

Being Who God Made You to Be

I Thessalonians 5:16-22

PW Emerson – 02/23/2020 – Ten:27 Ministries

I Thessalonians 5:16-22

¹⁶Rejoice always, ¹⁷pray continually, ¹⁸give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

¹⁹Do not quench the Spirit. ²⁰Do not treat prophecies with contempt ²¹but test them all; hold on to what is good, ²²reject every kind of evil.

The group of believers at Thessalonica had only been established 2-3 years prior to the Apostle Paul writing this letter to them.

Paul is talking to the believers about how to live.

He believes this is important

- For the individual believer
- To grow the body of believers as a whole

In the piece we're looking at, we see seven actions to live out:

I REJOICE ALWAYS

This is not talking about the feeling of joy

Rather about the expression of joy

It doesn't say, "Be Joyful"

It is talking about the active expression of joy

And it says, “ALWAYS”

How we feel fluctuates from day to day, sometimes hour by hour

Our mood changes

We have setbacks in life

Curveballs are thrown at us

But regardless of what is going on in our lives, we are to rejoice ALWAYS

Don't you feel more comfortable around people who are smiling?

Who are happy?

Think about at work or school – would you rather have a boss/teacher who is smiling, happy and glad to be there? Or someone who is grumpy and clearly in a bad mood?

The same applies to being in the church.

When people see us rejoicing at church, that makes for a more appealing environment all around.

We are to REJOICE ALWAYS

II PRAY CONTINUALLY

This is not talking about mindless recitation of prayers, as if it is the next thing on the to do list.

It's the idea that prayer should be a regular habit.

- Do we pray before a big presentation at work or school?
- Do we pray before going on a trip?
- Do we pray when things go well at work or school?

Most people pray when they are struggling, which is a good thing.

But if prayer is a regular habit, we will be doing it for all sorts of occasions!

The Greek word for “without ceasing” is *adialeptos*. It doesn't mean “non-stop” but actually means “constantly recurring.”

In other words, we can go through our day communicating with God about everything. We can include God in all our thoughts and concerns and plans every minute of every day.

This is what Jesus invited us to do when he said, “Abide in me.” (John 15) This is how we can have the Abundant Life He promised us.

To pray without ceasing is to invite God into every moment of every day. This is what gives us the ability to rejoice! In fact, we are able to REJOICE ALWAYS, only if we are Praying without Ceasing.

III GIVE THANKS IN ALL CIRCUMSTANCES

Not to give thanks for everything; rather give thanks in all circumstances

Romans 8:28

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

Knowing that God works for good in all things, it would stand to reason that we would be giving thanks in all situations ... God had a hand in it!

Ephesians 5:20

always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

While I may not be able to give thanks for all of the things that happen, I can give thanks in everything for the confidence that God is always present and is always at work for good.

IV DO NOT QUENCH THE SPIRIT

Paul is telling us not to ignore the gifts of the Holy Spirit

- Healing
- Faith
- Prayer
- Teaching
- Prophesying
- Helping
- Wisdom

We see the gifts of the Holy Spirit listed in

- Romans 12:6-8

- I Corinthians 12:8-10
- I Corinthians 12:28-30
- Ephesians 4:11
- I Peter 4:11

We can spend an entire sermon series looking at these.

But

We have a tendency to lean on our own talents, hunches, desires, etc.

Instead, we should be using the gifts of the holy spirit – they are given to us FROM GOD!

V DO NOT TREAT PROPHECIES WITH CONTEMPT BUT TEST THEM ALL

Although there are some people who have a gift of prophesying, not everyone does.

There are false prophets out there – both when this was written and today.

We should be thinking about things, using a discerning heart, TESTING them.

Don't check your brains at the door!

We tell our kids, don't believe everything you read on the Internet.

Take that many steps further ... don't believe everything

- In the papers
- From politicians
- From prophets
- EVEN from pastors

Think. Does what is being prophesying fit with scripture?

I remember in 1993 David Koresh told his followers that he was the messiah.

They all died believing he was.

zB If I said ...

