

Gratitude and Your Fight for Godliness

Over the last two weeks, we have highlighted the theme of thanksgiving and how it relates to the Christian life. The first week, I emphasized that we will only be grateful if we really understand who God is – that he is both great and good. Then last week, David Pollard preached on how gratitude and prayer go hand-in-hand. It is not stretching the truth one bit to say that thankfulness is to be an integral part of the Christian's life.

As I think about Romans 1 and how the apostle Paul talks about how sinful the human race is in rejecting God, he words it this way: ²¹For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.¹ Glorifying and thankfulness go together. If you're not thankful, you're not glorifying God. But if you're glorifying God, you will have gratitude because Romans 1 says that God's glory and our gratitude must unite in a Christian's life.

Now, let me ask you a question: do you believe we ought to glorify God? As I ask that, I imagine that many, most, if not all, of you here today will agree with me on that statement. But let me ask a harder question: what happens when circumstances of life become difficult? You know you ought to glorify God. You know you ought to possess gratitude. But how can we glorify God with gratitude when trials come?

We know that God doesn't promise ease, but when hardship comes, it jolts us and is like a torrential storm that threatens to sweep us into the depths of the abyss. I know for me that I've always had a general idea that the Christian life meant warfare. When I was a teenager, my favorite Bible verse was 1 Timothy 2:3-4, ". . . endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. ⁴No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of *this* life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier."²

I understood the concept of warfare; however, I thought warfare was still relatively easy. I thought that the more I grew in obeying Jesus, the easier life would become. But then I experienced a season of spiritual drought and difficulty in late high school and then into college. That was very hard. Thankfully, God gave me endurance. And a few years later there was a season of life where I felt so encouraged spiritually that I felt almost invincible. I was fighting sin. There wasn't much difficulty. I was just growing by leaps and bounds. Temptations would come my way, and I felt I was deflecting them with relative ease.

Then mental and theological struggles came to me. Temptations came with a vengeance. Almost seemingly all of a sudden I felt enveloped in worry and despair. I had no idea what was really going on. I wanted out. I tried various things to fight against it all, but I felt like I was losing the battle. I even went to a Christian counselor for six months. In the end, he said that he just thought it was spiritual warfare. I would talk with family members and friends. I asked for prayer. I'd sit in my boy's room while they'd be playing and I felt stuck in my mind. With tears in my eyes, I would ask them at their very young ages to pray for daddy. I feared leaving God. I feared I'd run away from the faith.

¹ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016), Ro 1:21.

² *The Holy Bible: King James Version*, Electronic Edition of the 1900 Authorized Version. (Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 2009), 2 Ti 2:3–4.

Then, at some point in this season of life, came a conversation with a friend that bothered me. He walked with me through a lot of this, and one day over breakfast he said, “I think you need to praise God for this.” My external reaction was probably something like, “Yeah, you’re probably right!” But my internal, gut reaction to him was “How dare you! Are you kidding me?!” I had no idea what he meant. Was he saying I needed to praise God for temptations? I mean, the Bible says that we are to pray to not be led into temptation. How can I praise God for temptations? Is he saying that I need to praise God that I can’t seem to obey him? I thought we were supposed to obey God! What did it mean to praise God for *this season*?

God didn’t seem to want to let me out – no matter how much I prayed and wept. It was only over time that I began to realize more and more what God was teaching me: I am weak. God is strong. I need the Lord every moment. To add to this, I began to learn (and I continue to learn) a very important lesson that I think many of us in first-world Christianity don’t want to admit: **the Christian life will always involve varying degrees of spiritual warfare.** What I mean is that growth in godliness, isn’t often easy. The Bible indicates that growth in holiness happens over the long-haul and is oftentimes difficult.

