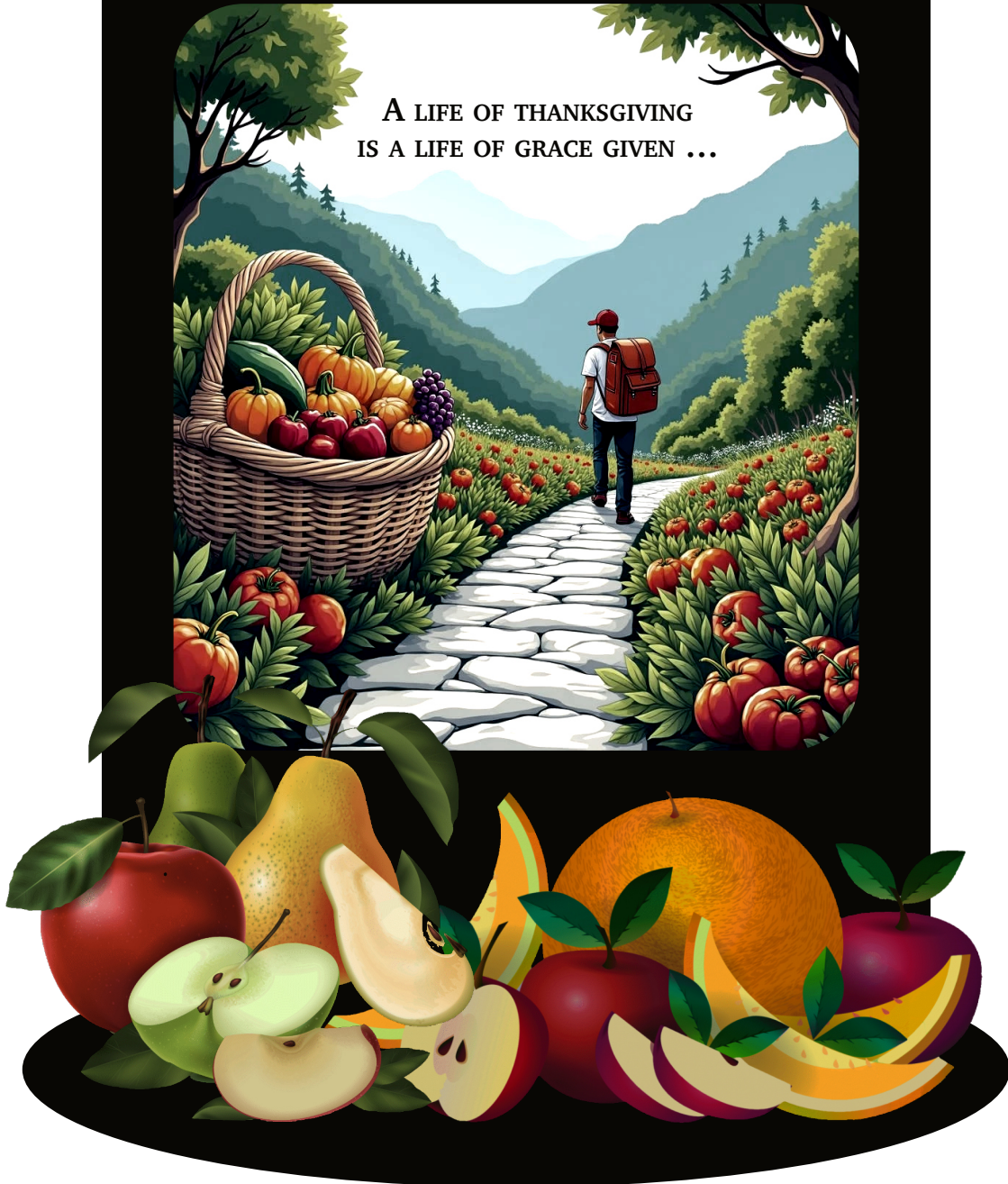


THANKFULNESS ON THE NARROW WAY

THANKFULNESS IN OUR HEARTS TO GOD ...

A LIFE OF THANKSGIVING
IS A LIFE OF GRACE GIVEN ...



