

ALWAYS THANK GOD

In Thessalonians 5:16-24, Paul reviews for us what “God’s will” for us is “in Christ Jesus.” These are not man-made guidelines. They are from God Himself. The world will scoff at many of these guidelines as being nonsense, or as being impossible, or as restricting one’s freedom too much, but for those who are “in Christ Jesus,” they are vital and the way of true freedom and happiness.

It might seem impossible to live a life in which one is “always joyful.” It is easy to be joyful in good times, but what about all the trials and tribulations that cause us sorrow?

For the person who belongs to Christ through faith there is joy even in sorrow. Why? Because he knows that Christ rules heaven and earth, so the sorrow that enters his life is not a matter of blind fate. Anything that causes us sorrow is something our Saviour has permitted to come only to serve our good. Sorrows draw us closer to Jesus (Romans 5:3-5); they purify our faith like gold is refined in fire (1 Peter 1:7); they provide us with opportunities to confess before others the hope that is in us (1 Peter 3:13-15). There is, however, one thing sorrow cannot do. It can never, never separate us from God’s love (Romans 8:39). God’s Spirit helps us and prays for us in our weaknesses, and we know God will keep His promises to watch over us and care for us in our sorrows.

So we can “consider it pure joy... whenever [we] face trials” (James 1:2). There was little in the early Christian church in which most people today would find much joy. The believers were persecuted. Most of them were poor. Still those early Christians had a joy in Christ that nothing and no one could take away.

It might also seem impossible, and even nonsensical, to most people that one should “pray without ceasing.” How can a person pray nonstop without taking time out at least to eat and to sleep?

When Paul urges constant prayer, he is not suggesting that we sit at all times with hands folded and heads bowed in conscious prayer. The Christian either consciously or unconsciously commits all things at all times to Him who cares for us. When this is the inward spirit of a person through faith, he will also express it outwardly in words of petition, praise, and thanks.

Often we are quick to ask God for things we need but then forget to thank Him when He answers our request. Ten lepers came to Jesus asking to be healed. Only one returned to give thanks! May Jesus’ sad question “Where are the nine?” (Luke 17:17) remind us how pleased He is to receive our thanks. Let us never forget to thank Him for all His blessings!