There’s a reason the Bible uses words that relate to warfare and bodily discipline when talking about our growth in holiness. Think with me about Galatians 5, where Paul says that our flesh lusts against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh so that we do not do what we want to do. Think about the apostle Paul when he said he beat his body into subjection. That doesn’t mean that he literally did that, but he’s talking about an intensity of discipline needed for growth. Jesus himself talks about his followers fighting against sin by saying we “gouge out our eyes” or “cut off our hands.” Don’t minimize the need to fight against sin and fight for holiness. As good soldiers, we war against sin. These truths have become tremendously encouraging to me because I think many times we can tend to think we’re losing because we’re in a battle. No so! Battling doesn’t mean we’re losing. It means we’re right where we need to be. The Christian life is one of warfare – sometimes it’s lighter than others, but sin is always close at hand, the Bible says. Therefore, trials are always here and warfare ought to be our experience.

But what does all of this have to do with gratitude? In saying this, you could have the response like I had with my friend: anger and despair. “So we’re just going to fight and be exhausted the rest of our lives? God wants me miserable?” Absolutely not. What I want to do today is to emphasize how our fight against sin and our fight for godliness must include the constant companion of gratitude. Or, to word it like the apostle James, **We must learn to count it all joy in our fight for godliness.** I imagine I could preach many messages on this, but this morning I am only going to highlight a couple of main points and give several passages of Scripture to support them. Today we will see *why* we must count it all joy, and then we will focus on *how* we count it all joy.

So, with that, turn in your Bibles to James 1:2-4. This will be our first text to look at. Before we read it, let me pray for us.

“²Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, ³for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. ⁴And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.”³

³ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016), Jas 1:2–4.

1. Why must we count it all joy?

In verse 2, James uses the word trial, and I think sometimes we can too narrowly interpret that word. We think of this word only applying to external difficulties like a lost job or a child with cancer. Certainly this verse applies to those situations, but the here can also refer to internal temptations as well. Trials therefore are any difficulties that could take you off the path of following God.

To add to this, James then says “trials of various kinds.” As I think about James’ wording here, I get a mental image. I imagine myself walking down a sidewalk in a big city. I’ve entered into the wrong area of town, but I don’t really realize that’s where I am. I’m just doing my own thing and then I take a wrong turn down an alley and there are five or six people there. Those people don’t want to help me to get back to where I need to be. They stare at me and it seems like they want to beat me up.

You know, if I were in that situation, I’d be terrified. From a spiritual perspective, this is what James is emphasizing. It’s not simply that you meet one trial. You meet trials of various kinds. You have unpaid bills, a child whose sick, someone who’s mad at you, work, scheduling conflicts, sin issues and temptations. All of these things tempt you to walk away from God. Jesus himself said that there are enough worries in one given day that we should expend our energies worrying about tomorrow.

For each of us, trials of various kinds meet us daily. They do not want to help us. They want to take us away from following God. And yet, James says we are to count it all joy when we meet these trials. Why? This statement could make you cringe, like it did with my friend years ago. Is James saying that I should be happy about the internal temptations to sin against God? Is James saying that I should be pleased with how other people sin in this world and hurt others? No. Sin is to be hated.

But James also says that there can be joy in the midst of hardship. Think about that mental image I gave earlier. I would, of course, be terrified by being in an alley like that. But what if, at the touch of a button on my cell phone, I could contact the strongest military force to come to my aid? In that scenario my odds for survival are a lot greater, right? And, I would also imagine, I’d be extremely grateful.

That analogy may be too trite. I hope it’s not, but the reason I give it is because James says that we can have joy in pain because there is *One* who is greater. And there is One who is working all things together in such a way to actually strengthen and mature his children – not break the.

