



## Sermon for Sunday, November 20, 2022

### “God’s Will for Us”

**SCRIPTURE: 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18** <sup>16</sup> Rejoice always, <sup>17</sup> pray without ceasing, <sup>18</sup> give thanks in all circumstances, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

#### **Introduction: Intimate prayer with the Lord is the foundation of joy and gratitude.**

Today is Thanksgiving Sunday. As Christians, like the words of the text, we must always be rejoicing, praying without ceasing, and living with gratitude in any environment. However, sometimes we live with indifference to deep fellowship with the Lord rather than with prayer and gratitude. Also, we live with anxiety and complaints rather than with joy and gratitude.

**By the way, today's text 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 says, "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you." The Bible tells us to always enjoy life, in fellowship with the Lord in prayer, and to give thanks in any circumstances for humans to live happily.**

In fact, when joy disappears from our lives, so does gratitude. Also, when gratitude disappears from our hearts, the joy within us also disappears. Joy and gratitude go together like two sides of a coin. The joy and gratitude that bring us happiness arise through prayer, and intimate fellowship with the Lord.

Generally, it is difficult for us to be grateful when we are facing hardships. However, there are people in the Bible who did not stop praying to the Lord even when their lives were threatened, and they confessed their gratitude. In the Old Testament, in the book of Daniel, when King Darius of Mede reigned, the king's servants asked the king to issue a decree to frame Daniel. King Darius' decree said that anyone who asked for anything from any god or person besides the king for thirty days would be thrown into the lions' den. However, even though Daniel knew the contents of this decree, he prayed and gave thanks to God three times a day as was his custom. Also, in the New Testament, the apostle Paul's confession of gratitude to the Lord is found throughout his epistles. Apostle Paul confessed his gratitude to the Lord even when his health was not good and when he suffered hardships and persecutions for preaching the gospel. The reason why both Daniel and the apostle Paul were able to always live a life of joy and gratitude, as in today's text, was because of the power of prayer, an intimate fellowship with the Lord that keeps their faith.

As such, it is not impossible to live a life of rejoicing always, praying without ceasing, and giving thanks in any circumstances, which is the Lord's will for us. Dear brothers and sisters! Are you living in obedience to the will of the Lord for us, just like the words of 1 Thessalonians? Please reflect on whether our gratitude is to the Lord himself or to the environment and material things.

#### **Body: The difference between Christian gratitude and worldly gratitude**

**In Habakkuk 3:17-18, the prophet Habakkuk's confession of thanks comes out. “Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will be joyful in God my Savior.”**

If our gratitude stays in material things and circumstances, we cannot confess our gratitude like the prophet Habakkuk. **Today's text 1 Thessalonians 5:18 says; “Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of**



**God in Christ Jesus for you.” shows that the Christian's life is to be thankful in any circumstances and life conditions.** However, even though we live with the name of Christians, there are many times when we live a life of faith but continue to be in gratitude for material things and the environment rather than gratitude for Jesus.

Many people in the world rejoice and give thanks when they receive material benefits such as money, fame, health, children's well-being, and healing from illness. It's like giving more meaning to exchanging gifts and spending time with loved ones and family than rejoicing that baby Jesus came to this earth at Christmas.

In addition, many people in the world compare their circumstances and situation with those of others and take comfort in thinking that they are fortunate that the situation they are in is better than those other people. That's why we think we are thankful that we are healthier than that person, we have a lot of money, and we have suffered less loss in some things.

But the Christian gratitude that the Bible speaks of, and Jesus teaches is not that kind of gratitude. Christians, of course, can appreciate material gains and take comfort in comparing their circumstances to those of others. But Christian gratitude has a deeper foundation. It is thanksgiving for the grace of forgiveness and salvation through Jesus Christ.

Also, Christian gratitude is gratitude for life itself that the Lord has allowed us to have. In the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew chapter 5, the Lord says those who can give such thanksgiving; are the poor in spirit, those who mourn, those who are meek, those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, those who are merciful to their neighbors, those who are pure in heart, those who are the peacemakers, those who are persecuted because of righteousness.

It was right after Jesus healed many people's sickness and met their needs that he gave these instructions to the crowd in the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus wanted to teach people what a true Christian life is and how that is the basis of gratitude and joy.

Therefore, Christians must be able to give thanks in all circumstances and conditions. To be thankful in all situations is to be able to give thanks even in difficult situations. Of course, it is very difficult to be thankful during difficult circumstances. However, we can say that we are mature believers only when we are able to give thanks even in difficult times. These things can be done in our lives if we have deep fellowship with the Lord through prayer so that His will is done in us.

### **Conclusion: Rejoice, be glad and be thankful**

Now let's summarize today's sermon. The apostle Paul was able to sing in prison and rejoice even during hunger, beatings, and adversity. He could also appreciate his physical weakness. So, the apostle Paul said that he learned all the secrets of being thankful not only for abundance but also for poverty and need. How could such a life be possible? It was because the apostle Paul had the faith to be grateful for the life given to him. And the basis of that faith was prayer, an intimate fellowship with the Lord.

Please don't forget. If we base our gratitude on material and environmental things, we cannot live with gratitude in everything. However, if we base our gratitude on Christ, who is eternal life and truth, we can give thanks even in adversity.

**The Lord speaks in Matthew 5:11-12 of the Sermon on the Mount. “Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me.(v.11) Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.(v.12)”** Blessed be that the basis of our joy and gratitude is not material things or circumstances, but Jesus Christ.

