

“He that oppresseth the poor to increase his *riches*, and he that giveth to the rich,
shall surely come to want.” Prov 22:16

Thanksgiving Exercises

Nearly the whole of Thanksgiving day, November 29, was spent in church. Our morning meeting was one of special interest. In a cheerful testimony everyone had a thank-offering to present to God. In the forenoon we had a Bible-reading on the subject of thanksgiving, and it was clearly shown from the Scriptures that **it is our duty to glorify God by offering thanks and praise**. This was a most precious season. **All were instructed and reproved; for repining at the dealings of God has been almost continual, while gratitude and praise had been seldom expressed and little cherished in the heart.** Many confessed that they had cherished doubt and distrust, and had reaped as they had sown; and as they expressed a resolution to reform in this particular, **I reminded them that when pretexts for dissatisfaction are presented, we are to say, “Get thee behind me, Satan.”** Let everyone who has tasted of the love of God praise him for his goodness to the children of men. In this let every soul be whole-hearted and sincere. {RH January 15, 1884, par. 5}

It is a great cause of gratitude that we understand the nature of this day better than we once did. It is not designed to minister to our selfish gratification in the enjoyment of every luxury because God has bestowed upon us the rich bounties of his providence; on the contrary, we are to recall his mercies, and to meditate upon his favors with thankful hearts. **To devote this day to gluttony, and our time and strength to the preparation of rich and expensive dishes, thus tempting our families and friends to gorge themselves, instead of offering thanksgiving to God, is the basest idolatry of self; for it is perverting the very best gifts of Heaven to the indulgence of appetite.** Many thus lay the foundation for disease and premature death, and furnish Satan an occasion for hellish exultation. {RH January 15, 1884, par. 6}

I could not let this opportunity to invite sinners to Jesus pass unimproved. I wanted all who had not previously done so to **present themselves a thank-offering to Him who has made so costly an offering for them.** Oh, matchless love! Oh, precious, precious offering in our behalf, that we might have eternal life! In response to the invitation, **about thirty came forward**, including some who had backslidden from God, and quite a number who were seeking him for the first time. **What a precious thank-offering to Jesus was this!** He himself says, “Joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.” There was indeed cause for rejoicing when the news was borne to heaven that on Thanksgiving day, November 29, 1883, at South Lancaster, Mass., **souls were deserting the black banner of Satan, and taking their position beneath the blood-stained banner of Prince Immanuel.** In imagination I could hear the response of praise, as angels told the glad news that these precious souls had entered into covenant with God to obey him as dear children, and that their names were enrolled in the Lamb's book of life. What a victory was this for Christ, and what a disappointment for Satan! {RH January 15, 1884, par. 7}

Our meeting closed about two o'clock, and we then took ample refreshments; but we had no time to devote to the preparation of extra dishes. **We were having a feast of fat things; we were eating of the Bread of Heaven, and drinking rich draughts from the well of Bethlehem.** Jesus graced the feast with his royal presence, and our hearts were joyful in him. The **testimonies** borne by our brethren and sisters were full of courage and gratitude to God; and their verdict was, “Oh, what a Thanksgiving day this has been! It is the best Thanksgiving day I ever experienced!” {RH January 15, 1884, par. 8}

The Coming Thanksgiving

EGW

Our Thanksgiving is approaching. Will it be as it has been in many instances, a thanksgiving to ourselves? or will it be a thanksgiving to God? Our Thanksgivings may be made seasons of great profit to our own souls as well as to others, if we improve this opportunity to **remember the poor among us**. God has placed his poor in our midst, and he identifies his interest with them. Those who for Christ's sake relieve their necessities thus show that they would gladly do the same for Jesus; but as they cannot manifest their love to Jesus in person, they do their acts of sympathy, their deeds of love and beneficence, to him in the person of his saints. {RH November 18, 1884, par. 1}

There are among us poor persons who need not have been thus if they had manifested wise forethought and careful Bible economy when they had opportunity and ability to earn wages. But they spent all as fast as it came, indulging in things they might have done without, and lacking nothing for their own comfort. Their desire to dress as richly as their relatives or friends, the desire to gratify their fancy so **to provide for their tables as to make a good showing before friends or relatives who love not the truth, makes them very liberal to themselves**, which results in their really doing injustice to themselves, to their families, and those whose capital they are using. Many need not be poor if they were self-denying and economical. When in possession of health, they should improve the opportunity when money comes in, to practice economy and lay by a certain sum weekly, resolving not to touch it even if for some meals they were obliged to eat salt and potatoes, or porridge and bread. This **self-denial** would be of the greatest advantage to the health. And if wages were low, or money scarce, it would be a gratification to know that there was something to fall back upon. {RH November 18, 1884, par. 2}

