

Grow—that’s what the rest of this epistle is about. It’s how we keep from being led away, how we keep from falling, how we know when someone is twisting the Scriptures. How much does this epistle emphasize the need for growth? Here is one place: “But also for this very reason, **giving all diligence**, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness” (2 Peter 1:5-7). And here’s another one: “Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, **be diligent** to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless” (2 Peter 3:14).

And the results of this diligent effort to grow? “For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ...for if you do these things you will never stumble; for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 1:8, 10-11).

So, **beware** of false teachers, and anything else that might lead us away from the truth; and **grow**, because that’s what will keep us out of danger, and ultimately lead us to eternal life.

Written by: Brian Gibson (Plain Words From Gods Word FB Group)

Marietta church of Christ

8150 Driggers St.
Jacksonville, FL 32220

Times of Worship

Sunday:

9 am - Bible Study / 10 am - Worship / 5 pm - Worship

Wednesday:

7 pm - Bible Study/Worship

Evangelist: Devin Barber

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Rejoice, Pray, Give Thanks

1 Thessalonians 5.16-18

Paul concludes his first letter to the brethren at Thessalonica with some final instructions and exhortations. One of the main themes of the letter is the second coming of Christ, and each chapter is concluded with a reminder of this hope. A message that is just as relevant today as when it was first pinned by Paul. It is an event that all people, especially all Christians, should constantly be preparing ourselves for so that we don’t miss out on that hope. Among these final exhortations Paul gives three short, but powerful instructions that will forever be connected. Paul writes, “*Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you*” (vv. 16-18 ESV).

Rejoice always (v. 16). This may be the second shortest verse in the Bible but that doesn’t take away from its weight. Paul wrote this letter to a group of people who were facing persecution from the Jewish people. In 2.14-19 we learn Paul was driven out from Thessalonica by the Jews which hindered him from preaching to the Gentiles, and he was longing to return to them. How is it then, given these circumstances, can Paul tell them to rejoice always? How can we rejoice always given all that is going on in the world? How can we rejoice always when things are going wrong in our life? How can we rejoice always when it seems that evil gets more attention than good? It’s because our rejoicing is not in the physical things of this world, but our rejoicing is in the Lord. ...

When Paul wrote his letter to the Philippians he says, “*Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say rejoice*” (Philippians 4.4 ESV). Without the Lord, rejoicing always is a vain effort. It is through the Lord that we can have victory over sin, and the assurance of a hope of eternal life in heaven. It is in this hope that we look past the physical and rejoice in the spiritual. Those who are without the Lord can’t say the same, they do not have the “*peace of God*” (Philippians 4.7). When we consider the depth of God’s love and mercy how can we not rejoice always?

Pray without ceasing (v. 17). These three commands are intertwined with each other, exclude one of the three and a person loses out on the full effect. Here Paul reminds his readers to “*pray without ceasing.*” In Luke 18.1 the reason Jesus told the parable of the persistent widow was “*they ought always to pray and not lose heart.*” While in Colossians 4.2 Paul wrote “*Continue steadfastly in prayer.*” It is through prayer a Christian can open his or her heart in gratitude and praise to God. Those who continue in prayer can rejoice always because they have the assurance and confidence that God hears and responds to the prayers of the faithful. Prayer is not the avenue through which we selfishly go to God to fulfill our fleshly desires. Prayer is reminder of our dependance upon God. Even in the difficult times, when things don’t make sense, we can still go to God to relieve the distresses of our heart. Praying to God should fill us with peace, knowing that we put our concerns in the hands of the one who made and sustains the world. God will answer prayer in accordance with His perfect will (1 John 5.14-15).

Give thanks in all circumstances (v. 18). One way we show our thanks to God is through our prayers. The Christian is not immune to the trials, tragedies, and distresses that come from this life. But even the Christian can live a life of continual joy and thanksgiving because of the matchless love of God. Ephesians 5.20 says, “giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.” There is so much the disciple of Christ can be thankful for. Each day we should do as the hymn says “Count your blessings! Name them one by one. Count your many blessings! See what God hath done.” God know how to take the evils of satan and use them for good (Philippians 1.12-14). ...

A person who has experience the grace of God understands no matter the physical circumstances, God has enriched their life. In James 1.17 we read “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights.” To understand this is to know why the Christian is thankful despite what may be going on in their life.

Our rejoicing, our never ceasing prayers, and continual thankfulness are all anchored by the hope of an eternal home in heaven that will far surpass anything this physical world has to offer or throws at the disciple of Christ (1 Peter 1.3-9).

Written by: Derek Steen

“Beware...Grow” (The Message of 2 Peter)

These two words appear in the last two verses of 2 Peter: “You therefore, beloved, since you know these things beforehand, **beware** lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked; but **grow** in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ...” (2 Peter 3:17-18).

These two admonitions—beware and grow—sum up the message found in this epistle. One points to a problem, the other to the solution; one warns of danger, the other points the way to safety.

Beware: Look again at the above passage, specifically the warning issued—“beware lest you also fall...being led away with the error of the wicked.” He’s talking about false teachers, the kind of folks discussed in the previous verse, who “twist” the Scriptures “to their own destruction” (3:16)—not to mention the destruction of those who follow them. Chapter 2 is entirely devoted to a discussion of false teachers—their danger (vv. 1-3), their judgment (vv. 4-10a), their character (vv. 10b-16), and the influence they can have on others (vv. 17-22). Beware of false teachers. They’re doing the devil’s work, which is exactly why they’ll spend an eternity with him. If we’re not careful, we may end up in the same place.

Grow: Grow in the truth, the truth taught by “the apostles of the Lord and Savior” (2 Peter 3:2), men whose reliability is unquestioned, because they were eyewitnesses, and because they confirmed what had been prophesied many years earlier (2 Peter 1:16-21). ...