

God's Praises Sung; His Works Forgotten.

by Edward Payson

The sermon warns against the danger of spurious gratitude, which is a superficial expression of thankfulness that is not productive of obedience to God's laws.

Scripture: Psalm 106:12, Psalm 139:23, Isaiah 12:1, Colossians 3:17, 1 Thessalonians 5:18

Topics: "Genuine Gratitude", "Obedience To God"

Description

Edward Payson preaches about the tendency of humans, like the Israelites, to quickly forget God's works despite singing His praises. He highlights how spurious gratitude arises from self-love and how fleeting emotions of wonder and admiration often lead to forgetfulness. Payson emphasizes the importance of genuine, lasting gratitude that reflects in our actions and obedience to God's laws, not just in momentary bursts of praise. He challenges the congregation to maintain a continuous flow of gratitude towards God for His constant blessings and providence, urging them to avoid the trap of transient thankfulness that quickly fades away.

Transcript

"They sang his praise; they soon forgot his works."

Psalm 106:12,13.

was said of that generation of the Israelites, which came out of Egypt. The chapter which contains the portion of their history here alluded to, begins with rapturous expressions of gratitude, and ends with the murmurs of discontent; both uttered by the same lips, within the short space of three days. Their expressions of gratitude were called forth by that wonderful display of the divine perfections, which delivered them from the host of Pharaoh, and destroyed their enemies.

Their murmurs were excited by a comparatively trifling inconvenience, which in a few hours was removed. Of persons, whose thanksgivings were so quickly, and so easily changed to murmurings, it might well be said; --though they sang God's praises, they soon forgot his works. Unhappily, the Israelites are by no means the only persons, of whom this may, with truth, be said. Their conduct, as here described, affords a striking exemplification of that spurious gratitude, which often bursts forth in a sudden flash, when dreaded evils are averted, or unexpected favors bestowed; but expires with the occasion that gave it birth; a gratitude resembling the joy excited in an infant's breast by the gift of some glittering toy, which is received with rapture; and pleases for an hour; but when the charm of novelty vanishes, is thrown aside with

indifference; and the hand that bestowed it is forgotten.

Springing from no higher principle than gratified self love, it is neither acceptable to God, nor productive of obedience to his laws; nor does it in any respect really resemble that holy, heaven born affection, whose language it often borrows, and whose name it assumes. It may be called, distinctively, the gratitude of sinners; who, as they love those that love them, will of course be grateful to those that are kind to them; grateful even to God when they view him as kind. When excited by any signal display of his goodness, wisdom, and power, it is often, as in the case before us, accompanied by other emotions of the same character; by wonder, admiration, joy, and love, which assist to swell the song of praise, but die on the lips that pour it forth.

Such is the gratitude, such the emotions with which man too often receives the blessings, and contemplates the works of his Creator. Such evidently was the gratitude of the Israelites; and such, I fear must be added, is much of the gratitude, which, as a community, and as individuals, we have expressed on our annual seasons of public thanksgiving. A person unacquainted with human nature, who should witness for the first time some striking exhibition of national gratitude, would not, indeed, suspect this to be its character.

Such a person, while listening to the rapturous ascriptions of praise poured forth by the Israelites on the shore of the Red Sea, would have little expected to hear them, within three days, impiously murmuring against that God, whose goodness they had so recently experienced, and so loudly acknowledged. And as little, perhaps, would such a person be prepared to anticipate the scenes, which usually attend, and follow our days of public thanksgiving. The day itself, in its approach and commencement, would present to his mind an appearance, in no small degree imposing, affecting, and even morally sublime.

When he read the proclamation of our chief magistrate, enumerating the many public and private blessings for which we are indebted to the unmerited bounty of God; and calling upon men of all classes and denominations, to set apart a season, for the express purpose of thankfully, and publicly acknowledging his goodness; --when he saw the appointed day on its arrival ushered in with the solemn stillness of the Sabbath: and the usually thronged places of business empty; when he beheld the crowd, which, professedly, enter God's gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise; when his "mind's eye," glancing rapidly over the State, saw its temples filled, and its inhabitants every where engaged in a public act of praise; when he listened to the sacred songs which burst from every consecrated edifice, expressing nothing but thankfulness, and admiration, and joy; --would he not exclaim, --surely this is a grateful people!