There are families where enough is wasted to support a small family. Such the Lord is testing. He will let them experience pinching want,—the only way in which they can learn the lesson that it is not selfish indulgence or chasing after pleasure that brings peace and contentment. Real moral worth, the love and fear of God, opens fountains of pleasure that are never dry. {RH November 18, 1884, par. 3}

While there are those who are in poverty through extravagant habits of living, there are also those who bear the curse of God for their dishonesty. They profess to be Christians; but they have overreached, thinking it was very cunning to deceive, to prevaricate, to obtain means under false pretenses, to take that which was not their own. God cannot bless this class. They will eventually come to want. {RH November 18, 1884, par. 4}

But these are the degraded poor, bearing the present penalty for their evil course, preparatory to the final judgment of God, and the reward they will receive according as their deeds have been. While he bears long with the perversity and iniquity of those who profess to be Christians, but who are so only in name, God never forgets, and he will punish their transgressions and visit their iniquities. There are poor among us who have done the best they could; but misfortune and sickness seem to be their lot. Their homes are not attractive because they cannot make them so. They have no money to indulge in the gratification of luxuries or those things their tastes desire. The plain necessities of life are all they can afford. There are many such ones to whom it is exceedingly galling to be obliged to depend on charity in the least sense. But, brethren and sisters, God has placed these very ones in our midst to test and prove us, to keep our dispositions Christ-like. God withholds nothing from us; we are the recipients of his mercies. **Day by day and hour by hour, God is giving to us generously; and shall we for one moment look down upon the poor as though in God's sight we were better than they? God forbid!** Never let the hungry cry of the destitute and afflicted ones come up to God against us; for every tear and every pressure of suffering want bears a cry up to heaven,—a grave charge upon some one of God's favored ones. {RH November 18, 1884, par. 5}

There are a hundred ways that can be devised to help the poor in so delicate a manner as to make them feel they are doing us a favor by receiving our gifts and sympathy. **We are to remember that it is more blessed to give than to receive. The attentions of our brethren are most liberal to those whom they wish to honor, and whose respect they desire, but who do not need their help at all. Custom and fashion say, Give to those who will give to you; but this is not the Bible rule of giving. The word of God**

declares against this way of gratifying self in thus bestowing our gifts, and says, "He that giveth to the rich, shall surely come to want." {RH November 18, 1884, par. 6}

Now a season is coming when we shall have our principles tested. Let us begin to think what we can do for God's needy ones. We can make them through ourselves the recipients of God's blessings. Think what widow, what orphan, what poor family you can relieve, not in a way to make a great parade about the matter, but be as a channel through which the Lord's substance shall flow as a blessing to his poor. As you look upon your own children, consider how many there are just as good and noble who have but little to cheer or make them glad. They may be orphans, with no home, no father, no mother, subject to temptations and influences calculated to lead them to ruin when these days of festivity occur. **Who has a care for these homeless ones? Whose doors are open to them? Let the widow and the orphan be remembered.** {RH November 18, 1884, par. 7}

But this does not embrace all your duty. Make an offering to your best Friend; acknowledge his bounties; show your gratitude for his favors; bring a thank-offering to God. How many want a share in our College at Healdsburg, Cal.? How many want to present a thank-offering to God through the College at Battle Creek? How many want to invest something in our school at South Lancaster? Brethren and sisters, **eat a plain dinner on Thanksgiving day, and with the money you would spend in extras with which to indulge the appetite, make a thank-offering to God.** What will you do for our new school just dedicated at South Lancaster? This school is at present in the greatest need. Will you do something for it? {RH November 18, 1884, par. 8}

Everything seems to have degenerated into mixing the spurious with the genuine. **Thanksgiving is almost entirely perverted.** Instead of being a day of solemn gladness and gratitude to God, it has become a day of jollification, self-indulgence, and gluttony. **Self** interposes for attention, for gratification, for indulgence. **This is a thanksgiving and oblation made to self to the forgetfulness of God and all his benefits to us.** Let **nothing** interpose to detract glory from God. {RH November 18, 1884, par. 9}

