

## Can We Really Be Thankful in Everything? (Christian Conduct Series)

**1 Thessalonians 5:18:** *In everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.*



One of the hallmark attitudes of a focused Christian life is being thankful. The very foundation of our Christian belief is the fact that being redeemed from sin and death by the love and sacrifice of Jesus is a gift that is, in every case, beyond our ability to earn or deserve. We are freely given life in Christ, and therefore, we have great motivation to live in a state of gratefulness. That being said, how far should this grateful attitude go? Is it really supposed to encompass each and every experience we have? Does being thankful in everything mean we should never be sad or anxious?

This episode is the fifth in our Christian Conduct Series, where we carefully examine God's instructions to us given by the Apostle Paul in **1 Thessalonians 5:12-24**.

We will examine the third of six briefly stated and yet powerfully connected "inside out" Christian Conduct lessons in 1 Thessalonians 5. We call these "staccato" texts—short, impactful phrases that stand out from the Apostle Paul's usual longer sentences.

- ♪ *Rejoice always*
- ♪ *Pray without ceasing*
- ♪ *In everything give thanks*
- ♪ *Quench not the spirit*
- ♪ *Despise not prophesyings; prove all things*
- ♪ *Abstain from all appearance of evil*

Let's do a quick recap from our previous two episodes.

recap  
recap

♪ **Our first lesson was: 1 Thessalonians 5:16:** *Rejoice <5463> always<3842>.*

**Rejoice:** Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #5463 *chairo*; calmly happy

Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon: 1) to rejoice, be glad 2) to rejoice exceedingly 3) to be well, thrive

**Always:** Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #3842 *pantote*; every when, i.e. at all times

This rejoicing is not emotional euphoria; it is a state of being that is calmly happy or thriving. It exemplifies working through any and all challenges with God's power and providence nourishing and driving us.

*Rejoice always* is a foundation upon which the other five Christian Conduct lessons are built.

♪ **Next, we looked at: 1 Thessalonians 5:17:** *Pray <4336> without ceasing <89>.*

**Pray:** Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #4336 *proseuchomai*; from #4314 and #2172; to pray to God, i.e. supplicate, worship

**Without ceasing:** Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #89: *adialeiptos*; adverb from #88; uninterruptedly, i.e. without omission (on an appropriate occasion)

Thayer's Greek Lexicon: 1) without intermission, incessantly, without ceasing

The more we calmly rejoice and thrive in God's will, the wider the door to *pray without ceasing* opens.

The message is to be regularly in a prayerful state of mind without omitting any part of our experience or opportunity. This continuously prayerful mentality includes prayers of praise, worship, supplication and thanksgiving—all kinds of prayers given in all different kinds of ways.



**With the concept of rejoicing always and praying ceaselessly, Paul now brings us to our third Christian Conduct lesson:**

1 Thessalonians 5:18: *In everything give thanks <2168>; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.*

**Thanks:** Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #2168 *eucharisteo*; verb from #2170; to be grateful, i.e. (actively) to express gratitude (towards); specially, to say grace at a meal

Thayer's Greek English Lexicon: 1) to be grateful, feel thankful 2) give thanks

Gratitude toward God through Christ should drive the perception and processing of our life experiences. Paul says this is God's will for us. Why does he say that here? These three are linked together as a collective process.



A rejoicing or thriving state of being creates a solid environment for growth.

A prayerful state of mind keeps us tapped into our truest source of strength.

A thankful state of perception opens and reopens our ability to receive and apply God's direction.

This is ALL God's will for us!

Let's take a look at one example of the connection between *rejoice always* and *in everything give thanks*.



The next set of verses follows Paul's earnest prayers to have his *thorn in the flesh* removed.

