

## Thankfulness & Gratitude

While **thankfulness** and **gratitude** are closely related and often used interchangeably, especially in everyday language, there *is* a subtle difference — particularly when viewed from a **biblical** and **spiritual** perspective.

### Key Differences Between Thankfulness and Gratitude (Biblical Lens)

#### 1. Thankfulness is a response; gratitude is a disposition.

- **Thankfulness** is often **immediate and outward** — a *reaction* to a specific blessing or kindness.
  - *Example:* “Thank You, Lord, for providing today’s bread.”
- **Gratitude**, on the other hand, is a **deep, abiding attitude** — more like a way of **being** that doesn’t always need a triggering event.
  - *Example:* A grateful heart continues to trust and rejoice even during trials.

#### Biblical Insight:

*“Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts... And be thankful.”* (Colossians 3:15) — Thankfulness arises from a grateful heart ruled by Christ.

#### 2. Thankfulness is often expressed; gratitude is often sustained.

- Thankfulness may be spoken or demonstrated in a moment (like a prayer or song).
- Gratitude continues as a **soul posture** — even in silence or suffering. It becomes part of one’s character.

#### Biblical Insight:

Job didn’t say, “Thanks for my suffering,” but he **worshiped**:

*“The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.”* (Job 1:21)

That's **gratitude**, deeper than situational thankfulness but the situation was terrible.

### 3. Gratitude is more transformational.

- Thankfulness can stay at the surface.
- Gratitude, when cultivated, reshapes how one sees **everything** — from **God's sovereignty**, to **life's trials**, to the purpose of one's existence.

*"Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is the will of God..."* (1

Thessalonians 5:18)

Gratitude trains us to see with eyes of trust and eternity.

From a biblical perspective, **Gratitude** is far more than a polite expression or a fleeting emotion. It is a **spiritual posture**, a **recognition of God's goodness**, and a **response of the heart rooted in humility, faith, and reverence**.

### Biblical Definition of Thankfulness:

**Thankfulness is a continual, humble response of the heart that acknowledges God's grace, presence, and provision.**

### Core Elements of Thankfulness in Scripture:

#### 1. Recognition of God as the Giver of All Good Things

- *"Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights..."* (James 1:17)
- Thankfulness in Scripture flows from an understanding that everything — life, breath, sustenance, salvation — is a gift from God.

#### 2. A Heart Posture, Not Just Words

- "Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you." (1 Thessalonians 5:18)
- Biblical thankfulness is not meant to be limited to the condition of comfort or success. It is rooted in trust that God is sovereign and good — even in suffering. Because God is what is good, not the suffering that is good.

— This implies that thankfulness is more than a feeling—it's a *way of life* and an essential part of God's will.

### **3. Linked to Worship and Remembrance**

- "Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise! Give thanks to him; bless his name!" (Psalm 100:4)
- Thankfulness is a form of worship — a declaration of God's worth and a remembrance of His past faithfulness.

— Thankfulness is shown here as a way to enter into God's presence. It's equated with *worship and blessing*.

### **4. A Remedy for Anxiety and a Path to Peace**

- "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God." (Philippians 4:6)
- Thankfulness grounds the soul, reorients the heart, and brings peace by shifting our focus from lack to abundance.

— Thankfulness is spiritually protective. It's paired with prayer and becomes a means to experience *divine peace*.

### **5. Rooted in the Gospel and Overflowing Through the Spirit**

- "...be filled with the Spirit... giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." (Ephesians 5:18-20)
- In Christ, we are given a new life, and the Spirit enables us to walk in a continual rhythm of thanksgiving.

— A *Spirit-filled life* naturally overflows with gratitude. It's equated with *spiritual vitality* and worship.

## **Thankfulness is an Outflow of Peace and Christ's Presence**

- **Colossians 3:15–17**

- *"And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts... And be thankful... whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him."*

- — Thankfulness is connected to *peace, worship, and purposeful living*. It's an expression of living in union with Christ.

## **Thankfulness vs. Godlessness**

### **Romans 1:21**

*"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."*

— Ingratitude is portrayed as a sign of *rebellion and spiritual decay*. Thankfulness, therefore, is equated with *right relationship with God*.

