

GIVING THANKS FOR THE SWEET "P'S"

Selected Scripture

Introduction:

After evangelist D. L. Moody passed away in 1899, his great Northfield Bible Conference Center in Northfield, Massachusetts, came under the management of the well-known Bible expositor, G. Campbell Morgan. In the middle of the busy 1904 Bible conference season, Howard Morgan, Campbell's three-year-old son, became desperately ill and wasn't expected to survive. As his family attended to him at his bedside, the multitudes attending the summer Bible conferences prayed earnestly for his recovery. One day Howard turned his face toward his mother and requested she sing a hymn for him, one he had often heard in some of the Bible conference sessions. "Sing to me about the sweet peas," he asked. She didn't understand which hymn he had in mind, but when she hesitated, he added, "You know, the sweet peas, gift of God's love." Then she understood he was referring to an old hymn by Peter Bilhorn, "Sweet **Peace**, the Gift of God's Love."

Well, I want to use that same kind of play on words this Thanksgiving Day. In counting our blessings, it seems that so many of them begin with the letter "P." God has given us an abundance of "Sweet P's," and I'd like to remind you of some of them today, so that we can thank God for the gifts of His love. (This outline is not original with me.)

His Pardon—Isaiah 55:6-7

"Seek the LORD while he may be found; call upon him while he is near; let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD, that he may have compassion on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."

All of us have, to a lesser or greater extent, ruined our own lives. The prophet Isaiah said, "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way..." (Isaiah 53:6 ESV) We all have areas of moral failure and sin. Not a person here has lived a life free from mistakes and regrets. But Isaiah goes on to say, "...and the LORD has laid on

him the iniquity of us all." In a way that we cannot fully comprehend, God through Jesus Christ became sin for us, bearing our guilt, that we might have a complete and irreversible pardon through the power of His shed blood.

Isaiah 1:18 – "Come now, let us reason together, says the LORD: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool."

1 John 1:9 – "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

Today we can give thanks for His pardon...

His Purpose—Isaiah 14:27

"For the LORD of hosts has purposed, and who will annul it? His hand is stretched out, and who will turn it back?"

Sometimes when we slow down enough to think, we become troubled, and we ask ourselves the great philosophic questions of life—Why am I here? What is the meaning of life? Does my life really have meaning and purpose? Millions of people spend their money on alcohol, drugs, and entertainment just to fill the void and emptiness of a purposeless life. But Isaiah 14:27 tells us that the Lord of Hosts is a God of purpose, and Psalm 139:16 tells us that we fit into His purposes, that is, that He has a meaningful purpose for our lives.

"Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there were none of them." (Ps 139:16 ESV)

We give thanks for ... His pardon ... His purpose...

His Precepts—Isaiah 40:8

"The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever."

We have talked in recent weeks from 1 Peter about this wonderful truth – the eternal nature of God's Word. While everything around us may be deteriorating and fading away, God's Word is eternal. Without the Word of God we would be like sheep in a desert, without pasture.

We would be hungry children without food. We would be pilgrims without a map. We would be questioners with no answers. Thank God for His infallible Word! Then there is...

His Providence—Isaiah 46:8-10

"Remember this and stand firm, recall it to mind, you transgressors, remember the former things of old; for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose,'"

God clearly tells us that He watches over this world, and He watches over His children, working all things together toward the fulfillment of His purposes and His will. To the child of God, there are no accidents. We travel an appointed way. As we pointed out earlier, the psalmist says in Psalm 139...

"Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there were none of them." (Ps 139:16 ESV)

And in the NT the Apostle Paul reminds us...

"And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose." (Ro 8:28 ESV)

His Provision—Isaiah 33:15-16

"He who walks righteously and speaks uprightly, who despises the gain of oppressions, who shakes his hands, lest they hold a bribe, who stops his ears from hearing of bloodshed and shuts his eyes from looking on evil, he will dwell on the heights; his place of defense will be the fortresses of rocks; his bread will be given him; his water will be sure."

John and Sophia Ironside were ardent Christian workers, but when John died suddenly at age 27 of typhoid fever, Sophia was left with two small boys and no income. One of the boys, Harry Ironside (later the world-famous Bible teacher and the pastor of Moody Memorial Church

for 20 years), watched his mother closely. On one occasion, Sophia gathered her two sons to the table for breakfast, but their plates were empty, and there was only water to drink. "We will give thanks, boys," she said. Closing her eyes, she prayed a prayer she based on Isaiah 33:16, saying, "Father, You have promised in Your Word, 'Your bread shall be given you, and your water shall be sure.' We have the water, and we thank You for it. And now, we trust You for the bread, or for that which will take its place." Just as she finished praying, the doorbell rang, and the boys ran to the door to find a man there. "Mrs. Ironside," he said, "I feel very bad. We have been owing you for months for that dress you made for my wife. We've had no money to pay you. But just now we're harvesting our potatoes, and we wondered if you would take a bushel or two on account of the old bill." In a few minutes, the potatoes were sizzling in the frying pan, and the boys had answered prayer for breakfast. How wonderfully God has promised to meet all our needs.

Psalm 23:1 – "The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want."

Matt. 6:33 – "But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you."

God's provision is truly a wonderful promise, but then there is...

His Presence—Isaiah 41:10

"...fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand."

This is certainly one of the sweetest promises in the Bible. The hymnwriter used these words for that great hymn "How Firm a Foundation":

*Fear not, I am with thee, oh, be not dismayed
For I am thy God; I will still give thee aid.
I'll strengthen thee, help thee, and cause thee to stand
Upheld by my gracious, omnipotent hand.*

Even when King Nebuchadnezzar threw the three men in to the furnace, a fourth man appeared with them. God was there with them.

What a marvelous assurance—that God is with us. No matter what dark times may come upon us, we can give thanks for God's presence.

His Peace—Isaiah 26:3-4

There is one more "P" I would like to mention this morning. In Isaiah 26 we read:

"You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you. Trust in the LORD forever, for the LORD GOD is an everlasting rock."

The words here "perfect peace" are, literally from the Hebrew, "shalom, shalom." It indicates a deep kind of peace which Isaiah later describes as a river of peace (Isa. 48:18). In my opening story this morning, I mentioned a hymn written by hymn writer, Peter Bilhorn. He wrote:

*There comes to my heart one sweet strain,
A glad and a joyous refrain,
I sing it again and again,
Sweet peace, the gift of God's love.*

*In Jesus for peace I abide,
And as I keep close to His side,
There's nothing but peace doth betide.
Sweet peace, the gift of God's love.*

Before leaving this earth, Jesus said to his disciples, *"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid."* (John 14:27)

His peace is an amazing gift...

Conclusion:

What an amazing abundance of "sweet P's" God has provided for us to enjoy as believers in Jesus Christ. How can we be thankless or depressed when he has given us so much?

Let us give thanks this day and say to our Heavenly Father: Thank You for Your pardon, Your purpose, Your precepts, Your providence, Your provisions, Your presence, and Your peace!