"SPIRITUAL CONSISTENCY"

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

4-8-2026

*** We must always remember that <u>consistency is God's desire</u>.**

I. God Desires Consistency In Our <u>Rejoicing</u> (V. 16)

II. God Desires Consistency In Our <u>Prayer Life</u> (V. 17)

III. God Desires Consistency In Our <u>Giving of Thanks</u> (V. 18)

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INTRODUCTION:

What is God's will for you?

What is it that God desires from us as His children? What can we give to God that would please His heart?

READ I Thess. 5:16-18

V. 18

For "this" is the will of God.

The word "this" refers to the three imperatives stated previously.

In the commands found in verses 16-18, that which God is emphasizing is not the words "rejoice," "pray," or "give thanks," but rather the words "evermore," "without ceasing," and "in everything."

(NOTE: these modifiers come before the verbs in the Greek)

It's relatively easy to rejoice, but to always rejoice is not so easy.

To pray is not such a great demand; what is remarkable is the command to "without ceasing" pray.

To give thanks is not too much to ask, but to "in everything" give thanks is another story.

What God desires of us is consistency.

There is too much "fair weather" Christianity today.

Too much "on/off" "up/down" "in the valley or on the mountaintop" Christianity.

"Consistency" = faithfulness; to do something without fail; to be steady, day in and day out; to be like clockwork.

In Verses 16-18, God outlines for us a "trio" of internal experiences that we are to be involved in consistently.

*** We must always remember that consistency is God's desire.**

I. GOD DESIRES CONSISTENCY IN OUR REJOICING (v. 16)

"Evermore" = always

It's easy to rejoice when things are going smooth; when circumstances are favorable; when our agenda is falling into line as planned.

But what happens to our joy when trials fall, when opposition arises, when suffering knocks at our door? (cp. Ja. 1:2ff)

The command "rejoice always" is remarkable when you consider what the Thess. believers had already gone through (1:6; 2:14; 3:2-4).

Peter rejoiced that he had the privilege to suffer shame for Christ (Acts 5:41).

What keeps us from rejoicing? ANSWER: A bad reaction to bad circumstances.

If you study the life of Paul, you find a man who was consistent. He had joy when he was abased and when he abounded (Phil. 4:12). He could rejoice when he was out preaching the Gospel freely, and when he was whipped, chained, and imprisoned for reaching the Gospel (Acts 16:25).

For Paul, suffering and rejoicing were not mutually exclusive.

He knew that the Christians could have both at the same time. Though these two human experiences are seemingly contradictory or paradoxical, Paul could rejoice while suffering *SEE II Cor. 6:4-10 **v. 10).

Was Paul a "blind optimist"?

Did he merely believe in the "power of positive thinking?" NO.

Unlike the man-centered theologians of today, he had a Biblical basis for his positive attitude.

How did Paul and how can we rejoice no matter what?

Paul had full confidence in three facts about his Lord Jesus Christ:

1. He was assured of God's unwavering love for him

   Gal. 2:20 - I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

   "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? [shall] tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:35-39).

2. He knew that God had sovereign control over his life

   Acts 9:14-15 - But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name s sake.

   Acts 18:9-10 Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city.

   Acts 20:24 But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.

   Peter had the same confidence: 1 Peter 4:19 Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator.

3. He knew that All things work together for good in God's perfect will (Romans 8:28)

SEE II Cor. 4:16-18.

a. Paul had a daily spiritual renewal (v. 16)
"Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong." (II Cor. 12:10).

b. Paul knew the final score (v. 17)
"For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Rom. 8:18).

HYMN - "It Will Be Worth It All When We See Jesus."

c. Paul kept his eyes on the eternal (v. 18). He lived for Christ and His Church.
"Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for His Body's sake, which is the church" (Col. 1:24).

Polycarp was an early Christian martyr and bishop of Smyrna, living from approximately A.D. 69 to A.D. 155. He is known for his strong faith and his direct connection to the Apostle John, making him a significant figure in early Christianity.
During his trial for his faith, the proconsul urged Polycarp to deny Christ to save his life. Polycarp's response emphasized his unwavering faith and loyalty to Jesus, whom he had served faithfully for 86 years.

“Eighty and six years have I served Christ, nor has He ever done me any harm. How, then, could I blaspheme my King who saved Me?....I bless Thee for deigning me worthy of this day and this hour that I may be among Thy martyrs and drink the cup of my Lord Jesus Christ.”
Polycarp (Bishop of Smyna)

--They can take away our money, but not our riches in Christ.

--Our earthly house may burn down, but our heavenly home will not.

--Our present health may deteriorate, but our future body is incorruptible.

--They may kill the body, but not the soul.

When John Chrysostom (ca. 347-407) was brought before the empress Eudoxia, she threatened him with banishment if he insisted on his Christian independence as a preacher.

"You cannot banish me, for this world is my Father's house."

"But I will kill you," said the empress.

"No, you cannot, for my life is hid with Christ in God," said John.

"I will take away your treasures."

"No, you cannot, for my treasure is in heaven and my heart is there."