James says we can have joy because of three things God is working in trials: **1) God is calling you to cling to him.** (Very important point. Testing of faith is not God testing you to see how great you are. He’s testing you to see if you’ll recognize you can’t do it and therefore cling to him. That’s faith. Dependence on God!). So James says, “Count it all joy because God’s drawing you closer to him.” **2) You’ll gain endurance.** In other words, you’ll grow in endurance and perseverance. **3) You’ll become more mature spiritually.**

All three of these issues I have feared in the midst of painful seasons (and you probably have as well). Personally, I thought I was going to give up on the faith (i.e. – not endure). I thought I was completely backtracking and becoming spiritually immature. I also struggled with depending on God because I thought I had to prove that *I could do it*. But in all of this, I needed to hear my friend’s counsel: praise God for this. Or, as James puts it, “Count it all joy.”

Notice something very important. James doesn’t say, “Feel the joy well up inside of you and then thank God.” No, instead he says, “Count it all joy.” The word “count” means to hold a view or have an opinion

of something. This means that a Christian's joy is based in something secure. Think back to the Cubs winning the world series analogy I gave a couple weeks ago. People were filled with excitement because the Cubs *won*. There wasn't a person who said, "Well, I don't *feel* they won." They won. The reality bred excitement. Also, I imagine many of the excited people had various troubles and difficulties in life, too. Yet there was still a semblance of joy these people had.

So, in a much greater way, James calls Christians to choose joy. God promises that he is drawing you closer to him. He promises that you'll continue to follow him. He promises you'll mature to be more like your Savior! You don't have to feel these things for them to be true. Praise the Lord that his promises are not based on my feelings! Embrace reality. Embrace joy. Embrace gratitude. God has promised. You can be grateful.

2. How do I count it all joy?

But how do I practically *count it all joy*? One thing needs to be said before I go any further. The Bible never says that we are to ignore pain. Some people think that truly spiritual people always have pasty smiles on their faces. That is not true. Jeremiah was called the weeping prophet. Jesus himself wept. Recently we concluded the series through the book of Ecclesiastes – which faces pain and difficulty head on. Biblically speaking, being grateful doesn't mean that we ignore pain. Instead, it means that we understand all things in their proper place. We sorrow, but not as those without hope.

Christians can have godly gratitude in pain and pleasure. But notice what I just said: godly gratitude. That's very important to emphasize. Some people think simply saying "thank you" and writing a thank you card" means that you're godly. But you can be grateful and ungodly. Think about the story of the Pharisee and the tax collector. The Pharisee goes into the temple to pray and how does it start? He says, "'God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. ¹² I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.'"⁴ Hold on a second. Can't we be grateful that we're not living outright sinful lives? Absolutely, we can be grateful. It's right to give God praise for what he has kept us from. So, what's the problem with this Pharisee? While he praised God for God's work in him, he trusted in the God-birthed actions as his righteousness. He did not trust God for his righteousness. That's seen when we see the tax collector simply crying out for mercy. He does nothing and yet he walks away righteous.

I share that story because there's an ungodly gratitude and there's a godly gratitude. A godly gratitude centers on and around God as our everything. Praise God from whom *all blessings flow*. There's nothing in my hands I bring. All things are from him, to him and through him. So, the gratitude of the godly is a gratitude that recognizes God as the ultimate and supreme One who has given me all I have. But not only that. The gratitude of the godly recognizes that God doesn't even need my gratitude. In Acts 17:25, Paul says, "²⁴ The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, ²⁵ nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything. . . ."⁵ Do we grasp this? If we're serving God in such a way as to show he needs something, we're not serving God. God needs nothing. He doesn't even need our gratitude. Gratitude is not for his benefit. If it were, then he's not supreme. He's needy. Instead, gratitude is for our benefit and for the revealing of God's glory. When I express gratitude, I'm revealing how glorious God is and I'm confessing that he deserves all praise! This is godly gratitude.

⁴ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016), Lk 18:11–12.

⁵ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016), Ac 17:24–25.

