

DEUTERONOMY 8:7-18

# LOOKING BACK, LOOKING AHEAD

Rev. In Kee Kim



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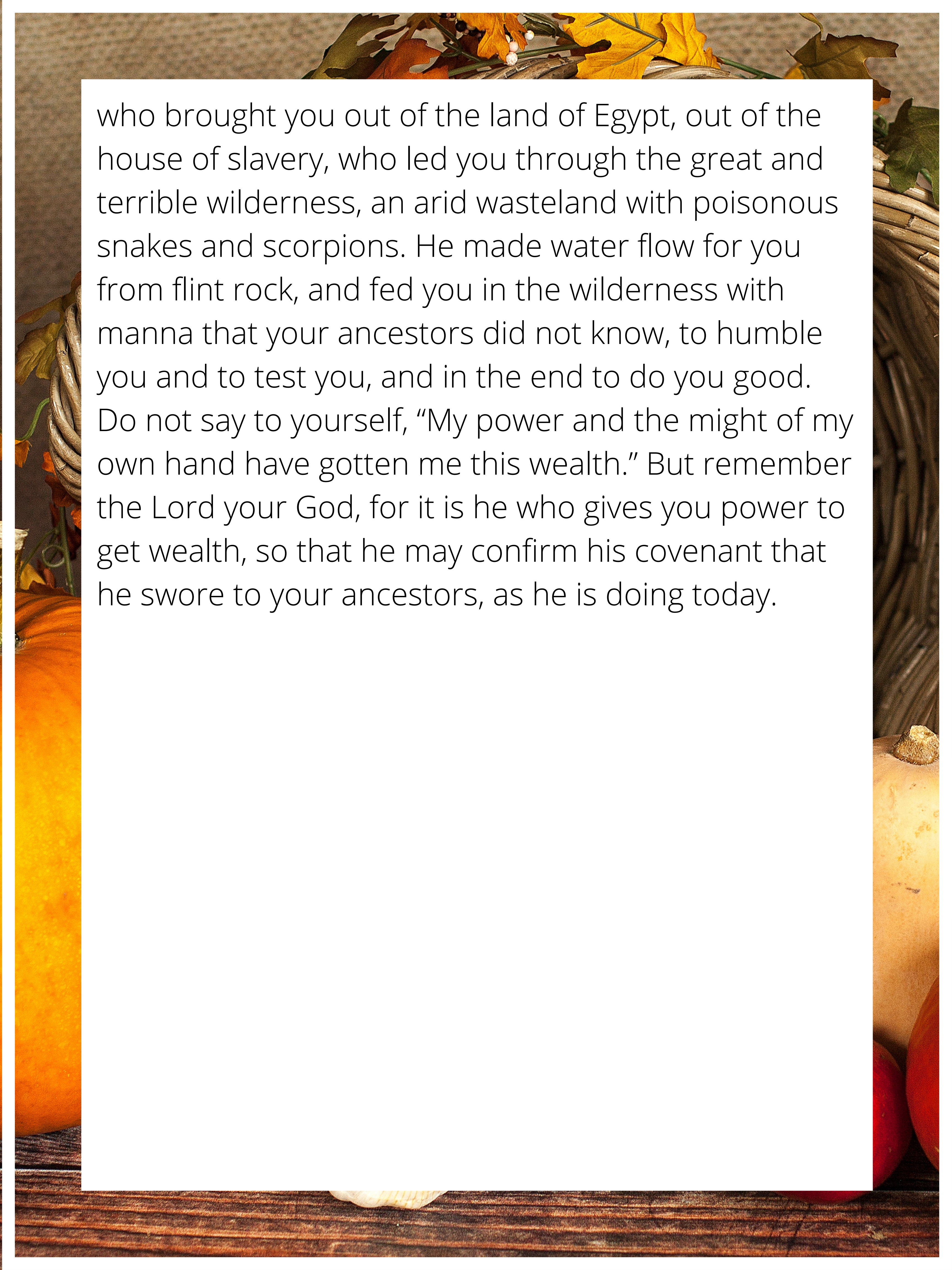
# Scripture Passage

## Deuteronomy 8:7-18

For the Lord your God is bringing you into a good land, a land with flowing streams, with springs and underground waters welling up in valleys and hills, a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive trees and honey, a land where you may eat bread without scarcity, where you will lack nothing, a land whose stones are iron and from whose hills you may mine copper. You shall eat your fill and bless the Lord your God for the good land that he has given you.

