



3-Life Changing Verses:

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

Pastor JD Farag

Now, let's get into the Word of God. 1 Thessalonians chapter five and our text is going to be verses 16 through 18. We made it through to verse 15 last week. I'll have you turn there if you're not there already. Once you do, if you're able, I'll ask you to stand. If not, that's right, where you're seated if fine. You can follow along as I read.

We have 3 verses. Basically, it's one sentence, but three verses. Verse 16, Paul writing by the Holy Spirit says, " Rejoice always. Pray continually. Give thanks in all circumstances for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. That's pretty self-explanatory, isn't it? Should we just close in prayer?

How about we open in prayer? Why don't you join with me? Thank you, Lord. Lord, thank you for your Word and this portion that we have before us this morning, here, in your Word. Lord, would you, as only you can and are always so faithful, to settle our hearts, quiet our minds. Enable us by the Holy Spirit to give you our undivided attention so he can speak into our lives and minister to us. Lord, keep anything that would distract us away from us. Because we don't want to miss anything that you have for us. We ask you for this, in Jesus name. Amen. Amen. You can be seated, thank you.

The title that I chose for today's sermon is "3-Life Changing Verses". You like that? You're just saying that. How cliché' is that? Life changing verses, really, Pastor? Is that the best you can come up with? Yeah.

I realize it does sound somewhat cliché, but the truth is? These 3 verses, if applied, can change our lives in a powerful way and I mean in a powerful way. I'll take it a step further and say that not only can these 3 verses change how we live our life? This is the will of God, in Christ Jesus, for our life.

Do you want to know what God's will is? One of the most often asked questions I get as a pastor is: Pastor, how do I know what God's will is for my life? Oh, right here. 1Thessalonians chapter five:16-18. These 3 verses, this is the will of God that we rejoice always, pray continually and always give thanks.

That's what I want to talk about today. These 3 life-changing verses have been referred to as principles for the inner life. Standing orders of the Christian Church and my favorite: Diamond drops of the Christian experience in its higher levels. So packed, so full in just three verses.



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So, what I would like to do if you'll kindly indulge me is look at these three verses. In so doing, allow the Holy Spirit to minister the truth of the powerful change that can come in our lives by way of these three verses.

Let's start with this 1st one, verse 16. It's that of being, and I chose to say it this way for a reason, relentlessly joyful. Relentlessly joyful, an unrelenting joy. It's important to understand that the Christians in Thessalonica were suffering greatly under the crushing weight of unrelenting persecution. Paul, himself, knew a thing or two about persecution and here he's encouraging them to rejoice always: Despite the hardship; Despite the persecution; Despite the trials, difficulties, pain and suffering.

Now the question is: How? How is it possible to always rejoice no matter what? Always be joyful, relentlessly joyful, no matter what may be happening around us? Or even worse yet to us? And for the answer, we need look no further than to James chapter one.

Let me read verses 2 -4 James writing by the Spirit says, "Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds." Really? I'm to consider it "pure joy"? when I experience trials and persecution and hardship and difficulty? Yeah! How, pray tell, am I to consider it pure joy? Oh, glad you asked. You asked, right?

Because James is going to answer that for us. He says here's how. It's because you know..." I underlined those words. You might want to do the same in your Bible because that's key. It's not: You hope, you think, you wish, you believe even. No, you know! You know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance.

And then Verse 4 is very interesting because James says, "Let perseverance." That's interesting. For lack of a better word, the insinuation is that we don't let perseverance finish its work. We fight it. Instead of "let it". "Let perseverance..."

When you're in that trial, when you're experiencing that hardship? "Let perseverance that's being produced in that hardship, finish its work. So that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything."

I want to share with you, just personally, from my own experience concerning this experiencing of joy in the midst of difficulty. One of the things that I had to realize and that God ministered to me was this: That joy is very different than happiness.



