

God's Will for You

Submitted by Minister Bernice Cole

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 NIV

¹⁶Rejoice always, ¹⁷pray continually, ¹⁸give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

If I could be transparent for a moment, I would share that I have had a problem with the idea of “rejoicing always” in the text. There are some circumstances and situations that most do not think about rejoicing when they happen. For example, you are on your way to an important destination, and run into a detour that makes you extremely late or absent. Perhaps you were removed from a job or position. Or those times when a loved one transitions to the other side and waiting to see what the end is going to be, just to name a few. Most are not immediately able to rejoice.

We cannot see what God sees. We do not always see the big picture. That detour may have saved us from a devastating tragedy had we been allowed to continue. The door closing on the one job may open a window to a better opportunity. We may not ever know the pain and hardships that may have been waiting for that loved one and now they are truly in a better place.

In other words, all joy, prayers, and thankfulness should not fluctuate with our circumstances or feelings. Be joyful, pray continually, and give thanks often does go against our natural inclinations. But, when we do God's will, we will find it easier to be joyful and thankful. We cannot spend all our time on our knees, but it is possible to always have a prayerful attitude. This attitude is built upon acknowledging our dependence on God, realizing His presence within us, and determining to obey Him fully. Then we will find it natural to pray frequent, spontaneous, short prayers. A prayerful attitude is not a substitute for regular times of prayer but should be an outgrowth of those times.

Paul was not teaching that we should thank God **for** everything that happens to us, but **in** everything. Evil does not come from God, so we should not thank Him for it. But when evil strikes, we can still be thankful for God's presence and for the good that He will accomplish through the distress.

Being in constant prayer means keeping our requests continually before God as we live for Him day by day, believing He will answer. When we live by faith, we are not to give up. God may tell us to wait, but His delays always have good reasons. As we persist in prayer, we grow in character, faith, and hope.

Obey God's command to rejoice, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.