

Gratitude and Your Fight for Godliness

Last week, in the message Bennett Sweat preached, he stated that in Heaven our mouths will pour forth an unending stream of thanksgiving. It is not too extreme to say that gratitude is integral for life. In Romans 1, the apostle Paul talks about how sinful the human race is, and he describes their sinfulness by saying: **²¹ For 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 God and thankfulness to him 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 unite in a Christian's life. And, we see how ingratitude and sinful behavior go hand-in-hand. Whereas gratitude and godliness are intertwined. How is gratitude and godliness united?

I've had many conversations with many people regarding the battle against sin in our lives. And, sometimes in talking with them, they speak as though warfare is a sign of ungodliness on their part. They talk about how weak and weary they feel, and as a result, they feel beaten down. But there's a fatal flaw that ends up coming in many of the people I've talked to. They begin to lose hope and think they're losing spiritually because the temptations are intense and maybe even increasing.

Now, I think we all know that God doesn't promise ease, but when temptations like these come (whether large or small), it jolts us and is like a torrential storm that threatens to sweep us into the depths of the abyss. But, have we forgotten that the Christian life is one of warfare? Maybe you have thought that "warfare" was just a term, but God didn't really mean for our Christian journey to be a battle. When I was a teenager, my favorite Bible verse was **1 Timothy 2:3-4**, ". . .endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. ⁴ No 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

At that age, I'm grateful God taught me that warfare was necessary. And, in some ways, I understood the concept of spiritual 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 intensely difficult. Thankfully, God gave me endurance. Then, a few years later there was a season of life where I felt so encouraged spiritually that I felt almost invincible. It was like God had moved me from the front lines back to the base camp. Then, God put me on a more intense battle field. 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 (all 5-and-under) 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.

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

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.

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 does it mean to praise God in and for the battle?

That’s a great question, but let me again restate that the Bible does say we are going to battle. 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 because they remind us that being in a battle doesn’t mean we’re losing. It just means we’re in a battle; so, keep fighting! Or, as Paul says in Galatians 6: “don’t grow weary in doing well.” We’re tempted to give up, but don’t give up. We have Christ! Yes, the Christian life is one of warfare. 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 [Fern Jepma; Rothbury Community Church; Naravette]

“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

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 this Greek word can be translated as either “trial” or “temptation” depending on the context. From a biblical perspective, a trial is something that God ordains us to go through in order to strengthen us. The purpose of God in trials are for our good. Yet, “temptation” is something that seeks to destroy us. What’s interesting is that we could be involved in a trial and at the same time be tempted. Like with Joseph, God meant Joseph’s circumstances, but God

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

meant it for good (that's trial). Yet, Joseph's brothers meant it for evil (which brings in temptation). When James says trials of various kinds, he's talking about any difficulty 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 and temptations of various kinds. You have unpaid bills, a child whose sick, someone who's mad at you, work, scheduling conflicts, but then you have your own heart and mind and how you relate to all of this. Therefore, you have sin issues and temptations. All of these things could tempt you to walk away from God.

Now, 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. Sometimes people skip over a very important word in this verse. They go straight to JOY, and they say, "Be thankful." But James doesn't simply say, "Be thankful" or "Be joyful." James says, "Count it" all joy. That's an accounting term. Look at your circumstances. Look at the temptations within and the trials from without and then in counting all this up, say "JOY!" How in the world can we do this? I believe the only way we can do this is if we have eyes of faith in God. 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 this One has promised to produce greater growth and maturity through this warfare than if we didn't go through it at all! God's intention is to grow you not break you. Therefore, with eyes of faith you can defy the battlefield and say, "JOY!"

More specifically, 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 and how powerful your faith is. He's testing you to see if you'll recognize you can't do it and therefore cling to him. That's faith. Faith is 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. You'll see that God is actually the One giving you the strength. As you see God strengthen you, your gratitude increases towards him and as your gratitude increases, your trust in him increases. And, if your trust is increasing in him, your obedience grows. And, that's the third point we see. **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." Remember that he says, "Count it all joy." The word "count" doesn't mean that I count these things up and give them value, but instead this means that as I really think about God and his role in these circumstances, the only conclusion is to see that I'm secure and God's doing greater! So, our joy and gratitude is based in God, who is our security.

I love the practicality of this statement because I can't simply change my emotions on a whim. My emotions have to be directed by reality. As I meditate on what is real and true and right – and think on these things – and as I thank God for these things, he changes my heart. 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 can I grow in counting 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. A couple years ago, we went through a series on godly lament. 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. A godly gratitude centers on and around God as our everything. Praise God from whom *all blessings flow*. 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, "²⁴The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, ²⁵nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything. . . ."²⁴ 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.

Now, *how* do we begin to rightly express this godly gratitude? Second idea is that we must **proactively rehearse and praise the Lord for his salvation** 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, think of Psalm 103, which Bennett preached from last week. In a season of struggle, I

⁴ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016), Ac 17:24–25.

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: **¹Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name! ²Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits, ³who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases, ⁴who redeems your life from the pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy, ⁵who satisfies you with good so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.** ⁵

Driving down the road in your 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: The gratitude of the godly proactively rehearses and praises the Lord for his salvation. 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, "**¹²I thank him who has given me strength, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he judged me faithful, appointing me to his service, ¹³though formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent. But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief, ¹⁴and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.**"⁶

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 whom I am the foremost.**"⁷ 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*.

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

⁶ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016), 1 Ti 1:12–14.

⁷ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016), 1 Ti 1:15.

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. . . .”**⁸ 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.”**⁹ 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 glorious 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.”**¹⁰

Ventura, not only are we to individually call our souls to be grateful. ***The gratitude of the godly involves one another in the local church.*** 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

⁸ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016), Mt 26:27.

⁹ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016), Col 1:12.

¹⁰ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016), Col 3:15–17.

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. 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 ***The gratitude of the godly purposefully praises the Lord in 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?*"**¹¹ 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!*"**¹² 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 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.***⁸***Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me.***⁹***But 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.*"**¹³

¹¹ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016), Ro 7:23–24.

¹² *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016), Ro 7:25.

¹³ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016), 2 Co 12:7–9.

“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. And, as we grow, confessing our weakness, then we can see how “counting it all joy” makes more and more sense. God is our strength!

So, we’re more weak than we want to admit. And when God forces us to see our weakness, we tend to say, “NO! Take it away.” But 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.”**¹⁴ 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.) Therefore, **By the Lord’s grace, “count it all joy” and express gratitude because God has reconciled you to himself, is drawing you closer to him, and promises to strengthen you every day. Praise God for all of his benefits, and praise God he’s given many of us the ability 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), Eph 5:3–4.