

THANKSGIVING:  
HOW IT WAS OBSERVED BY ISRAEL  
AND HOW IT SHOULD BE  
OBSERVED NOW BY GOD'S CHILDREN

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## PREFACE

The giving of thanks is seldom mentioned apart from our national holiday that is called "Thanksgiving." This is a great shame because, of all nations, ours is the most blessed, both naturally and spiritually.

We mistakenly think that the Thanksgiving Day observed by the pilgrims was the first one, when in fact God instituted the first Thanksgiving festival, and it was observed by the nation of Israel.

God has ordained that His children should express gratitude to Him for the manifold blessings He heaps upon them daily. It behooves us, then, to learn what God has revealed in His Word about the subject of thanksgiving and to meditate on these principles until we are able to practice true thanksgiving.

In years past, I wrote several lessons about Thanksgiving for the *Christ Gospel Messenger*. Now the Spirit of the LORD has bid me to resurrect these lessons, as it were, and compile them into a single booklet which would be much more convenient for study purposes.

As we look more closely at Israel's Thanksgiving celebration and at the other lessons in this booklet, we will learn more about the kind of gratitude we need to have springing up in our hearts and flowing out of our mouths.

Beloved, we live in a day of gross ingratitude, but we do not have to let ourselves become like the world. Once we understand how far short we are falling, we can repent and let Jesus Christ fill our hearts with the overflowing gratitude that He has for His heavenly Father.

May God bless the words of this book to your hearts and lives.

— The Author

**THANKSGIVING:  
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**Chapter One**

**THE FIRST THANKSGIVING**

The Book of Leviticus records the account of the first Thanksgiving festival. This feast, known as the Feast of Tabernacles, was attended by Israel, the LORD's natural Bride. Like our own Thanksgiving, the Feast of Tabernacles was celebrated at the close of the harvest season in Canaan's Land.

Also in the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when ye have gathered in the fruit of the land, ye shall keep a feast unto the LORD seven days: on the first day shall be a sabbath, and on the eighth day shall be a sabbath. And ye shall take you on the first day the boughs of goodly trees, branches of palm trees, and the boughs of thick trees, and willows of the brook; and ye shall rejoice before the LORD your God seven days. And ye shall keep it a feast unto the LORD seven days in the year. It shall be a statute for ever in your generations: ye shall celebrate it in the seventh month. *Ye shall dwell in booths seven days*; all that are Israelites born shall dwell in booths: That your generations may know that I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths, when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God. And Moses declared unto the children of Israel the feasts of the LORD (Leviticus 23:39-44).

The Hebrew word for *booth* is *sook-kaw*, it means a hut or lair of entwined boughs, booth, cottage, covert, den, pavilion, tabernacle, tent. The children of Israel lived in houses in Egypt and in Canaan's Land. Their booth or tent experience pertained to the wilderness phase of their journey.

After leaving their homes in Rameses, the Israelites set up their first tent encampment in Succoth, which is called the place of booths. The children of Israel had no permanent dwelling place during the years of wandering in the wilderness. The LORD's own house was called a Tabernacle, and the tribes of Israel encamped in tents around the LORD's Tabernacle. Encircling and overshadowing all of the tents was the LORD's pillar of cloud and fire.

The Mosaic Tabernacle in the center of the tents of Israel was spiritual in its ministry; nevertheless, it belonged to the natural realm because its furniture was built and set up by man. Israel's real booth in the wilderness was the spiritual one that overshadowed all the natural tents. Without the protection and blessing of the living booth of the LORD's pillar of cloud and fire, none of the Israelites would have survived to enter into the promised land.

The foundation of Israel's experience with the pillar of cloud and fire in the wilderness was the lamb's blood that they applied to the door posts of their homes in Egypt. Likewise, the booth experience in the wilderness formed the foundation for many of the blessings Israel received in Canaan's land. After Israel entered into Canaan's Land, the LORD instituted the annual Feast of Tabernacles or booths in order to give His natural Bride an opportunity to express thanksgiving to her Bridegroom for her spiritual foundation that was made up of all His past blessings to her.

The Feast of Tabernacles started on the fifteenth day of the first month, at which time Israel offered offerings made by fire. The whole burnt offerings on the Brazen Altar speak of the fiery love and consecration that the Bride of Jesus Christ is to offer to her spiritual Bridegroom. The freewill offerings brought on this

occasion speak of the voluntary, spontaneous spirit which the Bride is to manifest. The LORD does not receive offerings that are given grudgingly or presented out of a sense of dreary obligation. The four classes of trees that Israel used in making her booths in order to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles portray the house of praise in which the spiritual Bride is to live as she passes through this world. Let us consider the significance of the trees entwined in Israel's natural thanksgiving booths so that we may know the classes of praise and thanksgiving we are to give to Jesus Christ for our spiritual foundational experiences with the pillar of cloud and fire.

## I. GOODLY TREES

The first class of trees that Israel used in the making of her "thanksgiving booths" was of goodly trees.

And ye shall take you on the first day the boughs of *goodly trees*, branches of palm trees, and the boughs of thick trees, and willows of the brook; and ye shall rejoice before the LORD your God seven days (Leviticus 23:40).

The Hebrew word for *goodly* means magnificence, i.e., ornament of splendor, beauty, comeliness, excellency, glorious, glory, goodly, honour, majesty. We have no natural tree in the world today that would fulfill such a glowing description. However, according to Jewish history, a tree known as a goodly tree existed in Bible days. This tree was said to have had the same taste in all parts of the tree, not just in the fruit. The outer bark, the wood inside, the branches, the leaves, and the fruit all tasted the same. Thus, the man who ate a leaf or a cutting from the bark knew the flavor of the goodly nature of the tree, just as did the man who ate of its fruit.

As far as spiritual truth is concerned, a better translation of the term *goodly tree* would be goodness tree. The goodness tree stands in the middle of the scales, for this is the tree that can separate the knowledge of good and evil. The goodly or goodness tree is a picture

of the goodly ministry of the pillar of cloud and fire that led Israel to the banks of the Red Sea; it also is a picture of the goodly nature of the rod that opened up the waters of death and allowed Israel to be separated from the flesh pots of Egypt. It does not matter whether one eats of the goodness of the cloud and fire or the goodness of the rod, the taste is the same because the goodness tree reveals the LORD's Name or nature which separates His children from the world.

Separation always involves suffering of some kind. For the Israelites it meant giving up houses, land, established eating habits, a known way of life. Although they worked as slaves for the Egyptians, the Israelites knew that they would be going home at night to eat a meal flavored with their favorite spices. They knew that they would be sleeping in the same bed in the same place they slept the night before. They knew that they would be getting up in the morning to work at the same job they worked at the day before. But Israel had to suffer the loss of all these familiar things in order to go to Canaan's Land. They had to become nomads, pilgrims, with no permanent dwelling place, no certain food supply, and no sure means of livelihood.

Did the LORD have an evil motive in separating His children from Egypt and opening up the Red Sea for them to cross over into the wilderness? Certainly not! The LORD's motive was good because His nature is good. He knew that natural and spiritual death awaited the Israelites if they stayed in Egypt. He knew that they would either be killed by their cruel taskmasters, or swallowed up by the idolatrous, heathen practices of the country. The LORD's goodness provided Israel with blood that spared them from death when He smote the firstborn of the Egyptians. The goodness of His Name or nature also separated Israel from Egypt, though it brought suffering and distress to their flesh.

We need to weave the goodness tree in our spiritual booths because it represents the goodness of the nature of the LORD Jesus Christ. Before taking on the Name of Jesus Christ in water baptism, we knew very little of the Word of God and the goodness of His

nature to separate us from the children of the world. The separations that we have known in our spiritual journey with Jesus Christ have been as painful to our flesh as were the sufferings experienced by natural Israel in her journey to Canaan's Land. Yet, if we have laid the boughs of God's spiritual Goodness Tree in our spiritual booths, we can move into our little house, as it were, and thank the LORD even for the pain. We can praise His Name because it is the LORD's good nature which brings us to the waters of death and separates us from flesh that will destroy our spiritual relationship with Jesus Christ. We can praise His Name and rejoice prophetically because He uses the painful death experiences to form the foundation for new, pleasurable life experiences.

## II. PALM TREES

The second class of trees that Israel used in the making of her "thanksgiving booths" was the branches of the palm tree.

And ye shall take you on the first day the boughs of goodly trees, *branches of palm trees*, and the boughs of thick trees, and willows of the brook; and ye shall rejoice before the LORD your God seven days (Leviticus 23:40).

The second tree to go into Israel's booths was the palm tree, which pertains to thanksgiving that comes out of exalted fruitfulness. The Hebrew word for *palm* means erect, upright. The Bridegroom in the Song of Solomon likened His Bride's mature stature to that of a palm tree. Just as the natural palm tree gives fruit out of the top of its tall, beautiful stature, so also does the spiritual Bride give forth light out of the maturity of her stature.

Light has a giving nature. The light of the natural sun comes out of a high, exalted place, but it is not a respecter of persons or positions when it comes to shining. Light shines upon saint and sinner, rich man and poor man, king and slave. Light runs in all places and in all directions. Light does not say, "Since I belong to

such exalted realms, I will not shine on the floor." No! Light says, "I don't care where I shine—on the ceiling or the floor, outside or inside in a corner. It does not matter. Just let me give my light and brighten up the darkness."

Jesus Christ came into this world as the Light of life. His thankfulness for the spiritual light of truth which His heavenly Father had given Him was manifested in the way He freely, gladly, gratefully shared His light with all who would receive it. Jesus came from the exalted courts of heaven, but He never was selfish with His light. In the course of His lifetime on earth, Jesus shared the light of truth with publicans and sinners, with scribes, Pharisees, and Sadducees. He shared it with His disciples (one of whom later betrayed Him), with a lone woman at a well in Samaria, with Roman rulers who judged Him worthy of death, with a thief hanging on a cross near His own.

