

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18
Duties of Believers – Rejoice

1

Introduction

If God's flock is to be healthy, above all else the relationship between the sheep and the Great Shepherd, Jesus Christ the Son of God, must be right.

For that to happen, believers must be mindful of their responsibilities to worship and serve the Lord.

Paul gives three exhortations to believers. Believers are to have constant joyfulness, constant prayerfulness, and to have constant thankfulness.

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1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

Rejoice always, ¹⁷ pray without ceasing, ¹⁸ in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for
you

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Rejoice Always

1 Thessalonians 5:16

Rejoice always

One needs to have a proper understanding of Christian joy to properly understand this command. It may seem strange to be told to **rejoice always** when life is filled with so many difficulties and sorrow. Paul understood this and knew that **joy must transcend sorrow**. That even in the midst of pain and suffering one must continually focus on true joy. Listen to what Paul says in **2 Cor. 6:10 - "sorrowful yet always rejoicing."**

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Such a focus is possible because **Biblical joy comes from God**, not merely from a superficial emotional response to positive circumstances (cf. Phil. 3:3). Christian joy constantly flows from what the believer continually **knows to be true about God** and about his eternal, saving relationship to Him—**regardless of circumstances** (Ps. 16:11; 68:3; Luke 2:10–11; 24:52; Acts 16:34; Rom. 5:2, 11; 1 Peter 1:8). **Supernatural joy is from the Holy Spirit and Paul listed it as an aspect of spiritual fruit** (Gal. 5:22; cf. Rom. 14:17).

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The phrase translated **rejoice always** literally reads “**at all times be rejoicing**” and emphasizes that truly joyful Christians will always have a deep-seated **confidence in God’s sovereign love and mighty power on their behalf**, and in His providential working of all things according to His perfect plan. Therefore, no event or circumstance in the Christian’s life, apart from sin, can or should diminish his true joy.

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Rejoice Always

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There are several reasons for a believer to have Biblical joy.

1. **Believers should rejoice always in appreciation for God's righteous character**, which, even in trouble, is demonstrated faithfully to believers. The psalmist declared,
 "The Lord *is* my strength and my shield;
 My heart trusted in Him, and I am helped;
 Therefore my heart greatly rejoices,
 And with my song I will praise Him" (Ps. 28:7).

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2. **Believers should have constant joy out of appreciation for Christ's redemptive work**, which derives from a gracious, loving, merciful, and compassionate God (Luke 2:10; 10:20; Rom. 5:1–2, 11; 1 Peter 1:8–9).
3. **Believers should have constant joy because of God's faithful instruction**. Jesus states in John 15:11, "These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and *that* your joy may be full."
4. **Believers should rejoice in appreciation of the Holy Spirit's ministry on their behalf** (Acts 10:44; Rom. 14:17; cf. 8:14–27).

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5. Believers should rejoice always because of the **spiritual blessings they possess** (cf. Eph. 1:3–4; Phil. 4:13, 19; Col. 2:9–14; 2 Peter 1:3).

6. Believers should have joy in God's providence as **He orchestrates everything for good** (Rom. 8:28–30; James 1:2–4).

7. Believers should be joyful out of gratitude for **the promise of future glory** (cf. Ps. 16:8–11; Matt. 5:12; Luke 10:20; 1 Cor. 1:7; Phil. 1:18–21; 3:20; Jude 24).

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8. **Answered prayer** should always be a source of joy (Pss. 66:20; 116:1, 17; 118:21; John 16:24).

9. Believers should have an appreciation for **the gift of God's Word** (Col. 3:16; cf. Pss. 19:7–11; 119:14, 111, 162; Jer. 15:16).

10. The **privilege of genuine fellowship** should bring continual joy to the believer (1 Thess. 3:9; 2 Tim. 1:4; Philem. 7; 2 John 12).

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11. True believers should express joy at the **saving proclamation of the gospel**, as the early church did: “being sent on their way by the church, they passed through Phoenicia and Samaria, describing the conversion of the Gentiles; and they caused great joy to all the brethren” (Acts 15:3).

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So What ...

1 Thessalonians 5:16

Rejoice always

The joyful Christian is more concerned about glorifying God than about avoiding temporal difficulties (Rom. 8:18; cf. Heb. 11:13–16, 25). He thinks more of his spiritual riches and eternal glory than he does any present condition or poverty (1 Peter 1:6–7; 4:13; James 5:11; cf. 2 Cor. 6:4–10; 1 Peter 5:10).

Believers who live like that will fulfill the command to **rejoice always**.

What are you joyful for?

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