
Words of Truth

I Thessalonians 5:16-18

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“Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you” (I Thessalonians 5:16-18). These instructions are very similar, though more brief, to what Paul wrote the saints in Philippi: *“Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice. Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand. Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things”* (Philippians 4:4-8).

The Greek word that is translated “rejoice” [χαίρω] is defined as: “1) to rejoice, be glad; 2) to rejoice exceedingly; 3) to be well, thrive; 4) in salutations, hail!; 5) at the beginning of letters: to give one greeting, salute” (Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon; Strong’s # 5463). The wise men rejoiced when they saw the star indicating Jesus’ location after birth (Matthew 2:10). Rejoicing is what a shepherd does when he finds his lost sheep (Matthew 18:12-14 and Luke 15:4-5). When John heard about the faithfulness of saints, he rejoiced (II John 1:4 and III John 1:3). These occasions for rejoicing are pretty obvious. There are times however when a Christian should rejoice that one may not immediately think of when hearing the word “rejoice.”

In times of persecution, a follower of our Lord should rejoice and be exceedingly glad (Matthew 5:10-12). The Apostles did such when they were arrested, beaten, and commanded not to speak the truth (Acts 5:17-42). In these times one should be able to focus away from the suffering of persecution and be able to rejoice because of the reward ahead in eternity (Luke 6:22-23). Along these lines of thought, Peter wrote this: *“Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy”* (I Peter 4:12-13). So, the point we have to focus on is that our ability to rejoice evermore or rejoice always is about the hope that is before us (Romans 12:12; cf. Romans 8:24-25). So, stay focused.

Then, we have another tool provided by God that helps us in our staying focused. That tool is prayer. The instruction we are looking at in this study is pray without ceasing. What

does that mean? Does that mean you should be praying twenty-four hours per day every day without pause? NO! Jesus ceased praying (Luke 11:1). Therefore, we are left to conclude that this does not mean a continual prayer, but the continual practice of praying. We ought to always pray and not fail in such (Luke 18:1). Thankfully, the instruction doesn't just stop with pray without ceasing. The saints in Thessalonica were given more detail about prayer that helps us very much today in our prayer lives.

The instruction to give thanks in everything is a great detail we don't want to miss. Notice the connection between continuing in prayer and thanksgiving: *“And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye 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 whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him... Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving”* (Colossians 3:15-17 and Colossians 4:2).

Being thankful plays a huge part in our spiritual well-being, mental health, and continued faithfulness to our Lord. In the previous paragraph I quoted verses from a letter written to the faithful brethren in Colosse. Notice four more verses from that same letter: *“Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son... As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving”* (Colossians 1:12-13 and Colossians 2:6-7).

All that we have covered shows us the connection between prayer and being thankful. The prayer life of a Christian should be focused on thanksgiving (Ephesians 5:20 and Hebrews 13:15). That is clear. Let us not stop there though. It goes further than our actions. The mind of a Christian needs to be focused on being thankful. Think about something for a moment. One of the contributing factors in disobedience to God is a lack of thankfulness. Notice: *“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened”* (Romans 1:18-21).

So, the conclusion is that it is the will of God in Christ that Christians pray with thanksgiving continually. Be a people that rejoice always. In the best and worst of times, we should be able to accomplish these things (Psalms 34:1).