Here, if no where else, the exhortation of the Psalmist is literally complied with. Here, rulers and subjects; legislators and judges; young men and maidens; old men and children; all unite to praise the name of the Lord. Here, at least, his showers of blessing do not descend upon a barren soil; but his goodness is suitably felt, acknowledged, and returned. It leads men to look with an eye of penitence upon the past. It will constrain them to cheerful and constant obedience in future.

The public sacrifice of thanksgiving in the sanctuary will be succeeded by more private, but not less acceptable offerings, from each family altar; from every house praise will be heard, and incense ascend; and the tide of gratitude, which has flowed deep, and full, and strong, in the temples of God, will now, divided into many streams, glide silent and unseen through every heart; refreshing the roots of each moral and Christian virtue; and clothing with new verdure the face of society.

Such would, probably, be the expectations of a person unacquainted with human nature, on witnessing, for the first time, the solemnities of a public thanksgiving. How greatly then would he be disappointed and surprised, to find none of his expectations realized; to see thousands going from the house of God to indulge in gluttony and excess; rising from a still loaded table without even the form of an acknowledgement to Him, on whose bounty they had feasted; and closing a day consecrated to holy gratitude, in sensual pleasure, and sinful mirth?

How greatly would he be surprised on the following day to find, that every appearance of thankfulness, and even of regard to our Benefactor had vanished; --to hear the language of impatience, discontent, and perhaps of profaneness, from lips which had just been employed in uttering the high praises of God; and to see the tide of national depravity, after a momentary ebb, flowing again in all its accustomed channels, with all its former strength! Would he not exclaim; --might he not with truth exclaim; This people sing God's praise; but they soon forget his works?

But without, at present, farther insisting on our national inconsistency, ingratitude, and forgetfulness of God; evils, which though we play lament, we cannot remove; I shall proceed to mention some instances, in which the works and perfections of Jehovah engage our attention; excite our natural affections; and, perhaps, call forth expressions of praise; but produce no salutary effects upon our temper or conduct; and are soon forgotten. Of these instances the first, which I shall notice, is furnished by the works of creation; or, as they are often, though not very properly called, the works of nature.

In so impressive a manner do these works present themselves to our senses; so much of variety, and beauty, and sublimity do they exhibit; such power, and wisdom, and goodness do they display; that perhaps no man, certainly no man who possesses the smallest share of sensibility, taste, or mental cultivation, can, at all times, view them without emotion; without feelings of awe, or wonder, or admiration, or delight. While contemplating the moon walking in her brightness, or the sun shining in his strength; the heavens; the work of God's fingers, or the bed of ocean hollowed by his hand; the wonders of greatness and distance brought near by the telescope, or the no less astonishing wonders of littleness revealed by the microscope; who has not felt emotions allied, apparently at least, to religion; has not felt almost persuaded to become religious; has not felt constrained to exclaim, --Marvelous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; in wisdom hast thou made them all!

Who has seen the face of heaven gather blackness; the clouds rising and rolling on in mountain over mountain: the lightning's flash, quickly and more quickly repeated, illuminating them with a sudden glare; the storm sweeping the land, and rousing ocean to fury; while the barriers placed by omnipotence repel its rage, and say, --Hitherto shalt thou come and no farther; without feeling, that God is, fearful in praises, and terrible out of his holy places; that, He hath his way in the whirlwind and the storm; and the clouds are the dust of his feet.

And in the morning. of the day; in the spring of the year; when God seems to repeat his work of creation, and, in the language of the Psalmist, renews the face of the earth; when his unseen, but swiftly moving pencil repairs the ravages of winter; restores to faded nature the colors, the bloom, the freshness of youth; and adorns with unrivalled tints the forest and the field: --when all is mildness and serenity; when the whole landscape smiles, and happy warblers give it a thousand tongues; making every grove resound with the expressions of their joy; who has not felt his breast swell with emotions which resembled, and which he, perhaps, fondly called, love and gratitude to the Creator, admiration of his works, and delight in his perfections?