## **Biblical Definition of Gratitude:**

**Gratitude is a continual, inward posture of the heart that recognizes, remembers, and reveres the grace, sovereignty, and goodness of God — regardless of external circumstances — and lives in humble trust and joyful surrender to Him.**

## **Core Elements of Biblical Gratitude:**

## 1. Rooted in Grace, Not Circumstance

- Gratitude in Scripture isn't based on what we *get*, but on who **God is** and what He has **already done**.
- *"But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."* (Romans 5:8)

## 2. A Response to God's Character and Faithfulness

- Gratitude flows from knowing that God is **unchanging, merciful, and near**.
- *"Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good; His steadfast love endures forever."* (Psalm 136:1)

## 3. Sustained Through Trials

- Biblical gratitude does not deny pain — it *transcends* it by trusting God's purpose in all things.
- *"Though the fig tree should not blossom... yet I will rejoice in the Lord."* (Habakkuk 3:17–18)

## 4. Transforms Perspective and Conduct

- Gratitude shapes how we see, speak, and act — it cultivates joy, peace, and humility.
- *"Whatever you do... do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him."* (Colossians 3:17)

## 5. Anchored in Eternal Hope

- Gratitude ultimately rests in the hope of **redemption, resurrection, and union with God** — not fleeting pleasures.
- *"Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."* (1 Corinthians 15:57)

## Gratitude as a Mark of Maturity

### Hebrews 12:28

*"Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe."*

— Thankfulness here is tied to *spiritual maturity, awe, and reverent worship* in response to receiving God's eternal kingdom.

Gratitude, biblically, is not just a feeling — it is the *fruit of a heart that knows it belongs to God*. It remembers what He has done, trusts what He is doing, and hopes in what He will do.

## The Difference Between Thankfulness and Gratitude

**"Thankfulness is a moment — Gratitude is a mindset.**

Thankfulness responds to what we see — the blessings, the provisions, the answered prayers.

But **Gratitude lives deeper**. It's not just for the good days. Gratitude abides through storms, through silence, and through seasons of waiting — because it trusts in the unchanging character of God.

In Scripture, thankfulness is the song we sing when God provides. Gratitude is the quiet resolve to keep singing, even when He hasn't — yet.

## GRATITUDE IN SUFFERING?

### 1. Romans 5:3–5 (ESV)

*"Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame..."*

- **Insight:** Paul teaches that suffering is not meaningless—it builds a chain of virtues that ultimately leads to hope. Rejoicing in suffering is a bold form of gratitude.

## 2. James 1:2–4 (ESV)

*“Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect...”*

- **Insight:** Joy in trials isn’t denial, but recognition that trials refine faith. Gratitude here is tied to the growth that trials produce.

## 3. 1 Thessalonians 5:18 (ESV)

*“Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.”*

- **Insight:** "All circumstances" includes suffering. This verse doesn’t say we must give thanks *for* suffering, but rather *in* it — which implies an attitude of trust and surrender.

## 4. 2 Corinthians 4:17 (ESV)

*“For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison.”*

- **Insight:** Suffering is preparing something *eternal* and far greater. Gratitude flows not from the pain itself, but from its divine purpose.

## 5. Philippians 1:29 (ESV)

*“For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake...”*

- **Insight:** This frames suffering as a *gift* — a radical thought. Gratitude becomes part of receiving suffering as part of our walk with Christ.

## Scriptures that Show God Does Not Desire or Cause Harm

## 1. Lamentations 3:31–33 (ESV)

*“For the Lord will not cast off forever, but, though he cause grief, he will have compassion according to the abundance of his steadfast love; for he does not afflict from his heart or grieve the children of men.”*

- **Insight:** Even when grief is allowed, it is not from God's *heart* — it's not His *desire*. His heart is always compassionate.

## 2. Ezekiel 33:11 (ESV)

*“As I live, declares the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live.”*

- **Insight:** God's will is for **life**, not punishment. He does not enjoy pain, even of those who do evil.

## 3. Isaiah 61:1–3 (ESV)

*“He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted... to comfort all who mourn... to give them a crown of beauty instead of ashes.”*

- **Insight:** This is God's **mission statement through Christ** — not to break hearts, but to heal them.

## 4. 2 Corinthians 1:3–4 (ESV)

*“Blessed be the God... of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction...”*

- **Insight:** God is clearly identified as the **Comforter**, not the afflicter.

## 5. John 10:10 (ESV)

*“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.”*

- **Insight:** Christ explicitly contrasts His mission with that of the **thief (evil)** — He comes to *restore*, not destroy.

## 6. Romans 12:19–21 (ESV)

*“Beloved, never avenge yourselves... ‘Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.’... Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”*

- **Insight:** We are told **never to repay evil** or cause harm for perceived good. God handles justice; our call is to love and overcome evil with good.

