

In everything give thanks...

Paul issues one of the premier challenges (actually a command) in 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. (NASB)

What a tall order! Life is fraught with negatives and the practical pains of everyday living. We hurt; we get confused; we are sometimes at a loss to figure out the "whys" of daily frustrations. ***Why would we pray when things seem so out of control or so painful?***

Precisely ***because*** some things are out of our control and painful! If I am not powerful enough to *fix* things that are so difficult, then it is best that I genuinely trust the One who really is in control, even if I don't understand *why* things are as they are. And in trusting, pray!

The Holy Spirit inspired James, the brother of Jesus, to write that every good gift we have has come down from the Father. We should recognize that evil comes from Satan and those who do his will, *not* from God. Since God has given us this command, to pray without ceasing and to give thanks in every circumstance, *we must be able to do it!*

Consider each item carefully: Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; in everything (every circumstance) give thanks. Think about it... if I am rejoicing always, and also praying without ceasing, then I must be rejoicing and praying at the same time! When I decide to give thanks to God, I am acknowledging that things could be worse, that God is the author of my rejoicing and that I am following God's will for my life, v. 18, **"for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."**

Consciously or sub-consciously, when we simply follow the commands, rejoicing chases us down, overtakes us and overwhelms us. To the church at Philippi, Paul wrote that we can have peace that "surpasses all comprehension." I believe that part of that process in Philippians 4:4-8, includes the rejoicing and praying of 1 Thessalonians 5. Without any oversimplification, I suggest we "just do it!" - *even when pain and confusion seem out of control! That is God's roadmap for peace and rejoicing.*

God loves us and is giving us a plan that genuinely works. But you have to work the plan! *God loves you and so do I!*

-Ray Wallace