

## *Lord, Give Me a Thankful Heart*

### *Key Verse:*

“...be filled with the Spirit,  
as you sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves,  
singing and making melody to the Lord in your hearts,  
giving thanks to God the Father at all times  
and for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.”  
Eph 5:18-20 (NRSV)

### *Portion for the Journey:*

Did that verse really say that we are to give thanks... **for everything**? Can that be right? I have heard many arguments regarding this verse, saying, “...but we can’t thank God for everything ...not for the ‘*bad things*’ that happen to us!” “Bad things” in this life really do happen. One has only to spend a few minutes listening to the news to find a very dark picture of life in this world! Many Christians have endured all manner of suffering. The worst form of suffering and abuse come at the hands of men being held captive by the enemy to do his will. Should we thank God for those circumstances, when evil appears to defeat God’s love and goodness?

**Thankfulness is a major theme throughout the Bible.** Colossians 2:6-7 instructs us that this should be the attitude of all believers who walk in Christ. This passage actually calls us to “abound in thanksgiving!” When we cannot see the immediate good in a situation, this is certainly easier said than done. To maintain a heart of thankfulness, we need to make a conscious decision to obey this injunction by faith. Often situations that seem like the worst-case scenario turn out to be used by God for far greater purposes! Joseph was thrown into a well and then sold into a life of slavery by his own brothers. He suffered for years in a prison in Egypt. He not only forgave his brothers, he could see that even though they meant it for evil, God who is sovereign over all, meant it for good. God used Joseph’s situation to save thousands of lives and to save the people of Israel. (Gen. 50:20) Joseph understood God’s ways! He remained faithful through the most difficult times.

**God’s ways are higher than our ways.** We cannot always immediately see the good that God will bring into our lives through bad circumstances, if we truly know and trust God, we can thank Him for the trials and by faith believe He is able to use even these situations for good. God’s ways are so different and so much higher than our ways, we are not able to comprehend His ways with our own understanding, but He will teach us His ways when we seek His wisdom and understanding.

Moses is a man who spoke to God face to face just as a man would speak to his friend. After this description of the level of Moses’ relationship with the LORD, we are given a glimpse into Moses’ prayer life. He asks God for two things, he asks God to teach him His ways and he asks to see God’s glory. I can understand why he wanted to see God’s glory, but I really began to ask the LORD to show me why “knowing God’s ways” was of such significance that Moses specifically made this request. When one looks into the meaning of the Hebrew words, one learns that ‘knowing God’s ways’ is to know His heart, to have an understanding of what moves His heart to do the things He does. Ps. Ps. 103:6-7 Says that Israel saw God’s acts, but Moses understood His ways. Israel saw what God did, but Moses understood

why God did the things He did! Have you asked God to teach you His ways concerning His purposes in times of trial, suffering or when evil appears to triumph?

**Giving thanks is a matter of faith.** The Word tells us that “Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.” One of the best ways to develop the faith we need to give thanks in all circumstances and for everything is by meditating on His Word. When we meditate on the Word look at other verses to gain further understanding of the verses we are studying. 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 is a cross reference to Ephesians 5:18-20 and it confirms that indeed we are instructed to give thanks in everything! *“Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.”*

**Give thanks in every circumstance.** When we give thanks in every circumstance, we have the promise of peace that has no fear. This is the kind of peace that transcends our understanding and actually mounts a guard over our hearts and our minds! “Do not fret *or* have any anxiety about anything, but in every circumstance *and* in everything, by prayer and petition (definite requests), with thanksgiving, continue to make your wants known to God. And God’s peace [shall be yours, that tranquil state of a soul assured of its salvation through Christ, and so fearing nothing from God and being content with its earthly lot of whatever sort that is, that peace] which transcends all understanding shall garrison *and* mount guard over your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.” Phil 4:6-7 (AMP)

**God is the God of Everything!** Romans 8:28 gives us a better understanding of how and why we are able to give thanks in everything. “And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose.” Romans 8:28 (NASB) It is not until we truly comprehend that our Sovereign Father, Who has covenanted with us to cause EVERYTHING that happens to us to work for good, that we can trust Him enough to thank Him for all things, at all times and in every situation. Praise honors and glorifies the LORD, it speaks to Him that we trust Him and believe He is watching over us to work all things for good. We may not understand HOW it can be good, but we can, by faith, believe in our hearts that it is so because He has said it! Can you see how having this attitude of constant thanksgiving and trust in the Lord will not only change our entire viewpoint on life, but will be a real testimony to unbelievers when they see how a Christian handles adversity? (See Ps. 37)

Hannah Whitall Smith, wrote a very practical book in 1870 called, "The Christian's Secret of a Happy Life." She has a chapter called, "Is God in Everything?" which clarifies the Christian response toward suffering and circumstances. She says, "One of the greatest obstacles to an unwavering experience in the Christian life is the difficulty of seeing God in everything. ...things in which we can see God's hand always have a sweetness in them which consoles while it wounds. But the trials inflicted by man are full of nothing but bitterness. What is needed then is to see God in everything and to receive everything directly from His hands, with no intervention of second causes." The writer of Psalm 119 understood this when he declared, “For all things are Your servants. If Your law had not been my delight, Then I would have perished in my affliction.” Psalms 119:91b-92 (NASB); see also 1 Chron. 29:14.