Take care that you do not forget the Lord your God, by failing to keep his commandments, his ordinances, and his statutes, which I am commanding you today. When you have eaten your fill and have built fine houses and live in them, and when your herds and flocks have multiplied, and your silver and gold is multiplied, and all that you have is multiplied, then do not exalt yourself, forgetting the Lord your God,



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who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, who led you through the great and terrible wilderness, an arid wasteland with poisonous snakes and scorpions. He made water flow for you from flint rock, and fed you in the wilderness with manna that your ancestors did not know, to humble you and to test you, and in the end to do you good. Do not say to yourself, "My power and the might of my own hand have gotten me this wealth." But remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth, so that he may confirm his covenant that he swore to your ancestors, as he is doing today.





# Sermon

## Looking Back, Looking Ahead

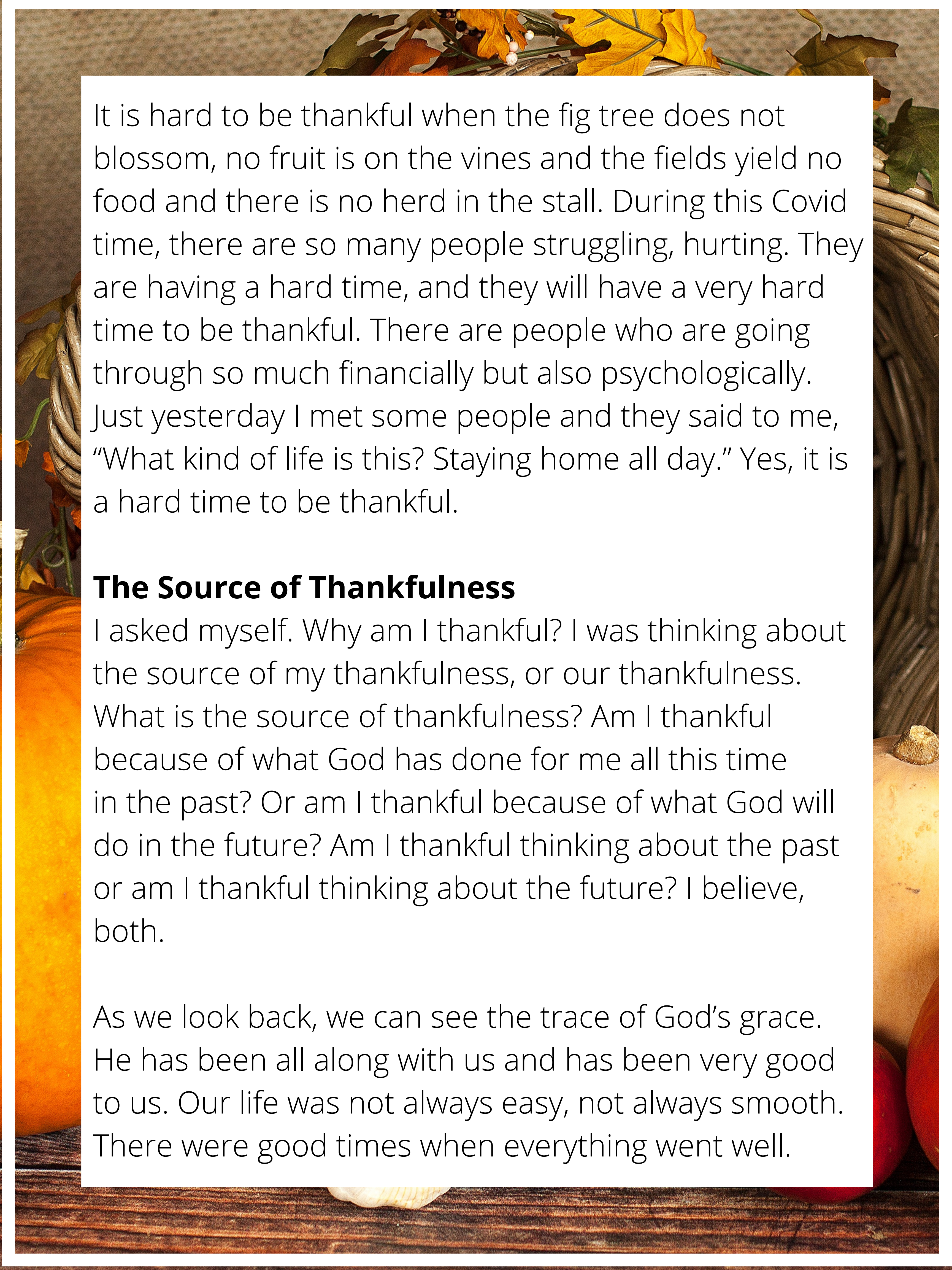
Today is Thanksgiving Sunday. Happy Thanksgiving to all of you! But we are having a very different Thanksgiving weekend this year. It is a very strange and unique year. It is sad that we have to limit our gathering just to our immediate family members. Even the worship, we could not do it in person.