Jesus possessed enough light to destroy all of the Christ-rejecting world, yet He did not use His light for destructive purposes. On the contrary. He gave forth light rays of truth to illuminate the ignorance and deceit enveloping the minds and hearts of the people. Those who received the light were changed by it. Those who rejected the light will be judged by it. When Jesus Christ returns to this earth with His spiritual Bride (who receives all of the light of truth that He shines into her heart), the elements will melt in the presence of their glorious, resurrected light.

It is no wonder, then, that the LORD commanded His natural Bride, Israel, to include branches of palm trees in her thanksgiving booths. The palm speaks of the Bride's thanksgiving for the light she receives from her Bridegroom, Jesus Christ. It also portrays the Bride's gratitude for her mature stature which permits her to share her Bridegroom's light of truth with others in this sin-darkened world.

Here again we see the principle of the past being the foundation or support for the present. The Bride had to receive light before she could give light. As we go on for God, victories are won as we receive new rays of light from the Sun of Righteousness. Other victories are

won as we share the light with others. Before we have the maturity of spiritual stature to give light to another person, we must allow light to penetrate the darkness of our carnal being which is greedy and concerned with increasing the wealth of self. The deceitful darkness of the carnal nature must be swallowed up by the light of truth of Jesus' unselfish, giving nature. Then we are able to stand erect and tall as a palm tree and give forth the light of truth, not because a particular person is worthy or unworthy, but because we have within us the Light Whose very nature is to give.

We have no excuse for being selfish and not giving. If we are saved today, if we have received the blessed Holy Ghost, if we have taken on the Name of Jesus Christ in water baptism, if we have seen a vision of the prize awaiting those who choose to grow to spiritual maturity, it is because Jesus Christ has shared some light with us. If we have received one or more of these rays of light, then we have something to give. Many people in the world still are sitting in darkness, waiting to receive the first ray of light and truth.

The Bride may grow weary of giving in the fleshly, uncrucified part of her being, but she must remember that she has an overshadowing booth of glory with some palm branches, as it were, in it. Therefore, if she moves, by faith, into her spiritual booth, she is able to offer up new praise and thanksgiving to the LORD for His exalted, giving nature of true light that He has shared with her. Then she can willingly and gratefully offer up new thanksgiving praise for the opportunity of sharing the LORD's light with others, and she gratefully can give forth the rays of His glorious light.

### **III. THICK TREES**

The third class of the trees that Israel used in the making of her "thanksgiving booths" was the boughs of thick trees.

And ye shall take you on the first day the boughs of goodly trees, branches of palm trees, and the boughs of thick trees, and willows of the brook; and ye shall rejoice before the LORD your God seven days (Leviticus 23:40).

The Hebrew word for *thick* means entwined, dense, thick. Naturally speaking, it refers to the dense, almost solid growth of the myrtle tree. Spiritually speaking, the thick tree pertains to the unity of God's headship which is comprised of the headship of the Father, the Word, and the Spirit. Although God chooses to manifest Himself to mankind in three distinct personalities, these three are one in purpose. The Father's headship, the Word's headship, and the Spirit's headship intertwine one another so intricately that they become one great myrtle tree, as it were.

The LORD told Israel to add boughs of thick trees to her booths because He wanted His Bride to give thanksgiving praise for the unity of His headship that saved her from death in Egypt, kept her alive through all the years of wandering in the wilderness, and showed her how to conquer the enemy and possess the promised land of Canaan.

There was no division in God's headship in Egypt. The Word gave instructions as to the required sacrifice. The Father provided the spiritual Lamb to be offered, and the Spirit came down to overshadow the natural blood sacrifice. Without clear instructions from the Word, the people might have brought the wrong sacrifice or none at all. Without the Father's willingness to share the Lamb, there would have been no blood sacrifice and, hence, no redemption. Without the Spirit's overshadowing presence on the natural lamb's blood, there would have been no power to drive back the forces of death and no anointing to preserve the life of those inside the house. Israel would have perished in Egypt if there had not been perfect unity in the spiritual Myrtle Tree of God's headship.

The unity of God's headship furnished Israel with water in the wilderness. There had to be cooperation between the big Rock, identified in the Hebrew as *tsoor* and representing the headship of the Father, and the smaller Rock called *seh-lah* in the Hebrew and representing the headship of the Word, and the Spirit's invisible waters which flowed out along with the visible waters of the smitten Rock.

Before the smiting of the big Rock (*tsoor*, the Father) and the small Rock (*seh-lah*, the Christ), the Father and the Son dwelled together as one in the invisible realm. When Moses struck the top of the *tsoor* Rock, an opening was made so that *the seh-lah* Rock could be manifested in both the invisible realm and the visible realm. The Father knew that the smiting from Moses' rod would mean that He would have to give up the unbroken, divine relationship in the invisible realm that He had enjoyed alone with His Son. Likewise, the Son knew that He would have to give up the oneness of relationship that He had known alone with the Father from eternity.

The smiting of the Rock signified the Father sharing His only begotten Son in both the invisible realm and the visible realm. Once the humanity of Jesus Christ was joined to the divine Godhead through the rod that separated the smaller *seh-lah* Rock from the big *tsoor* Rock, the relationship between the Father and the Son could not be exactly the same as it had been before the opening that was made in the Godhead; part of the Rock would remain in the invisible and part would be joined to the visible, natural realm so it could touch mankind as a Mediator. Even under the shadow and type, the Father and the Son or the Rock wept tears of pleasure that it had liquid life to give to the thirsting Bride, Israel.

The visible waters that flowed out of the Rock on this occasion were anointed with invisible tears of the Father and the Son and the Spirit. The unity of God's headship provided visible, natural water for the body, and it also provided invisible spiritual waters for the soul and spirit. Therefore, Israel was able to survive in the wilderness. Those who faithfully drank of the visible waters for their bodies and also drank of the invisible waters for their spirits and souls lived to cross over Jordan and to enter into Canaan's Land.

Then, Israel possessed Canaan's Land because God passed His unified headship down to His chosen leaders. The kingly glory of God's unified headship empowered Joshua and other men with leadership abilities to conquer the land and to divide it to each tribe and family according to God's holy will. The unified headship of

God's power and anointing upon the high priest, who wore the breastplate of judgment upon his heart, enabled him to lead and guide God's people in the perfect will of God.

The unified power and anointing of God's headship also inspired the Word prophets, who were holy men of God, to utter prophetic revelations many years in advance, before the performance of the prophecies were brought into visibility. Thus, God's Word prophets were able to teach, instruct, and warn His people concerning their future. Consequently, God's leaders were like visible myrtle trees that were overshadowed with God's great invisible Myrtle Trees of wisdom, understanding, and knowledge of His divine, unified headship.

Apart from the unified headship of God's glory, guidance, and anointing upon her leaders, Israel's warfare with her enemies would have been one series of contests of cruel, aggressive military campaigns. It would have been a wicked warfare of flesh fighting flesh to see who possessed the greatest natural forces for self-exaltation. However, Israel was victorious and conquered the land according to God's master plan because her spiritual thanksgiving booths were entwined with the boughs of God's invisible, unified headship.

It matters not where we have come in our personal journey of going on for God; each of us has reason to weave the boughs of God's unified headship, from His invisible Myrtle Trees, into our personal thanksgiving booth, since each of us is where we are because of the unified power and anointing of God's headship. It takes the unified working of the Father, the Word, the Son, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost to save us from the sin and death of Egypt, to sustain us in the wilderness phase of our journey, and to deliver us from our enemies in Canaan's Land. Every day gives us new reasons to praise our spiritual Bridegroom, Jesus Christ, for His blessed headship in our lives.

#### IV. WILLOW TREES

The fourth class of trees that Israel used in the making of her "thanksgiving booths" was the boughs of the willow trees.

And ye shall take you on the first day the boughs of goodly trees, branches of palm trees, and the boughs of thick trees, and *willows of the brook*; and ye shall rejoice before the LORD your God seven days (Leviticus 23:40).

This fourth class of boughs to be interlaced into the structure of Israel's thanksgiving booths came from the willow tree, or from the low place by the brook. The willow of the brook pictures the Bride's thanksgiving for humility fruitfulness that she has an opportunity to gain in the low place.

Natural willow trees, especially weeping willows, are called God's stationary reservoirs. They can "cry" or put out as much as 5,000 gallons of water into the atmosphere on a hot summer day. The willow owes its power and ability to minister life-giving refreshment to the world to its humility and willingness to remain in the place that God has provided for it in the low place. There, it puts down its roots and lays hold of hidden water far below the earth's surface. Therefore, it has the power and ability to cool the atmosphere on a hot summer day.

God's spiritual weeping Willow Tree *of* humility grows by the river of life within God's only begotten Son, Jesus Christ. From a high, fruitful place in heaven, Christ, the Son of God, came *to* the low place called earth and was joined to Jesus, the Son of Man. Jesus became a fruitful, humble Willow Tree called Christ, cooling, comforting, and healing the feverish, painful atmosphere of many sin-sick souls and bodies.

Christ's invisible, fruitful, procreative, moisturizing tears of humility, as it were, ministered in a two-fold manner. Part of Christ's liquid life or tears ascended directly up to God the Father in a cloud of praise as He poured out His thanksgiving to Him for the

privilege of being fruitful in the low place of His Father's perfect will.

Another part of the liquid life of Christ, the Son of God, dropped down into the fertile, humanity earth of Jesus, the Son of Man. Jesus' earth was constantly watered and refreshed by Christ's tears, as it were, of humility, causing the plants of truth to spring up in His head and to bring forth wisdom's fragrant buds and blossoms. Thus, because of His union with Christ, God's divine Willow Tree, Jesus is a beautiful garden which blesses and refreshes both God and mankind.

Just as the Christ, the Son of God, poured out tears of humility praise and gratitude to the LORD God for His perfect will that brought Him to fruitfulness in the low place, so did Jesus, the Son of Man, weep tears of humility praise and gratitude for His heavenly Father's perfect will in His life. Just as the Christ's tears of humility praise and gratitude dropped down upon the humanity earth of Jesus as He shared His life-giving substance of truth with Him, so did Jesus weep over a lost and dying world, offering His humility thanksgiving that He had fruitful, life-giving substance to share with us in the low place.

