

Rejoice Always ***1 Thessalonians 5:16-18***

Good morning,

While the Apostle Paul was in prison, awaiting his execution for being a Christ-follower, he said in ***Philippians 4:4, Rejoice in the Lord always. Again, I will say, rejoice! NKJV***

In the current environment of the world in which we live, being joyful not only seems difficult, but at times, it seems impossible.

As we suffer moments of loss, uncertainty, and heartbreak, it is odd that the Apostle Paul, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, would tell us to ***rejoice***.

But it is through our circumstances, as believers, that we grow and mature in our faith in Jesus Christ. So, no matter what trials or losses we face, we can and should find hope and joy, in Jesus!

Please open your Bibles to ***1 Thessalonians 5***, as we take a break out of the ***Gospel of Mark***, for a Thanksgiving message.

1 Thessalonians is believed to be one of the earliest of Paul's letters written to different churches.

These new Christians were confused about the return of Jesus, and some even believed they had missed the rapture, because of the intense persecution against Christians at this time.

Paul wanted to know how this newborn church was doing, so he sent Timothy back to minister to the new believers there.

Paul wanted to know about their faith, because they were enduring persecution and there were many false teachers who might have infiltrated their church.

Timothy returned to Paul with a good report, and then Paul wrote *1 Thessalonians* as an encouragement for new believers.

I. As Christians, when should we rejoice?

Read *1 Thessalonians 5:16*

One of the things that will enhance our relationship with the Lord is to rejoice always, in every situation.

1 Peter 1:6 In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials,

1 Peter 1:7 that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ,

1 Peter 1:8 whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory,

1 Peter 1:9 receiving the end of your faith — the salvation of your souls. NKJV

The word *rejoice* is actually an action **verb**, and the dictionary definition means to feel or show great joy or delight.

We should not only rejoice during happy times, but also during sorrowful times as well.

The Christian can *rejoice always* because our joy is not based on circumstances, but it is based on the promise and trust we have in the Lord Jesus Christ.

John MacArthur said, “*There is no event or circumstance that can occur in the life of any Christian that should diminish that Christian's joy.*”

Circumstances always **change**, but the Lord never changes.

Some people, especially those who are going through trials, may say, “*It is impossible, to rejoice always, it can't be done,*” and in our own strength, they are right, rejoicing in trials is not natural.

Rejoicing in any situation comes from a supernatural joy, which is only made possible by the Holy Spirit.

Happiness comes from happenings, or because something happens our way. But the Lord instructs us to rejoice in all circumstances, in **afflictions**, as well as times of blessing.

We don't rejoice when someone dies or gets cancer, but we believe God is doing things in and through our circumstances, and He even turns evil into good, for those who love Christ.

Romans 8:28 And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. NKJV

God promises to give us beauty for ashes. Even with sin, God somehow can still work all things out for our good and His glory after the correction.

The enemy want you to stress out, but God has a better plan.

II. *Pray always.*

Read *1 Thessalonians 5:17*

The Bible has 377 references to praise and 375 references to prayer. Christians are to pray continually even though we cannot bow our heads, or close our eyes, at every moment of the day.

Prayer is communication with God, and we can live each minute of the day in a continual conversation with God.

For most Christians, prayer is our **untapped** power source!

Charles Spurgeon said, “*The best style of prayer is that which cannot be called anything else but a cry!*”

2 Samuel 22:7 In my distress I called upon the LORD and cried out to my God; He heard my voice from His temple, and my cry entered His ears. NKJV

“***I called upon the LORD***” literally means to cry out; to implore aid with **desperation**.

Pastor Jim Cymbala said, “*I discovered an astonishing truth: God is attracted to weakness. He can’t resist those who **humbly** and honestly admit how desperately they need Him.*”

The Lord has chosen to work through prayer, in order to teach His children to talk and depend fully on Him!

One of the famous sayings of Christians, “*All I can do for you is pray.*”

What believers are saying without realizing it is, “*All I can do is go to the Almighty, All powerful, Creator of the universe.*”

The One who placed the stars in the sky and calls them by name and “*All I can do, is go to the only One who is able to answer.*”

These early church members trusted in the Lord, not only to hear their prayers and petitions, but they trusted Him to answer them.

James 4:2 you do not have because you do not ask.

James 4:3 You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures. NKJV

God answers every single prayer from His children, no matter what!

His answers are given in His time, for His reasons, according to His will and good pleasure. Sometimes the answer is yes, sometimes no, and sometimes wait!

Isaiah 40:31 those who wait on the LORD Shall renew their strength; They shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.

Of course, we don't always understand His ways, but we need to believe He is working out His plan for His glory and our good!

That kind of thinking is called faith, Trusting God! God doesn't need our advice, but He wants our heart and allegiance!

The purpose of prayer is to show us, that He who is in charge, loves us, and has no plans to harm us with His decisions.

Prayer helps us communicate with the Lord and then helps us discover what the Lord wants to accomplish for us.