**While the Apostle Paul does not use the word "rejoice," look at the "thriving" he expresses:**

2 Corinthians 12:9-10: *9 And he has said to me, My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness. Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. 10 Therefore I am well content (think well of) with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.*

This text combines being grateful and rejoicing in spite of suffering. Paul is saying, “Thank you for NOT healing me so that I can rely on the strength of Christ. Thank you for saying no. Thank you for taking what I believed was a solid argument, brought before You for all the right reasons, and yet You are telling me no.”

This is a powerful example of what this thanksgiving is all about. Paul is not only thankful, he is glad to have these weaknesses because he sees it is through them that what he was hoping for actually comes. Through Jesus, God gave Paul the end result in a way he could not have even imagined.

If we truly thrive in God’s sufficiency through Christ in us, then perceiving our weaknesses with true thankfulness is absolutely in order! Paul had that thankful state of perception. He was able to perceive difficult things, thankfully embrace them, and make them powerful tools for growth, witnessing, praise and honor. It was a beautiful paradigm shift for him.

Our previous episode’s theme—*pray without ceasing*—integrally connected all three Christian Conduct lessons. Paul shows us these connections in his letter to the Philippians.

**When reading the book of Philippians, we often think of it as a source of incredible rejoicing:**

**Philippians 4:6-7:** *6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with **thanksgiving** <2169> let your requests be made known to God. 7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

**Thanksgiving:** Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance #2169 *eucharistia*; noun from #2170; gratitude; actively, grateful language (to God, as an act of worship)

Thayer’s Greek English Lexicon: 1) thankfulness 2) the giving of thanks

If we are *anxious for nothing*, it means we are thriving. Being anxious is the opposite of thriving. Paul encourages us to let go of our anxiousness. Thrive, pray and be thankful. We need to put these three together. This three-part approach is the solid basis for Christian being. By following this, we will be brought to *the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, that will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus*—this a huge promise!

Paul likely understood this because he did it himself. He prayed and was grateful and thankful. This all connects like a mathematical equation:

<p><b>A THRIVING (joyful) STATE OF BEING + A PRAYERFUL STATE OF MIND</b>  <b>+ A THANKFUL STATE OF PERCEPTION</b>  <b>= THE PEACE OF GOD WHICH SURPASSES ALL COMPREHENSION</b></p>
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Even if we do not like math, this is good to memorize to help us find peace in the midst of trouble.

We admit this is a hard decision. What happens if we are in the middle of grieving the loss of a loved one? What happens when we can't find a job? What about marriage problems?

Having this state of gratitude, of perceiving events around us through the lens of thankful eyes, is like saying, "In the midst of my deepest troubles, I look up knowing the heavenly Father has this in His hands. I can't see the answer. I can't even fathom where the answer is, but I can be grateful because God has it under control."

We can cope with such difficult things by transferring our anxiety and lifting it up to Him, then having that thankfulness begin to have an effect on our lives. That doesn't mean God's answer comes quickly. It means we can more readily cope and have endurance along the way.

### Rick's Experience


This is a smaller example. We live in Connecticut, which is not known for tornadoes, but occasionally, we get them. And, occasionally, they like to visit me!


Five years ago, the last tornado to come through Connecticut came to my office. I had seen the weather warning, so I went home because our dogs freak out when the storm is bad. Then I got a phone call 15 minutes later, and somebody from the office building said I had better get back there. He didn't tell me why.

I drove back, and the seven-minute drive took 40 minutes because trees and debris were down on the roads. I wondered what had happened! When I got to the office, I saw what had happened. This tornado came through, and half the aluminum roof got ripped, rolled up and thrown into the street. My office is on the top floor, and the water completely destroyed two offices. Mine was one of them.

When I went up the stairs, I saw all the damage, and it was so wet that I splashed just walking across the carpet. My gut reaction was to look up, and I said out loud, "I am still the most blessed person I know."

I had no idea how to handle the mess, but that came with time, and the blessing proved itself. It wasn't easy—it took eight months for the building to be rebuilt—but I was thankful to have come through the experience alive. We want to try to be thankful, even when things are really difficult.

