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THANKFULNESS

D.B. KNOX

"THE CHRISTIAN FAITH"

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What would you say are the main ingredients for happiness? I would put thankfulness high on the list. Although it is not included amongst the seven cardinal virtues, it is perhaps more important than any of the usual seven because you cannot be happy if you are not thankful, and we have so much to be thankful for, especially to our fellow men and people who have lived before us. I often think of Abraham who was perhaps the richest men in his times, yet the poorest Australian is better off than he. Abraham, for all his wealth, had to sleep on the ground, sit on the most uncomfortable of chairs, travel about on a camel, live in a tent under the scorching sun or freezing winds, and so on. He had no medication for his aches and pains, no interesting reading matter, let alone recorded music or T.V. entertainment, and so I could go on. We are so much better off because of the work and energy and ingenuity of people who lived between us and the time of Abraham. Our comfortable life is due to the effort and work of people who lived before us. We ought to be thankful to our fellow men who, whether they lived in the past or in the present, have contributed so much to our comfort.

But friendship is more enjoyable than possessions, and we should be thankful to members of our family and our community who extend their friendship to us. Especially we should be thankful to our spouses who share their life with us. There is another great benefit that we in Australia enjoy and that is a comparative freedom from fear and for this we ought to give God thanks as it is the result of the Christian religion, though a lot of people don't realise it. But you have only got to compare life in a country where the Christian religion does not exist or where it has been obliterated to see that a social life comparatively free from fear is the gift of Jesus Christ. Take for example present day Uganda or Russia, where you cannot rely on the justice of the community. Fear is a normal accompaniment of life in so many communities, both past and present.

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Above all we ought to thank God for our life and health, and for the prospect of a happy eternity through the forgiveness of our sins because of Jesus the Saviour who died and rose again for us. We commemorate his birth at Christmas. So let us be thankful. You always enjoy things more if you are thankful for them. Because while you are thankful you are not self-centred. Self-centredness is the essential evil. We can overcome it by beginning to be thankful to God and then, through his presence in our lives, remembering to be thankful to other people.

The Bible says (Romans 1) that our basic sin in which we are all involved, is failure to thank God for what we have received and enjoy from him. We have to train our children to say thank you, and we ought to train ourselves, not merely to say, but to be thankful. Self centredness poisons happiness. Thankfulness makes it bubble over. Thankfulness is reality, because we have received so much from God and others. Some people are so crabbed that they cannot bring themselves to be thankful. We all know something of this ourselves; so ask God's Spirit to expand our personalities, so we appreciate our fellow men and what they contribute to our comfort, thankful to our friends for their company, thankful to our family and spouse for their love and what they do for us, thankful to God for everything and especially Jesus the Lord, born at Christmas, God sharing human life to save us, though forgiven, that we might enjoy the pleasures of his presence in one another's company for ever.

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