**Unwillingness to be thankful does not honor God.** Romans 1 describes the reprobate heart “that when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful” (Rom 1:21). In those times when we cannot see how good could come from a terrible situation, we can choose by faith to thank the LORD based on the knowledge that He is good, all His ways are perfect and just. God often asks for obedience first and then later brings the revelation and answers the questions of “why.”

**Thanksgiving will bring us into His presence** and open a powerful avenue for God to work on our behalf! Keeping our eyes on the LORD and not allowing our circumstances to take our gaze from Him is a powerful stance in spiritual warfare! Read 2 Chronicles 20 and not the order thanksgiving appeared in their pattern of praise and worship! Ps. 100 (entire chapter)

### *Digging Deeper in the Word:*

1. Look up and re-read the five verses that we discussed above: Eph. 5:19-20; 1 Thes. 5:18; Col. 3:15-17, Phil. 4:6-7; Heb. 13:15 and Rom. 8:28. As we go through these verses and the additional verses below, we will seek to answer the following “WHO, WHAT, HOW, WHEN and WHY” questions.
  - Is the promise that all things work together for good for everyone?
  - How often are we to give thanks? **Always**
  - When are we to be thankful? **At all times**
  - What are we to be thankful for? **Everything**
  - How often are we to offer a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving to the LORD? **Continually**
  - Why are we able to be thankful for all things, even those things that seem to be very bad? **God is able to make all things work together for good.**
2. Read the following verses and then decide whether you can trust God to be in everything that happens: Gen 50:20; Matt. 10:29-31; Ps. 119:71, 75, 89-91
3. Are we supposed to offer thanksgiving when we are “feeling it” or continually whether we feel it or not? How does thanking the LORD in difficult situations relate to faith? How important do you think it is to know God's character in order to thank Him sincerely in very difficult or tragic circumstances? Luke 17:12-29
4. Read Psalm 107 and note the verse that is repeated throughout this passage. What are some of the reasons that we should give thanks to the LORD that are given in this chapter?
5. What place does thanksgiving take in relation to praise and worship? How are we to enter the LORD's presence? Ps. 100:4; Ps. 103:1-7
6. How does having a thankful heart affect our prayers? Phil. 4:6; Col. 4:2; Col. 1:3; Rev. 7:11-12
7. What can we learn from those who were NOT thankful? How serious do you think it is when we neglect or refuse to thank Him? Have you considered that not thanking the LORD dishonors Him and is considered disobedience? Is “for everything” an option for a Christian? `Rom. 1:20-32; Neh. 9:17; Ps. 50:14-23; Phil. 2:14-15; Ex. 16:8; Luke 17:11-19

**Developing a firm root in the Word:** The subject of thanksgiving is an excellent topic to study in-depth. If you find this study of “thanksgiving” to be an area that is really speaking to you, completing a “Topical Word Study” is well worth your time. You will be amazed at the insight the LORD gives you!

- Use a Strong's concordance, the concordance in the back of your Bible or an online concordance. The “Tools” section of this website has detailed instructions on using a Strong's Concordance with a link to many online Bible study tools that will let you do a key word search.

- Make a list of verses that use the words "thank, thanks, or thanksgiving. "
- Look up definitions of words in a Hebrew or Greek dictionary.
- Record the verses you study and insights you gain from each verse. Note the context of the passage you are reading.
- Mark your Bible. When you complete a "topical word study" it is helpful to write topic title and key verse you started with in the back of your Bible. Choose a color that will be connected in your mind with the topic of Thanksgiving. For example, orange or brown are good choices, because they remind us of Thanksgiving! As you read the verses on Thanksgiving, underline those that speak to you with the colored pencil and put the reference to the next verse in your study in the margin. This allows you to go back through the entire lesson whenever you want and also share the study with others!
- Be sure to apply what you read to your life!

### *What Is God Speaking to Your Heart?*

Summarize what the LORD has shown you personally in this lesson. If there are some areas in your life where you have a hard time thanking the LORD, write them down in your journal and apply what you have learned in this lesson! Can you see thanking God for everything throughout the day is a valuable habit to develop?

### *Heart Response to The Lord:*

Ponder the verses in this lesson carefully before the LORD. There are some big issues here to lay before Him and ask Him to bring you to the place where You can trust Him enough to thank Him in all things and for all things. Now, as an act of faith and a first step, resolve in your heart before Him to be more thankful--for the big things and the little things.

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but in every circumstance and in everything, by prayer and petition (definite requests),  
with thanksgiving, continue to make your wants known to God.  
And God's peace [shall be yours, that tranquil state of a soul assured of its salvation through Christ, and  
so fearing nothing from God and being content  
with its earthly lot of whatever sort that is, that peace]  
which transcends all understanding shall garrison and  
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