

Mirror Ministries

Be Sure to Give Thanks

By Daphne Delay
devotional@mirroministries.org



"Brothers and sisters, we ask you to show your appreciation for those leaders who work among you and instruct you. We ask you to love them and think very highly of them because of the work they are doing. Live in peace

with each other. We encourage you, brothers and sisters, to instruct those who are not living right, cheer up those who are discouraged, help the weak, and be patient with everyone. Make sure that no one ever pays back one wrong with another wrong. Instead, always try to do what is good for each other and everyone else. Always be joyful. Never stop praying. Whatever happens, give thanks, because it is God's will in Christ Jesus that you do this. Don't put out the Spirit's fire. Don't despise what God has revealed. Instead, test everything. Hold on to what is good. Keep away from every kind of evil" (1 Thessalonians 5:12-22, God's Word Translation).

I've heard a lot of "Thanksgiving" messages, but I must confess that I think this one is the best! I know Pilgrims had not yet enjoyed a feast with the Indians at the time Paul wrote these words, but they ring true during this season nonetheless. And honestly, this is an exhortation for Believers all year long—not just during the 3rd or 4th week of November.

Paul said, "Whatever happens, give thanks, because it is God's will in Christ Jesus that you do this." It doesn't sound like he's making a suggestion; instead, he said, "...this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you" (NKJV).

The God's Word Translation said, "Whatever happens, give thanks..." Most other translations say, "In everything give thanks..." It's interesting, but the word everything really does mean just that. It means all the time, for whatever or whoever. It also literally means daily. I suppose the saying could apply here: Is your cup half full or half empty?

I'll be the first to admit that it's not easy to be happy everyday about everything that comes your way. But God didn't say we had to be happy about everything. He simply said, "...give thanks..." In other words, no matter what comes our way, it is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you and I to be thankful, not necessarily happy.

Another thing to note is when Paul said, "Whatever happens, give thanks..." he used a Greek word here which means to be grateful, to express gratitude, (and I love this one) especially to say grace at a meal. This is most interesting because we know Paul didn't have a clue about the American holiday called "Thanksgiving" when he spoke these words to the Thessalonians. Yet, we find a common thread between Paul's words and the true meaning of this time of year because the Pilgrims often celebrated days of thanksgiving as part of their Christian religion.

Before the feast, which held in 1621 to celebrate their first successful harvest, the Pilgrims often held days of prayer, not feasting, to celebrate and give thanks to God. Could it be that they were following Paul's instructions to the church?

I think, most likely, yes. And why not? They were devout Christians who had left their homeland to find religious freedom. They were determined to worship God freely without political influence. It is reported they declared the day they docked their boats on the shores of America as an annual day of thanksgiving. As soon as their feet touched the land, they had a Thanksgiving Service to express their gratitude to God. The Pilgrims had suffered a rough journey on the sea and many more trials still lay ahead of them, but they knew it was most important to stop and give thanks.

They must have viewed their cup as half-full.

Paul said, "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you" (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18). I heard a teaching on the word "rejoice" one time that I have never forgotten. It literally

means, "Remember Redemption!" In other words, our redemption is the pardon and forgiveness we received for our sins at salvation, therefore, rejoice means remember this!

And what a reason to rejoice! To "...pray without ceasing..." reminds us to have continual fellowship with God. Prayer is simply communication with God and

communication is the simple act of talking and listening. So to pray without ceasing isn't hard: you are either doing the talking or you are doing the listening.

So our instruction is this: "Rejoice [remember redemption] always, pray [talk and listen to God] without ceasing, and whatever happens [see your cup half-full and]

give thanks because it is God's will in Christ Jesus that you do this."

(Editor's Note: Seminole resident Daphne Delay is an author, speaker, and the founder of Mirror Ministries. More devotionals can be found at www.mirroministries.org.)



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