But alas, how transient, how unproductive of salutary effects, have all these emotions proved? Appetite and passion, though hushed for a moment, soon renewed their importunities; the glitter of wealth, and distinction, and power, eclipsed, in our view, the glories of Jehovah; we stink from that heaven toward which we seemed rising, to plunge afresh into the vortex of earthly pleasures and pursuits; we neglected and disobeyed Him, whom we had been ready to adore; and continued to live without God, in a world which we had just seen to be full of his glory.

The rays of that glory, darting upon our minds, enkindled indeed a sudden flame; and the flame thus kindled flashed up toward heaven, but sunk and expired with the flash. Thus we sang God's praise; but soon forgot his works. Our emotions were of precisely the same nature with those, which are excited by some grand display of human powers; and, like them, they produced no reformation of conduct; no amelioration of the heart. A second instance of a similar nature is afforded by the manner, in which men are often affected by God's works of providence.

In these works his perfections are so constantly, and often so clearly displayed; our dependence on them is at all times so real, and sometimes, so apparent; and they bear, in many cases, so directly and evidently upon our dearest temporal interests, that even the most insensible cannot, always, regard them with indifference. Here nations and individuals stand on precisely the same level. Both are equally, that is entirely, dependent on the providence of God; and both are occasionally constrained to feel and acknowledge their dependence.

But the feeling is usually transient; and the acknowledgement is forgotten almost as soon as it is made. How often have we seen Christian nations, when scourged by war, pestilence, or famine; and when the help of man was evidently vain, addressing public and united supplications to heaven for relief: And as often have we seen them, after relief was obtained, singing with apparent thankfulness, *Te Deum laudamus*, --Thee O God we praise; and then proceeding without delay to repeat those sins, the punishment of which had just been removed.

If there is a solitary instance to which this remark does not apply, it is afforded by our fathers; the fathers of New England. How often they were placed in circumstances of distress and danger, from which God alone could deliver them; and how often, in answer to their supplications, he granted them deliverance, you need not be informed. Well may we exclaim, with the posterity of Abraham, --Our fathers trusted in thee, O God; they trusted in thee: and thou didst deliver them.

And while they trusted in God for deliverance, they were truly grateful for its accomplishment. They did not forget the mighty works of the Lord, but taught them diligently to their children; and endeavored to have them preserved in everlasting remembrance. Witness their establishment of the custom, in compliance with which we are now assembled for thanksgiving in this house of prayer. But if our fathers furnish an exception to the remarks, which have been made respecting the ingratitude of nations; it is evident that their descendants do not.

Though we have equal reason with them, to be grateful for the kind interpositions of providence in their favor; since to those interpositions we are indebted, for all our civil and religious privileges; yet how entirely, almost, are they forgotten? How seldom is the annual celebration of our independence marked, by any acknowledgement of God's goodness; any direct reference to his providential interposition; anything which indicates a grateful recollection of his past favors.

True, he is, sometimes, on these occasions addressed in prayer; and his praise is perhaps sung; but it is too evident that his works are soon, very soon, forgotten? Do not those days, as they pass in review before Him, to whom we owe our independence, appear stained with more, and fouler pollutions, than, perhaps, any other day of the year? And does not the cry of our national sins, at all times loud, then come up before him, with peculiar urgency? This, my hearers, is something worse than forgetting God's works.

It is selecting the anniversary of that day, on which he gave us one of the greatest temporal blessings which a nation can receive, to be employed in offending him with more than ordinary diligence. It is turning a day, which ought to be observed, if observed at all, as a festival of grateful recollection, into a season of idleness, intemperance, profaneness, and every species of excess. But once more passing by evils, which no efforts of an individual can remedy, let us turn, for farther illustrations of this subject, to our families, and to ourselves.

On reviewing our personal and domestic history we shall all find too many instances, in which, though we may have sung God's praises, we have forgotten his works. Say, ye, who go down to the sea in ships, and behold the wonders of God in the deep; did you never there experience the wonders of his mercy? Have none of you been reduced to extremities which caused you to say, all hope that we should be saved was taken away? And did no conviction of your dependence on him, who holds the winds in his lands, then pervade your minds?

Did no wish that he would interpose for your deliverance arise in your breasts; a wish which assumed the form of a prayer; or which would have assumed that form, had not guilty fears, and want of confidence prevented? And when God mercifully granted what you, perhaps, dared not ask, did nothing like an emotion of gratitude; nothing like a half formed resolution to devote your lives to Him, from whom you had twice received them, mingle with the joys of unexpected deliverance?

