**Lesson 8**

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18[[1]](#footnote-1)

**Verse 16**

Rejoice always;

1. **What a beautiful way we get to live our lives, constantly rejoicing exceedingly. How easy it is to fall into the rut of complaining about just about everything.**

***Rejoice:*** *1) to rejoice, be glad, 2) to rejoice exceedingly, 3) to be well, thrive-Thayer*

***Always:*** *every when, that is, at all times: - always (-s), ever (-more)-Strongs*

*Thus, it is especially important in the context of the more saccharine Christianity of a later time to note that Paul’s emphasis here is not so much on the experience of joy, but on the active expression of it. They are to “rejoice always,” which, as Philippians 4:4 bears out, means not simply to express joy in general, but specifically to “rejoice in the Lord.” Fee*

*Our feelings follow our thoughts. If we think on negative things, whether real or imagined, we will have negative emotions. If we think on the wonderful things God has done for us, we will have positive emotions, regardless of our physical circumstances (Romans 8:6). Rejoicing at all times has nothing to do with what is currently happening to us; it has everything to do with focusing on what has already happened to us and what has been promised to us in Christ. AWMI*

* 1. **REJOICE EXCEEDINGLY in persecution.** No, persecution is NEVER FAIR. It is NEVER PLEASANT. It HURTS DEEPLY especially since it often is done by people we love. Yet, our response is one of joy.

***Matthew 5:11-12***

*Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake.****12Rejoice and be exceedingly glad****, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*

***Luke 6:22-23***

*Blessed are you when men hate you,  
    And when they exclude you,  
    And revile you, and cast out your name as evil,  
    For the Son of Man’s sake.  
23****Rejoice in that day and leap for joy!*** *For indeed your reward is great in heaven,  
    For in like manner their fathers did to the prophets.*

***Acts 5:40-42***

*And when they had called for the apostles and beaten*them, *they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. 41 So they departed from the presence of the council,* ***rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name****. 42 And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus*as*the Christ.*

* 1. **REJOICE EXCEEDINGLY that you are not under the law.**

***Acts 15:23-30***

*They wrote this*letter*by them:*

*The apostles, the elders, and the brethren,*

*To the brethren who are of the Gentiles in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia:*

*Greetings.*

*24 Since we have heard that some who went out from us have* ***troubled you*** *with words, unsettling your souls, saying,* ***“*You must*be circumcised and keep the law” —to whom we gave no*such*commandment****— 25 it seemed good to us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, 26 men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. 27 We have therefore sent Judas and Silas, who will also report the same things by word of mouth. 28 For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things:29 that you abstain from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well.*

*Farewell.*

*30 So when they were sent off, they came to Antioch; and when they had gathered the multitude together, they delivered the letter. 31****When they had read it, they rejoiced over its encouragement.***

* 1. **REJOICE EXCEEDINGLY with others in their joy.**

***Romans 12:15***

*Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.*

* 1. **REJOICE EXCEEDINGLY in the Lord.**

***Philippians 4:4***

*Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!*

**Verse 17**

**Pray** without ceasing;

1. **A. The topic of prayer can either be a reason for rejoicing or a complete and utter burden.**

**Pray:** to *pray* *to* God, that is, *supplicate (request)*, *worship:* - pray (X earnestly, for), make prayer.

1. **The proximity of REJOICING EXCEEDINGLY with prayer should not be ignored. The fact that the next verse is about giving thanks in everything is also significant. Prayer is not the nastiness sandwiched between rejoicing and thanksgiving. It is the savory contents. Rejoicing, prayer, and thanksgiving are beautifully linked. Prayer is not a law, but a glorious honor, blessing, and privilege. It’s an honor because God hears. It is a blessing because He answers. It is a privilege because it is our right as His children to commune with Him, to bring our personal requests to Him, and to pray for others.**
2. **Prayer isn’t something we do as an obligation. We do it because GOD HAS PROMISED TO ANSWER.**

[***Hebrews 11:6***](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Hebrews%2011:6&version=NKJV)

*But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.*

[***Matthew 21:22***](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+21:22&version=NKJV)

*And whatever things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive.*

***Matthew 18:18-20***

*Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. 19 Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven. 20 For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them*

1. ***Some have cast dispersion on the idea of asking God for something, but the definition of prayer includes not only worship but also making requests of God. God WANTS us to ask, not only so that we can receive, but to give us joy. Again, we see the connection of prayer and rejoicing.***

***John 16:23-24***

*Most assuredly, I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in My name He will give you. 24 Until now you have asked nothing in My name.* ***Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.***

1. **Yes, of course, prayer is not for the purpose of lust.**

[***James 4:3***](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=James+4:3&version=NKJV)

*You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures.*

**Verse 17**

Pray **without ceasing**;

1. **B. What does it mean to pray “without ceasing”?**

**Definition:** Adverb from G88; *uninterruptedly*, that is, *without* *omission* (on an appropriate occasion): - without ceasing.- Strongs

**G88:** *unintermitted*, that is, *permanent:* - without ceasing, continual.-Strongs

**Amplified:** Be unceasing in prayer [praying perseveringly]

***Romans 1:8-10***

*First, I* ***thank*** *my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.****9****For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of His Son, that* ***without ceasing*** *I make mention of you always in my prayers,****10****making request if, by some means, now at last I may find a way in the will of God to come to you.*

1. **Paul is not talking about praying every second of everyday. He is not talking about praying an hour a day (quiet time, devotions, spiritual discipline). He is talking about continuing to pray and persevering in prayer.**
   1. ***It’s okay to pray about something more than once as long as you don’t fall into the mode of begging God. Often, after we have asked God for something, our continued prayer for the same thing takes on the form of thanksgiving for the answer. Notice again the pairing of thanksgiving and prayer.***

