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HOW SURRENDERED GRATITUDE BECOMES SPIRITUAL WARFARE

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The air changes this time of year. Gratitude is everywhere—on mugs, banners, and social media posts—but when life gets hard, thankfulness can feel forced, even hollow. We might say grace at the table, but deep down, we’re wrestling with fears, disappointments, or the ache of things not yet redeemed.

And yet, Scripture calls us to “give thanks in all circumstances” (1 Thessalonians 5:18). That command is not a demand for denial or permission to gaslight ourselves. This command is an invitation to grow in spiritual authority. True thankfulness is not a sentimental feeling; it’s a spiritual weapon forged in surrender.

When we surrender our expectations and live in the expectancy that our God is good, no matter what our current circumstances say, our worship matures. Gratitude shifts the atmosphere because it dethrones fear and anxiety and enthrones God’s will and God’s ways. Psalm 22:3 says He is “enthroned on the praises of His people.” Every word of thanks builds that throne again in our hearts, as we declare we want His will above all else.

THE DEEPER MEANING OF “GIVING THANKS”

The Greek word used when Jesus “gave thanks” at the Last Supper is *eucharistēsas*, which is the root of our word *Eucharist*. Most translations render it simply, “He gave thanks.” But that phrase only hints at the depth of what’s happening beneath the surface.

The early Church Father Athanasius gives us a fuller picture in *On the Incarnation of the Word*. To *eucharistēsas* is not merely to express gratitude—like dashing off a short prayer or thank you note—it is to receive all that God pours out of Himself, to be transformed by it, to transform the world around us by pouring it out wherever we are, and to return it to Him in worship so that nothing is lost in the return. It’s a beautiful cycle that we, as a vessel for His presence, were intended to repeat endlessly.

When Jesus lifted the bread, He wasn’t just thanking the Father for a meal. He was connecting with the Father, receiving all that God poured out, then returning it in perfect surrender. His gratitude was an act of warfare and worship, consecrating the suffering that Communion represents.

That is the mystery of thanksgiving: when we give everything back to God in gratitude, we lose nothing. In the Kingdom, nothing surrendered is wasted; it becomes seed.

GRATITUDE AS WARFARE

When fear whispers, “You’re not enough,” and bitterness murmurs, “You’ve been forgotten,” thanksgiving rises up and answers, “My God is faithful.” Gratitude is the language of faith. It names God as *good* long before the outcome is clear.

Thankfulness disarms the enemy because it shifts our focus from what’s missing to Who is present. It realigns our hearts to heaven’s reality: God is reigning, even here. It is, quite literally, warfare that takes back what the enemy stole: joy, peace, and intimacy with God.

I’ve learned this firsthand. In seasons of exhaustion or uncertainty, gratitude has often felt like the last thing I wanted to offer. But in those moments, when I whispered thanks for what I could not yet see, peace would come. The heaviness would lift. Gratitude became my sword, cutting through confusion, reminding me that surrender to God’s will and God’s ways is not defeat, it’s necessary for victory.

THE TABLE THAT TEACHES US

When Jesus broke bread and gave thanks, He invited His disciples to do the same, but it wasn’t just limited to the blood and body of Communion. The Eucharist teaches us how to live eucharistically in every part of life: to remember our Source, receive all that He pours out, and rejoice in the goodness of our God.

- **Remember:** We call to mind who God is and what He’s done.
- **Release:** We let go of our expectations of what His provision will look like.
- **Receive:** We open our hands to what He’s giving now (even if it’s not what we expected).
- **Rejoice:** We return it all to Him in worship, trusting that nothing surrendered will be lost.

Eucharist was never meant to be confined to church Communion tables. This receiving and returning is our purpose. It was meant for our kitchen tables, our offices, our quiet drives home. Every meal, every conversation,

every challenge is an opportunity for the Kingdom of Heaven to break through to the earth through the gratitude of a vessel like us.

THANKFULNESS AND SURRENDER

The more I walk with God, the more I see that thankfulness and surrender are inseparable. You cannot have one without the other. When we cling to control, gratitude feels forced. But when we open our hands and trust God's character more than our understanding, thankfulness flows freely. This trust comes from knowing God's character and proving it to ourselves over and over again.

Absolute surrender, as Andrew Murray so beautifully wrote, is the continual source of the Holy Spirit's power as we prove God's character to ourselves. When we release everything that fills us that is not our purpose, God fills the space with Himself. That's when gratitude becomes not a duty, but a natural overflow of His presence.

To live surrendered is to live in gratitude for the grace of His abiding presence that keeps meeting us, moment by moment.

LIVING EUCHARISTICALLY

To live eucharistically is to let every part of life—joy, pain, ordinary routine—become a life-giving process of receiving and returning. When we receive God's gifts with open hearts, even when they come wrapped in mystery, we participate in His redemptive work.

We become part of the miracle Athanasius described: God pouring Himself out, transforming creation, and returning it to God through our thanksgiving, so that nothing is lost.

Every moment of gratefulness becomes a restoration. Every whispered praise rebuilds what sin tried to shatter. Every surrendered moment becomes a seed for new life.

This is why gratitude changes everything. It's not about ignoring reality; it's about seeing reality through the lens of an omnipresent God who already inhabits the future where He is victorious and all is as He desires.

A POSTURE THAT FREES THE SOUL

If you're in a season where gratitude feels impossible, you're not alone. Start small. Thank Him for breath, for light through the window, for the lacework on the backs of leaves, for the promise that every season will not be wasted.

As you do, you're not practicing positivity. You're engaging in spiritual warfare. You're enthroning God again in your heart, reclaiming ground for His glory.

Thankfulness isn't weakness—it's warfare. It's the surrendered stance that frees the soul and floods the atmosphere with the Prince of Peace.

REFLECTION

- Where do you feel resistance to gratitude right now?
- What would it look like to “give thanks” not for comfort, but in surrender, like Jesus did?
- What might God want to reveal about Himself through your gratitude?

A Closing Prayer

Father, thank You for the grace that keeps pouring out, even when we don't understand. Teach us to live eucharistically—to receive all You give, to return it in worship, and to see Your glory revealed in every circumstance. May our thanksgiving become a throne for Your presence and a weapon against the enemy's lies. Let our lives be a continual “thank You,” rising from surrendered hearts.

In Jesus' precious name, Amen.

For more resources on surrender and God's character made available to us in our time of need, connect with Cathy Colver Garland at [Revelationship.net](https://www.revelationship.net) (<https://www.revelationship.net/>). Cathy Colver Garland

is the co-author of *Revelationship: Transformative Intimacy With Christ* (<https://a.co/d/3YMhbp8>) and the *Revelationship Devotional & Study Guide* (<https://a.co/d/1AEOp9w>) (EnRoute Publishing). She speaks and writes practicology (practical theology), knowing our identity in Christ, and discovering the God who reveals Himself as He pursues us for relationship.

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