



# A Vital Practice

Message for September 2018 - 10

## International Missionary Society Seventh-Day Adventist Church Reform Movement

YOUTH DEPARTMENT OF THE GENERAL CONFERENCE

Dear Youth:

I greet you in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and ask that His blessings, love, and direction be upon you in abundance.

### **The dross of this life**

On this occasion we will meditate on the text of 1 Thessalonians 5:18, ***In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.***

We have come to this world with a purpose; that is why God has created us. It is not to spend our life in idleness, without striving for anything, without understanding anything, remaining in a vegetative torpor. We have come to this world to learn the lessons of God, that one day we may live in heaven.

This is why we have a short life: “As for man, his days are like grass; As a flower of the field, so he flourishes. For the wind passes over it, and it is gone, and its place remembers it no more.” Psalms 103:15, 16. We are compared to the grass, that is, we are like a breath of wind, nothing more, and then we cease to be. Look at your parents, family, and friends, many have already departed.

Every day millions of people—even young people and children—descend to the grave. We must, like David, ask God to teach us to live according to His will: “Lord, make me to know my end, And what is the measure of my days, That I may know how frail I am.” Psalms 39:4.

### **When we don't value what we have**

One of the most important aspects of human existence in order to be happy is to value what we have and thank God for it, otherwise unhappiness would be everlasting. The reason why thousands and thousands of people are unhappy is because they have not learned to give importance to the things they possess and instead focus their attention on what they do not have. There will always be something we lack, that we do not possess; we will always have reasons to complain, because life gives us tough blows. Why not practice the vital act of thanking God? This spiritual exercise strengthens the soul, revives the spirit, clears our horizon, and allows us to see the sunlight.

If we reflect thoroughly we will realize that we always have reasons to thank God. The first thing we must do is recognize all that He has given us. The first wonderful and ineffable gift is life. What would have happened if we had not been born? Nothing. We would not have the possibility to be eternal and enjoy all the delights of heaven; by living and accepting the grace of Christ in our hearts, we are given salvation (John 3:16). So, living by itself is already a great miracle; it is an extraordinary divine gift. Thank you for that Lord! If God withdrew His breath from life, we would all die (Psalm 104: 28-30). But how few are those who thank God every day just for the sake of living! There are thousands who take their lives, others burn it on the altar of passions and vices. How do you want to live your life, dear youth?

Esau was Isaac's firstborn, but he did not value what God had given him, that is, his birthright. It was a great privilege to be the firstborn of a family and it brought great blessings, but also responsibilities. Esau was only interested in the material, the immediate, that which satisfied his senses and was not spiritual. This led him to ingratitude towards God for the gift of being the firstborn. It was not difficult to dispose of his birthright when his brother Jacob asked for it in a parlay for a plate of legumes. Thus he wept when his brother fraudulently obtained the blessing of the father, yet he could not recover what he forsook (Genesis 25: 30-31). Esau married pagan women who had a pernicious influence on his life (Gen. 26: 34-35). Their descendants were the Edomites, but these were not very close friends of Israel, in fact when the Israelites asked permission to the Edomites to cross through their territory to reach the earthly Canaan, they refused. In the historical accounts there were several recorded wars between Israel and Edom.

We also know the lineage of the Herods was Edomite, who did much damage to Israel with their government. This is a story of warning for all of us. There are others that teach us the consequences of not valuing the blessings that God gives us.

Most people focus on what they do not have: material things, beauty, preparation, relationships, etc., and they live awaiting miracles; that spectacular, extraordinary things happen, and they forget what they have, what is truly real and tangible. We have the habit of forgetting what God gives us and fix our attention on what we do not have. This leads us to live strangled in dissatisfaction.

### **Learning to value and be grateful for what we have**

Dear youth, are you exercising the vital practice for the salvation of your soul? I have met young people who are not happy because they focus on the vehicle they do not have, or the latest iPhone model they do not have, or the girl or boy of their dreams who does not pay attention to them. Why not value daily the things that God gives us? I do not speak of idolizing them but of valuing them in their proper measure. We have a house where we sleep in every night, where we find shelter from rain, sun, wind. We have food, running water, health, clothes, things that we have accumulated over the years. You may consider it normal, but there are millions of people who do not even have the basics. More than 1.3 billion people live in extreme poverty and more than 60% of the world population suffers from malnutrition ([www.DoSomething.org](http://www.DoSomething.org)).

We also have friends, a family, people who appreciate us, and most importantly, we are part (or can be part) of the people of God, the church; we are members of the family of God on this earth. Isn't this wonderful? We live through difficult times in this humanity, but we have the time of grace to be able to convert and subscribe to the divine promises. We have freedom of worship—the right to worship God according to the dictates of our conscience—the civil laws protect us, but there will come a day that will be lost.

Jesus gives us the light of His Word, the assurance of His presence, of His help, of the work of the Holy Spirit in our life. What else could we want? Is not this something we should thank God for? In fact, whoever does not learn to value these privileges or thank the Lord for them will fulfill the words of Amos: “They shall wander from sea to sea, and from north to east; they shall run to and fro, seeking the word of the Lord, but shall not find it.” Amos 8:12. What was despised, when the final crisis comes, will be sought out, but it will be too late.

The antediluvians should have appreciated the opportunity to climb into the ark that God offered them through their servant Noah, but they did not value that privilege, and when they desired to accept the offer, it was late.

Israel was taken by God from Egypt, received countless blessings from God, such as manna, care day and night, protection from their enemies, the sanctuary, the light of truth... but they always protested and focused on what they did not have. This attitude led them to forget God.

Young people have much to thank God for: their youth, vitality, enthusiasm, etc., but how often do we hear that they are not happy because they expect something more? God tells them: “Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth, Before the difficult days come, And the years draw near when you say, ‘I have no pleasure in them.’” Ecclesiastes 12:1.

How many times do young people say they want to be of legal age in order to do what they want, then they realize that the responsibility of being of age brings new burdens and concerns. Why live in a state of contingency, waiting for tomorrow to bring something exceptional and different? Let's examine some expressions that mortals use quite regularly: "When I graduate, when I am of age, when I have a driver's license, when I have a car, when I find a girlfriend or boyfriend, when I get married, when I have a good job, when I own a house, when..." The list is endless. It is easy to cease recognizing what we have or have achieved, but for a Christian it is imperative to have a disposition of recognition and gratitude. Tomorrow does not make any sense without the deep and conscious experience of today.

Satan did not value what God gave him and put in his heart sinful desires, rebelled against the divine government and went so far as to fight against the One who had given him life. Ingratitude comes from the devil and is the poisonous weed born in the garden of the heart when we do not have a heart pleasing to God.

## **Conclusion**

Now is the time to learn to value what we have and thank God. There are things that are priceless: a sunset, a sunrise, a beautiful landscape, a bouquet of flowers, good music, a plate of shared food with those we love, a bed, our home, our parents, our friends, our spouse, and children if we have them. But it is the sacrifice of Christ that should inspire us and bring us hope more than anything, because even if we lose everything we have, the Lord remains faithful at our side.

Dear youth, I invite you to do an exercise. Take paper and pencil and write a list of all the things you should thank God for. Surely you have many. Talk about this when you come together to read this writing. May the Lord help us, it is my desire and prayer. Amen.

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