

Lessons in Sowing Faithfulness

Lesson 5

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

August 14, 2022

Prayer: Who, What, Where, How, When, Why

Introduction

Rejoice, pray, and give thanks; that is the message in 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18. Succinctly, and in that order, did Paul advise Thessalonians who had abandoned their jobs to watch for Jesus' return. Perhaps Paul believed his words would mollify the disappointment felt by believers when the Lord did not appear.

Yet, did they know how to pray? Even the original disciples asked for instruction, so Jesus taught them the Lord's Prayer (Luke 11:1-4). He further told them to always pray and not give up (Luke 18:1) and to "go into your room, close the door and pray" (Matthew 6:6), and "your Father knows what you need before you ask Him." (Matthew 6:8)

Yet, is there more for one to learn about prayer? It is not simply a means to ask for something but a way to grow closer to God through conversation. As Jesus said in Matthew 6:33, "...seek first His kingdom...." With that prerequisite, the prayer travels a smoother road to its Listener.

Memory Verse: "Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful."—Colossians 4:2

Pray, and read 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18. What questions or observations do you have about this passage?

OBSERVATION: What does the passage say?

1. What attitude or bearing did Paul believe necessary before prayer? (1 Thessalonians 5:16)
2. How often should one pray? (1 Thessalonians 5:17)
3. When should thanksgiving be included in prayer? (1 Thessalonians 5:18)
4. What is the reason for the answer in #3? (1 Thessalonians 5:18)
5. The memory verse (Colossians 4:2), a charge given to the Colossians by Paul, includes a cautionary word: "watchful." For what were they to be watchful? (Colossians 2:8, 16-18)

INTERPRETATION: What do the passages mean?

1. What have been and are some reasons that Christians rejoice? (Psalm 149:2; Proverbs 23:25, 29:2a; Ecclesiastes 2:10b; Zechariah 9:9; 1 Corinthians 13:6b)

2. How do we first rejoice if prayer is one of supplication intended to bring comfort to a person experiencing tragedy? (Psalm 2:11, 63:7; 2 Corinthians 6:10; Philippians 4:6; 1 Thessalonians 5:18)

3. "...give thanks in all circumstances..." (1 Thessalonians 5:18) suggests that situations exist which some individuals may not think worthy of thanks. What might these be? (Job 17:11; Psalm 109:22; Proverbs 2:15; Ezekiel 7:11)

4. What are Paul's emphases concerning prayer?
(Acts 2:42, 6:4; Romans 12:12; Ephesians 6:18;
Colossians 4:2-3; 1 Timothy 2:8)

APPLICATION: How do the passages apply to your life?

1. Many believers, besides following Paul's advice to "pray continually" (1 Thessalonians 5:17), have regularly scheduled prayer times in solitude that are more structured than the sporadic pleas uttered during the day. What do you think is the most effective declaration in this "structure" that will give God both delight and a desire to hear more?

2. In John 14:26, Jesus said, in part, "...the Holy Spirit, Whom the Father will send in My name, will teach you all things" "All things" included the Spirit being with us to pray. How much prayer do you think is the Spirit's responsibility, and how much is yours? Or, should you depend on the Spirit completely and not give it another thought?

3. In Jeremiah 7:16, 11:14, and 14:11, God asks Jeremiah to NOT pray for His people in Judah. When would it be appropriate to stop praying for people in the U.S.?