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See, happiness is based on predicated upon things in your life going well. By the way, the word "happy" comes from happenstance. Here's the thing. If I'm only happy when things are going well? Well, if you're anything like me? Then I'm only happy about maybe two minutes every day if that, on a good day. Because if happiness is based on things going well in my life? Then I'm not very happy.

Joy is very different than happiness. Joy is inner. Happiness is outer. Happiness is outward, joy is inward. One of the things that I'm learning in my walk with the Lord is that you can experience the joy of the Lord no matter what is happening in the Lord and it's in the Lord.

Joy is only available to us as believers in and followers of Jesus Christ. It ties in with this 2nd one in verse 17. It's that of being continually, prayerful. Question, hear me out. What if I told you that this verse, verse 17, could so radically change your prayer life? Would you want to know how? Well I'm going to answer? What are you going to say? No, I don't really want to know how.

I don't think there's a one of us that doesn't want to know how: We can have a better prayer, right? The answer to "how" is that in order to pray continually, prayer must change from the complication of an activity to the simplification of an attitude. Let me say the same thing again.

We have complicated prayer, haven't we? Oh, my goodness. I remember a time not so long ago when I prayed God, "I want to be a man of prayer." So, I went out and bought all these books on prayer which is nothing wrong with that. One of the books by E. M. Bounds, I mean, it was so voluminous. It's just so thick.

I'm thinking to myself, Oh, my goodness. I got to read this book on prayer! So, I can have a better prayer life. Because I want to have a better prayer life and the Holy Spirit as only the Lord can just in that still small voice said, "What are you doing?" I mean, I'm going to read this book on prayer.

The Lord says like, "Do you know? You could, instead of reading that book on prayer? You could just pray. The amount of time that it would take you to read this book on prayer? Again, nothing wrong with that but the amount of time it would take you to read this book on prayer? Oh, my goodness, you could just pray.



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By the way, do you know how simple it is to pray? Do you know what prayer is? It's talking to God. Reminds me of a story many years ago I heard it on the mainland. This couple, the wife comes to the husband and says, "Honey, we need to pray to which the husband says, Is it that bad?" Like prayer is the last resort instead of the first response.

Now, the wife in this case, as is often the case is the spiritual leader when it comes to prayer and guys shame on us. That should never be. Our wives should never come to us and say, "Hey honey, we need to pray." No, it should be the other way around. The husband needs to say to the wife, as a spiritual leader, "We need to pray."

So, the wife says, I'll start. So she starts in on this prayer, "Omnipotent God, Creator of the Heavens and the Earth and the Sea and all that in them is." Reverb, King James, I mean, all of the above and she's just going on. This eloquent, I mean, it was just magnificent. So, she's done and her husband's like, "Oh my goodness, it's my turn now."

He prays like this. He says, "God, I don't know what she just said, but could you...? And he just talked to God. Just talk to God. I know it's a dorky illustration, but I have the gift of "dorky".

Our phones, right? Of course, now we have air pods and... But the ear piece and the microphone, that's what prayer is. So, the microphone is us talking to God, and the earphone is God talking to us. Through his Word. It's been said that prayer is not necessarily a monologue as much as it is a dialogue.

What really helped me and so radically changed my prayer life was realizing that I had so complicated prayer. I had made it an activity, and in so doing, it became a chore. It was a "got to", not a "get to". It wasn't until I realized, "Wait a minute, stop." It's not an activity; It's an attitude. An attitude of prayer.

You'll forgive the play on words but Jesus taught the "be" attitudes, not the "do" attitudes. I know that's a play on words, but "be" attitudes. In the words, it's this attitude of prayer. Let me define "attitude". I actually went online because when I say the word "attitude", what comes to your mind? I know what came to my mind. Man, they got attitude.

But that's not the attitude I'm talking about here, okay? Attitude can be defined as a settled way of thinking, feeling about someone or



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something. Typically, one that is reflected in a person's behavior, not "do-havior", behavior. It's a settled way of thinking.