Our prayers do not change God's mind, they **transform** our mind, to think like Him.

Psalm 37:4 Delight yourself also in the LORD, And He shall give you the desires of your heart.

Psalm 37:5 Commit your way to the LORD, trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass. NKJV

The heart that delights itself in the Lord starts to desire what God desires. Then we have real fellowship with the Lord.

We finally begin to realize His will is best for us, we can trust Him for our future, and we get the things that delight our heart.

E.M. Bounds said, "*What a church needs today is not more or better machinery, new organizations, or novel methods...But men whom the Holy Spirit can use, men of prayer.*

The Holy Spirit does not flow through methods, but through men; He does not anoint methods or plans, but people of prayer.

Do you want to be used by the Holy Spirit? Do you want to be part of an amazing church? We must tap into our power source!

III. *Give thanks.*

Read *1 Thessalonians 5:18a*

Philippians 4:6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; NKJV

Give thanks for all things, *how?* ...Because we know that God knows the future, and He is going to work all things out for His glory and for my good, so we should be thankful.

As Christ followers, we need to guard our hearts against the “entitlement” mindset and become set apart for the Lord!

We are blessed to live in the land of plenty, and as a result, we tend to become complacent and start to feel as if all the blessings we receive are somehow owed to us.

“*Entitlement*” leads to un-thankfulness, and as Christ-followers, we need to guard our hearts against an unthankful attitude.

When it comes to being *thankful*, “attitude is everything.”

The attitude we carry through life is of paramount importance because it demonstrates the gratitude, we have towards the God who loves us and has saved us.

pri.org said, “*Grateful people who count their blessings are more likely to exercise, more likely to get better sleep.*

Grateful people are less likely to have physical complaints, with an overall healthier and happier life.”

There is even research that suggests when you have a sense of appreciation, your heart rhythms are more coherent and smoother, which of course is healthier.

The medical field agrees, *thankfulness* is a **heart** matter.

A thankful heart is a positive heart and the *Encyclopedia of Natural Medicine* states that the largest part of your overall health is from your mental health.

Having positive mental health or a positive mental attitude (PMA) gives us the motivation to do the best we can and to always strive to do better.

Having a great quality of life begins with being thankful, as our attitude becomes our way of life.

People who are thankful enjoy life more because they are not always angry, and they are content with what God has **provided**.

IV. Discovering God's will for your life.

Read *1 Thessalonians 5:18b*

Paul tells us to do these things because it is the *will of **God** in Christ Jesus for you.*

Paul also said in *1 Corinthians 6:19 do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?*

1 Corinthians 6:20 For you were bought at a price; therefore, glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.

How can we discover the Lord's will for our lives?

Romans 12:1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.

Romans 12:2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

Because of all the mercies God has given us, we should give ourselves fully to Him as a living sacrifice!

For those who claim to follow Jesus, a “***Living Sacrifice***” is someone who **willingly** places themselves on the Altar, to actively do the work and will of God.

When Jesus offered Himself as our offering on the cross, He fulfilled the righteous requirements of the Law on our behalf.

There is no longer a need for animal sacrifices. He covered our sin, made peace between us and God, and paid for all our sin.

The Cross is how we become “***Holy, acceptable***” to the Lord.

The problem with a ***Living Sacrifice*** on the Altar is they tend to climb off of the Altar from time to time. Paul is saying, “*Go back, and continually place ourselves on the Altar of God.*”

We not only need to place ourselves on the Altar of God daily but, we also need to examine our walk and willingly place ourselves on the Altar, moment by moment!

This is the picture of a Spirit filled walk of a believer, which means dying to self and living for Christ, moment by moment.

When a person comes to Christ by faith and accepts His free Gift of Salvation, the Lord cleanses them by His shed blood.

When a Christ follower gets tired of striving to earn God's favor, only to get frustrated with failure...

...they are to offer themselves to God as a "***Living Sacrifice***". It is a "***Reasonable service***" or an act of worship. (***Rom 12:2 NIV***)

Why does Paul call this act reasonable or logical?

Because the Lord's wisdom is greater than our own, and we should show Him homage and seek His counsel. This is not legalistic, nor is this the Lord being rigid and stern.

This command to offer the Lord our bodies and live for Him comes from the heart of a loving Father who desires us to...

...take care of the Temple where He lives and to stop hurting ourselves with sin, as we enjoy the Abundant Life, He gave us.

Sin harms and sin separates us from God, but the forgiveness of Christ brings freedom and life. Being a ***Living Sacrifice*** is reasonable in light of who the Lord is and all He has done.

How amazing, someone can be a "***Living sacrifice***" able to do the Lord's work. The Lord can use anything or anybody to accomplish His plans, yet He chooses fallible people!

“Don’t be conformed to this world, but be transformed”, according to *thefreedictionary.com*...

