



# In Everything Give Thanks

By

Mark McGee

“Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.” 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

Do you find **giving thanks in everything** easy or hard? I’ve found it one of the most difficult things to do as a Christian, yet God makes it clear that it’s His will for us in Christ Jesus! What do I need to know about giving thanks that will help me give thanks in everything? Let’s first get some perspective about giving thanks from God’s Word.

The Hebrew word *yadah* is important for us to understand how God views our giving thanks. The first time the word is used is in Genesis 29.

“When the Lord saw that Leah was unloved, He opened her womb; but Rachel was barren. So Leah conceived and bore a son, and she called his name Reuben; for she said, ‘The Lord has surely looked on my affliction. Now therefore, my husband will love me.’ Then she conceived again and bore a son, and said, ‘Because the Lord has heard that I *am* unloved, He has therefore given me this *son* also.’ And she called his name Simeon. She conceived again and bore a son, and said, ‘Now this time my husband will become attached to me, because I have borne him three sons.’ Therefore his name was called Levi. And she conceived again and bore a son, and said, ‘Now I will praise the Lord.’ Therefore she called his name Judah. Then she stopped bearing.” Genesis 29:31-35

Leah was so thankful for her fourth son that she *yadah* the Lord and named her new baby boy *Yudah* (Judah). *Yadah* comes from the root word *yad* (hand). The literal root is “to throw, shoot, or cast.” The direction of throwing or casting is to God. *Yadah* carries the idea of casting praises and thanks to God, confessing to God with outstretched hands. Here are three examples of how the word is used in the Old Testament.

“And he appointed some of the Levites to minister before the ark of the Lord, to commemorate, to thank, and to praise the Lord God of Israel.” 1 Chronicles 16:4

“Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, *And* into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him, *and* bless His name.” Psalm 100:4

“And in that day you will say: ‘Praise the Lord, call upon His name; Declare His deeds among the peoples, Make mention that His name is exalted.’” Isaiah 12:4

The Hebrew word *todah* is another important word to understand about giving thanks. The first time it’s used is in Leviticus 7.

“This *is* the law of the sacrifice of peace offerings which he shall offer to the Lord: If he offers it for a thanksgiving, then he shall offer, with the sacrifice of thanksgiving, unleavened cakes mixed with oil, unleavened wafers anointed with oil, or cakes of blended flour mixed with oil. Besides the cakes, as his offering he shall offer leavened bread with the sacrifice of thanksgiving of his peace offering.” Leviticus 7:11-13

The word *todah* is related to the word *yadah*. *Todah* also carries the idea of thanking and praising and God. It's also connected to the sacrifice of **peace offerings** His people made to Him. That's important to understand as we look at how to give thanks in everything.

*Todah* also carries the idea of confession. The concept of confession included saying the same thing as another; agreeing that what they said was right. Here are some of the ways *todah* is used in the Old Testament.

“Now Joshua said to Achan, ‘My son, I beg you, give glory to the Lord God of Israel, and make confession to Him, and tell me now what you have done; do not hide *it* from me.’” Joshua 7:19

“Now therefore, make confession to the Lord God of your fathers, and do His will; separate yourselves from the peoples of the land, and from the pagan wives.” Ezra 10:11

“So I brought the leaders of Judah up on the wall, and appointed two large thanksgiving choirs. *One* went to the right hand on the wall toward the Refuse Gate.” Nehemiah 12:31

“That I may proclaim with the voice of thanksgiving, And tell of all Your wondrous works.” Psalm 26:7

“Offer to God thanksgiving, And pay your vows to the Most High.” Psalm 50:14

“For the Lord will comfort Zion, He will comfort all her waste places; He will make her wilderness like Eden, And her desert like the garden of the Lord; Joy and gladness will be found in it, Thanksgiving and the voice of melody.” Isaiah 51:3

The New Testament continues this concept of giving thanks through confession with the Greek word *homolegeo*; a combining of *homos* (same), and *lego* (to speak). It also translates as “confession, speak the same thing, agree with what is said.” The New Testament writers used the word to describe agreement with what God said. Here are some examples of *homolegeo*.

“Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven.” Matthew 10:32

“that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” Romans 10:9-10

“Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of *our* lips, giving thanks to His name.” Hebrews 13:15

The word *exomologeō* adds an intensity to the idea of confession and thanksgiving. Here are a couple of examples of *exomologeō*.