Now, *how* do we rightly express this godly gratitude? When I sit down with people in counseling, one of my biggest pieces of counsel, along with prayer, is Bible memorization. Psalm 1 tells us that we should be murmuring to ourselves day and night the truth of God. How can we do that if we don't have it more firmly fixed in our heads? Practically speaking, Bible memorization has been a huge part of my salvation. More specifically, Psalm 103. In a season of struggle, I memorized the whole Psalm. I'd be driving down the road and my mind would waver off the path. One of the various trials hit me, and I would immediately spout off Psalm 103. I kept rehearsing biblical truths to fight the lies that were permeating my mind. I want you to hear how that psalm starts: ¹ **Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name!** ² **Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits,** ³ **who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases,** ⁴ **who redeems your life from the pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy,** ⁵ **who satisfies you with good so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.**
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Driving down the car, sitting in your office, doing laundry – wherever you are and whatever it is you're doing – you can rehearse God's truth when it's in your mind. (Oh, and by the way, I've never met someone who has said Bible memory is easy; so, we're all in the same boat there.) But notice what Psalm 103 teaches us to do: **Proactively praise the Lord for all his benefits.** And notice how the psalmist calls himself to do that. He tells his soul to praise God. That must mean that his soul isn't necessarily feeling it. His soul isn't aligning with reality. And so, the psalmist says, "Bless the Lord, O my soul." Or, like he does elsewhere, "Why are you so downcast, O my soul? Put your hope in God." He tells his soul what reality is.

Christian, this is so important. We all agree that Jesus says we are to deny ourselves and take up our crosses. But I think many people tend to think that the only thing we shouldn't deny are our feelings. If we deny our feelings, are we denying ourselves and who we are? Oh, Christian, listen! We find our real identity when we understand that our lives are hidden with Christ in God! Our emotions and, more importantly, our souls, need hope! Preach it to yourself! Have God's Word come in to train you in reality. As Jesus said, those who lose their lives for his sake actually find their lives! So, bless the Lord, souls! Memorize Scripture. Get God's benefits stuck in your mind.

But what are these benefits? In Psalm 103, David lists forgiveness, healing, redemption, God's never-ending love and mercy, satisfaction with good and youthful renewal. I want to highlight a few of these by looking at other passages of Scripture that connect these benefits with thanksgiving. The first benefit relates to a few of David's benefits. It's the doctrine of justification. Turn in your Bible to 1 Timothy 1:12-14. There, the apostle Paul is talking about his own sinful lifestyle as a moral Pharisee who rejected God. He writes this, "¹² I thank him who has given me strength, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he judged me faithful, appointing me to his service, ¹³ though formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent. But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief, ¹⁴ and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus."⁷

Though he was a blasphemer, Jesus judged him faithful. Wait a second, how could Jesus judge Paul faithful when he was a blasphemer, a persecuted and an insolent opponent? Through the mercy and grace of Jesus, he depended on Jesus for forgiveness and righteousness! Paul goes on and says that that past declaration of being judged faithful has current ramification. In verse 15, he says, "**The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of**

⁶ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016), Ps 103:1–5.

⁷ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016), 1 Ti 1:12–14.

whom I am the foremost.⁸ Even after salvation, he's the worst sinner he knew. But that wasn't a cause for despair. It also isn't a cause to keep sinning without care! That thought impelled him to praise God. Verse 12 starts with "I thank him who has given me strength." Why? Because of the works in his life? No. Because his entire salvation, his forgiveness, his eternal hope is found entirely *in Jesus Christ*.

Christian, when was the last time you sat back and reveled in those truths? Do you tell your soul, "Soul, this is the most glorious benefit – being in Christ?" Oh, I pray you understand. And, understand how God can count you faithful. Again, it's not because of your faithfulness. It's because of his faithfulness!

