

Reuben Saywell: 23 January am

What is God's will for my life? 1 Thess. 5:16-18

(Sermon Summary)

As Christians we are eager to know what God's will for us might be: where should we go? what should we do? This passage gives clear guidance about God's will for all of us. It gives three commands which are to be obeyed even in difficult days.

1. Rejoice always.

The early Christians greeted one another with the Greek word for 'Rejoice', and the Apostle Paul commands the Thessalonians to rejoice even though they had experienced severe suffering (1 Thess. 1:6). We are not being commanded to put on a false smile when inside we are sorrowing. Paul himself knew great suffering and sadness.

Neither is Paul talking about worldly happiness. The joy of the godless is a momentary joy (Job 20:5). People find happiness in possessions and status, but this does not truly satisfy. Rather, we must rejoice in the Lord, like Paul and Silas when they sang hymns in the Philippian jail. Paul was 'sorrowful yet always rejoicing' (2 Cor. 6:10). We think of joy and sorrow as opposites, but they can co-exist. What can we rejoice in today?

- What is to come - Heaven
- Who God is - Sovereign, and on the throne
- What Christ has done - He died in our place, and rose to give us hope
- The Holy Spirit - we are not alone.

2. Pray without ceasing

You can humble a Christian by asking them about their prayer life! God wants true prayer from the heart, not merely cries for help at a time of need. Joyful believers will naturally be prayerful believers.

'Pray without ceasing' does not mean that we must withdraw from the world; instead, we must be dependent on God for everything, responding to every challenge and blessing with prayer, as Daniel did. As adopted children we always

have access to our Father, and He is never too busy to hear us. No challenge is too great for Him (Eph. 3:20).

Paul's strength for his missionary work had its roots in prayer. We are not allowed any excuses for not praying: prayer is essential, like air for the soul to breathe. The Greek word for 'prayer' here encompasses all types of prayer: adoration, confession, thanksgiving, and supplication.

3. Give thanks in everything

Prayerful Christians are thankful Christians. We should give heartfelt thanks for God's grace - whether saving grace or common grace. If you are saved, then thanksgiving is a command. Do you have an attitude of gratitude for all the good gifts that God has given, or are you more preoccupied with what you *don't* have? Spurgeon commented that 'we engrave our trials on marble, and write our blessing in the sand'.

Think of what you were before you were saved, and how Christ saved you, then fulfil God's will for your life by obeying these three commands *always* and *without ceasing*.