK ON THESE THINGS”

Philippians 4:8

Small Blessings Are Still Blessings

By Steven Harper

Have you ever been hoping for, or maybe even expecting, some sort of increase in income, only to find out it was not as much as you had hoped for or expected? I remember when I was a lot younger and working in the fast-food business and had been working for several months at this one restaurant, doing my best and trying to impress the owners, and was told that I should expect a raise after 90 days. When the day came, I was told by management that I would be getting an increase, but one far smaller than anticipated. I was disappointed at first, and even a little upset, but then I stopped and thought, “It’s still more than what I had before.” For a moment, I was not grateful for the increase—until I remembered it was an increase.

The truth is, we sometimes are ungrateful — or maybe just not as thankful as we should be — because what we have been given is not as much as we would like, not as much as someone else received, or maybe just something that was not at all what we expected or maybe *wanted*. In those times, we forget the reality of being blessed with something more than what we had before, or just a gift that has been given by someone who was not obligated at all to us, but who wanted to give *something* to show their appreciation or maybe even “just because.” In our moment of disappointment at not receiving what we wanted or expected, we forgot that small blessings are still blessings!

In a society where we are materially blessed greater than many other people around the world, it is easy to sometimes forget this. We see and hear advertisements multiple times each day that promote some new and improved object, and are designed to get us to want, and then purchase, this object. Much of the advertising today is also designed to help make us feel unhappy with what object or objects we already have, and get us to think this new and improved object will make us happier and our lives better than they were before. As long as the advertising works as they intend, we will not be satisfied unless and until we obtain that new object, and anything less or different will be a disappointment. Should we somehow be able to obtain some other new, or maybe just new to us, object, all we see is that it is not that one object we wanted — and we are disappointed. And ungrateful. This sometimes seems to be a never-ending cycle for many, and a lot of unhappy people the result.

And let us not think this cannot happen with non-material things, either. Sometimes, we just don’t hear certain words of praise or thankfulness from others that we would like to hear, so we are disappointed and, ironically, ungrateful for the words we *do* hear. Sometimes, when we are so focused on the words we want to hear, we don’t really listen to what is said, and we miss out on smaller blessings and *different* words of praise or thankfulness. Sometimes, we fail to acknowledge that blessings that may be smaller than what we expected, or maybe just *different* than what we expected, are still blessings.

I write all this to lead us to stop and think about all the many blessings we receive and enjoy as disciples of Jesus Christ and how we sometimes overlook, or fail to appreciate as much as we could and should, the blessings we do have and enjoy. Sometimes, it happens as with the material objects we want or expect and we end up not being thankful for the small blessings because we were too focused on the big ones. Sometimes, we are so focused on the big blessings of eternal life and heaven that we haven’t yet received, and won’t until we pass from this life, that we forget the smaller blessings we now enjoy! Maybe we have even overlooked these blessings altogether? Again, let us consider:

The Bible. I would not classify this as a ‘small’ blessing at all, but it just may be that we have overlooked this altogether sometimes as a blessing. But stop and think about how this world — your world — would be drasti-

cally different [for the worse] without it! Where would you be? Where would this world be? The reality is, this world would be much worse without the Bible, for it has revealed to us the simplicity of God's plan for our salvation, but also the great wisdom of that plan, our great need for that plan, and the great love God had for His Creation in providing such a plan. It is forever true that ***"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work"*** (2 Tim. 3:16, 17). Without God having given us all that is contained within Scripture, we would not know what great love has been shown to us or what great blessings await the faithful, so take the time to be thankful for this blessing, and consider that there would be a lot more evil in this world and a lot less good being done if man did not have the written word. It is not a small blessing, but it is certainly one of the most overlooked and under-appreciated ones.

Our Spiritual Family. Recent polls have revealed that regular attendance or even involvement in any church has dropped to an all-time low in this country; while we lament this sad trend, let us not overlook the fact that this will mean future generations not ever knowing about the blessing of having a loving, caring 'family' of believers, and many more who won't be touched by the lives of those who are strengthened and assisted by the spiritual family of which they are a part. Fewer faithful and active disciples mean a more narrow influence on the communities around the ones who still serve the Lord, and a lesser impact on society, as a whole. While it may seem insignificant or even meaningless to some, this world will be much worse off without, or with fewer, followers of Christ. From the very beginning, His people made an impact on the world around them (cf. Acts 2:41-37), and because of their active faith, they had ***"favor with all the people."*** Let us not overlook the fact that the believers themselves were blessed by one another! Let us not overlook or under-appreciate the blessing we are and can be to one another; sometimes we are all we've got, and that is what gets us through the most difficult of times.

Good Teachers. Many of us still remember the good teachers we had back in high school, junior high, or even elementary school. We remember them because they helped us and inspired us to learn! Do we not also remember the good teachers we have had [or now have] in spiritual things? Whether it is a Bible class teacher, a preacher, or just someone who has taken the time to sit down with us and help us in a personal, one-on-one Bible study, I think we all know someone who has helped us tremendously in our efforts to learn God's word and God's ways. Do we recognize them as one of our small blessings? Think about how grateful the Ethiopian eunuch had to have been because Philip came to him and taught him Jesus (Acts 8:26-38)! Part of his rejoicing was due to the fact he had someone teach him the very words that led to his conversion and salvation!

There are certainly many more 'small' [and not-so-small] blessings we can and do enjoy, but let us never overlook the fact they **are** blessings. Take the time to thank God for each and every one. – ***The Words of Truth and Reason***, July 18, 2021. ■

Where Will We Be When COVID Is Gone?

By Mark White

COVID-19 has been an unwelcome intruder to human society in general, but to the church of the Lord in particular. We have significant challenges ahead recovering as a society, but churches will forever be affected by this trouble, too. We may not yet know all the ways the pandemic and our response to it may have affected us, but we can be sure that the Devil will see to it that it will harm us spiritually, if He can. We need to be thinking now of how we will recover what we have lost, and restore what has been lacking. Of course, we have learned some valuable lessons along the way about ourselves. Our strengths have been made obvious, but so have some weaknesses. Virtual meetings can never replace physical meetings. They are about as effective as a virtual doctor visit. It may get the job done somewhat, but there is nothing like the real thing. When this trouble has passed, where will you be? What effect will COVID have had on your spiritually? Trouble never leaves us where it finds us. ■

Service Times - Sunday: 9:00 & 10:00 AM; 6:00 PM - Wednesday: 7:00 PM

Tommy Glendol McClure, Editor and Evangelist - 925-759-4357

Web Site: www.lodiCAchurchofchrist.com - Email: lodicachurchofchrist@gmail.com - Phone: 209-365-9250