The word ***conformed*** means “*to be or become similar in form, nature or character.*” (*thefreedictionary.com*)

In other words, do not become like those in the world. Do not get sucked into the ways of the world.

JB Phillips says, “*Don’t let the world squeeze you into its mold.*”

To ***be transformed*** means your mind is no longer dominated by your flesh. “***Transformed***” in ***Romans 12***, is “*metamorphoo*” and it is where we get the English word metamorphosis.

This word “***transformed***” means to be changed in structure or composition, which is the change that occurs when a caterpillar becomes a butterfly.

When a person receives Christ, an amazing metamorphosis takes place within their hearts.

Unlike a butterfly, a Christian often does not look any different on the outside, but they are completely different on the inside.

By the way, if the butterfly doesn’t struggle to get itself out the cocoon, it will never have the strength to fly or survive. We grow through struggles, but usually not during times of peace.

Again, Paul said, “***You are not your own; you were bought at a price***”. In the song, “*Here I am to worship*”, the lyrics read, “*I’ll never know how much it cost; to see my sin upon that cross*”.

The price Jesus paid to redeem dead, sinful, fallen man was the ultimate sacrifice, but *why did He want to purchase us back?*

The Lord created us, first for His glory, and He also created us in His image.

We were created for the Lord's purposes, to fellowship with Him, to worship Him, and enjoy the life He gave us.

Left to our own vices and decision making, we would never fulfill the plans the Lord has for us. So again, ***you are not your own; you were bought at a price.***

God doesn't cause sin, the fall of man and the enemy cause sin.

Because the Lord is sovereign and knows the outcome of everything, He uses trials, suffering, relationships, and blessings to conform us into the masterpiece He made us to be.

Once we are saved, we become a new creation, with a new identity and with a **completely new way of thinking!!!**

So ***“Don't let the world squeeze you into its mold any longer.”***

Finally, Paul says in *Romans 12:2*, ***“That you may prove or “know” what the acceptable and perfect will of God is”.***

The New International Version says, ***“Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is...” (Romans 12:2)***

The word ***“know”*** is not used as an intellectual *know*, but we *know* God's will intimately, like the way Adam ***“knew”*** Eve.

You will always **remain** in the center of God's will, as you give yourself as a "*Living sacrifice*" to Him.

If a person's heart is focused on the Lord, and He has first place in their heart, they will naturally want to fulfill His will.

Once a believer is sure of the calling of God, they go and serve Him. An amazing metamorphosis takes place in their hearts.

Deuteronomy 14:2b the LORD has chosen you to be his treasured possession. NIV

That's how it is for God. He created us, He owns us, but we were sold to sin. Jesus died to purchase us back and when we accept His free gift, we belong to Him.

V. Practical Application.

Being obedient to God doesn't mean life will always be easy.

We live in a fallen world, so bad things happen because sin entered the world. But the Lord uses all things in the life of His called-out believers for His glory and for our good.

As we obediently follow Jesus' will for our life, we realize He has a plan, even during the trials and desert moments of life.

Why does Jesus allow His followers to go through trials?

- The Lord allows trials in our lives to **mature** us spiritually.

You can know all the scripture and promises of God, but they are not fully known by us, until we rely on and trust in them.

Trials can cause us to rely on Him, which will cause maturity.

- The Lord allows trials in our lives to **strengthen** us.

All through Church history, the church was only on fire when it was facing adversity. Without adversity in the Church, the Church was apathetic.

Human nature reverts back to reliance upon self until something that is too big for us to handle occurs and then we have to rely on the Lord again as He strengthens us.

- The Lord allows trials in our lives to **prove** Himself faithful.

If we never went through trials, we would never find out that His promises are true. On the other side of trials, we see...

Romans 8:28 we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. NKJV

God is in control. There are no accidents. He is faithful.

- The Lord's purpose for us during trials is to **conform** us into the image of Jesus Christ.

Romans 8:29 For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. NKJV

We look at the here and now, but the Lord sees the big picture.

Trials and suffering can be used by God to prepare us for a special task. God may be getting you ready for something.

That was the case with Joseph as the Lord was preparing him to be a great world leader, and “*to save many people alive.*”

The Lord knows every tear we cry, and He will never waste one moment of trial or suffering His children experience.

Part of trusting the Lord is trusting Him during the trials and suffering in life. God uses these experiences to transform us.

Sometimes God is glorified by removing the problem but there are times when God is glorified by allowing the trial and teaching us to worship Him during the desert times of life.

Sometimes, we are allowed to go through a trial in order to bring hope to someone else who will go through the same thing later.

You should comfort others with the comfort you have been comforted with by the Lord.

Whatever you are going through, the Lord will give you what you need when you need it, because He is in control.

The Lord allows desert place experiences to help us enjoy the mountaintop. There are purposes in the trials and deserts in your life. Some we will come to know, and some we will never know.

But you are not alone. He will never leave you nor forsake you. God is in the desert with you!

So, rejoice in the Lord always! Again, I say rejoice!