

"Prayer, Joy and Gratitude"

Holiness

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

Don Maurer

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Don: Let us pray. Father in heaven, most, if not all of us, have come from a great time of joy yesterday with family and friends. And Father, You provide these things. This is the day that You have made, and we are to rejoice and be glad in it. Father, in teaching others today I teach myself. And I pray, Father, that You would now instruct us, using Your word. And as Bruce has said so many times, may You give us the grace, Lord, to see You more clearly for Christ's sake, in whose name we pray. Amen.

Men: Amen.

Don: Okay. Bruce wanted me to teach on the subject of gratitude. And so I thought that I would tweak it a little bit. And so I've entitled this talk "Joy, Prayer and Gratitude."

Now Thanksgiving of course, in our culture, really has become little more than a day of feasting and football. There's nothing wrong with that. You know, I certainly enjoy those things myself. And of course, we all have to be servants, as Sig pointed out before, to prepare for that. But the reason for it, the roots of Thanksgiving, the Pilgrims' role and their being thankful to God for getting them through the harshness of the winters and everything they had to go through is all but ignored in our culture.

A few years ago on TV, I heard Angelina Jolie say that Thanksgiving is the worst holiday of the year. (*Laughter.*) And of course she also said that the Bible is the worst book ever written. So consider the source.

But today I want to focus on three important Christian characteristics or virtues mentioned frequently in the New Testament, and the Old Testament, for that matter. They are very much connected to each other—joy or rejoicing, prayer and gratitude.

We hear a lot about mental health in our day and age. Sin has become mental illness in a lot of instances. However, the first pastor of my church said that these three instructions and admonitions in 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 are God's prescription for mental health, and that is certainly true. So I'm going to read the passage right now from the New King James Version.

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18. *"Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing. In everything give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you."* This is the word of the Lord.

Men: Thanks be to God.

Don: Amen. Okay. Now keep in mind, of course, that when Paul wrote those words he wasn't writing them from the comfort of his living room, or from the embassy of the White House, or something like that, living the American dream. He was most likely writing it from prison—and not the kind of prisons we have today, where we have three squares and cable TV. It was a dungeon, and he was probably fastened in stocks to somebody else, cold, in unbelievable conditions, maybe solitary confinement. And yet he could say, *"Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing,"* and *"in everything give thanks."*

Let's start with *"Rejoice always,"* in verse 16. And we have another command here that I have on your handouts—Philippians 4:4. Sig, would you read that for us, please?

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Sig: Yes. *"Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, Rejoice!"*

Don: All right. Now that's pretty straightforward, isn't it? Now what does this mean? It can't mean that we always feel giddy and happy, happy, happy all the time. People on drugs want to feel that way. But that just isn't life. That just isn't reality, is it?

If you remember from the previous message that I gave a few years ago, there is a difference between happiness as the world defines it and joy in Christ. And what is the difference? Well, happiness, as the world defines it, is that when things go well for you, then you're happy. Or we see it on the sit-coms, or Stephen Colbert. And I don't know how to spell that by the way, so if the transcript gets it wrong, so be it. But anyway, you know, there is this frivolous, mindless kind of comedy. Or when things go well, that's happiness.

But the difference between that and Christian joy is that joy in Christ is settled, isn't it? It's steadfast. And it exists even in the midst of trials, which James says, by the way, we are to rejoice in. And in Romans 5, Paul says that we are to rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces patience, perseverance and character. That doesn't mean that we're masochists. Obviously, we don't like it when those things happen. But it is possible for us to rejoice in those things.

And it's interesting to me that our Savior said that we are to be joyful and to rejoice in several different things. Let's look at this. Dick Clouser, would you read Luke 10:20, please?

Dick: You snuck up on me, little buddy.

Don: Yep, yep.

Dick: *"Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you. But rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven."*

Don: Yes. I alluded to that a few years ago in my previous message on the subject of rejoicing. You know, the apostles had seen all these great things. Not just the apostles, but the seventy-two went out and raised the dead and healed the sick and cast out demons. And they said, "Oh, Lord, this is fantastic!" But what does He say? "Don't rejoice in that." *"Rejoice that your names are written in heaven."*

Now let me ask you this, brothers. What could be more wonderful than that? No matter what you're going through—and again, in preaching to you I preach to myself. But what could be more wonderful than this? No matter what you're going through, to know that your names are now, and always will be written in heaven, and that this will never be taken away from you? See, that's our sure foundation, isn't it? Jesus is our refuge in times of trouble. And our names are written in heaven. That is what we should be rejoicing over.

And this next one is really worth noticing. Bill McCoy, Luke 6:22-23, please?