## 7. Hosea 6:6 (ESV)

*“For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.”*

- **Insight:** God desires **love**, not ritual suffering or self-punishment.

## Core Truth

- **Suffering is a reality of the broken world, not a tool God wields to shape us by force.**
- **God does not need evil to accomplish good** — He is the one who redeems what evil tries to destroy.
- **To cause suffering in God’s name is to act against God’s heart.**

## Who is the Punisher and Inflictor of Suffering in the Bible?

### 1. Satan – The Accuser and Destroyer

- **John 10:10 (ESV)**  
*“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they*

*may have life and have it abundantly.”*

- **Insight:** The thief (Satan) is the destroyer. Jesus contrasts this with His own mission: life and restoration.
- **Revelation 12:10 (ESV)**  
*“...the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God.”*
  - **Insight:** Satan is the **accuser** — his nature is to **shame, condemn, and harm**.
- **Job 1:6–12 (ESV)**  
Satan comes before God and asks permission to afflict Job. It is **Satan who causes the suffering**, not God.
  - **Insight:** God allows the test, but **Satan is the actor** — bringing death, disease, and destruction to Job's life.

## 2. Evil Spirits and Demonic Forces

- **Luke 13:16 (ESV)**  
*“And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham... whom Satan bound for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond?”*
  - **Insight:** Jesus attributes her suffering to **Satan's bondage**, not God's will.
- **Mark 9:17–22 (ESV)**  
A boy is tormented by a spirit that tries to throw him into fire and water to destroy him.
  - **Insight:** These tormenting spirits **inflict suffering**, and Jesus **delivers** people from them — He does not cause them.

### 3. God's Discipline vs. Satan's Torment

- **Hebrews 12:6 (ESV)**  
*"For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives."*
  - **Insight:** God may discipline, but it's like a **loving parent training a child** — not inflicting pain to destroy.
  - **Note:** The Greek word for "chastise" can mean correction, instruction, or child-training — **not torment or abuse**.

### God's Role is Restoration, Healing, and Rescue

- **Psalms 147:3 (ESV)**  
*"He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds."*
- **2 Corinthians 1:3–4 (ESV)**  
*"The God of all comfort... comforts us in all our affliction..."*
- **Isaiah 53:5 (ESV)**  
*"By his wounds we are healed."*
- **Luke 4:18 (ESV)**  
*"He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives... to set at liberty those who are oppressed..."*

### Summary:

- **Satan** is the tormentor, accuser, deceiver, and destroyer.
- **Evil spirits** and broken systems cause suffering.

- **God** may allow trials but does **not delight in punishment** — He disciplines in love, **not to wound, but to restore**.
- **Jesus** came to **heal, comfort, liberate, and give abundant life**.

**Jesus never gave thanks for pain or suffering itself, but rather for what God would do through it — the outcome, the purpose, the glory beyond the suffering.**

He trusted the Father and gave thanks in faith, not because He enjoyed the suffering, but because of what it would accomplish.

Here are some biblical moments that support this:

### **1. John 11:41–42 — At Lazarus’s Tomb**

*“So they took away the stone. And Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, ‘Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me...’”*

- **Context:** Lazarus is dead. Jesus is about to raise him.
- **Insight:** Jesus **does not thank God for the death or suffering**, but for hearing His prayer — for what is *about to happen* (life).
- He’s giving thanks **in the face of suffering**, *because of the resurrection* to come.

### **2. Matthew 26:26–28 — The Last Supper**

*“Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples...”*

- **Insight:** Jesus gives thanks knowing it symbolizes His body about to be broken.
- Yet again, He does **not rejoice in the pain itself**, but in **the gift of life it would bring to others** — *the New Covenant*.

- His focus is on the **meaning and fruit of the suffering**, not on the suffering as good.

### 3. Hebrews 12:2 (ESV)

*“...who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame...”*

- **Insight:** Jesus did *not* take joy in the cross itself — He *despised* the shame — but endured it because of the **joy beyond it** (resurrection, redemption, reunion with His people).

### 4. Luke 22:42–44 — Gethsemane

*“Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done.”*

- **Insight:** Jesus is in agony. He asks for another way — showing that He does **not glorify suffering**, but **submits in trust**, because He knows the result will be redemptive.

### Conclusion:

- Jesus gave thanks **before** miracles, meals, and moments of redemption — **not because of pain**, but **because of what God was doing through it**.
- He **never glorified suffering** as inherently good. Instead, He trusted the Father to **redeem suffering** and gave thanks in *hope* and *faith*.