### It is Difficult to be Thankful

I was thinking about the words of the prophet Habakkuk. He said: ***"Though the fig tree does not blossom, and no fruit is on the vines; though the produce of the olive fails and the fields yield no food; though the flock is cut off from the fold and there is no herd in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord; I will exult in the God of my salvation."*** (Habakkuk 3:17, 18)

How beautiful these words are. We should be like Habakkuk, but it's hard. It's hard to make the same confession that Habakkuk did. It is hard to be thankful when life is difficult. When there is so much challenge. Especially when you see what's going on in the world.



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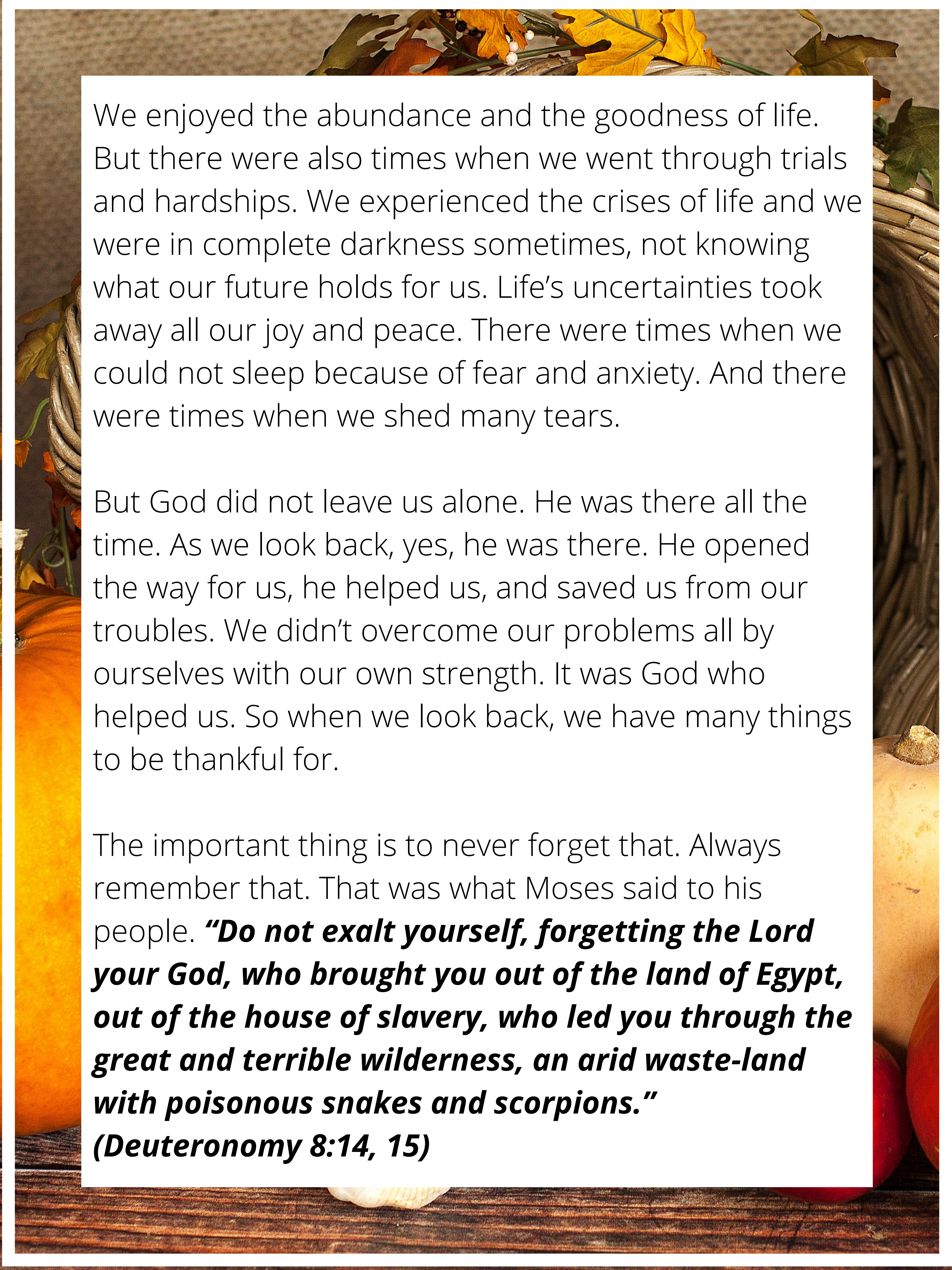
It is hard to be thankful when the fig tree does not blossom, no fruit is on the vines and the fields yield no food and there is no herd in the stall. During this Covid time, there are so many people struggling, hurting. They are having a hard time, and they will have a very hard time to be thankful. There are people who are going through so much financially but also psychologically. Just yesterday I met some people and they said to me, "What kind of life is this? Staying home all day." Yes, it is a hard time to be thankful.

## **The Source of Thankfulness**

I asked myself. Why am I thankful? I was thinking about the source of my thankfulness, or our thankfulness. What is the source of thankfulness? Am I thankful because of what God has done for me all this time in the past? Or am I thankful because of what God will do in the future? Am I thankful thinking about the past or am I thankful thinking about the future? I believe, both.

As we look back, we can see the trace of God's grace. He has been all along with us and has been very good to us. Our life was not always easy, not always smooth. There were good times when everything went well.



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We enjoyed the abundance and the goodness of life. But there were also times when we went through trials and hardships. We experienced the crises of life and we were in complete darkness sometimes, not knowing what our future holds for us. Life's uncertainties took away all our joy and peace. There were times when we could not sleep because of fear and anxiety. And there were times when we shed many tears.

But God did not leave us alone. He was there all the time. As we look back, yes, he was there. He opened the way for us, he helped us, and saved us from our troubles. We didn't overcome our problems all by ourselves with our own strength. It was God who helped us. So when we look back, we have many things to be thankful for.