 **There are so many scriptures about thanking God in prayer. Is our "thankfulness in all things" only to be expressed to God in prayer?**

 Interestingly, these words for *thanks* and *thanksgiving* are almost always related to prayer, but that does not mean we only focus our expressions of thanks toward God.

Let's look at an example:

Paul had cause for concern for the Thessalonian church, which received the gospel under hard conditions. We talked about this in more detail in Episode #1398: "How Do We Genuinely Appreciate Those Who Guide Us?" (Christian Conduct Series). Paul founded the Thessalonian church but spent very little time with them since the Jews in the area were out to kill him and he had to flee.

As a result, he had great cause for concern for their spiritual welfare since they were new to Christianity with so little time for their preparation. He sent Timothy to them.

**Timothy returned and reported what happened:**

**1 Thessalonians 3:6:** *But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and has brought us good news of your faith and love, and that you always think kindly of us, longing to see us just as we also long to see you.*

Paul's deep concern was relieved because Timothy firmly reestablished the connection with the Thessalonians.



**The results of Timothy's trip must have brought vital comfort to Paul. This comfort was life-invigorating:**

**1 Thessalonians 3:7-8:** *7 For this reason, brethren, in all our distress and affliction we were comforted about you through your faith; 8 for now we really live, if you stand firm in the Lord.*

*For now we (Paul speaking of himself) really live, if you stand firm in the Lord. This is a powerful connection that changes the way Paul is able to handle his own experiences. It lifts him up. This is what their connectivity did for him. Their spiritually strong state of being gave Paul deep inspiration and determination.*

This vital comfort also provoked a deeper conviction to attain and maintain his state of rejoicing, prayer and thankfulness. Those three things were provoked in a positive way. This was not a state of euphoria; it was a state of being, a state of perception that reaffirmed that the Thessalonians were in God's hands. *I see your strength and His strength and will move forward with everything I have.*

**Let's go to the next verses to see what happens:**

**1 Thessalonians 3:9-10:** *9 For what **thanks <2169>** can we render to God for you in return for all the joy with which we **rejoice <5463>** before our God on your account, 10 as we night and day keep praying most earnestly that we may see your face, and may complete what is lacking in your faith?*



Paul wrote to the Thessalonians to express his deep thanksgiving for them. This helps us understand that our own thankfulness, most often expressed to God in prayer, is also necessary to express to one another.

Within our Christian fellowship, we might struggle with this because we're so worried about not puffing one another up with pride. Where's the balance?

**Rick:** The Scriptures clearly teach that we should show thankfulness and gratitude. We need to check ourselves. If I say Jonathan was so instrumental in this or that, but I don't want to tell him because I don't want to puff him up, who might have the pride issue? Maybe it is me! I might be deciding that Jonathan's character is too weak to handle the praise.

We have to be careful about why we withhold deserved praise. We should trust in the Lord and encourage others by saying, “I appreciate you. Keep up the good work; let’s work together.”

While we must be careful, it is important to thank our brethren because the Apostle Paul showed us this template for our activity and communication with one another.

Earlier we said a thankful state of perception opens and reopens our ability to receive and apply God’s direction. We are able to see all things through the eyes of gratefulness because we know God has it all in control.

**Let’s examine another example of the Apostle Paul’s gratitude for others:**

**Romans 16:3-4:** *3 Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, 4 who for my life risked their own necks, to whom not only do I give **thanks <2168>**, but also all the churches of the Gentiles.*

The Apostle Paul is telling us to be thankful in all things and to express it fully. Being thankful in all things results from intentional actions, not just a feeling. Our causes for concern should provoke stronger connectedness, providing vital comfort and resulting in deeper conviction.

It’s not just about *thinking* thankfully; it’s about *living* thankfulness, and making it an outward expression of who we truly are.

