

“Gaining On Godliness!”
1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

Introduction:

1. Remember Playing Chase?
 - I Never Liked Being “It” – Because It Was Always Hard For Me To Catch Anybody – They Were Always Too Fast! Then Again, I Never Liked Being “Chased” Either – Because It Was Always Hard For Me To Get Away!
 - But, When Someone Else Was “It” And Was Chasing Me, I Could Just Sense That They Were Gaining On Me With Every Step! Faster & Faster They Would Come! They Would Yell: “I’m Gaining On You!” And Finally They Would Catch Me! And Then, I Would Be “It” For The Rest Of The Game!
2. A Kind Of “Christian Chase” Was Introduced To Us Last Week In 5:15 - “Ever Follow That Which Is Good!”
 - Pursue The Good! And Then:
 - Romans 12:9 - “Cleave To That Which Is Good!”
 - Every Day Of Your Life, You Ought To Be Chasing After “That Which Is Good!”
 - And Every Day Of Your Life, You Ought To Be Getting Closer & Closer – Gaining On Goodness & Godliness!
 - But How Do You Do This?
 - Is It Just Trying To Be Good & Do Good Most Of The Time?
3. We See God Providing The Process For Doing This In 5:16-18!
 - A Very Short Passage – But One Filled With Great Importance!
 - 5:16-18 - “Rejoice evermore. / Pray without ceasing. / In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you!”
 - These Verses Teach That: When You Pursue After God, You Are Pursuing After That Which Is Good!
 - Because God Is The Highest Good!
 - And The Closer You Get To God, The More You Will Look Like Him!
 - So Here Is How To Gain On The Godliness Of God!

1. Through Joy In The Lord!

- 5:16 - “Rejoice Evermore!”
 - In Order To Follow After “That Which Is Good” – You Need To Chase After Joy!
 - Because Joy Is Good!
 - This Is Not Just Happiness Because Of Your Circumstances (Things Are Going Fine Or Your Own Way) – This Is Joy In Spite Of Your Circumstances!
 - This Is To: “Rejoice *Evermore!*”
 - At All Times!
 - In All Circumstances!
- How Is This Possible?
 - It Isn’t!
 - Unless You Are Pursuing God – And The Joy That Is Found In Him!
 - The Reason For This Kind Of Joy Is The Lord!
 - Philippians 3:1 - “Rejoice In The Lord!”
 - Philippians 4:4 - “Rejoice In The Lord Always: And Again I Say Rejoice!”
 - The Lord Is The Reason For Joy!
 - And When He Is Your Focus – He Will Be Your Joy!
- When You Are Pursuing God, There Is So Much To Rejoice In!
 - Isaiah Shows Us Some Of What We Can Rejoice In:
 - Isaiah 61:10 - “I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels!”
 - The Savior / Salvation / Sanctification!
 - There Is So Much To Rejoice In!

- Imagine If You Lost It All!
 - Would You Want To End All?
 - Habakkuk Was A Judean Prophet Just Before His Country Was Taken Captive By The Babylonian Empire! In His Lifetime, Things Went From Good To Bad To Worse!
 - There Seemed To Be Absolutely No Reason For Joy! But What Does He Say?
 - Habakkuk 3:17-18 - "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: / Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation!"
 - Habakkuk Knew That If He Had The Lord, He Had All He Needed! And He Could "Rejoice Evermore" Because He Was Chasing After That Which Was Good – God!
- What If You Don't "Rejoice Evermore"?
 - What If You Are Always Downcast / Sad / Melancholy?
 - Remember The Thessalonians' Circumstances!
 - You Are Not Following After That Which Is Good – God!
 - Because In The Lord, There Is Great Joy!
 - "Christian Joy Is Not Dependent Upon External Circumstances; It Springs Out Of The Fact That The Believer Is In Christ!" (Hiebert)
- **IE:** When Ron Hamilton Was Just 27 Years Old, Cancer Was Found In His Left Eye, And It Was Removed! His Circumstances Could Have Made Him Angry & Sad! But Since His Focus Was On The Lord, He Could Sing: "O rejoice in the Lord, He makes no mistake, He knoweth the end of each path that I take, For when I am tried and purified, I shall come forth as gold!"
 - So, What Will You Do?
 - Are You Going To "Rejoice Evermore"?
 - No Matter What Your Circumstances?
 - You Can & Will If You Focus On The Goodness Of God In Jesus Christ!

