



3 “Impossible” Commands for All of Us

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18
November 15, 2020

The Big Idea: In rapid fire succession, Paul gives three commands for all Christians. They describe the will of God for our days – **joy**, **prayerfulness**, and **gratitude**. Each of these is accessible to us through a personal choice.

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 (ESV)

5 ¹⁶ **Rejoice** *always*, ¹⁷ **pray** *without ceasing*, ¹⁸ **give thanks** *in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus* for you.

Things to notice about the commands:

1. They are addressed to the plural “you” – “y’all”, so this is as much to the **church** as it is to the individuals.
2. All 3 are ‘imperatives’ – in other words, **commands**.
3. All 3 call for continuous action – in other words, these are **habits** to be learned and built into our lives.
4. The motivation is given: “this is the **will** of God”.
5. The **power** for obedience is named: “in Christ”

REJOICE ... all the time.

- James 1:2-4 – Joy is a **choice** we must make each day.
- We can choose joy, knowing that God is working for our **good** even in the most painful circumstances.

PRAY ... all the time.

- This doesn’t mean that we are focused in prayer 100% of the time. That IS impossible. It does mean, the Lord is **never far** from our mind or lips.

- Job refers to God as El Shaddai more than any other book of the Bible. El Shaddai means: “**overpowerer**” and “**sufficient**”.
- I will never cease praying if I believe my Lord is more powerful than any trial or obstacle and if I believe He is **enough**.
- Prayer is acknowledgment that I can’t face life **alone**.

GIVE THANKS ... all the time.

- Psalm 7:17
- Psalm 95:1-3
- Psalm 106:1
- My gratitude will be constant only if it is rooted in **who God is**. When it comes from thankfulness for Him, it can happen **regardless** of the circumstances of my life at any given moment in time.
- Gratitude will flow when I remember that the **last word** belongs to God, and it is resurrection and life.

6 Practical Ways to Give Thanks

1. Recall God’s **faithfulness** and power in your life and in the church.
2. Thank God for **saving** you and others through the redemptive work of Christ.
3. Think about how God is at work. Don’t minimize **small blessings**, steps in maturity, or minor growth. See and celebrate these things.
4. Make a **habit** of thankfulness. And, remember that just like grumbling spreads, so does gratitude.
5. Develop a habit of sharing with **others** things for which you’re grateful to the Lord. Seek to draw this out of others.
6. As you feel irritation and discouragement, **redirect** your heart away from grumbling and toward gratitude. **Number** your blessings.

As a Christian my whole life
should be one great big “Thank you” to the Lord!