Because Jesus maintained an unbroken relationship with Christ, the Willow Tree of humility, through the low places on earth and in the depths of hell and death. He now enjoys an eternal union with Christ (Acts 2:36). Thus, when we invite Jesus, the Son of Man, to come into our hearts and save us, we also get the Willow Tree of humility. When Jesus comes into our hearts, Christ also comes into our hearts. Therefore, Jesus and Christ both water the earth of our hearts with their fruitful, humility tears of thanksgiving in the low place. Surely, with such abundant, procreative waters of Jesus and Christ flowing over our earth, we have no excuse for not bringing forth the fruits of humility in whatever low place the LORD may ask us to take as we stride forward in our spiritual education and moral development.

Beloved, we have so much for which to be thankful, naturally and spiritually. It is a shame that so many of God's people wait until

our national Thanksgiving Day before offering to the LORD plenteous words of gratitude for His grace and mercy to us both as a nation and as individuals. God does not wait until Thanksgiving Day to bless us; He measures out abundant blessings to us daily. "Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits, even the God of our salvation. Selah" (Psalm 68:19). In view of God's great blessings, we should not let a day pass without our moving, by faith, into our spiritual thanksgiving booths with their overshadowing boughs and branches and offering up to the LORD Jesus Christ the praise and gratitude that He deserves to receive. Let us thank God daily for the Goodly Tree of His nature, the Palm Tree of His exalted light and glory, the Myrtle Tree of His unified headship, and the Weeping Willow of His humility.

## Chapter Two

### THANKSGIVING FOR GOD'S HEADSHIP

"In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you" (I Thessalonians 5:18). It is difficult for us to fully obey this portion of God's Word if our faith is not deeply rooted and grounded in the good, righteous, and just nature of God's headship. If we are convinced of the holiness of God's headship, it is easy to be thankful and grateful for every facet of it in our lives.

Until this understanding comes to our hearts, we fluctuate between praise and contempt for God's headship. If our carnal minds and corrupt human wills are pleased, then we praise His headship. But if our desires are contraried, we pour contempt on God's headship by our multitudinous frettings, murmurings, and complainings instead of thanking Him for ALL things.

The sour words that we offer to God are a mixture of gratitude and condemnation when we yet remain in a state of spiritual immaturity.

Often we say, "Thank you, LORD, for all of Your many blessings. Thank You for health. Thank You for food, for shelter, for transportation." But when one small pain, one lean meal, one leaky roof, or one flat tire arrives, we change our song of praise into a dirge of accusation. We may not express it verbally, but the thoughts of our heart are saying, "LORD, this is not fair. I deserve better treatment. I've been trying to serve You, and now You've let this terrible thing happen to me."

This is not giving thanks in every thing. In fact, it is a direct attack against God's righteous and holy headship. When we fret.

murmur, and complain about what God allows to come our way, we are esteeming His infinite intelligence and His divine judgment as being inferior to our human, finite mind and reasoning.

King David's first effort to bring the Ark of the Covenant up to Jerusalem was a complete failure because he sought to do it contrary to God's Word. When God allowed him to fail, he became angry or displeased with God's righteous headship and holy judgment in the matter. However, David repented and sought God concerning the proper way to bring up the Ark to Jerusalem. Therefore, David's second effort to bring the Ark of the Covenant up to Jerusalem gives us an instructive example of how to praise God for His headship.

Thus all Israel brought up the ark of the covenant of the LORD with shouting, and with sound of the cornet, and with trumpets, and with cymbals, making a noise with psalteries and harps. And it came to pass, as the ark of the covenant of the LORD came to the city of David, that Michal the daughter of Saul looking out at a window saw king David dancing and playing: and she despised him in her heart. (1 Chronicles 15:28,29)

So they brought the ark of God, and set it in the midst of the tent that David had pitched for it. and they offered burnt-sacrifices and peace-offerings before God. And when David had made an end of offering the burnt-offerings and the peace-offerings, he blessed the people in the name of the LORD. And he dealt to every one of Israel, both man and woman, to every one a loaf of bread, and a good piece of flesh, and a flagon of wine. And he appointed certain of the Levites to minister before the ark of the LORD, and to record, and to thank and praise the LORD God of Israel: (1 Chronicles 16:1-4).

God commanded Moses to place the Ark of the Covenant first into the Old Testament Tabernacle, before he placed the other pieces of furniture in the Tabernacle. The Ark was a picture of God's

headship and the headship of Jesus Christ. Therefore, it had to be placed in the Tabernacle first, as a picture of God assuming His headship first in His house.

As long as Israel remained under the headship *of* the Ark, she was guided and protected in the wilderness, and she was guided, protected, and victorious in Canaan's land. But when Israel's pride caused her to defect from God's moral headship in her spiritual walk with Him, God gave His Ark over into the hands of Israel's enemies.

Later, King David desired to bring the Ark up to Jerusalem because he knew that it was God's perfect will for the Ark to rest in Jerusalem. David saw that whenever the Ark rested among those who loved its presence that it brought blessing and prosperity.

Those who loved and respected God's headship that was manifested through the Ark were always exalted and blessed. David's first endeavor to bring the Ark or the headship into its proper place ended in miserable failure and death because he put his own headship above the headship of God's Word. God had clearly commanded in His Word that the Ark should be transported on the living shoulders of His priests. However, David ignored the headship of God's Word and placed the Ark on a cart of dead wood, drawn by animals.

When the oxen stumbled while pulling the cart with the Ark, Uzza reached out to hold the Ark, and the anger of the LORD smote him.

What a paradoxical insult to God's headship! On one side of the scales, man deliberately disobeys God's Word as though God had no power to punish disobedience. On the other side of the scales, he pretends to have such love for God's headship that he tries to protect it from falling to the ground as though the infinite, omnipotent God was a finite, powerless idol of some kind. No wonder that the omniscient and omnipotent God was angry and slew the offender.

What a dear price was paid for David to learn that having God's headship means that things must be done God's way, and not according to the will and way of the flesh. God will never allow His

headship to be brought under subjection to the headship of carnal man's flesh.

Before the Ark of God's headship could come to rest in the midst of Jerusalem, the King and all of Israel had to humble their hearts and bring them into union with the headship of God's written Word, which declared that the Ark must be borne upon the shoulders of four priests.

As soon as a personal union with God's Word was worked in their hearts and deeds of obedience manifested, their journey of bringing up the Ark became a blessed and joyous celebration. They took advantage of every step of the way from Obed-edom's house (where the Ark had been left) up to Jerusalem; they all played music, shouted, and danced before the LORD. David, the leader, danced with more zeal than all the rest.

However, the arrival of the Ark of God's headship in Jerusalem was not glorious for all of the King's subjects. Not everyone in the land joined the King in his joyful gratitude, zeal, and excitement in bringing up the Ark. David was scorned, despised, and rebuked by his wife, who thought his grateful demonstrations of joy before the LORD were very unbecoming to his exalted position as a King. Thank the LORD that David had the spiritual backbone to reject his wife's proud, arrogant thoughts.

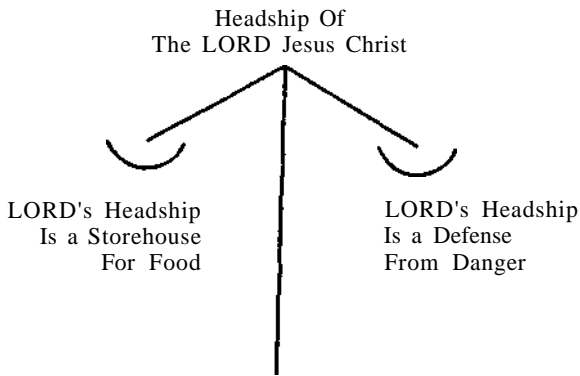
And David said unto Michal, It was before the LORD, which chose me before thy father, and before all his house, to appoint me ruler over the people of the LORD, over Israel: therefore will I play before the LORD. And I will yet be more vile than thus, and will be base in mine own sight: and of the maidservants which thou hast spoken of, of them shall I be had in honour (II Samuel 6:21,22).

One will never go on for God if one waits until everyone understands and agrees with the shouting, and the dancing, and the magnifying of the LORD's Name that God's Word demands. Michal's disapproval was of small consequence to David in

comparison to his joy, delight, and satisfaction of having the LORD's headship set in its proper place in Jerusalem.

Remember, it is not our responsibility to fight our enemies because they resent and reject true worship before the LORD. All we have to do is continue under God's headship and lift up the holy Name of the LORD in praises and thanksgivings, and God will judge our enemies, just as he did David's wife.

Now let us look at two special blessings that come when God's headship is in the right place.



Man's life is a gift from the Source of all life, the LORD Jesus Christ, and He maintains that life by providing food to feed it and by sharing the glory of His headship to protect it.

## **I. THE ARK OF GOD'S HEADSHIP IS A STOREHOUSE FOR FOOD FOR HIS PEOPLE**

The first blessing of God's headship is that it provides food for His people.

The natural bread, meat, and wine, which the people received from King David when the Ark of God's headship was set up in Jerusalem, picture the spiritual substance that is given us from God's Word by Jesus Christ, our spiritual King, when we come under His headship.

Christ's desire for us is that the headship of His mind and His will become our spiritual bread and meat and our satisfying portion.

And he dealt to every one of Israel, both man and woman, to every one a loaf of bread, and a piece of flesh, and a flagon of wine (I Chronicles 16:3).

Bread represents the humility strength and life of Jesus Christ. When we eat the bread of His humility life and strength, it will destroy and purge the death and weakness of our fleshly heart and our unChrist-like attitudes. The bread of Christ purges the unclean spirits, the fleshly death, and the schisms that keep us from being one with Him and the rest of our brothers and sisters in Christ.

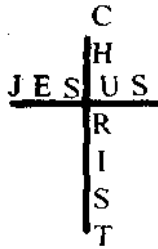
The meat represents the deeper depths and higher heights of God's divine spiritual principles of truth, which strengthen and increase our spiritual man, enabling him to overcome our fleshly man.