The important thing is to never forget that. Always remember that. That was what Moses said to his people. ***"Do not exalt yourself, forgetting the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, who led you through the great and terrible wilderness, an arid waste-land with poisonous snakes and scorpions."***  
***(Deuteronomy 8:14, 15)***





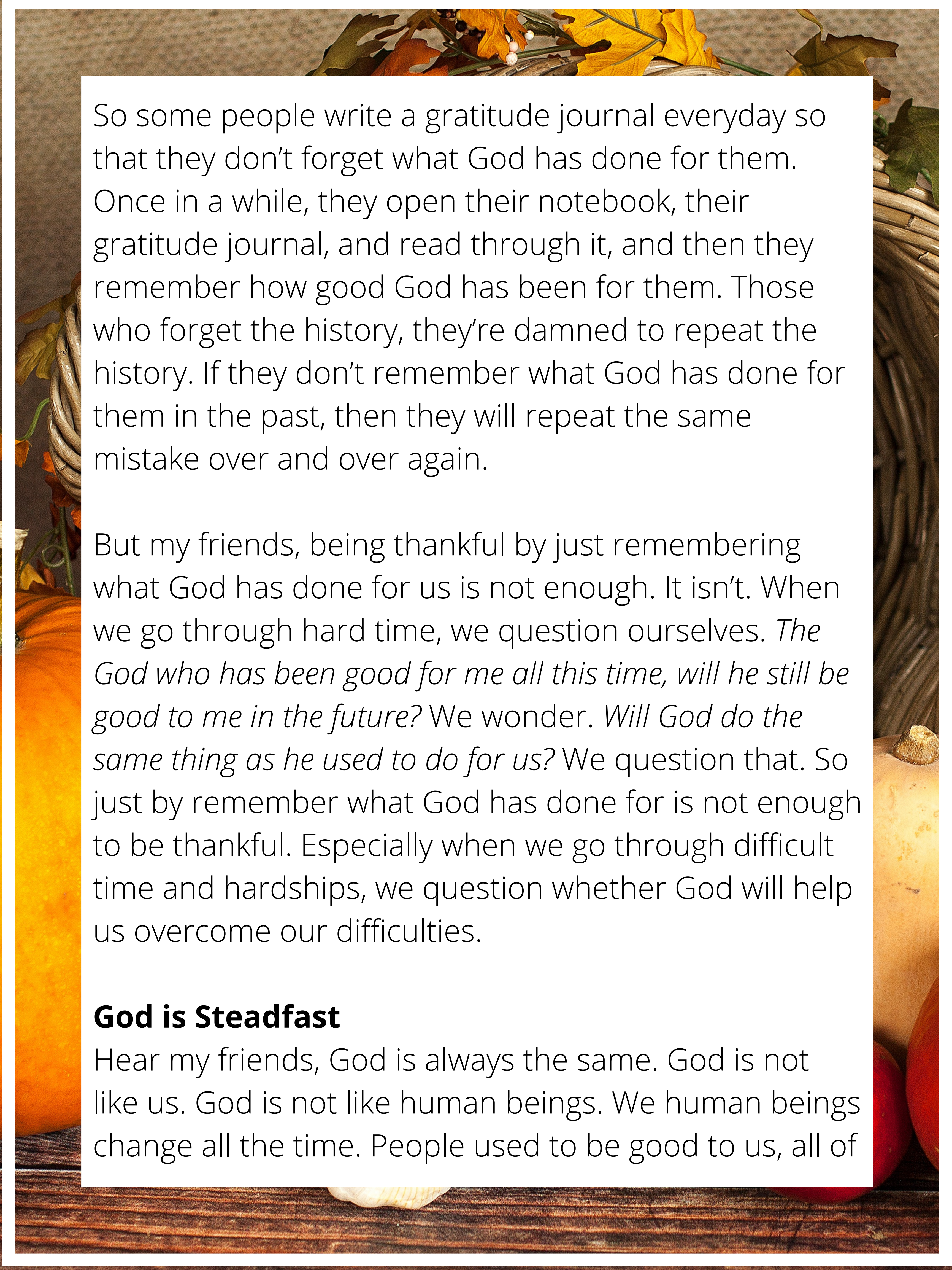
## Through God's Power

Do not forget what the Lord our God has done for us. We should never forget what God has done for us. Let us not be arrogant and haughty, forgetting what God has done for us and thinking that it was all our own ability. Moses experienced with the people, all the wonderful things God has done for them. He saw that, he saw that very clearly with his own eyes, with his people. But as time went on, he saw the arrogance and haughtiness of his people. That's why he said, ***"Do not say to yourself, 'My power and the might of my own hand have gained me this wealth.'" (Deuteronomy 8:17)***

Do not say to yourself that it was your own power. Moses reminded them by saying, ***"Remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth..." (Deuteronomy 8:18)***

It is not by our power we have become who we are; God gave us the power to do all we had to do to survive and to overcome our challenges. So, when your life is difficult, look back. And remember what God has done for you.