God spoke to me and revealed to me that everyone should give their entire savings to
Pastor Phil's retirement fund

That would be ridiculous.

That goes against what the bible says.

We are to be smart about things.

Once we have tested a prophesy and have discerned whether it is good or bad ...

VI HOLD ON TO WHAT IS GOOD

&

VII REJECT EVERY KIND OF EVIL

These are connected

HOLD ON TO WHAT IS GOD and REJECT EVERY KIND OF EVIL

It's the idea of overcoming evil with good.

I have spoken in the past that all believers are called to be disciples

That we are all called to be in ministry

It's the idea that when we are doing good, we are in ministry

So we see that Paul gave us these commands to live by:

- I REJOICE ALWAYS
- II PRAY CONTINUALLY
- III GIVE THANKS IN ALL CIRCUMSTANCES
- IV DO NOT QUENCH THE SPIRIT
- V DO NOT TREAT PROPHECIES WITH CONTEMPT BUT TEST THEM
- VI HOLD ON TO WHAT IS GOOD
- VII REJECT EVERY KIND OF EVIL

When I look at these as a group, something jumps out at me.

IT'S ALL ABOUT MY ATTITUDE!

In Philippians 2:5

Have this attitude in yourself which was in Christ Jesus

When Jesus called his first 12 disciples and began his ministry, the first thing he shared with them was the beatitudes ... and he did so with hundreds of other people listening

- Matthew 5
- Luke 6

He realized the disciples must have the right attitude if they were to be effective in their ministry

Our attitude ***DRIVES*** our actions

This year will be the Olympics.

Watch a runner in the starting blocks, ready to spring into action.

BEFORE they spring into action, they have

- Focus and
- determination

They have an attitude that drives their actions.

If you and I are to be successful disciples of Christ, we must have

- Focus
- determination

We must have an attitude that will drive our actions in the right direction.

Example ... Premarriage Counseling vs Marriage counseling

12 years ago, I was an associate pastor at a church in Lakeville

A young couple in their 20s came into my office for premarriage counseling

I had known the young man for probably ten years – he was in a youth group that I led

They were love-dubby

- holding hands
- I offered them each a chair ... they both sat in the same chair

It did absolutely no good to talk to them.

They were love-sick.

They didn't have

- Careers
- Post-high school education
- ANY well thought-out plans

But they had each other.

A year later they sat in my office for a very different meeting.

They weren't love-sick any more.

They were glaring at each other.

They both had

- Jobs
- Apartment
- cars

What was the difference from the first to the later meeting?

At the first meeting they looked at each other

- with the best of eyes
- and with the best of intentions

A year later they were looking at each other

- with the worst eyes
- and the worst intentions

Their attitudes had changed.

Think about Jesus' disciples.

Peter ...

- he seemed to mess up at every turn
- he walked on water, got scared, then started to sink
- he tried to chastise Jesus ... then Jesus said, “Get behind me satan”
- he sent people away who were casting out demons in Jesus’ name because they weren’t part of their group

Peter seems like the poster child of what not to do!

But ... through it all ... he keeps going.

He was focused on serving God and was determined to do so all the way!

As disciples of Christ, you and I may have moments that are frustrating, setbacks or worse.

But Paul and Jesus tell us to keep our attitude right, keep focused on living right for God.

When we live these out, you will find yourself growing closer to God.

You will find yourself being the person God made you to be!

Viktor Frankl, concentration camp survivor, said

Everything can be taken from a man but one thing: To choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's way.

Our attitude is our choice.

God calls us

- to a high calling (Phil. 3:14)
- to a holy calling (2 Tim. 1:9)
- to a heavenly calling (Heb. 3:1)

When we live these out,

- We are made sons of God (John 1:12)
- We are made the children of God (Gal. 3:26)
- We are made the servants of God (Matt. 25:21)
- We are made God's saints (Col. 1:1)
- We are made God's witnesses (I Thess. 2:10)
- We are made workers together with God (2 Cor. 6:1)

Pulpit Helps, August, 1992, p. 11.

Do you want to be a disciple for Christ?

He has given us the words, telling us what to do.

Let's go do it!