

# Thanksgiving, Joy, and Prayer

John M. Buttrey II

The Thanksgiving holiday is upon us. Soon the turkey, potatoes, gravy, and desserts will all be gone. However, while Thanksgiving Day will quickly pass, the need to give thanks should never pass. Maintaining an attitude of gratitude is essential to a strong character. We all have much for which we should be continually thankful. We enjoy blessings, both physical and spiritual. With this in mind, consider these words of the apostle Paul:

Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

There are three important essentials for us as Christians contained in this inspired instruction from Paul, to the Thessalonians, and to all in Christ.

Be Joyful (Rejoice)  
Be Prayerful (Pray)  
Be Thankful (Give thanks)

This is the type of people we are to be as Christians: joyful, prayerful, and thankful. Notice how Paul says, "For this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." In other words, we must consistently and continually practice these three essentials. We are to be joyful ALWAYS. We are to pray WITHOUT CEASING. We are to give thanks IN EVERYTHING. These descriptions are all different ways of saying the same thing. We can switch them around and not lose the meaning:

*Rejoice in Everything*  
*Always Pray*  
*Give Thanks Without Ceasing*  
*Rejoice Without Ceasing*  
*In Everything Pray*  
*Give Thanks Always*

Unfortunately, we sometimes allow life to get in the way of our fulfilling these three essentials. Our busy schedules and lack of time get in the way of our praying without ceasing. Trials and disappointments make it hard to rejoice always. We find it difficult to be thankful in all things when the events of life don't work in our favor.

However, we must not allow the circumstances of life to excuse us from consistently and continually praying, rejoicing, and being thankful. There are numerous examples in Scripture of those who maintained joy, prayer, and thankfulness in spite of challenging situations.

Consider Paul and Silas in a Philippian jail. After having been beaten and placed in the stocks, they were praying and singing hymns of praise to God (Acts 16:22-25). How about the difficulties of Joseph? He had been sold as a slave by his own brothers, falsely accused and jailed, and forgotten by someone he had helped. From all accounts, it might have looked as if God had forgotten him. Still, Joseph maintained a right attitude and confidence in God. The Christians of the first century, in spite of a great persecution, went everywhere preaching the word (Acts 8:1-4). Again, the examples are numerous.

This Thanksgiving, let us all be reminded to give thanks in all things, rejoice always, and to pray without ceasing. Doing so will make Thanksgiving more than just a yearly event.