

THANKS!
I THESSALONIANS 5:16-18

Our particular emphasis is on verse 18: give thanks in all circumstances... But take note of the commands that precede it. Believers are first commanded to rejoice – always. Scripture gives us a host of reasons for rejoicing, the greatest being our salvation (Ps. 13:5; Ps. 31:7, Luke 10:20). In addition, we are to rejoice in God's love (Ps. 90:14), God's word (Ps. 119:162), in righteousness (Isaiah 61:10), in hope (Ro. 12:12), in sufferings (Ro. 5:1-5), and in Jesus Christ Himself (Phil. 4:4). Many other reasons and circumstances abound for rejoicing.

Also preceding the command to "give thanks" is the command to "pray without ceasing." The call to pray is peppered throughout the New Testament. We are to pray for those who persecute us (Mt. 5:44), pray in secret and from the heart (Mt. 6:5-9), pray for the Lord to send out laborers into the harvest (Lu. 10:2), pray in order to endure in temptation (Mark 14:38), pray earnestly and without losing heart (Lu. 18:1), and pray for one another and in the Holy Spirit (Jas 5:13-14; Jude 1:20) to name only a few. These imperatives are strung together with the understanding that they depend upon one another. The more we rejoice, the more we are moved to worship and prayer. The more we pray, the more we experience the joy of the Lord which is our strength.

In verse 18, we are commanded to "give thanks in all circumstances." In the Old Testament we are repeatedly reminded to give thanks "for the Lord is good." God's goodness is our ultimate reason for gratitude. There is no circumstance that rescinds God's command to give thanks.

It is God's will for us to have continual joy, engage in continual prayer, and continually thank God. This passage is not the only place that gives this triumphant trio. "For what *thanksgiving* can we return to God for you, for all the *joy* that we feel for your sake before our God, as we *pray* most earnestly night and day that we may see you face to face and supply what is lacking in your faith?" (1 Thess. 3:9-10) Paul is not commanding other believers what he is not practicing. "Those three texts are three companion pictures, representing the life of a true Christian, the central sketch is the connecting link between those on either side. These three precepts are an ornament of grace to every believer's neck, wear them every one of you for glory and for beauty."

NOTES

Growth Questions for 1/3 – 1/10

1. What insight, principle, or observation from this weekend's message did you find most helpful, eye-opening, troubling?
2. Looking back over 2009 and forward into 2010 what are you most thankful for and what gives you cause to rejoice? How do difficult circumstances, situations, and encounters factor into how you answered the question?
3. Why is it difficult to rejoice in all circumstances? How can you intentionally develop a pattern and mindset of gratefulness and thankfulness for everything?
4. What is the relationship between rejoicing, giving thanks and praying without ceasing?
5. Luke 11:1-13 and Luke 18:1-8 give an example of praying persistently and consistently. What principles from those texts can you incorporate into your life?

Proclaim...Reach...Connect...Go
Living on Mission

1. Take time this week to pray for the following...
 - Thank God for the ability you have to communicate with him through prayer.
 - Take time this week and reflect upon what you have to rejoice about.
 - Ask God for favor, protection, and unity for *The Church at Martinsburg*.
2. Bible Reading Plans – www.martinsburgchurch.org
 - B90X – Church at Martinsburg's 90-day challenge to read the entire Bible in 3 months!
 - B365X – Church at Martinsburg's 365-day challenge to read the entire Bible in a year!
3. Important Dates
 - 1/10/10 – New Preaching Series – *The Essential James*
 - 1/10/10 – Start Sundays @ Regal – 10am
 - 1/17/10 - Community Groups Begin

...to proclaim the Gospel and reach those far from God.