Now, if you can take prayer out of the arena of an activity and put it under the arena, an umbrella of an attitude. That changes everything. So, now I can pray all the time. Like when I go to Costco Iwilei and need a parking spot. And don't want a park all the way in Ewa Beach.

I was told by somebody and I think it's true that the Costco Iwilei on the island is the busiest Costco in the world. Have you heard the same thing? Yeah. How about that one? Anyway, I digress. I'm back to our sermon already in progress here.

So, now I'm praying continually, with my eyes open in the car in traffic: For patience, love, kindness and long suffering on the H1 at 5 o'clock. For Christmas we got one of those wood plaques and we have in our kitchen. It's so good. It says, "I would get on the H1 at 5 p.m. going west - for you. Now, the online church is going, what?

I can talk with the Lord all the time. One time I was in my office, in my home office... I just don't know if it's a kinesthetic thing. I hope I'm saying that right where you kind of have to be moving and talking? So, my best prayer time the with Lord is when I'm just walking, talking and saying, "You know, Lord. Oh yeah, that's right, Lord. Oh, thank you, Lord and oh, thank you for reminding me. Oh, that's so good, Lord. Oh, I love you so much Lord.

And I'm talking out loud so then my daughter comes up and she says, are you talking to yourself? I said, no. So, don't do that in public, by the way, because they'll take you someplace.

I could just talk to him all the time and I don't even have to do it out loud. He can read my mind. There have been times when I'm in a situation and it's kind of an intense situation. I'm thinking, Oh, my goodness, what am I going to do? So, I say, Lord, I know you can read my mind right now. I really need some help; I need your wisdom. I need to know what to say, what to do. I mean, I'm talking to him all the time.

That is praying continually.

It's as one said it, you're in constant conscious communion with God, communion communication. You're constantly talking with him, and he's constantly talking to you. That's what praying continually is. How do I say this without sounding too...? I don't want to get in your face. Just saying that probably got in your face.



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I want I want to challenge you. I want to challenge you to approach your prayer life differently. Starting today, don't see it as, "I need to pray". I need to pray. Well, that's true. You need to pray. But I truly believe that God wants us to get to that place where we can't wait to pray.

I remember one night, a while back, I was so tired. I was just "beat tired" and I knew I was getting ready to fall asleep. I just said, "Lord, I can't wait till tomorrow. I'm so tired right now, I can't wait till tomorrow morning so that I can talk to you again. Wow.

I wish I would have known this when I was a younger Christian. I always know that I've made a really good decision when my only regret is that I didn't do it sooner. It is deliberate, by the way, this thing we call prayer, this talking with God, that's what prayer is. It has to be deliberate.

The challenge I want to challenge you with is: See your prayer life as an attitude of prayer and not an activity of prayer. Watch what's going to happen. I promise you that it will change your life. You'll never want to look back. I was in our prayer meeting this morning. We have a prayer meeting before first service. I was thinking to myself, "Wow, Lord, we have a really good relationship, don't we?" You would think I was talking to somebody or about somebody, right? No, I'm talking about the Lord. We have a great relationship.

What is the mark of a great relationship? When there's good communication? I'm like Lord, we have such a great relationship because we communicate all the time. I talk to him all the time. I can't imagine my life without being able to do that. I mean let's be honest. There are certain life situations that are such that... I mean, what are you going to do?

We'll say it like this? What do non-Christians do? Oh, I'll tell you what they do. They go to the bottle: The bottle of pills or the bottle of alcohol. They'll go to something or someone. I mean, what would we do if we didn't have the Lord?

The Apostle Paul echoes what he writes here to the Thessalonians in Romans chapter 12. Great chapter, by the way. The whole book of Romans actually. I think we spent, when we went through Romans a number of years ago. I think we were in Romans; this is like 2 1/2 years and we lived to tell about it. Romans 12:12, easy verse to remember. Listen



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what Paul says, "Be..." Not do, be. "Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer."

