



The Flame

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from GCCN Prayer Ministries

Beyond Norman Rockwell

The Thanksgiving season. Turkey and pumpkin pie, and some kind of feast with family or friends. It has that Norman Rockwell feel, doesn't it?

So pardon me if I shift the image a bit. Or rather, a lot.

Life is hard. It's always been that way. Never enough of anything. Your children huddle close to you. The morning is chilly and damp. The fire needs stirred but you'd rather just stay wrapped in the blanket with the kids at your side.

As the sun begins to shine through the early fog, you leave the warmth and begin the long walk to the well. You're not alone. Others are just ahead of you. Two battered buckets hang from the branch steadied on your shoulders. The trip back will be harder.

It's difficult to recognize much. Mortars have reduced most buildings to piles of splinters. Even the paths have disappeared. As you pick your way through the rubble, you notice that the woman who has been the local midwife lays awkwardly in front of her home. She's not asleep. A bullet has torn away most of her neck. None of the other families near her home are anywhere to be found.

A sudden burst of gunfire, and everyone scatters. In what seems like a mere blink of the moment, the road is empty. You're low to the ground, and you wonder how long you've been holding your breath.

By the end of the morning, you are back with your kids. There is no fresh water. The well didn't survive the blasts.

Tomorrow is Sunday. The local pastor has not been seen for two months. You've recalled the last sermon several times:

Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus (1 Thessalonians 5:18).

You and your children huddle near the fire. How thankful you are for the fire.

How dependent are we on the trappings of comfort and affluence to fuel our thankfulness? If all the external stuff of our lives is gone, what would Thanksgiving look like?

Taking Our Next Step

This Thanksgiving week, let us remind ourselves that not everyone in the family of faith is dry and warm and safe. Let us seek a thankful spirit that is not generated by external circumstances and ask the Lord for eyes to see His goodness and grace apart from our material comforts.

All of us will face times when our faith will be tested. We live in unsettled days, and we cannot assume that life will always be as we know it now. How feeble our faith if we can only define blessings in terms of what is temporary.

May this season find us in pursuit of the God whose grace measures far beyond Norman Rockwell.