

[1 Thessalonians 5:16-18](#) *“Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.”*

We are going to continue our look at 1 Thessalonians 5: 16 -18 this morning. However, before we move on to looking at what praying continually means for us, we are going to have a quick look at the plight of the believers that Paul was writing too and a brief recap on what we looked at last Sunday.

So, what were the circumstances of the Thessalonians believers that Paul was writing too. The Church in Thessaloniki was composed of both Jews and Gentiles that had very recently turned to faith in Christ. We need to understand that Thessaloniki was a very religious town with paganism and to lesser extent Judaism permeating every aspect of a person's life. Thessaloniki was also a well-known centre for the worship of the Roman Emperor as a deity. So, when Paul preached the Gospel of Salvation and both Jew and Gentile responded and were saved it really upset the apple cart angering and outraging not just the religious leaders but the Roman authorities as well. This outrage and anger led to a vicious persecution that lasted for many decades. It meant that the believers were ostracised from their families, friends and local communities who would not want to be associate with these pariahs. They were economically disadvantaged as they would have been excluded from many if not all of the better jobs in the city. They would have suffered verbal and physical abuse as they went about their daily life. The believers were a persecuted minority living on the fringes of society, fair game for anybody to have a go at.

We saw last week that when Paul commanded the Believers and us to “Rejoice always”, he wanted them and us not to focus our attention on our hardships and therefor to put our emphasis in the wrong place. No, Paul wanted us to think more of our Lord than of our difficulties; to meditate more on our spiritual riches in Christ than of our poverty on earth; to consider our glorious future when our Lord should come again than of our unhappy present.

Now Paul wants the Believers and us to pray continually and give thanks in all circumstances. It could be said that Paul is a hard task master and once again demanding the impossible from the Believers and us.

We are going to look at Paul's second command to pray continually.

It needs to be noted that this not the only place in Paul's writings where he has something to say about praying continually.

[Ephesians 6:18](#) *“And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people.”*

[Colossians 4:2](#) *“Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving.”*

So, let us start off with what is your view of prayer? For it is your view of what prayer is that will very much dictate what your response to this command of Paul to “pray continually” is. If you view prayer as nothing more than presenting a to do list to God of things you want changed in your life prayer will become a selfish stilted one side monologue. If prayer for you is finding those perfect words, where your more concerned about how you sound or getting it right, then this command to pray continuously probably fills you with dread. If you think praying continually as some type of never-ending Church prayer meeting you may or may not be particularly enthused with the whole idea.

However what Paul is talking about here is none of the above. What Paul is talking about is the essential core of what prayer is, prayer is a conversation between you and God. Here, when Paul urges us to “*pray continually*”, he is thinking of prayer as conversation with God as you go about your everyday life. Talking to God as you would talk to your best friend, a conversation born out of your love for one another.

Please do not think Paul is saying we should not have times of corporate prayer in our worship, or in our bible studies or simply when we gather together. These times of corporate prayer are invaluable and important, and we need to be diligent and disciplined in praying together. We should not however limit, our times of prayer to these corporate occasions. No, Paul wanted the Thessalonian believers to have that constant awareness of God so that as they went about their daily lives, they could have that ongoing conversation with Him.

Before we go on to look at what “*praying continually*” is. We need to understand that to “pray continually” it is not solely a matter of human determination and effort, as we saw with “*rejoicing always*” last Sunday, it will require us to go in the power of the Holy Spirit. We need to be guided and strengthened by Him, we need to listen to his leadings and promptings and be obedient in following Him.

Here are six quick tips that may help you, along with the Holy Spirit’s leading and strengthening to “*pray continually*”.

1. Begin with thanksgiving.

**Psalm 100:4** “*enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name.*”

In other words, start by telling God what you are thankful for, as we have just sung count your blessings. Prayer does not have to be *asking* for something; it can simply be thanking God from your heart for what He has already done.

2. Be honest.

If prayer had to be a stiff, formal language—“our most holy and mighty God, we beseech ye...”—first of all, we’d be bored and feel out of our element most of the time. And secondly, we would find it hard to keep that up for an extended period of time. However, prayer is not about fancy words or great oration, no, prayer is simply a simple conversation. Talk to God the way you would talk to a friend. Sit down with a cup of coffee and just let the words pour out, casually, simply. Just be real. God is interested in what you have to say.

3. Incorporate prayer into everyday chores.

Let your everyday tasks become acts of worship by turning them into times of prayer. We all have those mundane everyday tasks that take so much of our time but so little of our concentration. So, why not redeem that chore time and have a chat with God, even if it only to tell him how much you really, really don’t enjoy doing dishes.

4. Tell God what He already knows.

One of my most treasured times was when I picked Lucas up from primary school each day. On the twenty-minute walk back home Lucas would chat endlessly about

his day at school, his friends, his plans for Minecraft or of course as all small boys do ask a million questions. This time together strengthened our relationship deepened my connection with him. Of course, God already knows what is in our hearts—but when we offer our thoughts to him, it turns what might be a solitary life into a richer, more meaningful relationship with God. Remember that God delights in you. **2 Samuel 22: 20** *“He brought me out into a spacious place; he rescued me because he delighted in me.”*

#### 5. Pray while you wait.

A quick online search reports that Human beings spend approximately **6 months** of their lives waiting in line for things, it means on average **3 days** a year are spent queueing up. The average person spends about **43 days** on hold with automated customer service in one lifetime. Those who take the bus will spend about **27 days** of their lives waiting around on the platform or at the bus stop. Perhaps most surprisingly we will spend about **24 days** of our lives waiting for our families to get ready to out.

Transform that “wasted” time into something meaningful—pray for the people you expect to encounter that day or the tasks you need to accomplish. Give thanks for your day, give thanks for your job, pray for the cashier in Morrison’s, for the extravagant blessing of a giant store stocked with more products than we need. Count your blessings—because they are everywhere—and make those minutes count pray continually.

#### 6. Listen

Remember it is a conversation not a monologue. Sometimes you just have to silent and listen rather talking. This is not easy at times but it important for us to remember much as God wants us to talk to Him, He also wants to talk to us.

Paul Tillich the great American Christian philosopher wrote “The first duty of love is to listen.”

Praying continually is a heavenly habit enabled by the Holy Spirit. So, this week ahead why not practice this heavenly habit as you go about you everyday life.

**Philippians 4: 6 - 7** *“The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. <sup>7</sup> And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”*