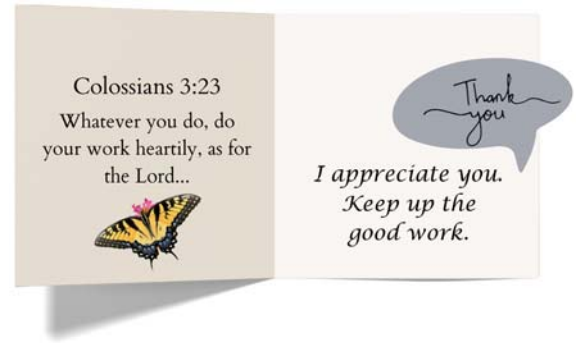
There are many things to be thankful for. Here are just three:

**Be thankful for our call to follow Christ!**

**Colossians 2:6-7:** *6 Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, 7 having been firmly rooted and now being built up in him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, and overflowing with **gratitude <2169>**.*

Being called is all about God’s grace, which means undeserved favor. We received this privilege to walk in Christ. How can we not live with gratitude? This call is so far beyond anything any imperfect human being could ever do in a lifetime to deserve even a small bit of it.

If we are grieving or can’t find a job or all those difficulties we discussed before, this kind of thankfulness, gratitude or reasoning comes in to help us say, *Let me be thankful that my life experiences are in hands that are bigger and stronger than mine. God sees the future in ways that I cannot.*





**Be thankful for our Lord Jesus!**

**2 Corinthians 9:15:** *Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!*

Jesus is everything to us and the entire human race because there is no hope for the future without his ransom sacrifice that paid the price for all of mankind. Nothing needs to be added. It is all because of Jesus. Our call wouldn't exist had it not been for Jesus.



We should be able to lean on this constantly as a motivation for living with gratitude. Being thankful for Jesus is so big and powerful that we can review it 10,000 times without it losing its potency.



**Be thankful for our God!**

**Psalms 92:1-4:** *1 It is good to give thanks to the LORD and to sing praises to Your name, O Most High; 2 To declare Your lovingkindness in the morning and Your faithfulness by night, 3 With the ten-stringed lute and with the harp, with resounding music upon the lyre. 4 For You, O LORD, have made me glad by what You have done, I will sing for joy at the works of Your hands.*

This reminds us of a verse from the hymn, *Endless Song*, “How can I keep from singing?”

*With resounding music*—with this sense of greatness and wonder and the awesomeness of God.



Gratitude can be expressed anytime, day or night. Its appropriate expression can come through the creativity of music or singing it out loud. Gratitude is meant to not only be felt, but is also to be expressed!

☁️ Thankful Thinking



True, life-changing thankfulness is part of an internally constructed Christian Conduct foundation.

Here is how it's built:

- a thriving state of being (rejoice always!)
- + a prayerful state of mind (pray without ceasing)
- + a thankful state of perception (give thanks in everything).

These things create a foundationally strong Christian life that has the capability to truly deal with and overcome all that may come our way. This is God's will for us!

Be thankful in all things. That means to live thankfully in all things. Don't merely feel it. Feeling gratitude is just the introduction to a book of glorious beauty. We must open that book and let the chapters flow as we live the gratitude.

The Apostle Paul says, *this is the will of God concerning you*, because he is putting these all together and giving us a formula for being able to step forward to deal with and overcome all the difficult experiences in our lives.

When we read the scriptures that say—*Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks*—we often skim through them quickly and then move on, thinking, *I need to remember that*. However, we should take a moment to appreciate the depth of these messages: the significance of God's providence, His power and grace, the strength we find in Him, and His spirit shining through us. This is what we need to see.