1. A life of thanksgiving is a life of grace and we enter the life of grace through the narrow gate, Matthew 7:13-14.

- (Matthew 7:13–14 ESV) **Enter by the narrow gate.** For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are **many**. 14 **For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life**, and those who find it are **few**.

A. Our new life of grace in Christ begins by obeying Jesus and entering through the narrow gate.

This is an act of submission to the sovereign will of God where we place our trust in Jesus alone for the forgiveness of sins.

B. We harvest thankfulness in our hearts when living on the narrow way.

- (Colossians 3:16 ESV) **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**.

C. A life of grace is a life of thankfulness in our hearts to God for blessing us with his favor.

Thankfulness ... *thanks* ... χάρις [*charis*] – grace; that which affords joy, pleasure, delight, sweetness, charm, loveliness: grace of speech; good will, loving-kindness, favor; of the merciful kindness by which God, exerting his holy influence upon souls.

Thankfulness to God means having joy, pleasure, delight, sweetness, loveliness, words of grace and merciful kindness in our hearts because of the holy influence of God upon our souls.

Note how dramatic the contrast • (Luke 6:45 ESV) **The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.**

D. Grace will never fail because God is sovereign and God will never fail.

To understand the relationship between grace and sovereignty we need to have a working understanding of the biblical teaching of the sovereignty of God.

The sovereignty of God is the concept that God is the supreme, all-powerful ruler of the universe, with ultimate authority over all creation and every event within it. This includes having the power, wisdom, and authority to carry out His purposes.

2. We abound in thankfulness as we live on the narrow way in submission to the will of the Lord, Matthew 7:21, Luke 6:46.

- (Matthew 7:21 ESV) **Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.**
- (Luke 6:46 ESV) **Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do what I tell you?**

A. Those on the narrow way **stand in grace** before God and are affirmed in and experience the blessed assurance that our God reigns over our world as we submit to his will and obey what he says.

- (Romans 5:1–3 ESV) Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, **we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. 2 Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.**

B. Those who do the will of the Father live in that reality and have the good treasure of grace and thankfulness in their hearts to God.

C. Those who are not on the narrow way deny the reality of God's sovereignty in their thoughts and actions and do not have true, lasting thankfulness.

- i. If God is the supreme, all-powerful ruler of the universe and has ultimate authority over all creation, then God has authority over us.
- ii. If a person then does not obey Jesus and enter by the narrow gate, then he is in effect denying Jesus' authority over him.
- iii. This person has not entered into a saving relationship with Jesus and remains apart from the grace of God and outside of the kingdom of God.
- iv. Jesus is neither his Lord nor his Savior.
- v. He is tossed about by life and does not know the blessed reality that God reigns over his universe.

Traveling along the narrow road we harvest the bountiful blessing of thankfulness ... that God in his grace and sovereignty is in full control of the events of my life ... that he is indeed in control in everything.

Possibly the greatest emotional aspect of thankfulness we can experience is the stability in our lives that comes from the full assurance of God's grace and sovereign care over our lives as the people of his pasture and the sheep of his hand.

3. Here are some of the many lessons we learn on the narrow way.

A. God shows us what true life is all about.

- (Psalm 16:11 ESV) You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

B. God searches, knows and tests us as he leads us along the path of life to transform our lives as the people of God who live in view of eternity.

- (Psalm 139:23–24 NLT) Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. 24 Point out anything in me that offends you, and lead me along the path of everlasting life.

C. We abound in thankfulness and thrive in the light rejoicing that we have been delivered from the domain of darkness and transferred to the kingdom of his beloved Son.

- (Colossians 1:12–13 ESV) Giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. 13 He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son.
- (1 Peter 2:9b ESV) ... who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

D. The path shines brighter and brighter as we recognize how perfect are God's ways—and we give him glory.

- (Proverbs 4:18 ESV) But the path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, which shines brighter and brighter until full day.
- (Psalm 18:30 ESV) This God—his way is perfect; the word of the LORD proves true; he is a shield for all those who take refuge in him.

