



PART 3 - G
PRACTICING THANKSGIVING

**“When I feel oppressed by my
disappointment and sorrow...
I choose gratitude.”¹
Carol Kent**

God's Call to Obedience

PRACTICING THANKSGIVING

G

**“ It is good to give thanks to the Lord, And to sing praises to Thy name, O Most High”
Ps. 92:1 NASB**

- I. As a believer, you are to give thanks to God, who has recorded specific requirements for thanksgiving in His Word. He has a great deal to say about the subject, so He must consider it a vital part of your relationship to Him.

- A. You are commanded to give thanks to God.

**“ And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the LORD Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.”
COL. 3:17**

**“ Praise the LORD! Oh give thanks to the LORD, for He is good; For His lovingkindness is everlasting.”
Ps. 106:1 NASB**

- B. You are commanded to *always* give thanks.

**“ Sing and make music in your heart to the LORD, always giving thanks to God the Father...in the name of our LORD Jesus Christ.”
EPH. 5:19B,20**

- C. You are commanded to give thanks *for everything* and *in all circumstances*.

**“ always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our LORD Jesus Christ.”
EPH. 5:20**

**“ give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.”
1 THESS. 5:18**

- D. You should always give thanks for the brethren and for their relationship to God and to each other. If believers practiced this discipline, there might be far

less grumbling, gossiping and focusing on the negatives in fellow Christians!
(1 Thess. 1:2-4)

“ But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers loved by the LORD, because from the beginning God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth.”

2 THESS. 2:13

II. God gives you His reasons and purposes for thanking Him.

A. He is magnified. (Ps. 69:30)

B. It honors Him. (Ps. 50:23)

C. It is God’s will for you to give thanks in good times and in adversity. (1 Thess. 5:18)

D. It is a “good” thing to do. (Ps. 92:1)

E. It brings glory to Him. (2 Cor. 4:15)

III. You were created and *chosen* by God to thank, to praise and to glorify Him.

“ But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.”

1 PET. 2:9

A. You are chosen to thank Him *forever*. (Ps. 52:9; 79:13)

B. God saved your soul so that you would be a vessel of His praises, fulfilling that purpose for which He chose and empowered you. (Is. 43:21; Ps. 40:1-3; 145:10-13; 1 Pet. 2:9)

C. God differentiates between those who are unregenerate and those who are not.

1. God describes the unregenerate man in Romans, saying that he neither glorifies Him nor gives thanks to Him. (Rom. 1:21)

2. God says that death and Sheol (hell) will not thank Him. (Ps. 6:5; Is. 38:18)

“ All you have made will praise you, O LORD; your saints will extol you. They will tell of the glory of your kingdom and speak of your might, so that all men may know of your mighty acts and the glorious splendor of your kingdom. Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and your dominion endures through all generations.”

Ps. 145:10-13a

IV. God gives many examples of the psalmists and other saints giving thanks, which are guidelines for you in establishing habit patterns of thanksgiving.

A. The psalmist shares that he gave thanks *abundantly* to the Lord. (Ps. 109:30)

B. He also gave thanks *wholeheartedly*. (Ps. 9:1; 111:1; 86:12; 138:1)

C. The psalmists set the example of giving thanks as the beginning of their communication with the Lord and about the Lord.

The writers often *began* their psalms with thanksgiving to God. What a wonderful example they have set for you to *begin* your prayers and meditations with praise and thanksgiving to your Savior and Lord! These authors are also your role models in communicating the praises of God to others.

D. Many writers in Scripture mention the importance of praising and thanking the Lord through the singing of psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. (Ezra 3:11; Neh. 12:8,46; Ps. 28:7; Jonah 2:9)

“ Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.”

COL. 3:16 NASB

E. God commands you to “put off” ungodly forms of communication and to “put on” communicating with thanksgiving. This act of obedience turns a harsh, hardened spirit into a gracious, grateful one. (Col. 4:6; Matt. 12:33-37)

“ Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving.”

EPH. 5:4

“ For the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart.”

