

Are You Spiritually Minded?

1 Thessalonians 5: 16 Always be joyful. 17 Never stop praying. 18 Be thankful in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you who belong to Christ Jesus.

You may be more familiar with other popular versions that read "Rejoice always" and "pray without ceasing".

I don't know about you, but this has been one of the most challenging passages of Scripture for me.

"Always be joyful?"

Are you kidding me? That was hard for me to read. The idea of being filled with joy always is something I could not grasp. It was a foreign concept to be sure.

"Pray without ceasing?"

How does that work? I'd always say to myself. I'd pray in the morning, and 10 minutes later prayer would be the absolute last thing on my mind. Then toward the end of the day I might think "Did I pray this morning? Did I even think about God today?"

And then the hardest of the three...

"Be thankful in all circumstances"

Forget it, next verse...

When we read something that is beyond our comprehension it is very difficult to process. It's almost like reading a foreign language and it just doesn't make sense.

Although these verses didn't make sense to me and I couldn't relate at all to them, what they clearly revealed was a deficiency in me. They indicated how far off I was from His

standard.

Paul is charging the Thessalonians (and now us) to live a higher standard of living, and personally, I do not know very many people who even want this, let alone work for it. I think for many this bar is set too high, it is unattainable. That's what I used to think. I'm not saying that I am living this way as consistently as it says, but I see a vast improvement to where I was before I started seeking God seriously.

I'd like to focus on verse 18, **"Be thankful in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you who belong to Christ Jesus."** Let's face it, this is a tough verse. Not only does it say to be thankful in all circumstances, but that it is God's will for you. Imagine, Bills are late, *be thankful*. I lost my job, *be thankful*. My spouse is ready to walk out on me, *be thankful*. In a natural sense, this is a totally ridiculous idea. In the natural, there's really nothing to be thankful for and why would there be, without any kind of supernatural perspective, life just stinks in those circumstances.

Has Satan ever spoken through you?

Consider these verses:

Matthew 16: 21 From then on Jesus began to tell his disciples plainly that it was necessary for him to go to Jerusalem, and that he would suffer many terrible things at the hands of the elders, the leading priests, and the teachers of religious law. He would be killed, but on the third day he would be raised from the dead.

22 But Peter took him aside and began to reprimand him for saying such things. "Heaven forbid, Lord," he said. "This will never happen to you!"

23 Jesus turned to Peter and said, "Get away from me, Satan! You are a dangerous trap to me. You are seeing things merely

from a human point of view, not from God's."

From my boyhood years, I always remember this as "Get thee behind me, Satan!" from the KJV.

Notice verse 21

The Master is explaining to His student what lies in the future. He's simply revealing God's will for Himself. Naturally, Peter has a hard time with this news and, from a natural perspective it just can't happen. Naturally what Jesus was saying did not make sense, but Peter was not seeing this with the proper, supernatural perspective as we learn from verse 23. It seems to me that Satan prompted Peter to say what he did, that's how I see it. Not that Peter was possessed, but that Satan inspired him to rebuke Jesus. This was clearly a temptation from Satan through Peter, not unlike the temptations Jesus faced during His fast, only indirectly.

This is spiritual warfare 101

This can be seen in our lives from day to day once we're attuned to it. For example, any encouragement to not spend time with God when we know in our hearts that we should is from the evil one. There is nothing more important than spending time in the Word and in prayer from day to day, but they can be the most challenging things to do and I think it is because of spiritual warfare. It's difficult to even when the habit is developed, let alone when there is no habit.

This illustrates why it is so important to have a spiritual or heavenly perspective of things. When we don't, things never make sense, we become frustrated, disappointed, and work against God, rather than with God. When we have the heavenly perspective that He wants us to maintain (prayer without ceasing), although we may be perplexed at times, we know that God is in control and that all things work together for our good.

Romans 8: 28 And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them.

Only when led by the Spirit...

Only with a supernatural perspective can we be thankful in response to negative circumstances. Romans 8:28 is a great verse to memorize and/or meditate on if you don't already.

I think this is one of the most unbelievable verses in the whole Bible. I think if we really believed it deep down in our hearts, then *being thankful in all circumstances* would not be difficult. This is the kind of truth that really sets us free. When we trust in Jesus with our hearts and believe that He's got it all under control, regardless of what craziness happens in our lives, we still have eternal life with Him to look forward to and the peace that surpasses all understanding right now

Other than salvation what better news could we have?

Is it any wonder why God continually tells us "Do not be afraid"? Maybe it's because we have absolutely nothing to fear when we trust in Him completely. But we can't really trust in someone we don't really know, which is where the Devotional Time enters in and why it's so important.

Philippians 4: 4 Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!

"Dear Lord, I love you. You are holy. You are so great and faithful. Who am I that you even consider me? Your Words can be challenging to me, but I long to understand them and appreciate them more and more. Please be patient with me as I struggle to comprehend your truths. Help me to know you more and draw me close to you. Thank you for teaching me! In Jesus' name, amen."

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