Has that emotion proved lasting? Has that resolution been fulfilled? If not, you must be classed with those, who sing God's praises, but forget his works. But it is not on the sea alone, that the preserving mercy of God is needed, and experienced. Many of my hearers have been brought, by casualty or disease, to the gates of the grave. Have none of you in that situation looked for help to Him, who dispenses life and death? And when the voice of his providence said respecting you, --Deliver him from going down to the pit, --when you felt health and strength gradually returning to your enfeebled frame; --when, on first leaving the chamber of sickness, you delightedly gazed on the face of nature smiling with new charms, and eagerly inhaled the refreshing, invigorating breeze; --what were your emotions?

Did no expressions of thankfulness to the Great Physician escape from your lips? Did you make no promises that you would serve him more faithfully? And have you not violated those promises? Have you not forgotten his works? And ye, whose friends were thus unexpectedly restored to you; ye, who have sat, day after day, by the sick bed of a child or relative, in the gloomy post of observation, and seen it grow darker every hour; while you hoped against hope, and felt hope struggle with despair; ye too, who have feared, and had hourly increasing reason to fear, that the perils of the sea had proved fatal to a husband, a father, a son or a brother; who have known the protracted agonies of suspense, --the sickness of heart which hope deferred occasions; --what record of your feelings and conduct in those trying hours has memory preserved?

Did you not alternately weep and pray; arid pray and weep? Did you not cry in your hearts, if not with your lips, O, if God will hear me but this once; --if he will grant me this one favor; my whole life shall show my

gratitude. He did grant it. The child, the friend, whom you had, in imagination, followed to the grave, or seen buried in the deep, was given back to your arms; and in the first transports of joy excited by this scarcely hoped for gift, the Giver was not forgotten.

With grateful admiration you acknowledged his goodness; perhaps returned him public thanks, and called upon others to unite with you in his praises. But soon, though not immediately, you forgot his works. The favor you had received caused you to forget them, The restored object of your affections was before you. You felt happy in his presence. You no longer needed the special interposition of God. You had no particular favor to ask; no pressing sorrow or want to drive you to his mercy-seat; and he was therefore neglected and forgotten.

Nor is it only when children are given to us a second time, and restored to us, as it were, from the dead, that we sing God's praises. Permit me to remind those of you who are parents, of your feelings, when you first became entitled to that appellation; --of your previous anxiety; --of your vows made in secret; --of the tears of joy which fell fast upon the unconscious object of your desire and affection, when first placed in your arms. And did nothing like gratitude mingle with that joy?

Did the father feel that he owed nothing to God, for a wife preserved, and a child bestowed? Did the mother feel unindebted to Him who spared her to enjoy the pleasures, and perform the duties, resulting from that relation? If the debt of gratitude was then felt and acknowledged, has it not long since been forgotten, and its payment indefinitely postponed? On this part of our subject it would be easy to enlarge. But sufficient has been said to convince all, who are accessible to conviction, that it may justly be said of us, with reference to God's providential dispensations, --they sang his praise; they soon forgot his works.

In a similar manner are men often affected by God's works of grace; or those works whose design and tendency it is, to promote the spiritual and eternal interests of man. These works most clearly display, not only the natural, but the moral perfections of Jehovah. Here his character shines, full-orbed and complete. Here, all the fullness of the Godhead, all the insufferable splendors of Deity, burst at once upon our "aching sight." Here the manifold perfections of Jehovah; holiness and goodness, justice and mercy, truth and grace, majesty and condescension, hatred of sin and compassion for sinners, are harmoniously blended, like the many colored rays of solar light, in one pure blaze of dazzling whiteness.