MATT. 12:34B NASB

F. The Apostle Paul linked thanksgiving with doing all in the name of the Lord Jesus. (Col. 3:17)

V. You are to give thanks to God *because* of who He is, for His character traits, and for what He has done. (Ps. 118:1; 107:1,8,15)

**“ Thou art my God, and I will praise thee;
Thou art my God, I exalt Thee.”**

Ps. 118:28 NKJ

- A. You are given examples in Scripture of how to thank God for *who He is* and for *His character*.
1. His goodness (Ps. 107:1; 118:1,29; 136:1; Ezra 3:11; Jer. 33:11)
 2. His lovingkindness, His love that endures forever (Ps. 136; 106:1; 118:1; 2 Chron. 20:21)
 3. His righteousness (Ps. 7:17)
 4. His name, His Holy name (Ps. 138:2; 140:13; 75:1; Is. 25:1; 97:12; 106:47)
 5. His righteous ordinances (Ps. 119:62)
 6. His truth (Ps. 138:2 NASB)
- B. You are given examples in Scripture of how to thank Him for *what He has done*.
1. For salvation (Ps. 118:21)
 2. For His indescribable gift, Christ Jesus your Savior (2 Cor. 9:15)
 3. For qualifying you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light (Col. 1:12)
 4. For your acceptance of the Word as coming from God and not from men (1 Thess. 2:13)
 5. For being chosen by God from the beginning for salvation (2 Thess. 2:13)
 6. For bringing your soul out of prison (Ps. 142:7)
 7. For His wonders of creation to the sons of men (Ps. 107:15,21,31)
 8. For daily sustenance (Mark 8:6; John 6:11; Luke 22:17)
 9. For His anger being turned away (Is. 12:1)
 10. For being a comfort (Is. 12:1)
 11. For working wonders through plans made long ago with perfect faithfulness (Is. 25:1)
 12. For your being fearfully and wonderfully made (Ps. 139:14)

13. For answering you; for hearing you (Ps. 118:21; John 11:41)
14. For giving wisdom and power; for making known what was requested of Him (Dan. 2:23)
15. For your deliverance from slavery of sin to obedience to God's laws; for having been sanctified by the Spirit and faith in the truth (Rom. 6:17; 2 Thess. 2:13)
16. For always leading us in His triumph in Christ (2 Cor. 2:14)
17. For manifesting through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place (2 Cor. 2:14-15)
18. For His strength (1 Tim. 1:12)
19. For your being appointed to His service (1 Tim. 1:12)

VI. You are to give thanks for the things you define as "good." Establish a **habit** of expressing your thankfulness for the *many* gifts God gives you. (Jas. 1:17)

- A. Follow the example of the one leper out of ten who returned to thank Jesus for healing him.
- B. Do not be like one of the nine lepers who neglected to thank Christ for His healing, mercy and goodness.

“ Now on his way to Jerusalem, Jesus traveled along the border between Samaria and Galilee. As he was going into a village, ten men who had leprosy met him. They stood at a distance and called out in a loud voice, ‘Jesus, Master, have pity on us!’ When he saw them, he said, ‘Go, show yourselves to the priests.’ And as they went, they were cleansed. One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. He threw himself at Jesus’ feet and thanked him—and he was a Samaritan. Jesus asked, ‘Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?’ Then he said to him, ‘Rise and go; your faith has made you well.’ ”

LUKE 17:11-21

Have you become like one of the nine lepers who neglected to thank Jesus for His mercy, goodness and the way He worked in your life? There may be many reasons why you are disobeying the commands to give thanks to God for His blessings.

Check the reasons which apply to you if you have not established a habit of thanksgiving.

- I am unaware of God's commands regarding thanking Him. (Lev. 5:17)
- I have lost sight of the *truth* that I deserve to go to hell for all eternity.
- I believe I *deserve* to have things go my way.
- I don't think about God choosing me for His eternal kingdom and that I was merely a responder to God's initiatives in calling me out of darkness.
- I am not focused on God's goodness and lovingkindness, which He demonstrated by saving my soul from eternal damnation through the great sacrifice of the Father and the Son on my behalf.
- I am lazy and apathetic about my relationship to God.
- I take for granted and have grown accustomed to the daily provisions, protection and mercies of God. (Lam. 3:22,23)
- I *expect* that most things should go my way; therefore, I don't think of giving thanks.
- I am focused on what I *want* instead of what I *have*.
- I have developed a discontented, negative, complaining attitude toward my life's circumstances; I nurture a root of bitterness.
- I am self-focused, self-absorbed, self-pitying.
- I believe that I am responsible for the good that I have accomplished or acquired, rather than God.
- I ask God for things; and when I receive them, I forget that I asked Him.
- I thank God for only the "big things" and neglect to thank Him for what I view as daily or repeated "smaller" blessings.
- I thank God only during my formal prayer time or before a meal, but I do not have a pattern of thanking Him during the course of the day.
- I thank Him once and don't consider repeatedly thanking Him for the same things.
- As soon as God grants one request, I focus on the next thing I want.
- I don't go on a *daily* "God Hunt," looking for ways in which God is working on my behalf.
- I don't cultivate and nurture the habit of giving thanks.

