

it. There are men in the world, I fear, who, no matter how happy and prosperous the affairs of their life may be, never look up with one honest sentiment of praise to God. Repeating the creed, perhaps, attending the services of the sanctuary, well affected towards Christian work, they are nevertheless living in a practical atheism more dark and hopeless than that of the poor heathen before his idols of wood and stone. May the mercy of the Father whom we so often forget deliver us from falling into such a state as that!

But how shall we who do believe in thanksgiving determine the law of its exercise, if we think it too much to accept the injunction of the apostle? The most common method is simply to make appeal to our own feelings. There are thousands of good men, I am sure, who think themselves quite justified in dividing their lives into two parts—the part that grumbles and the part that gives praise. We had better look honestly into this matter and enquire whether we have not proceeded on some such principle ourselves. Let us suppose that everything is going well in our business or in our family, that we have enjoyed what would be called a fortunate season in all our affairs, it is not difficult then to indulge in thanksgiving or at least to imagine that we are doing so. There is a kind of glow which every one feels under circumstances such as these unless he is a stranger to human emotions altogether. But let us suppose on the other hand that our affairs have not been prosperous, that the harvest has been poor, or trade dull, or health feeble, or the home broken by death. Ah! then it does not seem so easy to exercise thanksgiving. If we are looking only upon the surface of things, we may even begin to ask what occasion there is for it. Does the apostle mean to tell me that I am still to give thanks though my business is bankrupt, though my heart is sad, though the loved one of my life is gone away, and will return no more? Yes, that is just what he means, and blessed is the man who understands him!

Even if we don't quite understand him yet, I think we must feel that there is something defective in gauging our thanksgiving simply by the course of circumstance. Is it not a rather selfish method of procedure? Briefly stated the creed is this: "If God gives me what I want, then I will thank Him. If He does not give me what I want, then I will not thank Him. Why should I?" I do not wonder that the vow of the patriarch Jacob at Bethel has been so much admired, because it was very much like the vows