Failure to understand the nature of Christ's spiritual meat has caused the death of many spiritual babes because the strong meat of God's Word was presented to them instead of the sincere milk of the Word. Many babes have perished trying to eat the meat of exaltation out of season. That is why it is absolutely imperative for us to feed on sincere milk and to eat the pure bread of truth first. Without the humility that comes from eating this bread, we cannot survive for long in the day of exaltation. Unless we have the strength of the humility bread to support us in the day of exaltation, the deceitful pride of the flesh will rise up and destroy us.

If there is anything that I am deeply thankful for, it is the headship of Jesus Christ in my life; without it, I would be at a loss as to how to come in and how to go out. Life becomes a romance when we learn the secret of living and walking under the headship of Jesus Christ and allowing Him to assume His rightful place as the King, the Owner, and the Master. The King knows how to choose the portion of bread or meat that is convenient for our spiritual stature. As long as we remain under the headship of Jesus Christ, there is

nothing to fear because He is faithful to feed us from His Word exactly what we need to keep us growing and maturing in Him.

The headship of Jesus Christ also entitles us to a flagon of spiritual wine. The flagons of wine picture the fruit of obedience from the vine of surrender in the will of Jesus, the Man. Never once did Jesus permit His own will to become independent from the Father's will and stand up firm and erect like a tree. Jesus always kept His human will in the humble, surrendered, dependent, horizontal position of a vine. Jesus, the Man, always kept His horizontal vine-will joined to the divine, upright will of Christ, the Word.



Beloved, we cannot really drink of the HUMILITY blood or wine of the surrendered Vine Who hung on Calvary's Cross and died for us without the pride of our own will being changed. The more of this wine we drink, the more we will be transformed into His image and likeness. When the nature of our stubborn "tree-will" is changed to the likeness of Jesus' "vine-will," it is no problem for us to humble ourselves and walk wherever His headship leads us. We can be just as surrendered to follow Him through suffering and pain as we are to follow Him through blessing and prosperity. The wine of the precious blood of Jesus Christ is so pleasant that it makes every pain and suffering seem small and insignificant in comparison.

The world has no such bountiful table as is set before Christians who love the headship of Jesus Christ and walk under it. The world has no living Bread or Meat to sustain and strengthen the

minds and the wills of people. They have no wine to make their hearts merry and glad. It is no wonder, then, that they cannot understand why we worship the LORD with shouting and dancing.

In addition to being a storehouse, as it were, for food, the Ark of the LORD's headship was also a living defense for Israel.

## II. THE ARK OF GODS HEADSHIP IS A DEFENSE FOR HIS PEOPLE

The second blessing of God's headship is that it defends His people.

God revealed the spiritual principle of defense in His headship through the Prophet Isaiah. God gave His people a prophetic vision of His headship being a defense, a place of refuge, and a covert in the millennial reign of the **LORD** Jesus Christ.

In that day shall the branch of the LORD be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and comely for them that are escaped of Israel. And it shall come to pass, that he that is left in Zion, and he that remaineth in Jerusalem, shall be called holy, even every one that is written among the living in Jerusalem: When the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof by the spirit of judgment, and by the spirit of burning. And the LORD will create upon every dwelling place of mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night: *for upon all the glory shall be a defence.* And there shall be a *tabernacle for a shadow in the daytime from the heat, and for a place of refuge, and for a covert from storm and from rain* (Isaiah 4:2-6).

This particular portion of Scripture pertains to God's headship that will be manifested through Christ in His millennial reign upon the earth. These verses give a description of the happy state of the

millennial survivors from the great tribulation's storm in which all the wicked will be swept away.

All of the land will be purified, and the LORD's glory will be manifested in all the earth. God's headship through the LORD Jesus Christ will be a divine defense, ensuring safety and eternal peace.

The protective power of God's headship in the millennium is symbolized as a cloud of flaming fire, as a festive pavilion which will be like a cool, overshadowing cloud of protection from the heat in the daytime, and as a shelter of refuge from the danger of the night storms, and as a secret covert or hiding place from the rains of the nights.

Because Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Hebrews 13:8), we know that the principles taught in these verses apply also to us today.

By the spirit of judgment and burning from His holy headship, the LORD will wash away the filth of Israel's carnal life of the flesh and purge away the blood of her carnal warfare in the millennium so she can be a holy Bride unto the LORD upon the earth. Certainly, then, He will also wash and purge us now by the Spirit of judgment and burning from His holy headship. Then we can dwell as His Bride in the New Jerusalem.

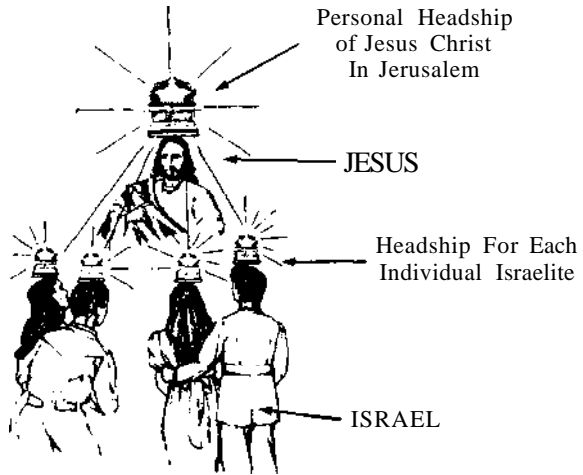
The spirit of judgment washes and purifies by enlightening the minds of God's people with infinite, divine principles of truth. The spirit of burning purges and purifies by the cleansing fire of the Holy Ghost.

When the LORD Jesus Christ establishes His rule and reign in the millennium, His personal headship will be in Jerusalem. However, by His omnipotent power and by His omniscient judgment and by the omnipresent burning of the Holy Spirit, He will create an ark of His headship upon each individual so that each Israelite will possess a personal ark or headship of the LORD.

The LORD desires the same goal for each of us now, and that is that we grow *up unto our* head, Christ Jesus, and take on the

Ark of His headship in all things (Ephesians 4:13-15).

And the LORD will create upon *every dwelling place* of mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night: *for upon all the glory shall he a defence* (Isaiah 4:5).



In the millennium each person will have his or her personal headship with its cloud of glory that will abide with the person day and night. Consequently, there will be perfect unity and harmony between the LORD Jesus Christ and Israel, His Bride, because there will be only one head, the LORD Jesus Christ, as the Governor and Guide.

Impressive as the little arks might appear to be, it is important to remember that their light, flaming fire, and glory all proceed forth from the true Ark, the highly exalted headship of the LORD Jesus Christ. Light from Christ's *kabode* glory and *Shekinah* glory is sufficiently able to personally enlighten each mind that He has created.

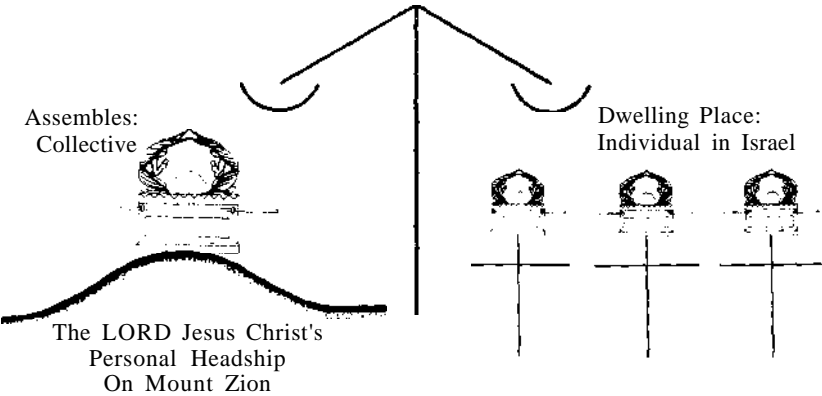
Christ has a personal portion of His headship or ark for each of us. It is completely unfitting for us to be jealous of what another has received from Christ. We should rather seek our personal portion of Christ's headship that He has reserved for us. This is why God's Word admonishes us not to compare ourselves among ourselves (II Corinthians 10:12).

There was a time in my life when I used to complain to God concerning the separations that He was requiring of me. "LORD," I would say, "You are making me do this, but you are letting Sister So-and-So get by." This was before I had learned and had understood that He was giving me the particular rays of light that He had ordained for me and that He was creating His special ark or headship for my head.

The first thing that the rays of light from Christ's headship do is to enlighten and to quicken the truth in *our* minds that God has a personal ark for us from His master plan. Therefore, His thoughts and His will are different concerning us on one side of the scales, although they are the same as for others on the other side of the scales.

During Christ's millennium reign, each individual Israelite will obey His voice because each will have a purged, purified, and enlightened mind and an ark of Christ's personal headship abiding upon his dwelling place.

Notice that God's Word makes a distinction between the "dwelling place" and the "assembly."



There is a difference between man's personal, individual tabernacle or "dwelling place" and the "assembly" of Christ's personal presence where the individual goes to worship and gather together with other saints. The "dwelling place" refers to the personal tabernacle of our body where dwell the spirit and soul and the glory of Christ and His headship. The word "assembly" is used to identify the place where God's people congregate and where Christ personally stands in the midst of two or three who are gathered together in His Name.

God has a headship for us to enjoy individually in our dwelling place, and He has a headship for us to enjoy collectively together in the assembly. Just imagine the chaos that would exist if, after gathering together in the assembly, we all ruled God's house by our own individual carnal headship. Each person, for example, might feel directed to sing a different song, or everyone might feel inspired to preach at the same time. The apodosis of it all would be confusion rather than worship.

That is why the LORD provides a special, collective headship in the assembly to guide and to govern the services in His house. The person who carries this "assembly headship" is responsible for following the leading of the Holy Ghost in such a way as to bless and to satisfy God's heart while, at the same time, ministering to the needs of the people.

The Ark of His headship is promised to be a defense (Isaiah 4:5). The Hebrew word for *defense* is *khoop-paw*, which means a canopy, a chamber, a closet, defense. It comes from the root word *khaw-faw*, meaning to cover, to veil, to encase, to protect, to ceil, to overlay.