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So some people write a gratitude journal everyday so that they don't forget what God has done for them. Once in a while, they open their notebook, their gratitude journal, and read through it, and then they remember how good God has been for them. Those who forget the history, they're damned to repeat the history. If they don't remember what God has done for them in the past, then they will repeat the same mistake over and over again.

But my friends, being thankful by just remembering what God has done for us is not enough. It isn't. When we go through hard time, we question ourselves. *The God who has been good for me all this time, will he still be good to me in the future?* We wonder. *Will God do the same thing as he used to do for us?* We question that. So just by remember what God has done for is not enough to be thankful. Especially when we go through difficult time and hardships, we question whether God will help us overcome our difficulties.

## **God is Steadfast**

Hear my friends, God is always the same. God is not like us. God is not like human beings. We human beings change all the time. People used to be good to us, all of





a sudden, they become very cold to us. Our friends sometimes become our enemies. That's what human beings do. But God is not like that. God is always the same. That's why the Hebrew writer said, ***"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and for ever."*** (Hebrews 13:8)

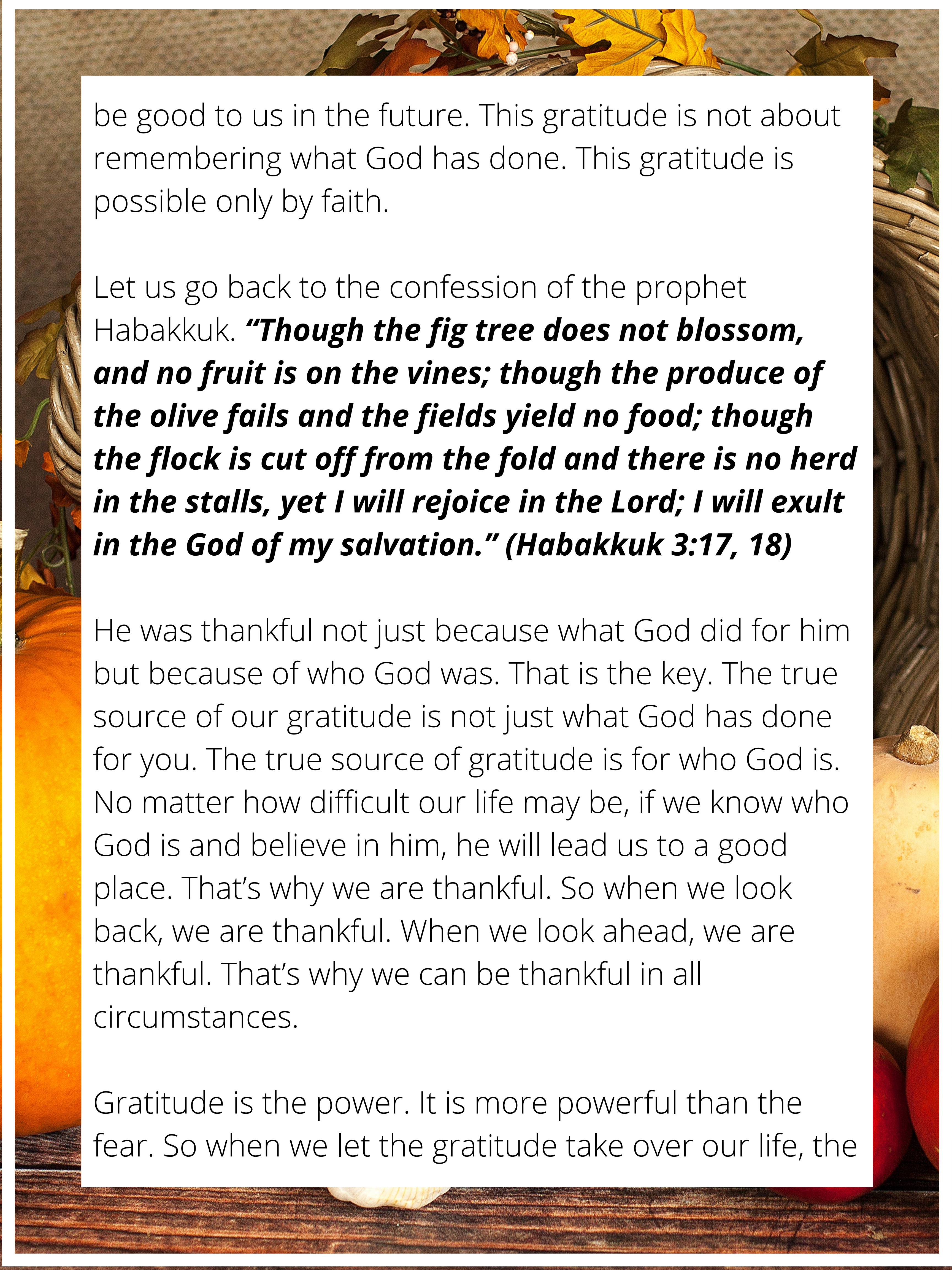
*If God was gracious yesterday, he will be gracious tomorrow. If God was with us before, then God will be with us forever.*