The big three, if you will, which brings us to our 3rd one in verse 18. It's to be constantly thankful, relentlessly joyful, continually prayerful and constantly thankful. They go together. It's a 3-pronged proposition, if I can say it like that. Now, it's important to notice what Paul is not saying here.

He does not say give thanks for all circumstance. He says, Give thanks in all circumstances. Well, why is that important? Because we don't thank God for everything. Thank you, God, for this broken arm. This flat tire. No. We thank God for being in everything as he works everything together for the good. That's what we thank God for. Oh, God, thank you so much. Thank you, Lord, so much.

Do you know what is interesting in the Gospels? Jesus took note of someone being grateful and thankful. Remember the account when he heals 10 lepers. Leprosy, that was a death sentence. I mean, you thought I was going to say Coronavirus. That's the prophecy update. We'll talk about that.

I mean. nobody would be around you. Jesus is not only going to be around them; he's going to heal them. Only one, and it wasn't even a Jew, only one comes back, "Thank you, Lord." And Jesus points it out. It was obviously so important to the Lord that it rose to the level of being included in the Canon of Scripture to be recorded for all of us all of these generations later. "Where are the other 9? He points it out. He takes notice.

Let me see if I can kind of "couch it" in these terms. How about you as a parent or a grandparent? Does it not just bless your heart when your children are grateful to you? Oh, my goodness. It's like, you just you want to... I told my son, Levi, who's in college in California. He's such a cool kid, such a grateful kid. He's always thanking me. It's like, "Thank you, Baba. Thank you, Baba." I'm like, "Levi, you're "killing me". Up to half of my kingdom. You can have anything you want. Maybe that's why he does it. I don't know. No. But he's so grateful. So, bear with me.

This morning, when I got up to kind of just prepare my heart and prepare this teaching. I said, "Lord, okay. How? Because the big question is how, right? I mean, we know on a broad scale that it's the "how" of the Holy Spirit that enables us and empowers us to do the "what" of the holy work. Right? We can agree with that.



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But I want to get specific. How can I be more thankful? How can I be more grateful? How can I be more joyful? How can I be more prayerful? How? I mean I want to do that. I can't imagine there would be anybody in this service that would say, "I don't want to be more prayerful. I don't want to be more joyful." I don't want to be more grateful. Are there? If so, can I just talk to you afterwards?

So how? How can we have this attitude of gratitude? I need a change. I'm in a rut. I'm going through the motions. I have no joy. I try to fake it till I make it. It ain't working. That's the one thing about joy and that is you can't fake joy. I mean, you know whether joy is the real deal or not.

I want to have the prayer life that the pastor's talking about. I want to have that. I want to be more grateful. I want to be more joyful. How? How? Well, being thankful is birthed from being both joyful and prayerful.

Listen to what Charles Spurgeon said. I mean, this is so good. He said, "When joy and prayer are married, their firstborn child is gratitude." Can I read that again? What do you say, no? I'm going to read it again. When joy and prayer are married their 1st born child is gratitude.

This is what Paul wrote to the Philippians. It's one of my all-time favorite life verses. I know I said that about every verse in the Bible. But Philippians 4 actually, 4:4-8. But in verses 6 and 7, he basically says, "This is how you can change your life." This is the cure for all of the anxiety in your life. All of the fear, all of the worry. This can change your life.

Listen to what he says, "Do not be anxious about anything. But in every situation by prayer and petition with thanksgiving." Do you see a pattern here? Present your requests to God and the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Do you know that saying that we have? I just need peace of mind. Peace of mind. This is the kind of peace Jesus said, "I give you not as the world gives. This peace is not dependent on the circumstances, on the situation.

Do you want peace of mind now that you have understanding? Oh, now I have understanding, I can have peace of mind. No, no, no. What Paul is saying here is that you can have peace without understanding. "Leaning



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not unto your own understanding," Proverbs 3:5-6. How? Oh, so glad you asked. By praying about everything and thanking God for anything you can think of. Oh, by the way, try and just thank God.