The Hebrew word *khoop-paw* is translated as *chamber* in Psalm 19:4,5: "...In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun, Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his *chamber*, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race." It is translated as *closet* in Joel 2:16: "...let the bridegroom go forth of his chamber, and the bride out of her *closet*."

The LORD's glorified headship is like a chamber or closet into which the Bride can flee for defense in the time of trouble. Natural circumstances of life cannot overcome the soul who knows this truth. Tribulation's storms may continue to whirl around us, but we find the protection and comfort we need in the secret chambers of His headship.

Thank God for a headship that enlightens our minds to the goodness of His nature. With this ray of light enveloping our head, our opinion of His righteousness, holiness, and justice never changes. When we are inside of a secret closet, as it were, shut in with God, we know that everything He does is for our good and for His honour and glory.

How different it is for Christians who do not have their heads protected by the glory cloud of the LORD's headship. We have seen people drawn back into the pathway of sin by nothing stronger than a little worldly music or a few words of lustful conversation. What was wrong? Their minds had never been enlightened and clothed with the glory of Christ's headship. An enlightened and clothed mind can easily discern the distinct difference between the momentary, false excitement that the world offers and the eternal, true pleasure that Jesus Christ gives to those who remain under His headship.

Once the mind has been enlightened and clothed, it has crystal clear perception that helps it to choose what is best. For example, if you were offered a choice between a bowl of cornhusks and a bowl of strawberries with whipped cream on top, you would immediately reach for the strawberries. Why? Because your mind has been enlightened with theoretical knowledge and clothed with empirical knowledge concerning the nature of these two things. Only an unknowledgeable, immature child or severely retarded person would choose the cornhusks over the strawberries.

The headship of the LORD Jesus Christ is also our greatest defense against another kind of enemy. In times of suffering, the subtle Serpent is always present to whisper through the flesh, "This can't be God. If it were, you wouldn't be in such torment. You are

smart; get to work and figure a way out. Take your own headship and redeem yourself."

Beloved, fleshly, serpentine unbelief and rebellion cannot tempt us to move out of God's will if we truly seek refuge in Christ's merciful and gracious headship. If, by faith, we keep our head up in the glory cloud of Christ's headship. He will defend us against our inner fleshly enemies. Then we will be victorious in Christ Jesus, and we will see how God makes *all things* work together for good.

We do not have to understand everything about what is happening to us. We only have to understand that God is the eternal Cause of all things and that the LORD Jesus Christ is the eternal redemptive Effect of all things and that God is all-power, all-knowledge, and all-love and purity. Therefore, He is too good and too holy to allow anything in our lives that is not for our good and for His glory. Consequently, all we need to know is that God's will is sufficient for our lives.

The infinite, divine mind of God Who devised and purposed His personal will for each of our lives is well able to bring it to perfect maturity without any carnal advice or help from us. Our responsibility is to surrender to come under His causative and redemptive headship and let it feed us with life and faith and let it be our defense and protection.

The headship of Jesus Christ provides for all of our natural and spiritual needs. Out of it comes our spiritual bread, meat, and wine. It is a closet for us when the enemy comes around. It is our defense and our protection. And what is so vitally important about this principle is that it works!

At this Thanksgiving season, may each of us come before the LORD with new gratitude in our hearts and new words of appreciation on our lips. Every day offers us new opportunities to shout and to praise His Name in the dance for His causative and redemptive headship in our lives. Every day grants us a new privilege to remember all the past blessings that we have received and the future ones that have been promised and to rejoice and to thank Him all over again. May our hearts be filled with joyful

gratitude to the LORD Jesus Christ, the Source of our lives and the Maintainer of our lives.

## Chapter Three

### TRUE GRACE

True grace is manifested in the form of true gratitude. The word *grace* means graciousness, objective beauty, favour, pleasant, precious, to bend or stoop in kindness to an inferior, to beseech, to have mercy or pity upon; it also means gratefulness and gratitude.

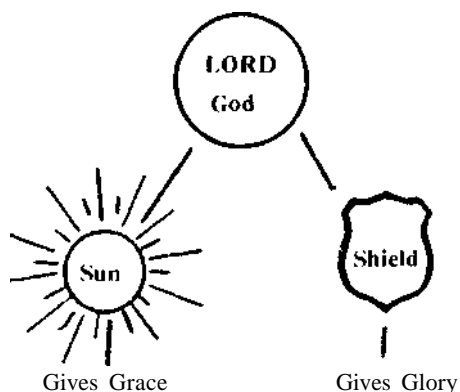
The thought that God, the Rock of Truth, would humble Himself and show mercy to sinful, rebellious men is more than we can ever deserve. To know that He did it willingly, with gratitude because He had something to give, is too much for our mortal minds to fully grasp.

Gratitude is the foundation of all spiritual growth in God. Gratitude toward God can turn the most minute blessing into heavenly joy and ecstasy. Gratitude can change a sorrowful and discouraged mind into a happy and hopeful mind.

King David knew the secret of gratitude. Every furrow in his Psalms is sown with the seeds of thanksgiving or gratitude.

Only those who allow this foundation of gratitude to be laid in their hearts will be able to stride forward in their spiritual education and moral development, thereby, arriving at the goal of spiritual maturity in their lives. With this truth in mind, let us learn to lay hold of gratitude.

For the LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly (Psalm 84:11).



The Sun of Righteousness will produce grace or gratitude, and God's Shield will produce glory.

Since, at this time, we are interested primarily in the grace or gratitude aspect of this Scripture, we shall confine our study to the word *sun*. We will see the different classes of grace or gratitude the Sun of Righteousness can produce in us as we wait under His divine presence in the Word and prayer.

The natural sun is noted for its attributes of heat and light. In the spiritual realm, the Sun of Righteousness shines forth with His warmth and light upon the souls who wait in His presence. The Bride in the Song of Solomon had some wonderful experiences with these two aspects of the spiritual Sun, for its heat and light clothed her with gratitude without and within.

## I. OUTWARD GRATITUDE

I am black, but comely, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, as the tents of Kedar, as the curtains of Solomon. Look not upon me, because I am black, *because the sun hath looked upon me*: my mother's children were angry with me; they made me the keeper of the vineyards; but mine own vineyard have I not kept (Song of Solomon 1:5,6).

The Hebrew word here for *sun* means brilliance, a light, a ray; it also refers to both the east and the west.

The Bride declared that as the sun with its light and brilliance looked upon her from its rising in the east to its going down in the west, she experienced a definite change, one so remarkable it was visible outwardly.

In the Old Testament Tabernacle, the east position had to do with the Brazen Altar, which represented the beginning of all spiritual experience. In the west position was the Ark of the Covenant, which portrayed the maturity of all spiritual experience.

The Bride first found the Sun of Righteousness leading her by its rays of light to experiences which produced within her gratitude for outward things in both the low place and in the high place.

## **A. GRATITUDE FOR THE LOW PLACE**

As the Sun shone upon the espoused Bride, it changed her colour and formed the light of grace or gratitude in her heart. She began to take on the colour of humility. She said, "I am black, but comely." The word *black* means sunburnt. She was like a cake well-turned or well-cooked; she was not burnt on one side, doughy on the other, and cold in the middle. She had been well-baked by the rays of grace or gratitude. She lived in the prayer closet until she fell in love with the will of her Bridegroom. She was grateful for His will in her life, for her relationship, for the unity she had with Him.

The rays of grace or gratitude made the espoused Bride to rejoice whether she was serving her LORD as an humble tent of Kedar or as an exalted curtain in Solomon's Temple.

The tent speaks of the humble place. There was nothing beautiful or desirable about an old weather-beaten tent on a lonely hillside in the wilderness. Nevertheless, she was so grateful, so filled with gratitude for the will of her Bridegroom and for the privilege of being one with Him, that she could rejoice while serving Him in a public place that was low and despised in the eyes of the world.

Her love for the Bridegroom produced a gratitude for union

with Him regardless of where she was placed to serve Him. The Bride was so grateful for the will of her Bridegroom and for the privilege of being one with Him that she could rejoice while serving Him in a private place in His temple, as a curtain in Solomon's Temple that was unsought-after by the world.

True grace or gratitude is built on appreciation for union with the will of God and will gladly serve the LORD, both in the low place and the high place, and both in the humble public place and in the exalted private place. Many Christians would go on for God if they could be joined to the exalted place as a curtain in Solomon's Temple and bring in the general public to behold their exaltation. But these same ones might backslide if God placed them out in the wilderness as an humble tent of Kedar for the general public to behold their humiliation. The thrilling delight in serving the LORD is being one with His will and the will of the Bridegroom, Jesus Christ.

When our colour is changed, all murmuring and complaining over the vicissitudes of life disappear, and gratitude is born that makes us rejoice that He has counted us worthy to know Him and to be one with His will for us, whether it consists of our serving as a tent of Kedar or as a curtain of Solomon's Temple.

The changing of the colour of our countenance is only an outward evidence that the Sun of Righteousness has shone in our hearts with His purifying rays of grace and gratitude.

The Word of God says that the Sun of Righteousness will arise with healing in His wings. While the Bride was in her prayer closet, the secret chambers, the light of the Sun of righteousness was shining upon her, purging her and healing her of all her doubts and fears of being ridiculed and persecuted as she went forth, like a tent of Kedar, to minister publicly to way-worn travellers who had lost their way. The radiant rays of grace or gratitude from the Sun made her to rejoice and to be grateful for the privilege of suffering for Him in order to serve Him.

## **B. GRATITUDE FOR THE HIGH PLACE**

The Bride also had an experience of being tested as a curtain in Solomon's Temple: if her colour had truly been changed, if the Sun of Righteousness with His grateful rays of light had produced gratitude, grace, gratefulness in her heart, there would be no feeling of pride of position. She would not be looking around at others, seeking to tell them of her great worth or what an exalted position she now holds. Rather, her heart would be taken up with gratitude for the privilege of being one with the will of her Bridegroom.