After you have finished checking your reasons for not establishing a pattern of giving thanks to the Lord, confess them. You may want to include a witness for your confession.

VII. You are to thank God for the circumstances in your life that you **do not** view as "good."

A. God commands you to give thanks **for everything**.

“ always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

EPH. 5:20

- B. God commands you to give thanks **in all circumstances**. You will experience a breaking of your will when you submit to this difficult command.

“ give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.”
1 THESS. 5:18

1. The natural response of man when faced with travail is to grumble, complain and feel sorry for himself. (Phil. 2:14)
2. God can *teach* you how to be content in all situations because contentment is an attitude that can be learned. (Phil. 4:11-13)

So often believers’ lives can be characterized like the Israelites when they had just been delivered from the bondage of slavery in Egypt. When the going got a little rough, they began to grumble and complain, rather than continuing to praise and thank God for His powerful deliverance, miraculous works, incredible mercies and faithful provision.

“ The rabble with them began to crave other food, and again the Israelites started wailing and said, ‘If only we had meat to eat! We remember the fish we ate in Egypt at no cost—also the cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions and garlic. But now we have lost our appetite; we never see anything but this manna!’ ”
NUM. 11:4-6

Unfortunately, this may be a picture of you at times. When you are inconvenienced, delayed, deprived, faced with difficult losses, people and situations, you may quickly forget that you were delivered from the death sentence you deserved, have been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, and have been made a fellow heir with Jesus Christ. You may demand heaven’s benefits during your earthly existence and whine and fuss when deprived of them. Focusing on temporal pleasures and ideals develops an ungrateful heart, which is destructive to a vital relationship with Christ and to the fruit of His Spirit being manifested in your life.

3. God requires you to die to the flesh by giving thanks *in the midst of adversity* and *for* the adversity. Therefore, the command can be obeyed to mentally and verbally give thanks even though in most cases, you will not *feel* like doing so.
 - a. The act of mentally or verbally giving thanks in tribulation or when faced with minor annoyances is often a *wrenching experience* because it
 - 1) goes against your feelings and your logic.
 - 2) runs contrary to your will in the matter.
 - 3) takes a strong commitment to obey when everything within you wants to rail against what is happening.

- 4) requires a surrender of your control to the Sovereign Controller of all events. (1 Chron. 29:11-13; Is. 46:9,10)
- b. The act of thanksgiving for irritations, losses and difficulties focuses you on the **reality** of who is in control of your life and your hope in Him who endured the cross on your behalf. (Heb. 12:2)
- C. God warns frequently that you will suffer in your earthly existence. Because of these warnings, He expects you to be equipped to handle them and to understand the reasons for them.

“Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.”

JAS. 1:2-4

Please note that James, the brother of Jesus and author of the epistle that bears his name, does not say “if” you face trials, but rather, “whenever.” Suffering is the means through which God focuses you on His goal of building your character and your eternal purpose. Through His human channel, James, God issues the commandment to “consider” trials pure joy. Repetitively giving thanks for problems is a way to enact this command.

1. Jesus warns that you should *expect* life to be filled with tribulation, but you are to trust that you will overcome through Him and His resources. (Rom. 8:35-39)

“In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”

JOHN 16:33B

- a. If you have, consciously or unconsciously, formed the expectation that most things should go your way, you are not acknowledging scriptural truths. Throughout the Bible God makes it very clear that you are called to suffer for His sake. (Phil 1:29)
- b. If you live by the concept that your earthly existence should be relatively free from suffering, then you will not be prepared and armed with God’s tools when the “fiery ordeal” inevitably comes.

“Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed.”

1 PET. 4:12,13

2. At times, God links commands to rejoice, praise and give thanks with adversity. He desires you to participate in the sufferings of Christ with a grateful heart. (1 Pet. 4:16; Phil. 3:10)

D. God often uses the practice of thanksgiving for trials as the **bridge** to bring you from a position of railing against His will for your life to an acceptance and surrender to His will, which includes the form(s) of suffering you are experiencing.