"But I will drive you away from your friends and you will have no one left."

"No, you cannot, for I have a Friend in heaven from whom you cannot separate me.

I defy you, for there is nothing you can do to harm me."

We need to rejoice in times of need and in times of abundance.

We need to rejoice when life is easy and when it's difficult.

We need to rejoice when people respond readily to the Gospel, and when they don't respond to our witness.

As long as we are doing right (obeying God), we can know that God is working, whether external circumstances reveal it or not.

This requires FAITH. The Christian who remains in depression and sadness is in sin, because in one way or another he is disbelieving (mistrusting) God.

II. GOD DESIRES CONSISTENCY IN OUR PRAYER LIFE (v. 17)

"The prayer of the upright is His delight" (Prov. 15:8)

God is pleased (receives joy) when we pray.

Those who please God even more are those who consistently pray.

To pray "without ceasing" does not mean to pray non-stop or to be on our knees 24 hours a day.

Such an interpretation would be inconsistent with Paul's own claim that he prayed "unceasingly" (Rom. 1:9; I Th. 1:2-3) while he was still a busy missionary (church planter) (Hiebert, p. 241).

We need a spirit of unceasing prayer; we need to be in constant communion with God (throughout the day; with our eyes open; while we do our daily jobs), wherever we are and whatever we do.

God is not speaking here about prayer int he sense of bowing the head, closing the eyes, moving the lips, but about the lifting up of our hearts to Him in repeated utterances throughout our daily routine.

Though we do need seasons of prayer and set-apart appointments with God like Daniel and David, our praying should not be limited by time and place or to set hours of prayer.

When God brings someone to your mind, that is a time to pray.

When God burdens you with spiritual need, that is a time to pray.

When you are worried, that is a time to pray.

When you think a sinful thought, that is a time to pray and confess it.

Throughout the day, pause and pray.

III. GOD DESIRES CONSISTENCY IN OUR GIVING OF THANKS (v. 18)

Ps. 92:1-2 - "It is a good thing for us to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises unto thy name, oh Most High. To shew forth thy lovingkindness in the morning, and thy faithfulness every night."

A. THANKING GOD FOR OTHERS

Paul begins most of his Epistles by saying how he thanks God for fellow Christians (Rom. 1:8; I Cor. 1:4; Eph. 1:16; Phil. 1:3; Col. 1:3; Philem. 4)

B. THANK GOD FOR MEALS

ILLUS: How Samuel gave thanks (I Sam. 9:13)

ILLUS: How Jesus, when on earth, gave thanks (Mt. 15:36; 26:26)

ILLUS: How Paul, even in front of the heathen, gave thanks- Acts 27:35

Other exhortations to give thanks - Rom. 14:6; I Cor. 10:30; I Tim. 4:3.

We are not to limit our thanks giving to the fourth Thursday in November (We are not to restrict our thanks giving to "Thanksgiving")

C. THANK GOD FOR GOOD TIMES AND HARD TIMES

The only way we can give thanks for everything is by once again knowing God's unwavering Love for us and His sovereign control over all things for His Glory and ultimately for my good.

How can we thank God for everything? (Where is our power to always be thankful?)

1. Letting God take control

   a. God can control us when we are following Christ (Eph. 5:1-4) NOTE: V. 4 - Our tongue is not for foolish, unclean speech but for thanksgiving.

   b. God can control us when we are filled with His Spirit (Eph. 5:18-20)

      When the Spirit is in control we can do that which does not come naturally.

      Thanking God for trying, tough times does not come natural or easy. Even being thankful for good times and expressing it does not come natural.

Why should we thank God for everything? (What is our motive to always be thankful?)

2. Knowing God is in control

   a. Remember: God is in control in good times. TURN TO Col. 3:17.

      Because what we do for God is accomplished through the power of Jesus (Jn. 15:5), we are to thank God the Father by Jesus.

      (Even our power to thank God comes by means of Jesus).

   b. Remember: God is in control in hard times. TURN TO James 1:2ff.

      The trials we experience are for our spiritual maturity.

      1. God is teaching us about ourselves "Trying of your faith" = testing to prove genuineness.

      2. God is producing patience and completeness

CONCLUSION:

During the Iran war, on “Good Friday” April 3, 2026, after a seriously wounded weapons officer ejected from the F-15E fighter jet whose call sign was “Dude Bravo 44,” climbed a 7,000-foot ridge, hid in a crevice for safety and submitted a short, unusual message over the radio — “God is good,” a US defense official told Axios.
The soldier survived for nearly 48 hours in hostile territory before being rescued in a complex operation involving US special operations forces on “Resurrection Sunday” (April 5th).

V. 18

What God commands can only be done by those "in Christ Jesus" (believers).

An unbeliever does not have the desire or ability to rejoice, pray, and give thanks unconditionally.

"In Christ Jesus" = Our union with Christ gives us the ability to perform what God asks of us.

Remember, though it seems hard to be consistent in performing these activities, God never demands that which He does not give the power to perform.

This power comes only as you abide "in Christ."

Rom. 8:28 - "All things work together for good . . ."