The LORD's secret is the same whether we are in the low place or in the high place, and that is a personal union with His will. The mystery of joy, delight, and ecstasy is in having gratitude for the privilege of being made one with the will of God. No one can ever stride onward and upward in God's will without gratitude for His will.

The Word of God tells us that God makes all things work together for good to those who love Him. When gratitude is flowing in the heart, the Devil can do nothing that we cannot be grateful for because we know that God will make it work for our good and for His glory. If the enemy puts a stumbling block before us, we can say, "Thank You, Jesus. I know You are going to make this a stepping stone." And God will overlay what the Devil meant for a stumbling block with the golden wisdom of His glory and turn it into a stepping stone so we can keep running on and climbing higher in the stature of the LORD Jesus Christ.

The Bride learned the first rays of gratitude when she was grateful for the will of God whether she was asked to serve as a tent of Kedar or as a curtain in Solomon's Temple.

The foundation of gratitude for outward circumstances was also laid in King David's heart while he was still a lad. Tending his father's sheep on the hillsides of Bethlehem gave him no claim to fame or consideration from his father. David was not even invited to attend the service in which Samuel was to anoint one of Jesse's sons to be king over Israel. Seven of Jesse's sons passed before Samuel,

but the LORD chose none of them. Only then did Jesse decide to mention that he had another son, who was out on the hillside with the sheep.

Was David sad, discouraged, or bitter about his occupation as shepherd? No! The Sun of Righteousness was shining in his heart, so he was able to worship and praise God with his playing and singing while tending sheep on the lonely hillside.

As a shepherd, David faced his own weaknesses and saw God strengthen him to slay a lion and a bear. Out on the hillside he had gratitude in his heart for the will of God in his life. When it was God's time to exalt David, he took the throne to rule and reign over Israel. But he neither forgot nor despised the lowly place from which he was called. David never lost his humility gratitude that he had gained while serving God as a lowly shepherd.

What is gratitude all about? It is allowing the Sun of Righteousness to shine in our hearts with His grace until we can praise God for His will both in the low place and in the high place. If it is God's will to make us a tent of Kedar, a spectacle before the multitude, we rejoice in His will. He may want us to tend sheep and face lions and bears while others are given opportunities for seeming exaltations of this world. We can take pleasure in His will if our heart has been circumcised from its idolatrous ingratitude.

If He chooses for us to minister privately as a curtain in Solomon's Temple in our prayer closet or in the house of God, we can do it with grateful humility, knowing it is the beauty of His truth that blesses others. Exaltation to a position of authority only gives one an opportunity to exercise the wisdom, righteousness, and humility that one has learned in the low place. The whole Bridegroom and Bride relationship is built on delight and gratitude for the will of God in our lives. Jesus Christ, the Bridegroom, had this delight for the Father's will although it meant Calvary's Cross, death, and hell. Christ, the Bridegroom, fills the heart of His Bride with His same delight for the Father's will.

## II. INWARD GRATITUDE

The Bride witnessed to the daughters of Jerusalem about the beauty and greatness of the Bridegroom until they cried out, "...whither is thy beloved turned aside? that we may seek him with thee" (Song of Solomon 6:1). By following the Bride's instructions, they found Him. Then the Bridegroom began to describe the beauties of His Bride to them, and He showed them how they, too, could become part of His Bride and become one with Him. The daughters of Jerusalem were so thrilled about what they had heard and seen of the Bride that they inquired farther for more understanding about the Bride, saying, "Who is she...clear as the sun..." Song of Solomon 6:10).

The Hebrew word for *sun* in this verse is different from the one used previously. This time the emphasis is on the aspect of heat. It means to give heat, to be hot, to make warm, to inflame self. The Hebrew word that is translated as *clear* means to be clean, to be bare. The spiritual picture is that the Bridegroom, as a burning Sun, has so worked within the Bride's heart and produced such gratitude that nothing within or without could disturb that gratitude.

This experience of the Bride's inward gratitude is only generated after the clear heat of the Sun has purged and purified her heart of its idolatrous ingratitude. It was the revelation of the Bride's gratitude in her mature stature that caused the daughters of Jerusalem to desire to know the LORD as a Bridegroom and to be a part of His Bride.

Outward grace or gratitude pertains to gratitude for the will of God whether it puts us in the low place of public humility or the high place of private exaltation. It comes by the LIGHT of the Sun. This is what would be known in the Mosaic Tabernacle as a Courtyard experience or as the foot-realm experience in the stature of the LORD Jesus Christ. The inward gratitude of the Bridegroom is generated by the invisible glory fire from off the Mercy Seat; this class of gratitude is found in Christ's mature stature in the head-realm.

Three classes of inward gratitude are revealed in the head-realm of the spiritual stature of Jesus Christ.

## A. GRATITUDE FOR RULERSHIP

...He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God. And he shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain (II Samuel 23:3,4).

King David wrote these words at the end of his life and, thus, revealed the gratitude he had attained as a ruler. Gratitude for rulership belongs to the mature head-realm *of the* stature of Jesus Christ.

What kind of gratitude is it? How does it manifest itself? God reveals the secret in the portion of Scripture we just quoted.

### 1. Just

First of all, David said a ruler must be just. The ability to judge justly and righteously in all things does not belong to a novice; it belongs to one whose heart has been purged, purified, and warmed with grace and gratitude for that which is fair, right, impartial, and proper. In order to understand what is just, it is necessary for us to grow in spiritual stature and to gain spiritual knowledge of God's principles of truth in His Word.

### 2. Fear of God

In addition to being just, a ruler must fear God. This is a reverential fear that causes a person to respect God's will and to fear getting out of His will. The Book of Jude tells us that we are to snatch others *out* of the fire carefully, lest we be burned also. When correcting someone, we should do it in the fear of God, lest we, too.

become defiled by a wrong spirit or an ungrateful attitude.

A ruler who is just and filled with the fear of God will know the clear shining of the Sun of Righteousness. The clear heat of the Sun burning within him will cause him to be as the light of the morning; in other words, he will be like a new, fresh day as he ministers God's wisdom and knowledge to those he serves. A ruler who has this clear shining Sun within burns with gratitude that he has living truth with which he can govern the lives of others.

When this class of gratitude burns within a heart, it will warm the hearts and lives of others and will kindle in their hearts a love for the Bridegroom. This is what happened to the daughters of Jerusalem when the Bride testified to them out of a grateful heart; she was grateful that she could minister to them and make her Bridegroom known to them. Gratitude for the marriage union with the Bridegroom qualified her rule and reign over the daughters of Jerusalem, directing them to her Bridegroom. The Bride had suffered with the Bridegroom in the days of her humility espousal; therefore, she was capable of ruling and reigning with Him in her days of exaltation as His Spouse.

John had a prophetic vision of the Bride's gratitude for rulership that will be revealed in the New City.

And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God. Having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal; (Revelation 21:10,11).

The glory of God with the New City, the Bride, caused her light to shine forth as a jasper stone, clear as crystal. The New City will shine with *clear heal*. In eternity, all of God's creation will be governed by the light of the New City; in other words, the Bride will govern with the humility grace and glory of the clear jasper light.

And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it (Revelation 21:23,24).

...and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass (Revelation 21:18).

The Holy City, New Jerusalem, will burn like clear glass, and it will rule the creation without through all eternity with the clear light of God's exaltation glory.

## **B. GRATITUDE FOR LOVE**

Who is she that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners? (Song of Solomon 6:10).

Many times we think we are grateful for love, but in reality most of the time it is only when we are receiving expressions of love from someone else that we feel this gratitude. However, we must grow in Christ Jesus until we can have the gratitude for love that is flowing out from us to others, instead of just from others to us. Remember, we have no choice as to whether we receive love from others, but we always have a choice to give love to others. Are we grateful for the privilege to minister love?

This gratitude for love is what the daughters of Jerusalem felt flowing from the Bride as she ministered unto them, and it caused them to desire to know the Bridegroom.

If we take the LORD's love to us for granted, the gratitude for love ceases to burn in our hearts. But when we have a burning gratitude for the love of our Bridegroom, it will be flowing out continually. Gratitude for love ministers not only to our Bridegroom, but also to others. It works even when we are quiet.

### C. GRATITUDE FOR DELAY

For so the LORD said unto me, I will take my rest, and I will consider in my dwelling place like a *clear heal* upon herbs, and like a cloud of dew in the heat of harvest. For afore the harvest, when the bud is perfect, and the sour grape is ripening in the flower, he shall both cut off the sprigs with pruning hooks, and take away and cut down the branches (Isaiah 18:4,5).

Some people suffer the evil emotions of frustration and panic when they experience a delay, because it appears as though God has forgotten all about them and their needs.

Mary and Martha had this problem when their brother Lazarus died. They rebuked Jesus for failing to come sooner. But Jesus had tarried purposely because He had gratitude for delay in order to see His Father's Name glorified. Jesus Christ knew that life was going to swallow up death. Jesus knew that He was going to call Lazarus forth from the tomb and that Mary and Martha would see the glory of God and their brother walking in newness of life. Jesus knew that life could not swallow up death unless He *delayed* for death to appear.

God received a double portion of praise and glory for this miracle because Jesus delayed His coming until all human hands hung in helplessness and powerlessness. In the presence of death, God's glory appeared and swallowed up death; therefore, new appreciation for life was manifested.

Appreciation and gratitude for maturity also comes through delay. To visualize this truth, let us consider a tomato plant. After planting his tomato seed in prepared ground in the springtime, a farmer waits for the rains and the sunshine of June and July. Soon he sees the shoot of a little plant. Days go by, and the shoot becomes a vine with little green tomatoes upon it. They grow and increase in size until eventually large green tomatoes hang on the vine. Does the farmer panic because the tomatoes are not ready for gathering the minute they reach their mature size? Of course not! He knows they

will ripen under the August sun, and he looks forward to the pleasure of eating them. When harvest comes, he is grateful for delay.

Likewise in the spiritual realm, God waits patiently for spiritual stature to ripen and mature in our hearts. He knows the maturity of the Bride's stature will bring pleasure through all eternity.