I keep a prayer journal. In fact, just this last week... I can type a lot better than I can write. I took typing... You young people have no idea. It's not fair actually. I watch you guys text and your thumbs are machines.... I'm like this. My daughter keeps telling me, "Just don't use your fingers." I want to type because... I took typing and I can actually type. Enough of my problems, back to the point and I have a point.

So, I was typing and entering in my prayer list. I just started thanking God for anything I could think of. I mean, next thing I knew, I had like, 2 pages. There was so much more that I could have just... And thank you for this, oh, thank you for that. Thank you for this and thank you for that. By the time I was done? Oh, my goodness. I mean, I was walking on air.

The joy the Lord, Nehemiah says, Nehemiah 8:11, is your strength. I was so strengthened, so encouraged. So full of joy. So full of thanks. So thankful, joyful and it came by way of being prayerful. Do you see how they all go together?

Okay, so what does this look like now, tomorrow morning? When that alarm clock goes off and I have to get up. How does this work? What does this look like in my life, okay? So, your Monday starts off, and it's one of those days where you just think to yourself. "Man, I wish I could go to bed and start all over. This is a terrible day."

Doesn't have to be. "Early in the morning will I rise up and seek thee." Spend some time with the Lord. Doesn't have to be this one hour... People say, I just don't have time. I don't have time to pray. You don't have time not to pray. Please, again, don't complicate it.

Don't make it like, "I need to spend 1/2 hour in prayer." Don't do that. Could you imagine? Your child comes to you and says, Oh, I got to spend 1/2 hour with you. Don't bother. You have to? No, I want to. I can't wait so, Lord, I want I want to start the day off with you. And when you do that and you're in the heat of the battle in the midst of the day?

I mean, life hits and life hits, doesn't it? And you just start, "Okay, Lord. First of all, I'm going to bring this to you. It's a situation that is above what I can deal with. So, I'm just going to bring it to



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you. And, Lord, thank you that I can. Start there. Thank you that I can bring this situation to you. Lord, would you help me here? I need I need help. Or would you resolve this? Will you give me wisdom and understanding for this?

He will, and he does. And then the next thing you know, you've got this peace. I mean, everything is chaotic, tumultuous, conflict and adversity. And yet there's just this peace and this joy and this calm. God's got this.

I gave it to him and I didn't take it back either. I used to do that. Give it to the Lord and then take it back. Start worrying about it. No, I give it to him. It's yours. Lord, you deal with this. Well, it's about time you asked me. I've been waiting for you to give it to me so I could.

We say God is the God of the impossible. Well, sometimes I wonder if God doesn't have to let it become impossible so he can do it. Because if it's still possible for us? He won't force himself on the situation or into this situation.

Okay, I'm going to pull myself up by the bootstraps, and I'm going to get her done. Get her done, right? I just picture God just saying, OK, well, let me know. I'll be right here when you bludgeon yourself up against the wall of my will for the 125th time because you're so thick headed. I'll speak for myself...

You know who you are, you thick headed, stiff necked, stubborn people, right? Then just let me know, because when you're done and you throw up your hands and say, God, this is impossible! Oh, God. It's impossible for you. Now it's possible for me. Can I just do this? Okay, here, go, take it. Well, you've made quite a mess of it. Wish you had brought it to me sooner.

Let's pray, Father, thank you. Thank you for your joy. Thank you for your peace. Thank you for your grace, your mercy, your love, your kindness, your compassion, your long-suffering, your patience with us Lord.

So much that we can thank you for. Lord, I thank you that just thanking you can completely and utterly and totally change our lives. I pray that as I bring a close to the sermon that the Holy Spirit will take it to the next level.



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Lord, thank you that the Holy Spirit does that, in Jesus name. Amen.
All right, let's get to our prophecy update.