

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

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.

2

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.

3

Rejoice Always

1 Thessalonians 5:17

Pray without ceasing

We have learned that we are to “rejoice always.” This joy is not based in circumstances but from our relationship with Jesus and the Father. They are in control, and we are secure in their love. Joyful believers will also be prayerful believers. Those who live their Christian lives in joyful dependency on God will continually recognize their own insufficiency and therefore constantly be in an attitude of prayer.

4

Pray Always

1 Thessalonians 5:17

Pray without ceasing

We also learned that we are to pray without ceasing. This is not saying we spend 24/7 on our knees, but that there should be an attitude of prayer behind all we do. Walking in prayerful fellowship with the Father should be as natural as breathing. It is not our will that we should be seeking, but His!

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Always Thankful

1 Thessalonians 5:18

in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

Being unthankful is the very essence of the unregenerate heart. The apostle Paul identified unbelievers as ungrateful: “although they knew God [conscience and general revelation], they did not glorify *Him* as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened” (Rom. 1:21).

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But when God regenerates an individual, He produces a new heart that longs to fellowship with God and **in everything give thanks**. That simple, direct statement allows believers no excuses to be ungrateful. “**In everything**” refers to all that occurs in life. No matter what struggles, trials, testings, or situations that occur in the lives of Christians (with the obvious exception of personal sins), they are to **give thanks** (Acts 5:41; cf. James 1:2–3; 1 Peter 1:6–9).

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Scripture is filled with the expectation of thankfulness.

1. **Believers should be thankful for God’s unchanging attributes**. God is **good** (Ps 34:8), He is **faithful** (Lam 3:23), **compassionate** (Ps 145:8-9), **merciful** (Ps 103:8), **holy** (Isaiah 6:3), **loving** (1 John 4:8), **just** (Deut 32:3-4), **forgiving** (1 John 1:9), **almighty** (Luke 1:27), **longsuffering** (2 Peter 3:9), **kind** (Luke 6:35), **caring** (1 Peter 5:7), **gracious** (John 3:16) and much more.

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2. **Believers should be thankful for their salvation.** This is God's greatest gift to humankind through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. We didn't deserve it, nor could we earn it. Yet God, who is rich in mercy, chose to forgive our sins and give us eternal life. Now we are free from the curse of sin and get to escape the punishment and death we deserved. A lifetime would never be enough to thank God for this precious gift!

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3. **Believers should be thankful for God's love** (Ps 107:21; 1 John 3:1). God chose to love us even when we were fighting against Him. It is a love that drove Jesus to die in our place. It is a love that adopts us into His family and makes us co-heirs with Christ. Nothing will ever separate us from that love, and it will endure forever. Believers should be grateful for God's example of love.

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4. **Believers should be thankful for God's presence** (Ps 140:13; Matt 28:20). He is always with us. God cares so much about us that He stays with us throughout our lives, and never gets bored with us and He is always ready to listen to us and guide us. And one day, we will get to stand in His physical presence and see Him face-to-face. How wonderful!

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5. **Believers should be thankful for God's help and provision** (Ps 28:7; Matt. 6:31-33). No matter what happens in life, we can thank God that He will provide for us. God promises to meet all our needs and to help us in our time of need when we approach His throne of grace in prayer.

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6. Believers should be thankful for our sanctification

(Col 1:12, 22). God has nailed our former selves to the cross. Not only are we a new creation, but He is making us like Him – holy and perfect. He intentionally puts us in situations that will transform us until the final day when He finishes the good work He began in us. And on that day, we will stand holy and blameless before Him (Colossians 1:22).

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So What ...

1 Thessalonians 5:18

in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

Paul's states, "for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus for you." This includes all three commands in this passage. It is the will of God that all those who are **in Christ Jesus** should express constant joy, prayer, and thankfulness. God is with us and enables us to live in direct communion with Him. Let each of us consider our own lives and determine not to live in the despair that consumes the world, but a life that is trusting in God for All Things.

Take a moment today, and make a list of all that you are thankful and prayerfully express that thankfulness to God with joy!

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