

A Useful Thanksgiving Bookmark

My 2 good friends, Bill and Pam, are having financial problems now. Oh, not Third-World or historic-level financial tribulations resulting in possible starvation, slavery or debtors' prison, but the uncomfortable (mostly to our pride – not a bad thing for Christians!) problems that cause some life-style adjustments. But, nonetheless, this is still a very real and frustrating trial!

So, my greatest prayer for them: should it be for more money or greater wisdom and discipline? Not money, because I have observed (and experienced) a lack of money is seldom the cause of financial difficulties and more money even less often the cure! Greater wisdom and discipline on the contrary will lead to a better handling of not only this trial but the other future struggles they will face.

The trouble with trials is that, in them, we tend to lose perspective; leading to despair rather than as, planned by God, humbling and guiding us back to Him AGAIN (and even closer). The mole-hill before us will become a mountain when we focus on the issue at hand to the exclusion of everything else – the greater good and blessings all around and before us.

"If only . . . when" becomes the cry; but if we allow ourselves to be "If only . . . when" people, most of our life will be lived in this fruitless mind-set and frustration. If, on the other hand, we practice a "This too shall pass . . ." approach to problems, mitigating today's trials through a redoubling of the discipline of thankfulness, we can hope, on the other side other current trial, to say: "All things do indeed work for good . . ."

The next page is a tool to hopefully help in this effort – a bookmark to help refocus on the truth of all we have to be thankful for even in the face of looming trials. There are only three main options and approaches to life:

- 1) Take the Non-Christian route of momentary and fleeting pleasures and pride: A few "good" years to do my own thing • Luck to have been born in a good Country and maybe a good family • Receiving • More, more, more • Being better off than others • Ability to avoid disciplines required of others • Psychological, emotional and physiological stimuli to the extent (and this is the catch) they do not control and enslave me • Doctors to drill, saw, cut and dope to keep me alive at any cost • Hopefully a warm bed in a nursing home to prolong my life on earth . . . You fill in the blank – I don't see much more.

- 2) Live in the false hope of an “If only . . . when” mentality with short-lived periods of sunshine between the real or imagined possible trials throughout life.
- 3) Become more and more people of thankfulness – learning, exercising, and increasing this discipline through each of life’s trials and trails:

Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds . . . ^{James 1:2} And we know that in all things God works for the good ^{Romans 8:28}

and much of the remainder of the *Bible*, only have meaning if trials are used as a basis for growth and maturity.

So, I suggest Bill and Pam use this bookmark:

- Strike through those points that do not apply to them.
- On the back, write those things for which they are now praying.
- Compare the front and back frequently to see if they can’t still easily exercise and develop the discipline of thankfulness so they will be happy (to the disappointment and frustration of the devil) through “this shall surely pass” trial to the other side of greater good that is coming.



Happy People are Thankful People!

God the Father who chooses • The **LORD** Jesus Christ who creates and saves • The Holy Spirit who protects, leads and provides for • Being made alive, given eyes to see, ears to hear, a feel for the truth, a change of urges, drives and desires • Health • Church • Fellow Christians • The *Bible* • Faith • Love for/of God • The pure joy of trials, necessary to develop perseverance • Learning the blessing of giving • God making a way to forgive both myself and others • Resulting peace • That the “boundary lines” have fallen in delightful places • “Sabbath-rest” • There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus • Those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified • It does not, therefore, depend on man’s desire or effort, but on God’s mercy • God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things – and the things that are not – to nullify the things that are • For being God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do • Food • Other and numerous “Common” Graces • Gifts and the guidance to use them • God’s disciplines that satisfy our desires with good things so that our youth is renewed like the eagle’s. • Increasing freedom from sins that previously bound me • Hope! . . . and on, and on and on . . . the blessings now are virtually endless and in the eternal and forever they WILL be infinite.

Remember – Happy people are thankful people and thankful people are happy people.