

Live by the Spirit

✠ Remembering to give thanks (vv.10-16)

✠ Remembering God's faithfulness (vv.17-18)

In the name of Jesus, God's Champion of grace and goodness, dearly redeemed people of God:

Sometimes it seems we're living in the *Twilight Zone*. "Do you mean *Twilight Saga*?" someone might ask. Who remembers Rod Serling's *Twilight Zone* from the 1960's? My Dad watched; it was too scary for kids. Today moms are obsessing over the *Twilight Saga* – memories of young love, perpetual youth, fascination with werewolves and vampires. Robert Pattinson and Taylor Lautner have women swooning like the Beatles in days of yore. People love to forget now and remember yesterday – at least the way they wish yesterday had been. But very soon all these characters will be forgotten again.

Memories of the way we were is what Moses is trying to instill in God's people in his last sermons called Deuteronomy. The Jordan River lies before them, forty years of wilderness wandering behind, and now Moses wants the Israelites always to remember today. How did we get here? Why are we here? And what will keep you safe on the other side? Moses will not cross. He will die in Transjordan. He wishes God's people never to forget. Then they can always **Live by the Spirit**, first of all...

✠ Remembering to give thanks (vv.10-16)

Ten years ago remember what your house was worth? Remember the job you had? How the Stock Market was flying high? But in the news? Always how bad the economy was. Today people are whining to go back. The one thing missing then and now is key to **Live by the Spirit**. We need to keep **Remembering to give thanks** in good times and in bad, when love is strong or nights are long.

If we could fly back to the Promised Land lying before Joshua and Israel, it would be like stepping off the plane into paradise: "*The Lord your God is bringing you into a good land—a land with streams and pools of water, with springs flowing in the valleys and hills; ⁸ a land with wheat and barley, vines and fig trees, pomegranates, olive oil and honey; ⁹ a land where bread will not be scarce and you will lack nothing; a land where the rocks are iron and you can dig copper out of the hills.*" (8:7-9)

Can you see trouble brewing? People want to depend on government, but by nature we all want to forget our dependence on God. Wouldn't that explain obsessions with sagas while God's Book of Books rarely is read? Why work so hard to light up the *Twilight Saga*, but never read God's book? "Too hard"? "Might not understand"? What makes *Twilight* more attractive than the bright light of heaven?

The LORD is calling out through Moses: **Live by the Spirit**, God the Holy Spirit, **Remembering to give thanks** first of all when times are good. "*When you have eaten and are satisfied, praise the LORD your God for the good land he has given you. ¹¹ Be careful that you do not forget the Lord your God, failing to observe [guard] his commands, his laws and his decrees that I am giving you this day. ¹² Otherwise, when you eat and are satisfied, when you build fine houses and settle down, ¹³ and when your herds and flocks grow large and your silver and gold increase and all you have is multiplied, ¹⁴ then your heart will become proud and you will forget the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. ¹⁵ He led you through the vast and dreadful desert, that thirsty and waterless land, with its venomous snakes and scorpions. He brought you water out of hard rock. ¹⁶ He gave you manna to eat in the desert, something your fathers had never known, to humble and to test you so that in the end it might go well with you.*"

Isn't the LORD God humbling our nation now? Isn't God helping us Christians also see how fleeting fame and fortune truly are? Accept this humbling and turn back to God – first in your own heart,

then your family and friends. God uses hard times to test our memories of His goodness and turn us back to Him for help. You know what He wants? God literally wants it to *“go well with you at your end.”* God wanted His people to keep **Remembering to give thanks** in the Promised Land because He was looking at the end, far beyond to the true Paradise: no war, no death or pain, no devil stealing God’s peace. God wants everything to come out right for you *“at your end.”* He needs to keep you...

Remembering God’s faithfulness (vv.17-18)

My dear daughter-in-law was showing me a picture of her grandpa after years of battling cancer. “You should have seen him in his prime. He was a big man.” I wish I could have. Time takes its toll on us all. We all leave this world with nothing more than the shrunken birthday suit from our Creator!

How many men looked at their portfolios in the “Twilight Zone” and never realized how stocks nosedive in recession? How many still pat themselves on the back making money in a “Bear Market”? How rare for a man to look at his blessings and say, “God’s power and God’s strength have produced wealth for me that money cannot buy. I have disappointed Him more times than I can remember. Yet He graciously confirms His covenant with blessings He swore to my forefathers long, long ago in Christ.”

Moses would never know the hero of faith I want to tell you about now. This man was not yet born. But he would be able to understand having nothing, but possessing everything in God’s grace and wisdom. His mother was not even an Israelite. She was actually running a brothel just across the River Jordan in Jericho. His mother the prostitute repented and by faith risked her life to hide Israel’s spies to side with the LORD God. (Hebrews 11:31) Somehow she married the son of the leader of the great tribe of Judah. You remember her as Rahab. With her Israelite husband Salmon, Rahab had a son named Boaz.

For a long time Boaz was a bachelor until a new woman came to town. Her name was Ruth, a widow from Moab. Ruth was coming with her widowed mother-in-law back to Bethlehem in Judah. Naomi had tried to send her home, but Ruth swore an oath in God’s name: *“Don’t urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. ¹⁷ Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the LORD deal with me, be it ever so severely, if anything but death separates you and me.”* (Ruth 1:16f)

Talk about determined! This beautiful love story takes only four short chapters! Ruth and Naomi came back from Moab to settle in Bethlehem. Boaz, the aging son of Rahab and Salmon, took kindly to Ruth. When she asked him why, he answered: *“I’ve been told all about what you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband—how you left your father and mother and your homeland and came to live with a people you did not know before. ¹² May the Lord repay you for what you have done. May you be richly rewarded by the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge.”* A man who blesses a woman like that makes a fine husband. And a woman who answers as humbly as Ruth, a fine wife: *“May I continue to find favor in your eyes, my lord,” she said. “You have given me comfort and have spoken kindly to your servant—though I do not have the standing of one of your servant girls.”* (2:10-13) When Ruth followed Naomi’s advice and proposed to Boaz, he did not object. Nor was he worried about rocking the cradle. *“The LORD bless you, my daughter,” he replied. “This kindness is greater than that which you showed earlier: You have not run after the younger men, whether rich or poor. ¹¹ And now, my daughter, don’t be afraid. I will do for you all you ask. All my fellow townsmen know that you are a woman of noble character.”* (3:10f)

Boaz and Ruth could never forget the LORD’s kindness. God gave them a family line through the centuries to the greatest Gift of all. Rahab and Salmon, Boaz and Ruth, were ancestors of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, born of the virgin Mary. When husbands and wives, citizens and nations live in Christ’s light, they keep **Remembering to give thanks**. They keep **Remembering God’s faithfulness**. They rejoice that God gave His Son Jesus to save us from our sins. Christ gives us life eternal to **Live by the Spirit**. There’s a healthy addiction, a worthy obsession. May it be your saga and mine. Amen.