How much good might be done if we would make a right use of our associations with one another! Every one who has received of the heavenly benefits is **under obligation to shed some light on the pathway of others.** **In all our associations we are to be witnesses for Christ.** Then all those who truly love God **will cease their idolatry of self.** Let this be the case in the coming Thanksgiving. **Employ your powers to a better purpose than in cooking a variety of food with which to gratify your appetites. Employ that time in becoming missionaries for God's cause, seeking how much you can do to turn the attention from self to the Lord our Creator.** Gather up the offerings. **Set the mind to running in a different channel than has been your custom.** Let your works correspond with your faith. **See what you can do toward turning your thoughts heavenward in place of upon earthly appetite and selfish indulgence.** Wisely improve your powers in gathering up the smaller and larger offerings for the Master, and thus **present a true thanksgiving to God.** Make the most of your social position and influence to advance the interests of God's cause in the earth. **There have been so few true Thanksgivings to God! Everything has been turned from God and heaven to earth;** and now let us make every effort in our power to turn the mind back to God, away from earth, away from selfish interests, and away from self-serving. **We know but little of the experience of self-denial. We must know more of it, weaving benevolence into our daily experience.** {RH November 18, 1884, par. 10}

There never was a time when we needed to begin to understand our duty to God as now. Let the questions be asked in sincerity, **Am I a Christian (Christ-like)? Am I showing my loyalty to God, and interestedly engaged in his service? Am I doing his word as well as hearing it?** Let every one, young and old, feel the responsibility of his stewardship. All are in their Master's service. **If those who profess to be Christians expend money needlessly when there are so many missionary enterprises that demand all the means that can be spared by every one of us, they are unfaithful servants. When about to purchase some article that is not essential, remember that the means thus invested, if not necessary for health or comfort, is so much retained for selfish purposes that ought to have been invested in the cause of God.** It might have added some really necessary article of food or apparel to the needy poor around us. **Cannot we, upon the coming celebration of Thanksgiving, make a thanksgiving for others through our thoughtful sympathy and deeds of love and kindness? We**

may bring rays of sunshine into many a heart that has long been desolate. {RH November 18, 1884, par. 11}

How many in the Christian world will upon this Thanksgiving obey the injunction of Christ, "When thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind, and thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee; for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just." Instead of inviting those who have many good things in this life, and who cannot appreciate the favors of a feast, invite to your homes the needy, the poor, the widow, the fatherless. To the ones who have an abundance we have shown honor; but the ones who were really in need, who would esteem our favors as of great value, we neglect because they are poor, as though they did not belong to the Lord's family. The poor as well as the rich are under God's care. **Then let us keep Thanksgiving in God's own way, and no longer follow the customs of the world, selfishly heaping our favors upon a few favorites, and neglecting the ones precious in the sight of the Lord, though slighted and neglected by those who profess to be the children of God.** {RH November 18, 1884, par. 12}

The pampered, the indulged, need to be in the place of the poor for a year, if not longer, that they might learn by experience what it is to be straitened in purse, to be humbled by slights, to be neglected, to want for sympathy, to put up with inconvenience, to lack many things necessary for comfort. This experience would give a different mold to the character. It would open eyes now selfishly blind; and when placed back where there was an abundance at their command, their sympathies, which are now sealed to everything but selfish interests, would become extended and deepened. {RH November 18, 1884, par. 13}

Brethren and sisters, will you this Thanksgiving live and act the Christian as well as bear the name? Remember the words of Jesus: "I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me not in; naked, and ye clothed me not; sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not.... Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not unto one of the least of these, ye did it not unto me." **Matthew 25:42-45. Never let it pass from our minds that Christ identifies his interest with suffering humanity. And we are to work for them as he worked for us.** Jesus says, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." We may show our love and benevolence to Jesus in the person of his saints, saying as did David, "All things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee." {RH November 18, 1884, par. 14}

When the blessing is pronounced on the faithful, unselfish worker, the question arises from the lips of him receiving the blessing, "When saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink?" They knew not that they had done any wonderful thing. The works of love and mercy had been the natural result of their love for Jesus. **When the heart is filled with the heaven-born principles of true faith and devotion, there will be an immediate kindling of love toward Jesus, the author of redemption; and the very same works of benevolence which characterized the life of Jesus, will be wrought out by his followers, in gratitude, in devotion, in acts of mercy,—the natural fruit borne by a branch of the Living Vine.** If there is in us the love of Jesus, who hath loved us, and given himself for us, then we shall reveal the spirit that is in us **by doing as Christ has done.** "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another." {RH November 18, 1884, par. 15}

The poor we have always with us; and opportunities are thus granted us of testifying to our love for Jesus in the person of his saints. Jesus linked himself with humanity in ties of close brotherhood. He sympathized with the poorest of the race. **On the coming Thanksgiving, let us take our stand on the platform of love to our Redeemer.** I shall look with interest for the reports of the coming Thanksgiving; for I believe it will be to all who will work as did Christ, the best and happiest of their lives. {RH November 18, 1884, par. 16}

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Eat fewer kinds of food at one meal, and eat with thanksgiving. 17LtMs, Lt 135, 1902, par. 9