



Silverdale Baptist

21 Days of Thankfulness • Choosing Gratitude • 1 Thess. 5:16-18, Phil. 4:4-6 •
11/16-17/2019

MAIN POINT

When the harsh realities of life come crashing in on us, we choose joy over fear and prayer over panic. We choose gratitude over worry because our God is still in control!

INTRODUCTION

Describe a time you found a way to be grateful under challenging circumstances.

What do you think the relationship is between faith and choosing gratitude?

UNDERSTANDING

Read the Bible and ask discussion questions about it.

Your goal is to facilitate a conversation around the text and topic.

| Have a volunteer read 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18.

We touched on 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 last week. This week we will focus a little more on this passage.

What are the three commands Paul gives in this passage?

Why, according to the text, should we follow these three commands? Or, what is the will of God according to these verses?

How serious do you think the command is in verse 18? How would you compare this command to other commands of Christ through Paul, such as

"Abstain from immorality" (1Thess. 4:3)?

The command in verse 18 carries the same force as all of the other commands of Scripture. As believers, we are required to "rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances" because it is God's will for our life.

What are the areas of your life where you are not rejoicing, not praying, and not giving thanks?

For the Christian, joy, prayer, and gratitude are tightly woven together. They are so tightly woven together that they are hard to separate out as individual attitudes. It is hard to imagine someone being joyful and ungrateful, or prayerful and unable to give thanks.

| Have a volunteer read 1 Thessalonians 1:6.

Paul was the first to preach the gospel to the Thessalonians. When they heard and believed the gospel, how was it received?

The Thessalonians faced trouble when they embraced the gospel. The trouble was so intense Paul was forced to leave the city. Yet, at the same time, they adopted the gospel with joy, and it is safe to assume, with gratitude.

| Have a volunteer read Philippians 4:4-6.

List the commands in this passage?

Again, how serious are these commands? Are these commands less significant than other commands of Scripture?

If these commands represent God's will for your life, how are you doing in your walk with Christ?

What are the similarities between Philippians 4:4-6 and 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18?

As believers, we should choose to walk in obedience, and that means we should choose gratitude.

APPLICATION

Discuss how to apply what you have studied.

What do you believe God's will for your life is? Are you walking in obedience

to His will?

In what ways can we express joy and thankfulness in ways that show the world our God is still sovereign?

What would it look like if you were always rejoicing, praying without ceasing, giving thanks in all circumstances?

Do you imagine God would give you a command and not enable you to obey it?

The Holy Spirit living inside of you will enable you to choose gratitude. He allows you to see things from God's point of view and embrace circumstances as opportunities to show the world the grace of God

PRAYER

Father, you commanded us to be thankful in all circumstances. Lord, you know that aside from the presence of the Holy Spirit, we are powerless to choose gratitude in every situation. Teach to rely on You, teach us to trust You, and teach us to see things from Your point of view. Amen.

| COMMENTARY

1 Thessalonians 5:16–18

5:16. Paul admonished, Be joyful always. This is short and to the point. The key, however, is the word always. Paul meant this literally. Christian joy is not bound by circumstances or hindered by difficulties. In fact, joy in the New Testament is often coupled with sorrow or suffering.

The Thessalonian believers had already experienced this strange duet, like an inspiring song played in minor key (1 Thess. 1:6). When the sorrow or suffering results from being identified with Christ, the Holy Spirit creates a supernatural joy—a wellness of soul that cannot be dampened by adverse situations. The explanation may be found in 2 Corinthians 4:16–18: “For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.”

But we should remember that we have a part in this joy. We are the ones commanded to be joyful. It is a choice, a deliberate response that focuses on the grace and goodness of God. As the writer to the Hebrews directed us, “Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and

perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart” (Heb. 12:2–3).

5:17. The next staccato note follows: pray continually. This means never stop praying. Paul was a busy missionary, and he wrote about the Christian’s duty to fulfill daily responsibilities, so this is not a command about speaking non-stop prayers. It refers, however, to the attitude of prayer, or reverence before God. The Christian’s life of righteousness and his approach to relationships and responsibilities should be such that he maintains a constant attitude of being in God’s presence. Such a person will pray often and about many things, including requests, praise, and thanksgiving. This command also means that we should never quit praying.

5:18. The next command requires trust in the sovereignty of Christ: give thanks in all circumstances. It recognizes God’s eminence in all events.

A thankful spirit does not come naturally to most of us. Certainly it pushes us beyond our natural capacities when difficult or painful situations invade our life. This command to be thankful, no matter what happens, is possible only by God’s grace. When we can agree with God that he works all things out for good to those who love him and are committed to obedience (Rom. 8:28), then we can thank him.

For those who wonder about God’s will, here it is emphatically stated: this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus. There is no need for searching, seminars, books, or “fleeces.” God’s will is that we are to be joyful, prayerful, and thankful because we are his children.[1]

Philippians 4:4-6

4:4. Again Paul returns to the key theme of this letter: joy. He calls believers to rejoice at all times and repeats the call for emphasis. This includes the bad times as well as the good (compare Jas. 1:2–5). Christians should be known as joyful people. Such joy resides not in circumstances or positive attitudes toward life. Joy reigns in the heart only when Christ is Lord of life. Joy is always in the Lord.

4:5. A practical way to have joy is by exhibiting gentleness to all. This lets the church and world see that you belong to the Lord. The Greek word *epieikēs* means “yielding, gentle, kind.” It includes the ability to go beyond the letter of the law in treating others, to provide something beside strict justice. It does not insist on personal rights or privileges. Christ embodied such gentleness in his dealing with all people (2 Cor. 10:1; compare 1 Tim. 3:3; Titus 3:2; Jas. 3:17; 1 Pet. 2:18). Why should we surrender personal rights for others? The

Lord is near. In both time and space, God is available to us. He is not far removed in heaven but present in our hearts to hear and relate to us. His nearness also means he knows us and what we are. In time, God is near, for he is coming again. Then we will receive our rewards for living like Christ rather than like the world.

4:6. Joy replaces anxiety in life, so Paul advises the Philippians not to be anxious about anything. The cure for anxiety? Prayer! Worry and anxiety come from focusing on your circumstances such as imprisonment or persecution which Paul and the Philippians faced. Anxiety or worry doesn't accomplish anything, but prayer does (Jas. 5:16). Jesus warned against worry which demonstrates a lack of trust in God (Matt. 6:25–34).[2]

[1] Knute Larson, I & II Thessalonians, I & II Timothy, Titus, Philemon, vol. 9, Holman New Testament Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000), 74–75.

[2] Max Anders, Galatians-Colossians, vol. 8, Holman New Testament Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 261–262.