“At that time Jesus answered and said, “I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from *the* wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes.”  
Matthew 11:25

“And many who had believed came confessing and telling their deeds.” Acts 19:18

“Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ *is* Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” Philippians 2:9-11

The most used words used for “thanks” and “thanksgiving” in the New Testament are *eucharistia*, *eucharisteō*, and *eucharistos*. The English transliteration is “eucharist.” It carries the idea of being mindful of favors received and returning thanks to the giver for the favors. In the case of the Christian, God favors us highly and blesses us with every spiritual blessing in Christ (Ephesians 1:3).

The word Paul used in 1 Thessalonians 5:18 is the verb *eucharisteite* (2 person, plural, present imperfect). The present imperfect tense means that the giving of thanks happened repeatedly in the past and continues at present. It speaks to a lifestyle for the Christian of always giving thanks in everything. Giving thanks in everything is

habitual in the sense that it is something Christians do and don't stop doing. That is God's will for us.

So, based on the language of the Bible what do we know about giving thanks to God in everything?

- All thanks and praise is cast toward God.
- Giving thanks is saying the same thing as God and confessing that He is right in everything He does.
- Giving thanks to God is connected to having the peace of God.
- Giving thanks is being mindful of God's favor at all times and returning thanks to Him for His great favor.

The obvious question now is "how?" How do we give God thanks in everything? Is there a process we go through to where we give thanks in everything? Do we get on our knees and pray for it until we get it, then stay on our knees to keep it? I think both are involved to some degree.

Early in my Christian life I came across a portion of God's Word that hit home in the area of giving thanks in everything. The Holy Spirit used it again and again to bring me to a place where I could truly be thankful.

"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." Philippians 4:6-7

Being anxious, worrying about how things are going to turn out, was a problem for me. Paul used the Greek words *meden merimnate* (nothing be anxious about) to address something that had been part of my thoughts and emotions for years. Instead of using my thinking and emoting energy for negative anxiety, God wants us to pray (hands to God) in both general prayers (*proseuche*) and specific, deeply-felt petitions (*deesis*), “with thanksgiving” (*eucharistias*).

What I invariably experience from praying with thanksgiving is what Paul writes in verse 7: “the peace of God” (*he eirene tou theou*). The word for “peace,” *eirene*, comes from the Greek root *eiro* (to join). The word was used in ancient Greece to describe times of national harmony, friendship and freedom. It also has the idea of reconciliation. When we trust God in everything, we are harmonizing with His Truth, and that opens the way to peace with God.

This peace is not a peace that we can understand in the “natural” sense. It goes far beyond that into the “supernatural” peace of God “which surpasses all understanding” (*huperechousa panta nous*). The word *huperechousa* is translated as “surpasses.” It is a combination of *huper* (above) and *echo* (to hold). The idea of “to hold above” is that something is superior or better than something else. Paul was saying that the “peace of God” is superior to and above our “understanding” (*nous* – mind, perception and reflection).

What does this “peace” of God do? It “will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” The word “guard” is *phrouresei*, a military term used for a providing protection with a strong garrison. It

comes from *phrousos* (a sentinel, guard). *Phrouresei* is a verb (future active indicative) that carries the idea of “keep watch” and includes both offensive and defensive aspects of a military garrison. It pictures soldiers standing guard from inside the city walls controlling all who would enter or leave the city.

Prayer is a spiritual connection between a believer and God. God blesses His children by placing a spiritual garrison around their “hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” The words *en Christo Iesou* (in Christ Jesus) carry the idea of “resting in Christ Jesus” (*en* with the dative case). It is as we rest “in” Jesus Christ that the Holy Spirit acts as a “garrison” that surrounds our “hearts and minds” and guard us from the anxieties that come against us in this world. The Spirit in us acts powerfully as we rest in Christ.

So, what have I learned from this? God wants me to live in peace. He provides the method for receiving His peace through prayerful dependence on Him. He promises to guard my heart and mind as I rest in the finished Work of Christ, thanking Him in everything. May we experience the peace that surpasses all understanding every moment of every day until we see Jesus “face to Face.”

Copyright © 1990-2015 GraceLife Ministries

“Scripture taken from the New King James Version. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.”