

What Do We Have That We Have Not Received?

By Tom Edwards

What do we have that we have not received?
For from You all blessings flow.
Even the very thanks we give,
We have because of You.

No matter how hard we have to work at accomplishing or acquiring anything, we should try to realize just how much God also factors into making that attainment a reality. For instance, if we want to imagine God not doing His part, then what if He took away the food He has made possible for us, or the water we drink, or the air we breathe, or the sun that also helps sustain life on earth, or gravity? Or what if he took away our physical strength that He has enabled us to acquire, or our mind that can be developed, which He has also provided us with? Or what if He took away all the resources He has given to our planet -- resources that we enjoy, and resources with which we design and build even modern conveniences? How, therefore, can anyone ever say, "God has never done anything for me!?" When, in actuality, He makes possible everything we can do and everything we have! So think again of the beginning statement: What do we have that we have not received? For from You all blessings flow. Even the very thanks we give, we have because of You.

The first question is actually based on 1Corinthians 4:7. Some Corinthians had become so puffed up in themselves that they did not even give God the credit for the things He had done for them -- such as blessing them with miraculous gifts. Paul, therefore, rhetorically asks, "...And what do you have that you did not receive? But if you did receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?" In other words, they boasted in themselves, as if they had no one to thank but themselves for what they had.

Though this verse does focus on the miraculous gifts, which are no longer a part of our present time, I see how this same principle can apply to us today by realizing that whatever we have been able to accomplish or obtain, we need to give God the credit, the thanks, and the glory for it. For He truly is the one who makes all things possible -- and even the things we can do! I often like to think about these things -- with thanksgiving to God. Maybe you will, too.

Something Nice

"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her..." (Eph. 5:25). An older couple were celebrating their golden wedding anniversary. The husband was asked what the secret was to his successful marriage. As the elderly are accustomed to do, the old gentleman answered with a story. His wife, Sarah, was the only girl he ever dated. He never had time to date until Sarah swept him off his feet. Before he knew it she had managed to get him to ask her to marry him.

After they had said their vows on their wedding day, Sarah's father took the new groom aside and handed him a small gift. He said, "Within this gift is what you really need to know to have a happy marriage." The nervous young man fumbled with the paper and ribbon until he got the package unwrapped. Within the box lay a large gold watch. With great care he picked it up. Upon close examination he saw etched across the face of the watch a prudent reminder he would see whenever he checked the time, words that, if heeded, held the secret to a successful marriage. They were, "Say something nice to Sarah." Let us say something nice to our companions every day. (From Morris Chalfant)

Calamity

By Ethan R. Longhenry

“For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; and there shall be famines and earthquakes in divers places” (Matt. 24:7). The “Arab spring”: the overthrow of existing powers in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya, with pressure placed on governments in Bahrain, Yemen, and Syria. The earthquakes in Haiti and Chile in 2010; the big Japanese earthquake and tsunami this year; and now, in the space of a few days, earthquakes in Colorado, Virginia, and Peru. A major hurricane heading toward the Northeast. Meanwhile, many other places are experiencing too little or too much rain.

A lot of people are probably wondering: what does it all mean? Is this the beginning of the end? There seems to be no end to the predictions people make about the impending doom that we are all facing. These types of events seem to “prove” what is being said.

The fact of the matter, however, is that what we are seeing has been going on for thousands of years. Major earthquakes strike the world every year: most just happen under water where they do not get as much notice. The same is true with major hurricanes: most end up going out to sea. Nations and governments come and go.

Perhaps what is different today is just how sheltered most of us are from calamity. Most of what we hear happens on the other side of the world; most of our ancestors would never know what was happening over there. Yet they had enough difficulties with high mortality rates, oppression by their own governments, constant war, famines, plagues, and a host of other ills.

Therefore, there is no special reason to believe that the types of events going on today are any different than events that have been going on for thousands of years. The Scriptures are clear that calamities of this sort are just part of life, and we must learn to live with them and despite them (e.g. Psalm 18:18, Luke 21:8-9).

Some people declare that disasters are God’s judgment on people. How can that be known unless God reveals it? It is foolish to make such declarations!

Others want to know why God allows such bad things to happen to people. All of these calamities take place because the world in which we live is subject to decay and corruption (Romans 8:18-25). The world began experiencing that corruption when sin entered it (Romans 5:12-18). Why it happens as it happens will always be a mystery to us; nevertheless, the fact that God loves us and wants us to be reconciled to Him does not have to be a mystery, for He displayed that love through Jesus His Son and His life, death, and resurrection (Romans 5:6-11).

For all sorts of reasons, some known, most unknown, calamities and disasters are part of this creation. They are sad events, but not even they are able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:31-39). We do well to take God’s advice and always be ready for whatever may come (Matthew 24:37-25:30): be reconciled to Him, seek to do His will in all things, and to gain the ultimate victory in Jesus over all the world can throw at us!