

Let everything that has breath  
praise the Lord. Praise the Lord!

Psalms 150:6

## Praise Points

with Karen Holland

# Watchful Thanksgiving

**Acts 16:23-26** *After they had been severely flogged, they were thrown into prison, and the jailer was commanded to guard them carefully. Upon receiving such orders, he put them in the inner cell and fastened their feet in the stocks. About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them. Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everybody's chains came loose.*

Remember Paul and Silas? Ever wonder why they were praying and singing near midnight? After a long day, being beaten and thrown in prison why would they do this? Looking at what the word for singing hymns means gives us a clue. The Strong's word humneo means to sing songs of praise celebrating God. These could have been from the paschal hymns: Psalms 113 – 118 and 136, which the Jews called the "great Hallel".

The word Hallel means praise, it's also part of the word hallelujah which means "praise Jah" or "praise ye the Lord". The exhortation "Praise ye the Lord: Hallelujah" from the Greek root allelouia appears throughout Psalms 113-118. The Strong's word halal used in this phrase means to shine, praise, boast, or celebrate in Jah which is the proper name of the one true God. Paul and Silas singing at midnight praising God was a way of boasting in the one true God and encouraging each other to "Praise ye the Lord: Hallelujah"!

Consider also Psalm 119 – they knew this psalm.

**Psalm 119:60-62** *I made haste, and did not delay to keep Your commandments. Though the wicked bind me with ropes, I will not forget your law. At midnight I will rise to give thanks to You, because of Your righteous judgments.*

The Strong's word yadah, to give thanks means to confess/acknowledge the name of God, especially to revere or worship with extended hands. It is a way of giving oneself wholeheartedly in worship or adoration, in complete surrender to the Lord.

Other verses which associate yadah with this giving thanks wholeheartedly.

- **Psalm 9:1** *I will give thanks to the LORD with all my heart; I will tell of all Your wonders.*
- **Psalm 100:3-4** *Know that the LORD Himself is God; It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; We are His people and the sheep of His pasture. Enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise. Give thanks to Him, bless His name.*
- **Psalm 111:1** *Praise ye the LORD! I will give thanks to the LORD with all my heart, In the company of the upright and in the assembly.*
- **Psalm 138:1** *I will give You thanks with all my heart; I will sing praises to You before the gods.*
- **Proverbs 3:5-6** *Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.*

From Psalm 100:3-4 and Proverbs 3:5-6 the word for know/acknowledge is especially interesting. Yada, to know/acknowledge, means to have an intimate relationship and understanding of who the person of Jesus Christ is as Savior and Lord. The only way to give

wholehearted thanks to the Lord is to know He is God and that you belong to Him; He is your Lord. This means trusting and obeying Him in all circumstances.

Paul and Silas wholeheartedly singing songs of praise and giving thanks at midnight was a way of inviting the Lord into their situation. It was a way to acknowledge the Lord and declare their faith, for the other prisoners were listening. It helped them rise up despite their difficult circumstances; to expectantly wait and watch for the Lord to act and direct their paths.

**Colossians 4:2** *Be devoted to prayer, watch (keeping alert) in it with thanksgiving.*

The word for watch is *gregoreuo*, meaning to keep awake, alert, vigilant, to arouse or cause to rise. Just think how hard it would have been for Paul and Silas to be alert enough at midnight to pray. Thanksgiving here seems to be a key, *eucharistia* means to be actively grateful, thankful for God's grace. This word is from a root *eucharistos* which means to give thanks full of grace. This watchful thanksgiving for God's grace is full of grace! After Paul and Silas prayed and sang at midnight we do see God acting with great grace in their situation: a violent earthquake opened the prison doors.

Like Paul and Silas, the apostles who were also of one accord, had this great grace upon them.

**Acts 4:32-33** *Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common. And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all.*

The word for grace, *charis*, is also the word for thanks. Look at the connection between this word, thankfulness, singing and letting the peace of God rule!

**Colossians 3:15-17** *And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.*

Being thankful, singing with grace in your heart to the Lord, when done in Christ's body lets the peace of God rule. Praying with watchful thanksgiving in Christ's body lets His peace rule. This is also God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

**1 Thessalonians 5:16-18** *Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; In everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.*

When we come before God with a grateful heart and offer our thanks in everything the peace of Christ rules no matter what our circumstances!

**Philippians 4:6-7** *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.*

We can give thanks through Jesus on our own or together as part of His body. Through Jesus we can be full of gratitude and rejoice exceedingly together for His indescribable gift! In everything, may we each be devoted to prayer, keeping alert in it with watchful thanksgiving filled with the grace and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ!

**Hebrews 13:15** *Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name.*

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

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