The LORD also compares the enemy to plants growing unto harvest time. He likens Himself to the sun shining upon them, bringing them unto the ripened harvest season. As He shines, they mature, and their true nature is revealed. They manifest the nature of their fruit or thorns in the day of their maturity. The season of mature fruit is the time for harvesting them, whether they be good or evil. As soon as the good or evil fruit is manifested, God says, "Cut them down and harvest them."

This is the way that God dealt with Pharaoh. The same God Who shone on Israel shone also on Pharaoh. Remember, the SUN GIVES GRACE, both to the just and to the unjust. When God sees His enemies rise up against Him, He continues shining with gratitude. God delays His judgment while He continues His clear shining, perchance the wicked will repent. The LORD Jesus Christ is King of Kings and LORD of Lords; therefore, He waits patiently for the final revealing of the fruits of mankind. Man's fruits are witnesses of his nature, whether it be good or evil.

God's people often feel disturbed when their enemies are prospering while God is leaving them in the low place of humility and seeming unfruitfulness. They think they cannot take it much longer. But we must remember that God's Word tells us to "Fret not thyself because of evildoers..." (Psalm 37:1). Why? Because after a while, God will surely cut them off. We need to learn gratitude for delay and rest in God's knowledge that He knows when the time is ripe to rise up and cut them down.

True spiritual gratitude for delay is found in the head-realm of the spiritual stature of Jesus Christ. Remember, if God has called you to do something, and if it seems as though it will never come to

pass. He knows the exact season in which to bring it to pass. Although the Devil and the flesh may constantly be saying, "You don't have what it takes; it will never happen," they can never prevent God from bringing His will to fruition in due season. It is a wonderful thing to learn to rest in God's nature of omniscient faithfulness and let the clear shining gratitude for delay work in one's heart. We cannot enjoy delay until there is born in our heart true gratitude for delay.

The light of God's will worked outward gratitude in the Bride's heart. Gratitude for His will in her life, not love for position, made her surrender to serve as a lowly tent of Kedar and surrender to hang as a curtain in Solomon's Temple. Inward gratitude for God's glory burned in her until she possessed gratitude for rulership, gratitude for love, and gratitude for delay.

May our own hearts be stirred to seek God for new gratitude to be laid in our hearts so the spiritual foundation of the New City might be complete.

## Chapter Four

### THE POWER OF A GRATEFUL MOUTH

Man's mouth is a powerful instrument that can be used either for good or for evil. God created man's mouth to praise and thank Him and to make His truth known. Unfortunately, however, man often fills his mouth with cursing and deceit.

The Apostle Paul taught the Christians of his day to fill their mouths with thanksgiving, and this was centuries before our pilgrim fathers thought about having a feast day by that name.

Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand. Be careful for nothing; *hut in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving* let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:5-7).

God desires that our moderation or patient bearing of affliction be known to others, that we do not run to excess in anything, and that we do not revel in the enjoyment of our earthly goods that His has given us. God desires that we be careful for nothing; that is, we are to avoid anxious thoughts and distracting doubts and fears in the needs and difficulties of life. We are to exercise constant care in trusting God for all our needs in this life.

We must join our requests in prayer with supplications and thanksgiving.

When our prayer and supplications are joined to holy gratitude, we experience the peace of God that passeth all understanding.

Paul also said, "In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you" (I Thessalonians 5:18). These Scriptures teach us that it is God's will for us to give thanks in everything. In every condition, even in adversity as well as prosperity, we are to give God thanks. Since God reconciled us to Himself through Christ Jesus, and since we enjoy this reconciliation in the midst of all things, it is only fitting that we give God thanks for everything.

We have no right to ask God for one more thing until we have thanked Him and expressed gratitude for what He already has done, even our redemption and reconciliation. We must learn to thank Him for the situation just as it is. For example, if we want Jesus to heal our aching back, we should lift our hands and first thank Him for our aching back.

Some people may say, "That sounds ridiculous." No, it is not ridiculous at all. If God had not already given us a back, it could not ache. If our back did not ache, we could not experience God's divine healing power. Therefore, we should thank God for our back regardless of what shape it may be in. When this principle is practiced, it makes living a spiritual romance with Christ Jesus. I have seen God perform great miracles after I had taught people to *thank* God for their conditions.

Since God expects Christians to express thanks to God in everything and for everything, we can be assured that Jesus Christ has set the instructive example for us. This same class of gratitude is seen in the mouth of our beloved Bridegroom, Jesus Christ.

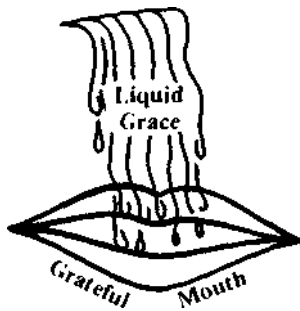
Thou art fairer than the children of men: grace [gracious or grateful words] is poured into thy lips: therefore God hath blessed thee for ever (Psalm 45:2).

The 45th Psalm is one of the thirteen Maschil Psalms of instruction written for the benefit of God's Bride. Hence, the person in question here is the Bridegroom Who is identified in verse eleven by the name Lord, the translation of the Hebrew word *Adonai*

which means master. Lord, husband. The Scripture says that grace was poured into His lips. The use of the word *poured* is very interesting, for it has the connotation of pouring melted metal into a mold and allowing it to harden. Once hot molten metal is poured into a mold and cooled, it forever bears the same form and shape as the mold. Liquid grace, or gratitude, which had been melted by God's hot exalted breath was poured into the lips of the LORD Jesus Christ. Then God's cold humility breath blew on it to freeze the gratitude into a form which never would lose its shape.

Christ's mouth was fairer than the mouths of the children of men because the Father's grace or gratitude was poured into His lips. The Father's grace or gratitude was first poured deep within Christ's heart, where the song of gratitude is fully formed. Then, the Father's grace anointed His lips to utter what His heart had already created.

Likewise, when our inner heart is filled with sincerity and truth, thoughts of gratitude will be generated in our heart which will have a need to be expressed through the tongue. The tongue is the ready pen, the skillful scribe, of the heart. Therefore, when the heart is free from its idolatrous images of ingratitude, the tongue expresses gratitude without hesitation.



The words which came from Jesus' mouth were always expressions of gratitude (Matthew 11:25; John 11:41). Fretful and ungrateful words were never heard coming out of Jesus' mouth. Not

even in the times of His greatest suffering and pain. He never accused His Father's holy justice by murmuring and complaining out of ingratitude.

All those in the synagogue marvelled at the gracious words that flowed forth from His anointed lips.

And all bare him witness, and wondered at the *gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth*. And they said. Is not this Joseph's son? (Luke 4:22).

The Psalmist prophesied of the grace that would be poured *into* Jesus' lips, and Luke prophesied of the grace that poured forth *from* Jesus' lips.

Jesus' words of grace were wonderful, and His power of grace was unparalleled. The greatest wonder is that Christ should speak these wonderful words of grace to us "graceless wretches" and then forgive us, cleanse us, and give us His gracious words so we can be thankful and grateful to God in everything.

Many believers can say "Thank You, Jesus" while they are standing in the midst of the exalted, fiery glory of Christ's personal presence. But few, comparatively speaking, are willing to allow Christ Jesus' cold humility breath to blow upon them in the midst of suffering and adversity so that the words of liquid gratitude may be solidified into a permanent form deep within their inner heart. Only those who, like the Bridegroom, have this molded, solidified gratitude can say "Thank You, Oh Father God, for Your headship" both in painful circumstances and in prosperous conditions of life.

This principle of the LORD's gracious words coming from His mouth enable us to understand why the espoused Bride in the Song of Solomon requested to be kissed with the kisses of the Bridegroom's mouth. The Bride wanted her mouth to be a grateful mouth like her beloved Bridegroom's mouth. The Bride did not say "Kiss me with a *kiss*." She asked to be kissed with the *kisses* of His mouth. The Bride knew that one kiss of gratitude would not be sufficient to change her ingratitude. The Bride's lips of ingratitude

could not be changed with just one kiss of gratitude from the Bridegroom. Therefore, she asked for kisses (plural) because she realized that it would take many of His kisses to convert her mouth from ingratitude to one of gratitude so she could always say, "Thank You, LORD Jesus, for everything."

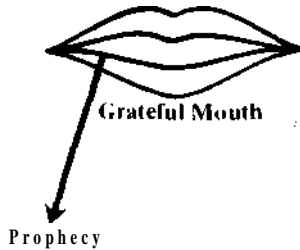
God desires to do a quick work in circumcising our hearts in these last days. We can bypass generating many fleshly thoughts and feelings of ingratitude by simply allowing the LORD to pour His gracious words into our hearts and our mouths and by learning *to* thank the LORD Jesus Christ for everything.

If we allow Jesus to circumcise our ingratitude that says "I am worthy of more," our spiritual man will be free to speak grateful words unto the heavenly Father for all things. Our mouths will be able to say "Thank You, Jesus, for every painful thing," if we have allowed Christ's cold humility breath to solidify His liquid grace which He has poured into our lips during our season of exaltation and blessing.

Grace, or gratitude, has sanctifying power. By thanking God for every situation, even the painful ones, we acknowledge before the visible and the invisible worlds the purity and justice of His supreme, sovereign headship. Furthermore, this same gratitude sanctifies us from the carnal flesh that tries to accuse God's righteous, holy, and just nature for allowing painful adversities to enter our world. Ungrateful rebellion and bitterness cannot stand for long in the presence of Christ's true grace. Grateful words that pour from our lips also have power to sanctify sincere listeners of their doubts and distrustfulness concerning the mercy and goodness of God's headship.

If this were the only blessed stream of life that flows from our lips after we have allowed our Bridegroom to transform our mouths, it would be more than we deserve. But since Christ's gracious mouth is the fountainhead out of which flows many other powerful streams of living words, we can expect Him to increase the streams of grace and life from our mouths.

The first stream to flow out of Christ's gracious mouth is called prophecy.