1. The practice of thanksgiving focuses you on the Lord while taking the focus off yourself and your problems. (Heb. 12:2-4)
2. The practice of *repeatedly* giving thanks instills an attitude of gratitude toward life and others.
3. The attitude of thankfulness about difficulties focuses you on God's purposes in the adversity.
4. God usually uses perseverance in obedience to change feelings so they are brought into accord with His will.

VIII. You must *choose repeatedly* to believe God's truths as you practice thanksgiving in adversity.

- A. Believe in God's character, commands and promises. (Ps. 119)
- B. Believe all His ways are perfect. (Ps. 18:30)
- C. Trust in His love relationship to you in the midst of difficulty. The following passage mentions a great variety of trials you as a believer may encounter yet God insists He is with you and loving you through the experiences.

“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: ‘For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.’ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our LORD.”
ROM. 8:35-39

The writers of Scripture gave thanks for *two* of God's character traits more frequently than any of His other attributes. The Lord is repeatedly thanked for *His goodness* and for *His love*. His loving character is often expressed in the Bible in two ways: “His love that endures forever” and “His lovingkindness.” These two traits are acknowledged with thanks often. In the midst of difficulty, reminding yourself of these traits will bring you hope, comfort, confidence and assurance in Him. Because God is good, He will always be good *to* you and

always do good *for* you. Rely on His promise to work all things for your good, even when your feelings and logic don't agree. Remind yourself frequently, "God loves me in the midst of this trial." His love is always present and active. Look for it in the darkness! (Is. 45:3; 2 Cor. 1:3; Rom. 8:28)

“ Praise the LORD. Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever.”

Ps. 106:1

D. Rely upon His sovereign control over all events of your life. (Eph. 1:11) Ponder these truths and apply them to your situation with thanksgiving:

1. His goodness and love are always being worked out through His sovereign plan for your life. (Jer. 29:11)
2. He alone has the ability to do the impossible! (Matt. 19:26)
3. His promises never fail. (Josh. 23:14; Ps. 119:140)

“ The LORD is faithful to all his promises and loving toward all he has made.”

Ps. 145:13B

4. His power and grace are always sufficient, through His Word and through His Spirit, to give you the resources necessary to endure in the midst of suffering. (1 Cor. 10:13; 2 Cor. 12:9,10)
5. His predestined plan for your life will not be thwarted, no matter how great the obstacles from your perspective. (Ps. 115:3; Job 42:2)

“ Remember the former things, those of long ago; I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me. I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say: My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please.”

Is. 46:9,10

6. His logic, which is always true and right, may seem ridiculous to you, but ultimately, His wisdom will prevail. (Prov. 8)
7. Your submission to His will reveals His wisdom and purpose. You will echo Joseph's words, "...**God has made me fruitful in the land of my suffering.**" (Gen. 41:52)
8. Your remembrance and thanksgiving for the many times He has been faithful

to you in past difficulties will increase your faith to handle the present ones. Remind yourself that *in the midst* of many past problems, you did not see God's purpose. But in retrospect, you saw what He accomplished in you and in others. (Deut. 8:2,3; Job 42:5)

IX. God links thanksgiving to prayer.

A. God commands you to “***Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.***” (Col. 4:2)

B. You are commanded to bring your petitions to God in prayer, *with thanksgiving*.

“ Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

PHIL. 4:6,7

The context of this verse reveals that the things being prayed about and petitioned for make you anxious or have the potential to do so. Therefore, it is difficult to thank God for the very circumstances about which you are fearful. But this is *God's plan* for handing your burdens over to Him and leaving them in His capable hands. (1 Pet. 5:6,7)

“ Cast your burden upon the LORD, and He will sustain you”

Ps. 55:22A NASB

1. Replace an anxious spirit with God's peace by
 - a. praying and making your petitions known to the Lord. (Jas. 4:2)
 - b. offering thanks to God for the difficulties as the petitions are made.
2. Replace your fears with gratitude by thanking God for
 - a. His character, as you wait upon the answer to your prayers and petitions with an attitude of trust and gratitude. (Ps. 145)
 - b. His promise that He will answer according to His will and plan for your life. (1 John 5:14,15)
 - c. His loving provision for all your needs during the waiting time. He may or may not fulfill your desires, if they are not in accordance with His goals for you. (Phil. 4:19; 2 Pet. 1:32; 2 Cor. 9:8)

