

New Year

The family slept in on New Year's morning. There was time to think first thoughts.

They were not the traditionally accepted thoughts of the season. I had no resolutions to make – they're daily occurrences now. As are recriminations and confession.

I recall the ardent West African preachers at Watchnight services who every five minutes between eleven and midnight would remind us of how little time was left to repent. Thankfully, I no longer wait for midnight – there wouldn't be time to confess it all.

Thankfully! That's the word.

My new year waking moments were filled with a sense of immense gratitude.

Thankful for the past, present and future

- so many wonderful years
- such joy at being alive
- so grateful to be moving forward into a future that is not mine but God's.

From the earliest days of sacrifice and temple worship, to the church and the present day, God's people are essentially a grateful people. The scriptures teach me that thankfulness is the best and only way to face past present and future.

A grateful heart is a forgiving heart.

Thankfulness puts all life into perspective and makes us aware of our own need of forgiveness. We learn to forgive as we are forgiven just as Jesus taught us to pray.

Gratitude affirms our faith in God – we owe everything to him

You are my God and I will give you thanks. I will proclaim your greatness. [Psalm 118.28] and recognise my own smallness.

Gratitude reminds me of my dependence on God - and deepens my trust in him

Give thanks to the Lord, proclaim his greatness.... Be glad that we belong to him ... Go to the Lord for help; and worship him continually. [Psalm 105.1]

Gratitude therefore gives me a real sense of security and encouragement

I am thankful and glad and I feel completely secure ... [Psalm 16.9]

Gratitude gives me a gladness of heart – a joy and peace that is deep and lasting

With joy give thanks to the Father. [Colossians 1.11]

No wonder Paul wrote to Christians in Ephesus ... In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, always give thanks for everything to God the Father. [Ephesians 5.20]

I want to begin the new year sharing the words of Psalm 138

I thank you Lord, with all my heart because of your constant love and faithfulness ... Lord, your love is eternal. Complete the work that you have begun.