## I. PROPHECY

A divine sentence is in the lips of the king: his mouth transgresseth not in judgment (Proverbs 16:10).

The Hebrew words for *divine sentence* pertain to prophecy. The LORD Jesus Christ is God's King of King and LORD of LORD's, Who was anointed and consecrated by the Spirit *without* measure (John 3:34). Jesus Christ has been enthroned at the right hand of God with all power in heaven and in earth. He is the holy Son of God; therefore, all gracious prophetic streams that issue out of His mouth are holy. All of His gracious prophetic judgment is just, holy, righteous, and true.

Out of Christ's mouth of gratitude will come a gracious prophecy of hope and comfort in the midst of dark or evil situations and circumstances. When we say, "Thank You, Jesus, for this painful situation," the Christ in our spiritual heart will send forth a word of prophetic hope, showing us His way of redemption for us. We will hear Him saying, "Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness" (Isaiah 41:10).

God's gracious Word prophesies to us not to turn around to fear and confusion in our troubles, but to look to the LORD Who will cause us to be victorious as we lean upon Him.

When some believers find themselves in adverse situations, they say, "Oh, I am so confused. I just don't know what to do. I am a nervous wreck." They are confused and nervous because, in their state of helplessness, instead of leaning on the LORD's Name for His revelation and redemption in their situations, their pride of revelation has begotten false images or evil emotions called confusion which is very destructive. Second, they are not giving thanks.

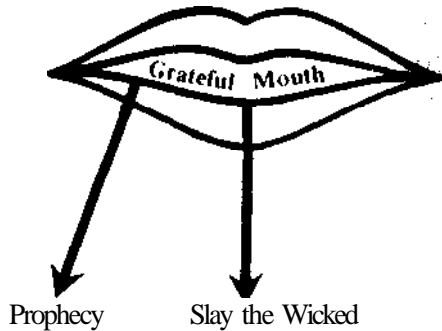
I have never seen a truly thankful and grateful person confused. This reminds me of a story I heard once. While walking through the woods one day, a man heard someone saying, "All this and Jesus Christ, too." The man set out in the direction of the voice and soon came upon an old cabin. Peering through the window, he saw an old man with a weather-beaten face. The old man had a single crust of bread and a glass of water which he gratefully was lifting up to God, saying, "All this and Jesus Christ, too." This man was neither confused nor ungrateful about what he was going to have for supper. He had only bread and water in the natural realm, but he had Jesus Christ in the spiritual realm. Consequently, he was exceedingly grateful for God's provisions of life, both in the natural and in the spiritual. It is better to have bread and water attached to Jesus Christ than the most elaborate provisions without Jesus Christ. The words of prophecy coming out of the old man's mouth showed him that his daily bread being joined to Jesus Christ was more than he deserved. A grateful heart never feels confused, nervous, or dismayed.

Proud, ungrateful lips cannot foretell the right way for us to go, because they always direct us into paths that will bring temporal exaltation and honour to the self. But grateful lips that are filled with the gracious Word of the LORD always divert us into the way and the paths of life that will bring us eternal exaltation and honour before the LORD.

Every gracious revelation which comes from the Spirit of God within will always agree with the written Word without. Therefore, if our prophetic words fail to agree with God's Holy Bible, we can

know that our prophecy is not coming from Christ's gracious lips of gratitude.

The eleventh chapter of Isaiah reveals that the second stream of gracious words flowing out from the grateful lips of the Resurrected Bridegroom has power to slay the wicked.



## II. SLAY THE WICKED

But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth *with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked* (Isaiah 11:4).

When the LORD Jesus Christ returns again. He will judge the poor, lowly, helpless ones in distress who have been deprived of their rights. He will decide with equity for the meek, oppressed ones in the land. He will smite the guilty with the rod of His gracious Word out of His mouth. He will slay the wicked with His glorious breath that accompanies His gracious Word.

When the LORD Jesus Christ returns again. He will be neither fearful nor dismayed because fallen Lucifer is in opposition against Him, or because the anti-Christ and the false prophet are set against Him, or because all the wicked people in the world are united against Him. No indeed! His infinite, divine gracious words and glorious breath flowing out of His lips will slay His wicked enemies.

If the LORD's gracious Word and glorious breath from His lips of gratitude will slay the enemies in that day, certainly He can and will do the same thing for us now.

Our unChrist-like flesh is never thankful for enemies, for adversaries, for opposers who stand against us. Many Christians frequently descend into the pit of ingratitude, murmuring, complaining, and accusing God's just headship because He has permitted some adversary to come against them.

God's purpose in allowing enemies to come against us is to prove the power of His gracious Word and His glorious breath.

The stairway of ingratitude always leads to a pit of confusion and darkness. Conversely, the stairway of gratitude always leads to new heights of glorious enlightenment. Once we learn the secret power of gratitude, we no longer have to take periodic trips to the pit of confusion and hopelessness. Let us not wait until murmuring, complaining, and accusing spirits possess our mouth. Let us use the LORD's slaying gratitude and let it come forth out of our mouth and let it slay the adversaries in our flesh. Then we can say, "Thank You, Jesus, for counting me worthy to suffer for Your Name. I'm grateful to have the opportunity and the privilege of fellowshiping even a small part of Your sufferings. I thank You for creating a way whereby the power of Your gracious words and glorious breath can be manifested before Your adversaries."

The LORD's glorious breath and His gracious words will slay the power of every enemy that comes against us.

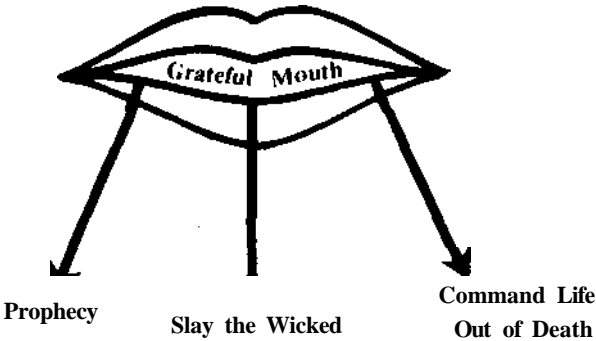
This principle is applicable to all enemies, whether they be outward ones or an inward one of our own flesh. It usually is much easier for us to be grateful for our outward enemies than it is for us to be grateful for the enemies of our own flesh that are continually rising up to oppose our spiritual growth in Christ Jesus. Some people may ask, "How can I be grateful for my unChrist-like flesh?" Have you ever noticed how much harder you pray and what greater degree of sincerity is manifested when it appears that the flesh is winning the battle in its warfare to prevent you from striding forward in your spiritual education and moral development?

We should be grateful for anything and everything that pushes us closer to God, increases our dependence on Him, and becomes an occasion for greater degrees of Christ's revelation of His overcoming power and glory. If the tool happens to be other human beings, let us thank God for them. If the tool is our own flesh, let us be grateful for that too. We must learn to say, "Thank You, Jesus, for my problem. Thank You for giving me something that causes me to weep and pray and seek Your face. Thank you, Jesus, for allowing me to experience Your victorious, gracious Word and glorious breath."

Giving thanks in everything prevents us from taking up a bitter spirit toward God, toward our fellowman, and toward ourselves. Many times Christians say that they feel burdened about something when what they actually feel is the depressive burden of their own ungrateful spirit.

Remember, gratitude slays the enemy. For example, we cannot hate someone and thank God for him at the same time. Why? Because when we start thanking God for that person, we start looking for something about the person for which we can be truly grateful. There is not a human being in the world that we cannot find something for which to be thankful if we look honestly. Christ's glorious gratitude will slay every wicked, hateful attitude that tries to rise up in our hearts and minds.

The third stream to flow out of Jesus' grateful mouth has power to command life out of death.



### III. COMMAND LIFE OUT OF DEATH

Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said. Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me. And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them. Loose him, and let him go (John 11:41-44).

Previous verses in this chapter tell us that Jesus deliberately delayed two days in the place where He was, after receiving the news of Lazarus' illness. By the time Jesus arrived in Bethany, Lazarus had been buried four days; corruption already had set in. La/an is' sisters and friends were doing everything but giving thanks. They were weeping, murmuring, and saying, "Jesus, if You had come a little sooner, Lazarus would not have died." But that was Jesus' purpose in tarrying so that Lazarus would die. Jesus knew that from His grateful mouth would proceed words of life that would swallow up Lazarus' death. Jesus also knew that many would believe on Him when they saw the great miracle of Lazarus being raised from the dead.

However, neither Mary nor Martha, in their ignorance and darkness, were able to say, "Thank You, God, that Lazarus is dead."

Nevertheless, this did not hinder Jesus from giving thanks first to His heavenly Father for everything exactly as it was—Lazarus' death and all the weeping and rebuking of Mary and Martha. After Jesus had given thanks. He gave the commandment for Lazarus to come forth out of death and the grave.

Many Christians want Christ's commanding power manifested in deathly situations before they have first given thanks to God for permitting these situations. It does not matter how dead we may feel

spiritually, we should always remember the order which Jesus used in dealing with death. We should first lift our hands and hearts, saying, "Jesus, I know that Your resurrection life can be manifested through death; therefore, I thank You for bringing me to this place of death." Then, after gratitude has come forth out of our mouth, we have the right to use Christ's gracious words to command spiritual death to move back and for new spiritual life to come forth.

Grateful lips have power to command life out of death. But we should never try to usurp Christ's command to change anything or anybody until we first have offered sufficient gratitude to God for that situation or that person.

Beloved, we have been granted the privilege to have life in this present world. We can make it pleasant and enjoyable, or we can make it miserable and wretched, depending on either our gratitude or our ingratitude. If we choose to let Jesus circumcise our hearts of ingratitude. He will also transform our mouth by making it like unto His own gracious mouth. We, too, can have the same powerful streams of gratitude flowing out of our mouth. Words out of a grateful mouth will prophesy and show God's provided way of redemption. Grateful words also have power to slay the wicked, and they have power to command life out of death.

May we seek God for the removal of ingratitude from our heart and mouth so that our heart and mouth may be filled with the glorious gratitude of the LORD Jesus Christ.