Here, everything that is suited to arrest the attention, to enlighten and convince the understanding, to seize the imagination, or to melt the heart, is made to bear upon us with an energy which it would seem impossible to resist. That an exhibition of these wonders should make, at least, a temporary impression upon our minds, is no more than might naturally be expected. When the glorious glad tidings of the blessed God are proclaimed in our ears; when the riches of his mercy, the treasures of his grace, the fullness of his condescension, compassion, and love, are poured out before us, from a heart which has felt their influence, by lips which have been touched as with a live coal from the altar of God; when, with a pencil clipped in the vivid colors which inspiration affords, he is drawn in the attitude of an affectionate father, grieved at once by the sins, and the miseries of his children: beseeching them in the kindest language of entreaty to return; and giving them a Saviour in the Son of his love; when the beauties, the glories, and the sufferings of that Saviour are portrayed by one who has sat at the foot of the cross; and seen the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ; when, with a countenance full of invitation, compassion, and love, this divine friend of sinners stands and woos them to himself, assuring all who will come, of a kind reception, and freely offering rewards, such as eye has not seen, nor ear heard; --when these rewards are displayed; when the immortal glories of an opening heaven are made to shine around us;

when the echo of its triumphant songs vibrates upon our ears; when kingdoms, crowns and thrones, eternal as their bestower are presented to our view; it is almost impossible, that even our obdurate hearts should be always unaffected, or retain their characteristic insensibility.

For a moment they seem to be melted. We feel, and are ready to acknowledge, that God is good; that the Saviour is kind; that his love ought to be returned; that heaven is desirable. Like a class of hearers described by our great teacher, we receive the word with joy; a joy not unmingled with something which resembles gratitude; and we sing, or feel as if we could with pleasure sing, God's praises. But we leave his house; the emotions there excited, subside; like the earth, when partially softened by a wintry sun, our hearts soon regain their icy hardness; the wonders of divine grace are forgotten; and God has reason to say in sorrow and in displeasure, --Your goodness is as the morning cloud; and as the early dew it goeth away.

But some of those whom I address have been more deeply affected by God's work of grace. For this you were prepared by previously passing through a state of religious anxiety. Conscience was roused to perform the long neglected duties of her office; and her reproaches you could neither silence nor endure. Your sins were set in order before your eyes; the curses of God's violated law thundered in your ears; destruction from the Almighty was a terror to you; His arrows, the poison of which drinketh up the spirit, pierced your souls; and despair and death seemed to be your portion.

How ardently did you then desire relief; what promises, what protestations, what vows did you make? At length, your desires seemed to be granted. relief was by some means obtained, and rapture succeeded to despair. A persuasion that God had pardoned you, and that he would make you forever happy, raised your affections to their highest pitch. You felt as if you were in a new world. Then everything seemed, in your view, to be praising God; then you thought it pleasant to praise him; and your language was, --I will sing unto the Lord so long as I live; I will sing praises to my God while I have any being.

For a time, this seemed to be the language, not of your lips only, but of your conduct. Gradually, however, though not immediately, you forgot God's works; your gratitude languished and expired; its half ripened fruit withered upon the stalk, and insensibility or discontent have usurped its place. Your history, there is reason to fear, will resemble that of the Israelites; like them you passed the red sea; like them, you triumphantly sang God's praises on its shores; like them, you said, --All that the Lord hath spoken we will do, and be obedient; like them, professedly following God, you entered the wilderness; but unbelief arrested your progress, as it did theirs; and like them, you will, probably, die in your sins, and never reach the promised land; never, indeed, unless a recollection of your ingratitude and unfaithfulness should lead to repentance.

On some of my hearers, however, God's works of grace have made, I trust, a more lasting impression. Your religion, my brethren, has not withered and died, like that which has no root; but have you not too much cause to apply to yourselves the language of our text? Remember, the kindness of your youth; the love of your espousals; the joys, the grateful joys which attended and followed your conversion. Where are they now? Where is your first love? Remember, too, how often your conversion has, in effect, been repeated; how often you have, in consequence, renewed your vows and thanksgivings; and, in weeping admiration have exclaimed, who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by transgression?

Recollect, also, the numberless temporal and spiritual mercies, mercies new every moment, which have at different times excited your gratitude, and which you fondly hoped would render it lasting. But has it proved so? Have not some days, whose morning hours witnessed your expressions of thankfulness, heard from your lips before night, the language of peevishness and discontent? When you have ardently desired the salvation of a child, a relation, a friend; when with supplications and tears you have asked this favor of Him who hears prayer; and he has at length given you reason to believe, that your request was granted; has your gratitude always corresponded with your obligations?