[***Colossians 4:2***](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Colossians+4:2&version=NKJV) ***NKJV (parenthesis ours)***

*Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant (to keep awake, watch-Strongs) in it with thanksgiving.*

1. **References to “prayer” in the Book of Acts**
   1. ***Praying together was the norm in the Early Church.***

**• After Jesus’ Accension**

[***Acts 1:14***](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts+1:14&version=NKJV)

*These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.*

[***Acts 2:42***](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts+2:42&version=NKJV)

*And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.*

• **Notice what the everyday Christian fellowship involved.**

**1) The apostles’ doctrine/teaching**

**2) Fellowship with each other**

**3) The breaking of bread-likely eating meals together and/or sharing the Lord’s supper together**

**4) Prayers (together)**

* 1. ***The disciples often prayed at set times and locations (and together).***

[***Acts 3:1***](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts+3:1&version=NKJV)

*Now Peter and John went up together to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour.*

[***Acts 16:13***](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts+16:13&version=NKJV)

*And on the Sabbath day we went out of the city to the riverside, where prayer was customarily made; and we sat down and spoke to the women who met there.*

[***Acts 16:16***](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts+16:16&version=NKJV)

*Now it happened, as we went to prayer, that a certain slave girl possessed with a spirit of divination met us, who brought her masters much profit by fortune-telling.*

* 1. ***If a specific need arose in the church, they prayed (and together).***

[***Acts 4:23***](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts+4:23&version=NKJV)***-31***

*And being let go, they went to their own*companions*and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said to them. 24 So when they heard that, they raised their voice to God with one accord and said: “Lord, You*are*God, who made heaven and earth and the sea, and all that is in them, 25 who by the mouth of Your servant David have said:*

*‘Why did the nations rage,  
And the people plot vain things?  
26 The kings of the earth took their stand,  
And the rulers were gathered together  
Against the Lord and against His Christ.’*

*27 “For truly against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together 28 to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done. 29****Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word,****30****by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus****.”*

*31 And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.*

[***Acts 12:5***](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts+12:5&version=NKJV)

*Peter was therefore kept in prison, but constant prayer was offered to God for him by the church.*

* 1. ***It would seem that the apostles felt a responsibility to prayer and the ministry of the gospel (word of God).***

[***Acts 6:1-4***](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts+6:4&version=NKJV)

*Now in those days, when*the number of*the disciples was multiplying, there arose a complaint against the Hebrews by the Hellenists, because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution. 2 Then the twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said, “It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables.  3 Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of*good*reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business; 4 but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word.*

1. **This is not to say that people did not pray individually. Paul mentions again and again the prayers he prayed. Here are a couple classics.**

***Ephesians 1:15-21***

*Therefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints,****16****do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers:****17****that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him,****18****the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,****19****and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power****20****which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places,****21****far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come.*

***Ephesians 3:14-19***

*For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,****15****from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,****16****that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man,****17****that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love,****18****may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height—****19****to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.*

1. **James shows us what earnest prayer is.**

***James 5:16-18***

*The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. 17 Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months. 18 And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit.*

***1 Kings 17:1***

*And Elijah the Tishbite, of the inhabitants of Gilead, said to Ahab, “As the Lord God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, except at my word.”*

***1 Kings 18:41-46 41***

*Then Elijah said to Ahab, “Go up, eat and drink; for there is the sound of abundance of rain.” 42 So Ahab went up to eat and drink. And Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; then he bowed down on the ground, and put his face between his knees, 43 and said to his servant, “Go up now, look toward the sea.” So he went up and looked, and said, “There is nothing.” And seven times he said, “Go again.” 44 Then it came to pass the seventh time, that he said, “There is a cloud, as small as a man’s hand, rising out of the sea!” So he said, “Go up, say to Ahab, ‘Prepare your chariot, and go down before the rain stops you.’”*

*45 Now it happened in the meantime that the sky became black with clouds and wind, and there was a heavy rain. So Ahab rode away and went to Jezreel. 46 Then the hand of the Lord came upon Elijah; and he girded up his loins and ran ahead of Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel.*

1. ***God is able to do MORE than we ask!***

***Ephesians 3:20-21***

*Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us,****21****to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.*

**Verse 18**

In everything give thanks; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.

1. **IN everything, not FOR everything. Logically, we do not give thanks FOR evil.**

*It is especially important to note that the modifier in this case does not say “for all things,” but “in all circumstances.” Fee*

*The question isn’t, “Why do bad things happen to good people?” but rather, “Why do bad things happen?” for bad things happen to all. The world is fallen, full of disease, driven by evil forces, and affected by people making wrong choices. That is why bad things happen. Consider this seldom asked question, “Why do good things happen?” Good things happen to all because God causes the sun to rise and the rain to fall (both blessings) on all people. “Every good and perfect gift” comes from Him and there are many who are His who do His will which is to love others. This is why good things happen to all. -C.D. Hildebrand, Are We Preaching “Another” Gospel?*

1. **No matter what happens to us in this life, God will work it together for our good. This does NOT mean that everything that happens is God’s will or that everything that happens has a divine purpose. It means that God can take even the awful things in our life and work them for our good. This is one reason we can give thanks.**

***Romans 8:28-32***

*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. 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. 30 Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified. 31 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? 32 He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?*

*The “this” in Paul’s concluding clause, “for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you,” is almost certainly intended to modify all three of the imperatives, not simply the giving of thanks in all circumstances. Fee*

1. Unless stated otherwise, all scripture is taken from the New American Standard Bible, **(NASB)**

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