

# 1 Thessalonians 3:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For what thanks can we render to God again for you, for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God;

## Analysis

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**For what thanks can we render to God again for you, for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God**—tina gar eucharistian dynameth a tō Theō antapodounai peri hymōn epi pasē tē chara hē chairomen di' hymas emprosthen tou Theou hēmōn (τίνα γὰρ εὐχαριστίαν δυνάμεθα τῷ Θεῷ ἀνταποδοῦναι περὶ ὑμῶν ἐπὶ πάσῃ τῇ χαρᾷ ἢ χαίρομεν δι' ὑμᾶς ἐμπροσθεν τοῦ Θεοῦ ἡμῶν, 'For what thanksgiving can we render to God for you for all the joy with which we rejoice because of you before our God'). Antapodidōmi (ἀνταποδίδωμι, 'to give back in return') suggests thanksgiving inadequate to match the gift—Paul can't thank God sufficiently for the Thessalonians.

The phrase epi pasē tē chara ('for all the joy') indicates joy's comprehensiveness; emprosthen tou Theou ('before our God') shows joy's orientation—not merely emotional pleasure but God-directed gladness. Paul's joy wasn't in personal success but in God's work through the gospel producing persevering saints. This God-centered joy differs from human happiness (circumstance-dependent) or achievement-satisfaction (self-centered). The rhetorical question 'what thanks can we render?' expresses gratitude exceeding articulation—God's grace in sustaining the Thessalonians surpasses Paul's ability to thank Him adequately.

## Historical Context

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Paul's overwhelming joy contrasts with his previous anxiety. Months of uncertainty about the Thessalonians' spiritual state, combined with his own afflictions in

Corinth, created emotional distress. Timothy's good news released floodgates of thanksgiving. This emotional trajectory—anxiety, relief, overwhelming joy—demonstrates Paul's humanity. He wasn't stoically indifferent but passionately invested in people's welfare. His joy 'before our God' indicates worship: thanksgiving becomes doxology as Paul praises God for sustaining the Thessalonians through persecution when Paul couldn't be present to help.

## Related Passages

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**Matthew 25:31** — Final judgment

**Romans 2:1** — Judging others

## Study Questions

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1. How do you distinguish between circumstantial happiness, achievement-satisfaction, and God-directed joy 'before our God'?
2. What spiritual realities evoke in you thanksgiving so profound you struggle to articulate adequate thanks to God?
3. How does your joy in others' spiritual growth and perseverance reflect (or fail to reflect) Paul's pastoral heart?

## Interlinear Text

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τίνα γὰρ εὐχαριστίαν δυνάμεθα τῷ θεῷ ἀνταποδοῦναι

what For thanks can we God again  
G5101 G1063 G2169 G1410 G3588 G2316 G467

περὶ ὑμῶν ἐπὶ πάσῃ τῇ χαρᾷ ἦ χαίρομεν δι'

for you for all G3588 the joy wherewith we joy for  
G4012 G5216 G1909 G3956 G5479 G3739 G5463 G1223

ὑμᾶς ἔμπροσθεν τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν

your sakes before G3588 God our  
G5209 G1715 G2316 G2257

## Additional Cross-References

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**2 Corinthians 9:15** (References God): Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.

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