

THANKING THROUGH IT

PRECEPT

ROMANS 12:2

² Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

PROMISE

Gratitude comes easily when things are going well, but how do we manage to be content during hard or lean times? To be a person who regularly experiences gratitude requires mindfulness and habits. Thanking through it—the “it” being whatever you are going through, be it good or bad—is a choice. First Thessalonians 5 offers practical, concrete steps to take as you learn to adopt a disposition of gratitude.

BE JOYFUL. The first step is to “rejoice always” (1 Thessalonians 5:16). Rejoicing is more than simply being happy. The Greek word translated “rejoice” means “calmly happy” or “be well.” So when Paul writes, “Rejoice always,” the image is one of someone who is cool, calm, and collected, despite any adversity they face. Rather than folding under the pressure or giving into despair, such a person maintains a sense of joy.

BE PRAYERFUL. Paul's next practical step for making the choice to be grateful is to “pray without ceasing” (v. 17). Prayer and gratitude go hand in hand because prayer connects the pray-er with the Giver of every gift. Prayer can be a conversation with God, meaning that it is participatory—we make petitions and express adoration—and also silent, with times of listening and just being present with God.

BE THANKFUL, Paul encourages believers to “give thanks in all circumstances” (v. 18). This may be the biggest challenge of the three, because there are moments when being grateful or giving thanks is not only not our natural response but even counterintuitive. That's why thanking through it requires mindfulness and intentionality. If you are rejoicing on a regular basis and praying as much as you can, then gratitude will follow. Another way to understand these verses is that celebration leads to communication, which leads to contentment.

God desires the best for His children, and He knows that if our minds are focused on the goodness of God and the gifts He gives, then our lives will be fundamentally different in positive ways. God wants us to rejoice, pray, and be grateful. Gratitude is God's will for you because he wants what is best for you.

Let us ponder on this poem entitled “*Lord, Forgive Me When I Whine*”

“Today upon a bus, I saw a lovely maid with golden hair; I envied her—she seemed so gay, and how, I wished I were so fair; When suddenly she rose to leave, I saw her hobble down the aisle; She had one foot and wore a crutch, but as she passed, a smile. Oh God, forgive me when I whine, I have two feet—the world is mine. And when I stopped to buy some sweets, the lad who served me had such charm; He seemed to radiate good cheer, his manner was so kind and warm; I said, “It's nice to deal with you, such courtesy I seldom find”; He turned and said, “Oh, thank you sir.” And then I saw that he was blind. Oh, God, forgive me when I whine, I have two eyes, the world is mine. Then, when walking down the street, I saw a child with eyes of blue; He stood and watched the others play, it seemed he knew not what to do; I stopped a moment, then I said, “Why don't you join the others, dear?” He looked ahead without a word, and then I knew he could not hear. Oh God, forgive me when I whine, I have two ears, the world is mine. With feet to take me where I'd go; With eyes to see the sunsets glow, With ears to hear what I would know. I am blessed indeed. The world is mine; Oh, God, forgive me when I whine.”

PRACTICE

1. Thankful Always. What steps can you take to cultivate an attitude of gratitude?

2. Gratitude in Life. How does knowing God's love and grace impact your daily life when it comes to what you want and what you're grateful for?

PRAYER

I. Life Kids

- May God bless them with patience as they teach & nurture the young souls in their care.

II. Life Link

- Pray for hearts of humility & service as they welcome and assist those who come to worship.

III. Life Worship

- May God fill them with His Spirit as they prepare and lead His people.

IV. Life Sports

- May God keep them safe & healthy as they celebrate their skills in sports.

V. Growth

- Pray for growth not only in numbers but in relationship with Christ & spiritual maturity.

VI. Unity

- Pray for unity in our church that reflects the oneness of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

VII. Provision

- Pray for physical and spiritual provision for those who are suffering and in need.