St. Paul knew about this kind of God very well. He said, ***"I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ."*** (Philippians 1:6)

*The one who began a good work, that's in the past, will complete it in the future. God will be with us forever. That was Jesus' last words. Matthew recorded what Jesus said in his last chapter and last verse in his gospel. "Remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."* (Matthew 28:20)

So we are thankful not just because God has been good to us before but also because the same God will



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be good to us in the future. This gratitude is not about remembering what God has done. This gratitude is possible only by faith.

Let us go back to the confession of the prophet Habakkuk. ***“Though the fig tree does not blossom, and no fruit is on the vines; though the produce of the olive fails and the fields yield no food; though the flock is cut off from the fold and there is no herd in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord; I will exult in the God of my salvation.” (Habakkuk 3:17, 18)***

He was thankful not just because what God did for him but because of who God was. That is the key. The true source of our gratitude is not just what God has done for you. The true source of gratitude is for who God is. No matter how difficult our life may be, if we know who God is and believe in him, he will lead us to a good place. That's why we are thankful. So when we look back, we are thankful. When we look ahead, we are thankful. That's why we can be thankful in all circumstances.

Gratitude is the power. It is more powerful than the fear. So when we let the gratitude take over our life, the



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fear will dissipate. Anxiety will dissipate. Worries will dissipate.

## **Living with Gratitude**

When gratitude takes over our life, we will focus on what we have, not what we don't have. When we focus on what we don't have, then the joy will be gone. We won't be happy. In the space where joy is supposed to be, complaints will take a seat. Think about it. Don't we have more than enough? Honestly, think about it, Don't we have more than enough? Don't you think that we have more than we deserve? That's why people who live with gratitude are always humble. They always feel that they have more than they deserve. This humility is not self-pity. It comes from the sense of overflowing gratitude.

Arrogance does not allow us to be thankful. Arrogant people will never be thankful. And also, people who are sick in their mind, in their spirit, they can never be thankful. Only those who are healed by God, only those who believe, they will live their lives with gratitude.





Let us live with gratitude. If you are continuously filled with complaints, think about your life, yourself, where you are. Maybe you are suffering from some kind of disease in your mind or in your spirit or in your heart. But when you are healed, when you are whole, then naturally thankfulness and gratitude come out of your mouth and out of your heart, and out of your spirit. Let us live with gratitude.

Happy Thanksgiving!