



January 17, 2025

Feelings of Gratefulness

Warm hellos once again friends, brethren, fellow laborers, spiritual family, and scattered children of God from here on the Gulf Coast of lower Alabama. My wife and I pray and hope this finds you doing well, and that again your week has been blessed.

So far, this has been a winter to remember for a good part of the United States. I am sure many will be glad when spring arrives here in the Northern hemisphere in a few short weeks.

With the world conditions, recent fires in California, and weather as well, it is very easy for any of us to become negative, and only see the bad in the world we live. In fact our news media thrives on getting folks worked up with all the bad that is soon coming or going on. This is not good for emotional health.

We live in a world that bombards us with many negative messages. So much of the world news is negative and even depressing. It is heart-rending to witness the violence that has been unleashed on so many. It seems that more and more of the people we know are dealing with health problems - from cancer, to heart and artery disease, surgeries, and other health crises. I could go on. We can't ignore the bad news. It can impel us to pray for those in need, and pray for and anticipate God's Kingdom to come.

We have to balance the impact of all this negative information with positive inputs so we can have a more positive frame of mind to better cope with life and also maintain better health. I remain connected to several colleagues in the mental and physical health sector and receive various e-mail newsletters that address health issues including diet, exercise, medications, supplements, counseling, and other factors that can help maintain good health.

One of the recent e-mails addressed the topic of happiness and motivation. It encouraged developing a routine that incorporates "feelings of gratefulness". By focusing on being grateful, one can better control of one's attitude and dispel negative moods and emotions such as anger and selfishness.

The article suggested beginning each day by thinking about and visualizing 5 things for which you are grateful while making yourself smile and doing deep diaphragmatic breathing. End the day by then thinking about and reliving at least one thing that was positive about that day.

Of course this won't erase all the negative events and even worries, but it can help to more positively cope with them. I remember the line in a song, "Count your blessings instead of sheep!" More and more people are having trouble sleeping through the night.

Prayer is critical at times of having a negative outlook. Meditation and reflection on what God promises is also very important for our wellbeing. 2 Timothy 1:7 clearly teaches us - *For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.* Our connection to God minimizes negativity, as His Holy Spirit does not focus on such.

I also searched the scriptures for the word "grateful."

Only one came up in the New King James Version pertaining to the prophet Jonah.

We recently covered this Minor Prophet in our weekly Bible Basics interactive study. It's on the CGM website for review. I've at times puzzled over why Jonah was so opposed to warn Nineveh and was so angry when they repented and were not punished.

We discussed that maybe he was acquainted with some of the horrible things the Assyrians did to their captives and enemies including Israelites? Jonah at first refused to warn the Ninevites and escaped on a ship. He was thrown overboard

and was swallowed by a great fish. He was burped up on shore, finally relented, and then went to Nineveh and warned them. They humbled themselves and expressed some measure of repentance.

"And the LORD God prepared a plant and made it come up over Jonah, that it might be shade for his head to deliver him from his misery. So Jonah was very grateful for the plant." (Jonah 4:6) The KJV translates the last part of the verse as: *"So Jonah was exceeding glad of the gourd."* This took place after Jonah became angry when the people of Nineveh repented, and after He had warned them. Jonah turned his anger into depression, made some kind of hut, and then sulked in it while he waited for what would happen next.

What I glean is that Jonah was grateful and glad that the gourd gave him shade from the searing sun. But then the LORD sent a worm to damage the plant and it withered, and subsequently then Jonah lost his shade. Jonah quickly returned to being angry again. God used this situation to teach Jonah about appreciating and being grateful for God's mercy. ". . . *You have had pity on the plant for which you have not labored, nor made it grow, which came up in a night and perished in a night. And should I not pity Nineveh, that great city, in which are more than one hundred and twenty thousand persons who cannot discern between their right hand and their left-and much livestock?"* (Jonah 4:10-11)

This is a very clear object lesson. We can focus on the past, or even on little things in our life, and allow them to control how we feel. We then can neglect the big issues in life.

As believers, we have hope in the face of illness, trouble, and even death. We can be glad that our Father has a plan for us and the rest of humanity, and that He has called us by His grace to know Him and to prepare for His kingdom. He has extended forgiveness and cleaning of sin to us by the sacrificial gift of His son, Jesus Christ. We are grateful and glad for ourselves, but also glad for the many humans who will be given that opportunity in the future.

I encourage you to do a search of verses that contain the phrase "be glad." There are almost 40 of them. Many direct us to be glad for the blessings and mercy God extends to us.

Being grateful and being thankful are similar actions or states of mind.

Here is a Scripture that links being thankful with peace of mind. "*And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful.*" (Colossians 3:15) Similarly the apostle Paul encourages us to avoid giving in to worry and anxiety. "*Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.*" (Philippians 4:6-7)

Being grateful and giving thanks are good habits that will bring blessing to us, and even help in some way to have better health spiritually, emotionally, and physically...

Arms up friends! Our sincere prayers and thoughts are with you daily. Thanks in advance for your heartfelt prayers for us.



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