E. We mature in our understanding of the all-inclusive extent of and the purposeful goodness of God in ruling over his universe.

- (Romans 8:28 ESV) And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

F. We are awed at the holy, solitary, indisputable truth that God alone is God.

- (Isaiah 45:5a, 6b–7 ESV) I am the LORD, and there is no other, besides me there is no God ... that there is none besides me; I am the LORD, and there is no other. 7 I form light and create darkness; I make well-being and create calamity; I am the LORD, who does all these things.
- (Isaiah 46:9b ESV) ... I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me,

G. We find great peace in the sovereign rule and the mind of God as we trust him in our personal, social and political relationships with other humans.

- (Proverbs 19:21 ESV) Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the LORD that will stand.
- (Proverbs 21:1 ESV) The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the LORD; he turns it wherever he will.

H. We reverently submit to and find blessed peace and quietness in the all-encompassing nature and supreme authority of God's sovereign will and purpose.

- (Job 42:2 ESV) I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted.
- (Psalm 115:3 ESV) Our God is in the heavens; he does all that he pleases.
- (Psalm 135:6 ESV) Whatever the LORD pleases, he does, in heaven and on earth, in the seas and all deeps.

I. We fall down in worship and humble gratitude for the unsearchable ways of God.

- (Romans 11:33 ESV) Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!

Unsearchable – marked by being impossible to find or discover the depths or the end of; therefore incomprehensible.

We should exult and find tremendous comfort in the majestic truth that God's ways and thoughts are higher than ours as the heavens are above the earth.

Why do we exult? We have learned the urgent and dire need in our lives for his ways and thoughts to surpass our human ways and thoughts in this way.

CONCLUSION: So how should we think and live in view of God's sovereignty?

- (James 4:13–16 ESV) Come now, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit”— 14 yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes. 15 Instead you ought to say, “If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that.” 16 As it is, you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil.

I. This is not a rebuke for making plans but a rebuke for making plans without taking into account the sovereign rule of the Lord over our lives.

- A. It is arrogant to assume that we will be around tomorrow let alone know what will happen tomorrow.
- (Proverbs 27:1 ESV) Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring.
- B. Our next breath and our ways are in his hand.
- (Daniel 5:23 ESV) ... but you have lifted up yourself against the Lord of heaven. And the vessels of his house have been brought in before you, and you and your lords, your wives, and your concubines have drunk wine from them. And you have praised the gods of silver and gold, of bronze, iron, wood, and stone, which do not see or hear or know, but the God in whose hand is your breath, and [in whose hand] are all your ways, you have not honored.
- C. Our lives are like a mist that is here then vanishes.

II. Here is how the person who humbles himself before the Sovereign Lord thinks and speaks.

- A. He turns to Scripture and examines his life to answer the question — What is my life?
- B. He believes that if the Lord wills, he will live.
- C. He believes that if the Lord wills, he will do this or that.

If you think this approach to life is too far-fetched or unrealistic, then you need to pay careful attention to the following harsh rebuke which is directed to the person who does not live in this way.

III. Here is how the person who does not humble himself before the Sovereign Lord thinks and speaks.

- A. He boasts about the decisions he makes in life.

Boast ... καυχάομαι [kauchaomai] – to glory (whether with reason or without); to glory on account of a thing; to glory in a thing; to show off.

- B. His boasting is due to his arrogance.

Arrogance ... ἀλαζονεία [alazoneia] – empty talk; an insolent and empty assurance, which trusts in its own power and resources; false pride; a self-exalting, self-absorbed conceit of one's own superiority; an irreverent and empty presumption which trusts in the stability of earthly things.

- C. He very clearly does not know what his life is.

- D. His manner of life is evil.

Evil ... πονηρός [poneros] – pressed and harassed by labors; bringing toils, annoyances, perils; causing pain and trouble; evil wicked, bad.

- E. He has no clue what true thankfulness is because he has rebelled against and rejected the very way that would bring him there.

LAST THINGS ...

Do you know what your life is?

Do you know how to know what your life is?

Do you understand the opportunity before you?

Here's a good starting question ... Do you live with thankfulness in your heart to God?