- d. His promise to work all things for your good. (Rom. 8:28)
 - e. His expectation that you will confidently come to Him to receive mercy and find grace in your time of need. (Heb. 4:16)
 - f. His desire to build your character through the waiting time. (Rom. 5:3-5)
 - g. His promise to strengthen you while you wait. (Is. 40:31)
3. Thank Him that
- a. His ways are not your ways and His perspective is not yours. (Is. 55:8,9)
 - b. His ways are perfect. (Ps. 18:30a)
4. Determine that if His answer is “No,”
- a. you will remember that He is the Potter and you are the clay. He knows what is best for His creation. (Is. 29:16; 45:9)
 - b. you will submit to the truth that His primary goal is to refine you; so He will give you what you *need* to reach that goal, rather than what you *want*. (Mal. 3:3; Dan. 12:10)
 - c. you will surrender to His perfect will for your life with thanksgiving!
5. Understand that having a thankful heart is a major way to delight in the Lord. (Ps. 37:4)

“ He is the Rock, his works are perfect, and all his ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is he.”
DEUT. 32:4

- C. God weaves the following hard-hitting verses together:

“ Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus. Do not put out the Spirit’s fire”
1 THESS. 5:16-19

Submission to these concise, pithy commands is a powerful means of maintaining a right relationship to Christ through a grateful acceptance of all conditions of your earthly existence. The charge to pray continually is framed with the instruction to be joyful always and to give thanks in everything, whether in prosperity or in affliction. You will not quench

the Holy Spirit and His fire if you are in submission to God's plan for your life, instead of resisting it.

X. God sets forth the principle of *sacrificial* praise and thanksgiving.

In the Old Testament, God instituted a "thank offering," which was to be an animal sacrificed in acknowledgment of God's mercies and goodness, and Israel's reliance upon Him to meet their needs. (Lev. 7:11-21) God commanded His people to offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving. (Ps. 50:14,23; 116:17). Though these sacrifices had a visible form long ago, Christ's death abolished the need for repeated, tangible offerings. His ultimate sacrifice took place on the cross. (Heb. 7:27; 10:10,14)

“ Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving, And pay your vows to the Most High; And call upon Me in the day of trouble; I shall rescue you, and you will honor Me.”
Ps. 50:14,15 NASB

Though the need for animal sacrifices is eliminated, the principle of sacrificial thanks and praise still applies to the believer. Sacrifice always involves a cost to someone or something. The word means "to slaughter", "to slay" or "to kill" in both Hebrew and Greek. God carries the theme of the sacrifice of thanksgiving into the New Testament when He commands you to offer a "sacrifice of praise." It is costly to deny self, to slay or to kill the indulgences and demands of self, in order to praise and to give thanks in the midst of adversity when you want to grumble, complain and feel sorry for yourself. It is not personally costly to give thanks for circumstances you appreciate because no sacrifice is involved.

- A. You are to thank God *for everything*, even when it requires sacrifice on your part to do so. (Eph. 5:20)
- B. You are to thank and praise God *always* and *continually*, even when you do not want to or do not feel like doing so. (Eph. 5:20)

“ Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that confess his name.”
HEB. 13:15

The New American Standard translation ties the sacrifice of praise directly to thanksgiving.

“ Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name.”
HEB. 13:15 NASB

XI. The prophet Jonah wrote about his thankful spirit in adversity. **Read Jonah 1 and 2.**

A. He recorded God's sovereign control over all he experienced. He expressed a thankful attitude for and a security in that control, even though it brought chastisement.

1. Jonah tried to flee from the presence of the Lord, but soon realized that he was unable to do so. (Ps. 139:7-12)
2. The Lord sent a great wind which caused a violent storm. (1:4)
3. God caused the lot to fall on Jonah, as Proverbs 16:33 says He has the power to do.
4. Jonah had great confidence in the Lord's ability to calm the sea if he were cast overboard. (1:12)
5. He knew God had hurled him into the sea, not the sailors. (2:3)
6. He was confident that the all-seeing God had responded to his prayer and petition. (2:2)
7. God prepared or appointed a great fish for His divine purpose. (1:17)
8. God humbled Jonah before commanding the fish to vomit him up on dry land. (2:10)
9. God's sovereign will was not thwarted by Jonah's disobedience. Jonah obeyed God's command and went to Nineveh, and the people of this wicked city were saved. (Jonah 3)

B. He describes his plight with the following words.

“ You hurled me into the deep, into the very heart of the seas, and the currents swirled about me; all your waves and breakers swept over me. The engulfing waters threatened me, the deep surrounded me; seaweed was wrapped around my head. To the roots of the mountains I sank down; the earth beneath barred me in forever.”

