

Encouragement

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Good Morning Friend,

Be joyful always. Pray continually. Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. I Thessalonians 5:16-18

Let's call these three verses, **A TERRIFIC TRIAD**. You can easily memorize them. You can preach them. You can share them. Best of all you can live them.

JOY - *Be joyful always.* (5:16). Frequently we are exhorted to rejoice. Both the Old and the New Testaments nudge us to rejoice. As I study this theme in the Scriptures, I am impressed to see the many adjectives and adverbs that more fully describe this joy: *great* (I Kings 1:40); *inexpressible and glorious* (I Peter 1:8); *everlasting* (Isaiah 35:10); *overflowing* (II Corinthians 8:2); *fullness* (Psalms 16:11); *overjoyed* (Matt. 2:10). Joy was frequently on the lips of Jesus in teaching His followers to be people of joy. One of the most amazing blessings that He offers us is found in John 15:11 where He says we can actually have His joy in us . . . *My joy I give to you*. Joy is a contagious quality that can spread to others around us as we truly exude His joy in us. Not a light, fluffy thing . . . too often this is a counterfeit replica. We can truly have real joy at the inner core of our being. It is a part of the "fruit of the Spirit" (Galatians 5:22). Paul also tells us to *rejoice in the Lord always* (Philippians 4:4). I refer to this as a focused joy. It tells us that our joy is not in circumstances. Rather, it is rooted and sourced in Him.

PRAYER - *Pray continually.* (5:17). Edward Payton said: *Prayer is the first thing, the second thing, and the third thing necessary for a Christian worker. Pray, then, my dear brother, pray, pray and pray.* The late Dr. Bob Cook, former president of King's College, convincingly said . . . "Pray your way through the day." Both of these men caught the spirit of Paul's admonition to *pray continually*. Jesus stated the same admonition in Luke 18:1. We must believe that prayer is conversation with God. It is talking to Him and we can live in the spirit of prayer all day long. Again, as Cook says, "Pray your way through the day." Keep the conversation going day and night.

THANKSGIVING - *Give thanks in all circumstances.* (5:18). Gratitude does not come to any of us naturally. We must teach our kids to say 'thank you.' God, too, knows that we are not innately grateful so He reminds us frequently in the Word. Paul tells us to be grateful . . . *in all circumstances*.

Admittedly, that is a stretch beyond our comfort zone. It's easy when things are going well. It's easy when we are getting all that we want. But . . . *in all circumstances*? Yes, that's what the Word says. The Swedish hymn, THANKS TO GOD was written by August Storm. At age 37 he became crippled. In spite of several difficulties, he wrote the hymn which richly embodies the truth of verse 18 . . . *in all circumstances*. Some of the words are these . . .

Thanks for pleasant, balmy spring time, Thanks for dark and dreary fall.

Thanks for tears by now forgotten, Thanks for peace within my soul.

Thanks for pain and thanks for pleasure, Thanks for storms that I have weathered.

Thanks for roses by the wayside, Thanks for thorns their stems contain.

Gratitude begins on the inside with an attitude. It is expressed by our words . . . and also by our demeanor. Away with all grumbling and griping. Let gratitude begin and continue.

Indeed these verses are **A TERRIFIC TRIAD**. But note one more thing. I will begin with a question. Do you really want to know the will of God? Do you want to live in the will of God? Assuming your answer is 'yes,' these verses are for you. After Paul gives us these three exhortations, he says . . . *this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus* (verse 18). Yes . . . God's will for you is that you rejoice, pray, and give thanks . . . and that you do it 'all the time.' These three verses call us to a lifestyle. May it be my lifestyle. May it be yours, also.

Be encouraged,

Lareau Lindquist