**With these things in place, we will be well equipped to accomplish further what Paul had in mind in the next verses:**

**1 Thessalonians 5:19-24:** *19 Do not quench the spirit; 20 do not despise prophetic utterances. 21 But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good; 22 abstain from every form of evil. 23 Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. 24 Faithful is he who calls you, and he also will bring it to pass.*

*Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, and give thanks in everything. Together these are the foundation for our lives.*

**So, can we really be thankful in everything?  
For Rick, Jonathan, Julie and Christian Questions...  
...Think about it!**

*All scriptures cited are from the NASB1995 translation unless otherwise noted.*



## Next episode

Episode 1403: What Does It Mean if I Quench the Spirit?  
(Christian Conduct Series)



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## Bonus Material and Study Questions

### Recommended additional study:

**Ep.1308: What is Your Ebenezer?**

*The power of biblically remembering past troubles and victories*

<https://christianquestions.com/inspiration/1308-ebenezer/>

**Ep.1154: How Can We Be Thankful After the Year We've Had?**

*Learning to access the power of God-driven gratitude*

<https://christianquestions.com/inspiration/1154-gratitude/>



For children, parents and Bible class teachers, continue your studies on this topic with these short, animated videos for kids at [ChristianQuestions.com/YouTube](https://christianquestions.com/YouTube):

- How can we be more thankful to God?  
<https://christianquestions.com/cq-videos/videos-cq-kids/thankful/>
- How can we make God happy?  
<https://christianquestions.com/cq-videos/videos-cq-kids/how-to-make-god-happy/>
- How can we praise God?  
<https://christianquestions.com/cq-videos/videos-cq-kids/praise/>



The themes of this Christian Conduct Series will break down **1 Thessalonians 5:12-24** this way:

**First the theme scriptures as a unit:**

**1 Thessalonians 5:12-24:** *12 But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction, 13 and that you esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Live in peace with one another. 14 We urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone. 15 See that no one repays another with evil for evil, but always seek after that which is good for one another and for all people. 16 Rejoice always; 17 pray without ceasing; 18 in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. 19 Do not quench the spirit; 20 do not despise prophetic utterances. 21 But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good; 22 abstain from every form of evil. 23 Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. 24 Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass.*

Now we break them down into specific themes. Here's what is coming next:

**#1403: "What Does It Mean If I Quench the Spirit?"**

*19 Do not quench the spirit.*

**#1404: “How Do We Know What Teachings and Prophecies to Believe?”**

*20 Do not despise prophetic utterances. 21 But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good; 22 abstain from every form of evil.*

**#1405: “How Do We Keep Ourselves Separate and Sanctified from the World?”**

*23 Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. 24 Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass.*

# Study QUESTIONS

## Ep.1402: Can We Really Be Thankful in Everything?

<https://christianquestions.com/character/1402-thankful-in-everything/>

See:  CQ.Rewind  
SHOW NOTES

1. How do these three “Christian Conduct principles”—“rejoice always,” “pray without ceasing” and “give thanks in everything”—interconnect to form a foundation of spiritual resilience? (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18)
2. In what ways does Paul utilize his “thorn in the flesh” experiences? How does this show a thankful state despite his suffering? (2 Corinthians 12:7-10)
3. Were you ever able to give thanks to God for a painful physical or emotional experience? What helped you give thanks, or what held you back?
4. What enables us to find the “peace of God”? What does that peace look like in daily life? (Philippians 4:6-7)
5. Share when you have felt the peace of God in your life. What led you to this kind of stability?
6. Besides God, to whom did Paul express thanks? Why?
7. Can it ever be harmful to praise someone? Please explain. Wherein lies the danger? (1 Thessalonians 3:6-10, Romans 16:3-4)
8. Can you think about someone you could intentionally express gratitude to this week for what they mean to you, or for something they have done for you, especially if they do not expect it? Will you act on this thought?
9. What are three things we can always look to with thankfulness? How can these help us reframe our personal hardships into experiences for which we can give thanks? (Colossians 2:6-7, 2 Corinthians 9:15, Psalms 92:1-4, Romans 8:28)
10. In 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18, Paul tells the Thessalonians (and us) to “Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.” How do these three admonitions work together to make a strong Christian life? When we practice all three, especially in difficult times, why is this “God’s will for you in Christ Jesus”?