* But What Can You Do If You Lack This Kind Of Joy? You Can Rekindle That Joy:

2. ***Through Prayer To The Lord!***

- 5:17 - "Pray without ceasing!"
 - In Order To Follow After "That Which Is Good" – You Also Need To Chase After Prayer!
 - Because Prayer Is Good!
 - But This Is Not Just Prayer When Times Are Tough & You Need Extra Help!
 - This Is To: "Pray ***Without Ceasing!***"
 - Continually! Keeping An "Open-Line" Of Communication With God!
- How Is This Possible?
 - It Isn't!
 - Unless You Are Pursuing God – And The Comfort That Is Found In Praying To The Lord!
 - The Reason For This Kind Of Prayer Is The Lord!
 - Psalm 65:2 - "O thou that hearest prayer!"
 - The Lord Is The Reason For Prayer!
 - And When He Is Your Focus – You Will "Pray Without Ceasing!"
- When You Are Pursing God, There Is So Much To Pray For!
 - **IE:** The top 10 reasons you are too busy to pray today:
 1. You wake up feeling rested, then realize your alarm should've gone off an hour ago.
 2. Your spouse is away on a two-day business trip that's lasted all week.
 3. None of the clean clothes you were able to find match.
 4. Your teenager shaved...the left half of his head.
 5. Your bills are due, and your toddler hid the checkbook.
 6. A strange fluid is dripping from your car.
 7. You accidentally delete your quarterly report ten minutes before a meeting with your boss.
 8. You're in charge of games for the church youth night tonight.
 9. Your dog is throwing up.
 10. Your toilet's overflowing, but at least you found the checkbook.

Ten reasons you really should pray today: See List Above!

- In The Lord's Pattern For Prayer, He Gives Us So Many Reasons To Pray! (See Matthew 6!)
- Have You Ever Wondered How To Pray? Or What To Pray? Or Why You Should Pray? Or Other Questions?
 - Jesus Himself Gave A Parable To Answer These Same Questions: Luke 18:1-7 - "And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought *always to pray*, and not to faint!" (Same Words!)
 - If The Judge Hears / How Much More Will God!
- What If You Don't "Pray Without Ceasing"?
 - What If You Are Prayerless?
 - If You Are Prayerless, You Are Not Following After That Which Is Good – God! And You Will Not Be Any Good To Anybody!
- But When You Do Pray – You Will Soon Find Much To Rejoice In Also!
 - So, What Will You Do?
 - Are You Going To "Pray Without Ceasing"?
 - You Can & Will If You Focus On The Goodness Of God In Jesus Christ!
 - Because, When You Pursue After God, You Are Pursuing After That Which Is Good!

* But What Can You Do If You Lack This Kind Of Prayer Life? You Can Rekindle That Prayer:

3. Through Thankfulness To The Lord!

- 5:18 - "In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you!"
 - In Order To Follow After "That Which Is Good" – You Also Need To Chase After Thankfulness!
 - Because Thankfulness Is Good!
 - But This Is Not Just Thankfulness When Things Are Going Your Way!
 - This Is To: "*In Everything* Give Thanks!"
 - If It Seems You Have Nothing To Go To The Lord In Prayer With, Go With Praise!
 - **IE:** "Always Be Prepared" To Praise! (Like The Boy Scouts Motto)
- How Is This Possible?
 - It Isn't!
 - Unless You Are Pursuing God – And Seeing Him In All Of His Goodness!
 - When Your Focus Is On The Lord – Thankfulness Will Naturally & Spontaneously Occur In The Heart Of A Christian!
- When You Are Pursuing God, There Is So Much To Be Thankful For!
 - Because God Is Good!
 - Exodus 34:6 - God Describes Himself As "The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth!"
 - Psalm 52:1 - "The goodness of God endureth continually!"
- Thankfulness Reveals That You Have *Received* Something!
 - Luke 17:11-19 - The Grateful Leper & The Ungrateful Lepers!
 - A Christian Life Is To Be A Thankful Life!
 - Ought To Be A Primary Characteristic! Especially To The Lord! It Reveals That You Have Received Something From The Lord!
- What If You Don't "In Everything Give Thanks"?
 - What If You Are Ungrateful & Thankless?
 - Your Focus Is Off Of The Goodness Of God!
 - And You Are Living Contrary To The Revealed Will Of God!
 - "This Is The Will Of God In Christ Jesus Concerning You!" – This Is What He Wants You To Be!
 - "When Gratitude Dies On The Altar Of A Man's Heart, That Man Is Nigh-Well Hopeless!" (Bob Jones, Sr.)
- But, When You Are Thankful – You Will Soon Find Much To Pray For Also!

Conclusion:

1. So, What Will You Do?

- Are You Going To:
 - “Rejoice Evermore!”
 - “Pray Without Ceasing!”
 - “In Everything Give Thanks!”
- These Are All Good – But They Will Never Come Unless You Chase After The One Who Is Good – God Himself!
- 2. When You Pursue After God:
 - You Will Have Much To Rejoice In!
 - You Will Have Much To Pray For!
 - You Will Have Much To Be Thankful For!
- 3. And You Will Be Gaining On Godliness!
 - As You “Ever Follow That Which Is Good!” (5:15)

***Grace Baptist Church
Stephen Elmer, Pastor
4245 North 200 West
Greenfield, Indiana 46140
(317) 326-2362
www.sermonaudio.com/wordofgrace
www.growatgrace.org
pastor-elmer@hotmail.com***