Might it not rather have been said of you, He rendered not again according to the benefit done unto him; for his heart was lifted up? But I need not press you farther with these inquiries; for you will readily acknowledge that, however often you may have sung God praises, you have ever been prone to forget his works. It might now be useful to consider the causes to which it is owing, that our religious emotions so often prove transient; and are so soon succeeded by forgetfulness of God.

But this would lead us into a wide field, which time will not allow us, at present, to explore. I shall only observe, that men are willing to offer God praises and thanksgivings, because it is an offering which costs them nothing; and because, while it seems to shield them from the charge of ingratitude, it involves the renunciation of no favorite sin; the performance of no disagreeable duty; the practice of no self-denial. But they are not willing to make those constant returns for God's goodness, which he deserves and requires, because this is, in their estimation, an expensive offering; because it implies sacrifices, which they are not disposed to make, and an attention to duties; which they dislike to perform.

The preceding remarks can scarcely fail to excite many painful reflections in every serious mind which acknowledges their truth. On human nature, they look with a most unfavorable aspect. They show us that while it is constantly and strongly prone to evil, it is, with respect to goodness, unstable as water, which receives and loses impressions with equal facility. They show us that ingratitude to God ever has been, and that it still is, one of its distinguishing features. The hatefulness of this feature is acknowledged by all.

"Call a man ungrateful," says one writer, "and you can call him nothing worse." "Ingratitude," says another, "is a vice so odious that the man was never yet found who would confess himself to be guilty of it." But ungrateful, man must be called, while truth is allowed to speak; of ingratitude, the most base and inexcusable, he must acknowledge himself to be guilty if he would prove that he is not profoundly ignorant of his own character. Another painful reflection, naturally suggested by the preceding remarks is, that little as there appears to be of religion in the world, there is much less in reality than in appearance.

In men who possess some real goodness, a single grain of gold gilds a large surface of baser materials; while in other men, varnish and tinsel supply the place of the gold. Much of the religion, even of good men, consists of merely animal emotions and natural affections, baptized by a Christian name; and all the religion of other men, if we except external forms, is of the same character. This, there is reason to fear, is the character of our national religion, if we can be said to have any.

As a nation, we treat Jehovah very much as heathen nations treat their gods; only with less apparent respect and veneration. We compliment him, as they do their gods, with the name and attributes of Divinity. We publicly implore his aid, as they do that of their idols, when evils oppress, or dangers threaten us. When relief is obtained, we, like them, have public seasons of thanksgiving, and offerings of praise; and our festivals, like theirs, are marked by sensual indulgences; and followed by no reformation of national sins.

What then are we to think of our annual seasons of thanksgiving? In what light, must we suppose they are regarded by Him whose judgment is according to truth? Must he not, in view of everything by which they are attended and followed, regard them as a mere empty form; as the copy of a heathen festival; or, at best, as only a repetition of the insincere praises of Israel? Must he not regard them as an earthly monarch would regard a book, inscribed to him on the title page, and preceded by a preface filled with flattery; but containing, on every following page, a gross libel on his character and government?

Like such a book, this day is dedicated to God. Like such a preface, it is filled with his praise; while every other day of the year, like every other page of the book, speaks a language most offensive to his ear. Mistake me not, however. I would be far from insinuating or entertaining a wish, that this custom, established by our pious fathers, should be discontinued. I only wish that its original character may be restored; that it may become the preface to a whole volume of praise; that the stream of gratitude, which seems to burst forth so copiously on this day, may continue to flow, though more silently, through the year.

Especially do I wish that the gratitude of this state may thus flow perennially; that her annual festivals of thanksgiving may resemble, in their character and consequences, those of our fathers. This festival she now, for the first time, observes, as an Independent State. Her voice now, for the first time, joins in sacred chorus with the voices of her sister states, and helps to swell the annual song of praise. And is it not highly desirable, --must it not appear so to every one who prays for her peace and prosperity, that now, when her voice is first heard in heaven; it should utter nothing but the sincere language of truth, and unaffected devotion; that now, when the incense of her united praises first ascends in a separate cloud before the throne of the Eternal, the flame on her altars should not be kindled with unhallowed fire?

