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"ALWAYS FOR ALL THINGS."

"And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God." – Eph. 5:15-21.

From the contrast here instituted between being drunken with wine and being filled with the Spirit, as well as from the fact that Christians and not worldlings are here addressed, we understand the wine to be used as a symbol of the spirit of the world. And the Apostle here warns the children of God not to become intoxicated with the spirit of the world, but counsels us, on the contrary, to be filled with the Spirit of God. It is not enough that we banish from our hearts the spirit of the world, but we must keep filled with the holy Spirit of [R1489 : page 12] God, else the spirit of the world will come in unsolicited and take possession.

The spirit of the world – the disposition and sentiments of the world on every subject – we find all about us, and the inclination of our natural mind is in the same direction: it is the mind of the flesh, the carnal mind, the selfish mind. To partake largely of this mind or disposition is to become intoxicated with it; and this intoxication stupefies the spiritual senses and beclouds the reasoning faculties, and so greatly mystifies the vision of truth that its clear discernment is impossible. But the spirit of Christ has the very opposite effect: it is the spirit of love and of a sound mind, whose healthful tendency is to illuminate the understanding and to invigorate every noble faculty of the soul.

The effect of such spiritual invigoration and illumination is that of joy and peace and praise; and when two or three such meet

their hearts naturally flow together; and while they make melody in their hearts together to the Lord, they often delight to express themselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, and in prayers of thanksgiving to God the Father, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Nor do such ever find themselves so beset with the cares and vexations of the present life that they can find no cause for thanksgiving; for, being graciously enlightened by the spirit of God, they know that *all things*, however vexing or perplexing or trying they may be, are working together for good to them that love God – to the called according to his purpose; and therefore it is their privilege to rejoice at all times and under all circumstances, and their pleasure *always* to give thanks to God [R1490 : page 12] for *all things*.

As for days of national thanksgiving, we, as citizens of the heavenly kingdom, have no special need of them; for every day should be with us a day of thanksgiving for all things – for the prosperity of our "holy nation" under the righteous authority of Christ our King, for its peace and joy and its glorious hope, for its privileges of spiritual enlightenment and blessing, for the perfection of its laws and the shaping of its course and destiny, and for the needed discipline as well, which is to prepare it for its future exaltation and glory. Let the people of the world and less enlightened Christians give thanks, as doubtless many of them do, out of a sincere heart, for the common blessings of this present life – for the air and sunshine and rain, for bountiful harvests and for seasons of comparative peace with the nations abroad. Yes, blessed be God, out of his abundant mercy, these rich blessings are common to all – to the just and to the unjust – and it is well that the attention of all men should be called to mark and consider them. But they tell of no special favor to any of the nations or kingdoms of this world, all of which, as soon as the appointed "times of the Gentiles" are fulfilled, must give place to the

universal Kingdom of God. (See MILLENNIAL DAWN, Vol. I., Chap. xiii.) God's supervision of these in the present time is not any interference in their chosen course, but simply an *overruling* of their free course so that they may not interfere with, but rather that they may ultimately minister to, his own wise ends, in the same sense as it is said that He maketh even the wrath of man to praise him.

And while the world thus marks and rejoices in, and in some cases returns thanks to God for, the truly glorious *common blessings* which our loving and benevolent Father showers alike upon the evil and the just, let our hearts not only rejoice in these things, but also in the higher spiritual favors bestowed upon the sons of God, giving thanks always and for all things unto God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Truly this is a happy frame of mind to be in, and those who can do this at all times and under all circumstances have reached an enviable altitude of Christian character and experience. All about us are trials and vexations on every hand, and the man or woman who has become so superior to these that he takes cognizance only of the end to be gained by this refining process, and who therefore patiently and even thankfully submits to the painful ordeals in hope of the glorious end designed by Divine Providence, may also confidently rejoice in hope of the final reward of the overcomers. **[R1490 : page 13]**

Along with this beautiful frame of mind produced by the indwelling spirit of God, the Apostle also links the grace of humility or submission – "submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God." Where the spirit of joy and thankfulness reigns pride finds no place, but each, in lowliness of mind and in the fear of God, submits himself to the other for helpful, loving counsel or criticism, to the end that so, by mutually taking heed to the word

of the Lord and seeking to measure up to all its requirements, the bride of Christ may make herself ready for the marriage.

It is in view of the urgent necessity of sober watchfulness and attention to the will of the Lord regarding us that the Apostle calls upon all who are to any extent intoxicated and stupefied by the spirit of the world, saying, "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." – Put away the worldly spirit and awake to the importance of being filled with the spirit of God, and look to him for the light that will surely follow, with its blessed, invigorating and health-giving influences.

"See then that ye walk circumspectly" [carefully, picking your steps. Oh, how carefully we must tread this narrow way!] not like ignorant persons, but as wise men, securing the season for yourselves [taking advantage of your opportunities] because the days are evil. [The times are perilous, and only by sobriety and the wisdom of meekness shall we be able to walk this narrow way to its glorious terminus.]

"Wherefore," he adds, "be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is." And may the will of God and the joy and peace of God fill our hearts and leave no room for the spirit of the world to intrude upon us.