Think of the night before Jesus was crucified. He was sitting and eating the Passover meal with his disciples. It's recorded that **"he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them. . . ."**⁹ He *gave thanks* to God for the cup, but I also believe for what the cup represented. It represented a new covenant. A promise of God whereby he saves people from their sins and unrighteousness and gives them new hearts that desire him and follow after him. A new covenant where Jesus himself takes the punishment for the sins of people and those people receive the righteousness of the Savior! Ventura, grasp a hold of the glorious Savior who has given us forgiveness and steadfast love and mercy by receiving upon himself rejection by people and also the just wrath that sinners deserved! Oh, forget not all his benefits! Because of Jesus, Paul, who was persecuted, rejected, whipped, shipwrecked, was able to have gratitude! He gave thanks because his standing before God was secure. And he knew just how lavish the salvation was. He says the grace of our Lord overflowed! And so it is with each person here who has depended on Jesus for forgiveness and life! Don't let feelings or circumstances tell you otherwise, Christian. Jesus is lavish in his grace towards you. Tell your soul to bless him!

I think of Colossians 1:12 that says, **"giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light."**¹⁰ We read over these words so quickly, but we need to engage our imaginations here. What is the inheritance of the saints? God has qualified us. We didn't qualify ourselves for us. He did. And he qualified us to share in this inheritance with all other saints. What is the inheritance? We have begun to possess it now. Fellowship with God. The ability to obey for God's glory. Repentance. Faith. Also, fellowship with other people. We have a community of believers – family who can love one another now and into eternity. But this inheritance comes to fullness in a future kingdom where there will be no more pain or sorrow. Finally, when we get there, we will have a home where we will find eternal rest. We have a place where we will naturally and always trust and obey God. We have the ultimate gift of dwelling with our Father who saved us. We will see our Savior face-to-face! The glory awaiting is beyond imagination in its grandeur! Forget not all his benefits, Ventura! Paul thanks God the Father for qualifying people for this inheritance. This should cause our souls to give thanks, too! Forget not all his benefits. Don't let the trials of today cloud your vision of eternal joys!

These are but a few of his benefits. But even meditating on the enormously few, we can understand why Paul would then write with such emphatic exuberance in Colossians 3:15-17: **"¹⁵ And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. ¹⁶ Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. ¹⁷ And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him."**¹¹

⁸ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016), 1 Ti 1:15.

⁹ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016), Mt 26:27.

¹⁰ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016), Col 1:12.

¹¹ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016), Col 3:15–17.

Ventura, not only are we to individually call our souls to be grateful. Bible medication is one way we will grow in gratitude. But Colossians 3 is a passage that commands us to recognize our need for one another to help spur us on in gratitude. The context of Colossians 3 is regarding our relationship with the local church body. The church at Colossae was to exhibit the peace of Jesus in their unity. So it is with us. And, as a church body, we are to be thankful *together*. We are to also meditate deeply on the Word of God and even teach one another. Even through song, we teach one another. But in all the teaching, we are to have thankfulness in our hearts to God. Then Paul says, whatever you do, do everything on the basis of Jesus and give thanks to God through Jesus.

Ventura, we need one another to help each other to grow in gratitude. Do you believe that? Sometimes people come to gather with the believers thinking all about themselves, and they forget that they come in order to tell their souls of God's great worth, all of his benefits and to also tell the other believers the same. There should be no half-hearted teaching. There should be no silent mouths while singing. Bless the Lord, O our souls, and *all that is within us*, bless his holy name! In our relationships, we must embrace gratitude. God has given us all we need and even one another. Praise his name.

But how does this gratitude help us in our fight against sin and our fight for holiness? Right now, some of you might feel the excitement of these truths. You might be encouraged. But then the trials and temptations of this afternoon or tomorrow morning may hit hard. You're feeling the temptations, the draws to sin. You think that maybe joy and gratitude are for those super spiritual people *over there* and not you. But remember that the battle doesn't mean you've lost. The battleground is right where God wants his followers! "But I'm so weak," you say. And God says, exactly! In your fight for godliness, you must **Purposefully praise the Lord in your weakness.**

