

Pastor Bill's Ramblings

1 Thessalonians 5:16–19, 23-24 (ESV)

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the Spirit.

Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it.



GRACE and peace in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ!

As a follow up to last month's Grace Notes, my dad passed away on October 11, 2016. It was painful to lose him, but it was more painful to watch him suffer and I am glad that he knew Christ as his Lord and Savior and that he has a place in heaven. In 1st Thessalonians we find a benediction that actually runs from verses 12-24. In these verses we find a number of instructions for those who follow Jesus. First we are called to rejoice always. I do not know about you, but there are times when I find it very hard to rejoice. The first Sunday in January this year I noted that 2015 was a very tough year and I was looking forward to a year with a lot less heartaches. Unfortunately, 2016 seems to be running a very close race with 2015. I can honestly tell you that I do not rejoice in the things that have and are coming my way. What I can tell you is that I do rejoice in the fact that I have promises that Jesus walks with me through the shadow of death and other places and that He has promised me his peace and his joy. Not the "peace and joy" that the world offers but a deep peace and joy that surpasses all worldly understanding. I pray that in the midst of the life that sometimes seems to assail you, you may likewise be able to rejoice in the peace and joy Jesus freely offers.

Paul then instructs us to pray without ceasing. I used to picture this as being on my knees or at least my eyes closed and I felt that would be impossible, it is really tough to do driving around Columbus during rush hour! Yet whether you realize it or not you are always praying, though you may not

realize it. Praying is communicating with God and although you may think you have hung up from Him, God is always on the line. Everything you say, to your co-worker, to your friends, to the waiter, to the checkout person, to your family, everything is heard by God and is considered communication or praying with Him. I know there are times when I speak as if He is not in the room, yet He is always there. And yes even when you do not say things out loud, He is there and knows your thoughts, ouch! I hope He was taking a nap a couple of times in the past week. Yet if we truly follow Jesus we must realize that we communicate or pray without ceasing every moment of every day.

Paul then instructs us to give thanks in all circumstances. It is one thing to rejoice always because I can transcend the moment and rejoice in God and rejoice in the peace and joy He gives. I found it a little tough giving thanks in the midst of my father's death. However, as I reflected on my father's death, I found that I could give thanks for the blessing of my father, for all he taught me, for the way he loved me, for the way we had grown close in the last 20 years, for the way he loved his grandchildren and great grandchildren and especially for knowing that he knew Jesus as his Lord and Savior and that he was not afraid to die. I found that I could give thanks that dad was not suffering in this world. I can give thanks that in preaching his funeral a man gave his life to Christ during the service. Even in death my father touched a friend. I can give thanks knowing that my father, who hated rock and roll music was willing to help build a church based on contemporary worship. I asked him about that and he said even though he did not like the music he felt it was important to get the message of the Gospel to the younger generation and if contemporary worship would do that he would support it financially and with his regular attendance. My dad's life was a blessing in many ways and for that I give thanks.

We are entering the season of harvest and the time we celebrate Thanksgiving. I pray this month that you too will rejoice always, realize that you are praying without ceasing and find ways to give thanks in all circumstances. May the God of peace himself sanctify you completely...

Your Servant in Christ, *Pastor Bill*