Shall we, on this most interesting occasion, give Him, whom we worship, reason to say of us; --This people lie unto me with their mouths, and flatter me with their tongues; for their hearts are not right with me, neither are they steadfast in my covenant? God, in mercy, forbid! God in mercy forgive those, if such there are, who constrain him to say this of them; who pollute, with heartless praises, the first public thank offering of this State: Of pardoning mercy, in its fullest extent, all who on this, or indeed on any other occasion, offer such praises to God, will stand in no common need.

To utter the praises of Jehovah, to offer Him thanks, is, my brethren, however lightly we may now think of it, a most solemn and important act; an act which will be followed by consequences awfully interesting. By uttering his praises we acknowledge that he deserves them, that he is supremely worthy of all those affections, of which praise is the language, the proper expression. By giving him thanks, we acknowledge that he has been kind to us; and that we are under obligations to regard and treat him as our benefactor.

Should we then refuse or neglect to place our affections on him; should our future conduct be inconsistent with our praises and thanksgivings, they will rise in judgment against us at the day of retribution. They will prove that we are acquainted with the character and works of God; that we had experienced and known his loving kindness; that we had been made sensible of our duties and obligations. It will thus be made to appear evident, that we refused to love and serve a Being whose glories shone around us so brightly, --whose favors descended upon us so profusely that we could neither avoid perceiving, nor refrain from acknowledging them.

Of course, no plea of ignorance can be urged in our behalf. We shall be left without excuse. We shall be condemned out of our own mouths. If we would avoid this fate, our future conduct must correspond with our present services; our gratitude must be practical, and our praises unceasing. And ought they not to be

so? If the perfections and works of God ever deserve our praises, do they not always deserve them? Is he not, yesterday, today, and forever, the same? If his favors deserve any return, do they not deserve a constant return?

Are they not new every morning; and can we hope to discharge, in one day, a debt which we have, during the whole year, been contracting, acid which hourly increases? Should the thankfulness, which our fellow-citizens this day express; prove to be of the spurious, transient kind described above, they will be peculiarly inexcusable; for the dispensations of providence, as they respect our political interests, are admirably suited to excite, not a momentary burst, but a continual flow of grateful affection.

God's mercies have descended upon us, not in a sudden torrent, but in a gentle and constant shower. If we have not, like some other nations, been recently freed from the pressure of overwhelming evils, it is because that from all such evils, we have, for many years, been graciously preserved. But this circumstance rather increases than diminishes our obligations to the great Disposer of events. The mariner who finds the sea tempestuous; who is often in imminent danger of shipwreck; and who, after despairing of life, is brought in safety to the desired haven, may feel, and ought to feel, strong emotions of thankfulness.

But has he more real cause for gratitude, than one whose voyage is uninterruptedly pleasant and prosperous; and who experiences no striking interpositions of providence in his favor, because none were necessary? Such, in a degree unexampled in this age of storms and convulsions, has been our political voyage; a circumstance which surely calls for gratitude, as uninterrupted as our prosperity. Permit me to add that whatever difference of opinion may have existed, respecting the expediency of our separation from the parent state; no one will deny, that, since this event has taken place, we are under great obligations to Him, whose watchful care prevented the evils which might have ensued; and rendered the dreaded shock of separation so gentle, that it was scarcely felt.

In fine, who have cause for continual thankfulness, if we have not? From what nation of the earth may God justly expect a constant tribute of gratitude or praise, if not from this. Go through the world, my hearers; visit every nation; compare its situation with our own; and on your return you will be constrained to cry: --He hath not dealt so with any people; Surely the lines are fallen to us in pleasant places, and we have a goodly heritage. Go, and urge other nations to praise God; and, if they know what you enjoy, they wilt reply; --"Give us your lot, and our praises shall be unceasing."

Shall our expressions of gratitude cease then, with this day; cease even before its close; cease as soon as we leave the sanctuary? Shall all God's wondrous works be so soon forgotten, and this, like our former days of thanksgiving, only close one year of sin, and begin another? Shall we write our history, or constrain God to write it, in the words of our text; and make the character of the perverse, ungrateful Israelites, who justly perished in their sins, forever our own? Rather let this day witness your assumption of another, an opposite character.

Rather let the thanksgivings of this day never end, till they are swallowed up in the praises of eternity. Not only now say, but through life continue to say; --Unto thee, O Lord, do we give thanks. Unto thee do we give thanks; for that thy name is near, thy wondrous works declare.

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