I want to draw your attention to two passages of Scripture. First is Romans 7. Romans 7 is one of my favorite chapters. It's a chapter where Paul is raw with his own fight against sin. I believe he's talking about his experience as a Christian, and while he talks of this struggle against his sinful desires, he says, "**24 Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?**"¹² **If he is judged on the basis of God's perfect law, he's wretched. The same is true for all of us. But then he says, "Who will deliver me. . .?"** Then comes verse 25, "**Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!**"¹³ Instead of despair, there's gratitude! Even in the face of sin and temptation and failing; Paul praises Jesus! Then he goes on in chapter 8 to talk about the acceptance and victory he has been given because there's no condemnation and he is now a child of God! No more need for fear. There's hope! When Paul turns to gratitude in verse 25, he's confessing that he is absolutely in need of Jesus, that Jesus has met the need and that he believes Jesus will follow through on all the promises! Gratitude is confession! It displays our trust and assurance in God!

But gratitude isn't only a confession about God. It's a confession about us. We are weak. I think many of us want to think we're all ok. Or we generally have things under control. When we feel we've got things taken care of in life, then we don't worry. Then we praise God. But God doesn't want us to rejoice in our strength. Godly gratitude rejoices precisely because we know we're weak! Paul said in Romans 7 that he was a wretched man. But thanks be to God! Gratitude confesses God's strength and our weakness.

Paul fleshes this idea out a little more in 2 Corinthians 12:7-9. This passages ties together this entire message. Paul speaks of all the things God has done through him, and then he writes this, "**7 So to keep**

¹² *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016), Ro 7:23–24.

¹³ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016), Ro 7:25.

me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited.

⁸Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. ⁹But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.”¹⁴

“Oh Lord, please take this thorn away!” Whatever this thorn was, it revealed Paul’s weakness, and it was something he absolutely did not want in his life. It harassed him. I think we all have things like this. Things we pray, “Lord, take this away.” Yet, it stays. Then Paul tells us God’s response as to why he doesn’t take it away. God wants Paul to trust the Lord and not himself. When our weakness is on display, it’s the perfect opportunity to say clearly and resolutely, “I can only do this because of God.” And, the reality is that any fight for holiness can only be done by the grace of God through dependence on him. The writer of Hebrews tells us that apart from faith/dependence it’s impossible to please God.

So, we’re more weak than we want to admit. But when God forces us to see our weakness, we tend to say, “NO! Take it away.” And God says, “I won’t take away your weakness. You are always in need of me.” But don’t fear, Christian. God holds you in his hands. Who’s stronger: you or God? God is!

In Ephesians 5:4, Paul wrote, to the Christian church in Ephesus, **“³ But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints. ⁴ Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving.”**¹⁵ Clearly the Christians could still be facing these sins or else Paul wouldn’t be addressing them. But do you notice the only positive command in these two verses? Let there be thanksgiving! Gratitude that’s fueled by God’s kindness to us in Christ empowers us in our daily trials and temptations, enabling us to boast in our weakness and rejoice in Jesus’ victory through us!

Christians, if you believe this: boast in God. Be grateful! When trials come. When temptations come. Count it all joy! And don’t count it all joy because you have it all under control. Don’t count it all joy because you have guaranteed your growth in holiness! Don’t count it all joy because you’ve figured out how to remove trials from your life! (You never will.) Instead, remember that gratitude is the confession that you believe God and his promises. Gratitude is the confession that you want him more than anything else. Gratitude is the confession that the promises of this world pass away, but God’s promises to you are eternal. Gratitude confesses God is God and you are not.

As you are grateful in your fight against sin, you will see more clearly the reality of all he’s given to you. As you count it all joy, God will draw you closer in dependence on him, give you endurance and you will grow in godly maturity (i.e. – holiness).

As we meditate on these benefits individually and corporately, we are reminded that God’s kindness truly does lead us to repentance, which leads to greater obedience, hope, joy, peace and love in Christ. Praise God for all of his benefits, and praise God he’s given many of us hearts to respond with gratitude. Count it all joy in your fight for godliness!

¹⁴ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016), 2 Co 12:7–9.

¹⁵ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016), Eph 5:3–4.