JONAH 2:3,5-6A

1. He prayed to God and cried out for His help from the stomach of the fish. (vs. 2:1,7)

It was obvious to Jonah that he was under the chastisement of God. He proclaimed from the belly of the fish, ***“...I have been banished from your***

sight; yet I will look again toward your holy temple.” (Jonah 2:4) With his life ebbing away, he chose to remember the Giver of salvation and His goodness to him. ***“But you brought my life up from the pit, O LORD my God.” (Jonah 2:6b)***

2. He believed that his discipline had banished him from the Lord, but he still chose to focus on Him and to beseech Him. (vs. 2:4)
3. He chose to *remember* the Lord. (vs. 2:7)
4. He chose to sacrifice to God with a song of thanksgiving.

“Those who cling to worthless idols forfeit the grace that could be theirs. But I, with a song of thanksgiving, will sacrifice to you. What I have vowed I will make good. Salvation comes from the LORD.”
JONAH 2:8,9

During probably the most painful ordeal he had ever encountered, Jonah realized that he deserved far worse, that he deserved death. In His great mercy, God had provided the fish to save his life.

C. You can learn from Jonah’s example in the belly of the fish by realizing

1. things could be a lot worse!
2. you deserve a lot worse!

Man’s nature is to compare himself to those who are in better situations or to compare his painful reality to a fantasy or ideal he has contrived. It may not occur to him to be thankful that matters are not worse! You can always be thankful, as Jonah was, for not receiving the death you deserve for your sin. (Jon. 2:9b; Rom. 6:23)

How sad that Jonah’s memory was so short, and he fell back into grumbling and complaining because He did not agree with God’s plan to win the souls of Nineveh. Witnessing the salvation of the city to which he was sent should have brought him great rejoicing and thanksgiving, but instead we find him depressed and angry. However, we can thank Jonah for his honesty in recording in the Holy Writ, both his victory and his defeat.

D. You should imitate those who gave thanks *before* the victory or deliverance. God expresses this order in Psalm 50:14,15, and verse 23. Read 2 Chronicles 20:1-26 for such an account.

“He who sacrifices thank offerings honors me, and he prepares the way so that I may show him the salvation of God.”
Ps. 50:23

One of the most powerful, offensive weapons the Christian has in his arsenal against Satan's influence is to offer **sacrificial** thanks and praises when experiencing crises, affliction, persecution and loss. Satan has a difficult time getting a foothold on your mind and attitude when you are thanking God for the *very things* that the devil is trying to use to "bring you down!" Try "rapid fire" thanksgiving for every negative thing you can think of at the time of your distress. You will probably find doing so is a great "stress reliever."

If you are plagued by flashbacks related to past traumatic events, repeated thanksgiving *for the events themselves* is often an effective means of eliminating the flashbacks. Giving thanks for the very things the adversary is trying to use to depress, discourage and defeat you, undermines his power.

Thanking God repeatedly for His provisions to escape temptation is another weapon you can use against the devil *at the very time* you are tempted to sin. Thank Him for His grace and power that is ever-present to deliver you from evil. Thank Him that He resides within you to overcome the temptation you are facing. Thank Him that you have the opportunity to experience His power at work. If possible, flee from the temptation.

Remember your *feelings* usually follow your obedience to commands, despite an initial lack of desire to obey. When you are overwhelmed, lonely, angry, upset or depressed, seek forgiveness for sinful attitudes. Call upon the Lord's power to change your thinking. Then offer **repeated** thanks for your situation and for the *specific* problems and related difficulties. Acknowledge that you *already* have many things in your life for which to thank Him. Focus on praising God for the salvation of your soul and all that encompasses the riches of His grace, including His mercy, goodness and lovingkindness. Be specific in your praises and thanksgiving. Renewing your mind with thanksgiving will turn your focus from yourself and your circumstances to God and His sovereign control over your life, lifting your spirits from the pit!

What a glorious privilege is yours: to cultivate the habit of thanking God and praising His salvation, love, mercies and goodness! How wonderful to know that the thankful attitude that you develop in your earthly existence will accompany you into eternity. You will join the heavenly throng in saying,

“ We give thanks to you, LORD God Almighty, the One who is and who was, because you have taken your great power and have begun to reign.”
REV. 11:17

The Bridge of Thanksgiving