Bill: *"Blessed are you when men hate you, and when they exclude you, and revile you, and cast out your name as evil for the Son of Man's sake. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, for indeed your reward is great in heaven. For in like manner your fathers did to the prophets."*

Don: Wow! You know, every time I read that, I can't help but be shocked. How is that possible? How is it possible for someone in the Middle East, for example, in an

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Islamic country, when he is beaten and put in prison, like Pastor Saeed, or having to pay that horrible tax because you're not a Muslim. I forget what they call it. Being forced against your will to convert to Islam, and if you don't do it, to suffer exquisite torment, to be killed by a suicide bomber. How is it possible for that person, or for any of us to do what Jesus says that we're to do in those circumstances? It's only through the grace of God. It can only be through the power of the Holy Spirit, that's for sure.

And then Paul says something very interesting in 2 Corinthians 6:9-10. Who would like to read that for us? Bob, would you read that for us?

Bob: *"As unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold, we live; as chastened, and yet not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things."*

Don: *"Sorrowful, but always rejoicing."* Boy, that almost sounds like a contradiction in terms, doesn't it—an oxymoron. How can we be sorrowful and always rejoicing? Well, because we are in union with Christ, all right? And Paul says that nothing, absolutely nothing, can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus—neither height nor depth, nor principalities nor powers, nor angels nor demons, nor anything in all creation. And see, that's why we can rejoice even in the midst of sorrow. We have the sure promise of eternal life. And it says that God *"cannot lie."* Jesus was *"a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief,"* wasn't He? Yet it says in Luke 11 that he was *"full of joy through the Holy Spirit,"* because that joy isn't some fly-by-night emotion. It's something that's constant. It's something that's firm. It's something that's real and lasts forever.

So we are to rejoice. Does anybody have any comments or questions before we go on to the next section?

Participant: Don?

Don: Yes, Sig?

Sig: If we were writing this today, do you think we would have similar comments? I mean, I don't know about the rest of the men, but I don't know whether I've gotten to a point in my life where I would say yet not killed, or poor, but making many rich, or having nothing, yet possessing all things. That seems like a pretty extreme situation that Paul might have been in. And yet he felt that he still wanted to rejoice.

Don: Yes.

Sig: That's more of a comment than a question, I guess.

Don: I think that if this were written in modern America today, with the way things are, no, I don't think it would have the impact and the effectiveness. And that's what I said at the beginning. I mean, this was Paul. This was somebody who was writing not in the midst of his comfort and pleasure, but in the midst of unbelievable circumstances. Just read 2 Corinthians chapters 4, 6 and 11, about all the trials that he went through, and the book of Acts as well. You know, this man, when he lived the Christian life, it wasn't health and wealth and prosperity. It wasn't his best life now, that's for sure.

Participant: Yes.

Don: And so, no. I don't think it would have the impact if this were written in modern 21st-century America, Sig. I think you raise a really good point.

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Participant: Hey, Don?

Don: Yes?

Participant: Is this the definition of *beloved*—happiness in spite of your circumstances? That may be a Bickelism.

Don: I don't think so. I think that *beloved* means that we're loved by God in Christ. Certainly there is a corollary there about happiness and joy in spite of circumstances. I forget now what word Bruce used. I'll have to look in my old transcripts and find out. Maybe it is *beloved*, but I don't know. Sorry about that.

Participant: I thought you knew everything. (*Laughter.*)

Don: No. There is only one Being in the universe who knows everything, my friend.

Participant: I thought you'd know it all. (*Laughter.*)

Don: Okay. Let's—

Participant: One thing on top of what Sig had mentioned is that in society we might not be to the point where this is applicable, or we might see this problem. But that's where we as a church have to be more intentional. There is a gentleman here at Christ Church who got into a horrific car accident a couple weeks back and may be paralyzed. And he's young and has a one-year-old, and he's going to go through some rough times.

And we had a prayer meeting, and one of the pieces that we were trying to convey is that it doesn't matter how the body is. It doesn't matter what we go through. It's a matter of that, before the foundation of the world, our names were written in the Lamb's book of life, and in that we rejoice.

Don: Amen!

Participant: Not in the current situation. When you're in the current situation, it's hard to realize that and see it and live it.

Don: Mm-hmm.

Participant: And that's where we need the body of Christ and others to come alongside us and pull us up and gird us up whenever—

Don: Oh, that is for sure! What is your name?

Participant: Brian.

Don: Yes, Brian. Absolutely. And thank you for bringing that up. That's so true. And I don't know how people who don't have Christ in their lives do it. And I'll be talking about that in a little bit, as we go through these next points.

But let's go now to number three on your handout. Verse 17, "*Pray without ceasing.*" These things are connected, as Matthew Henry observes. And I think we need to observe that ourselves, too.

All right. "*Pray without ceasing.*" Or some translations say "continually," or "always."

Maybe sometime Bruce can do a series on prayer, because prayer is at once really very simple, if you stop to think about it. It's talking to God. But also, there is nothing more profound in the universe, is there?

You know, J. C. Ryle says that prayer is the beginning of life for the Christian, as crying is for the newborn baby. It's as necessary to the Christian life as breathing is physically. You, like the person Brian alluded to a couple minutes ago, may be laid up

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and unable to do so many other things. You may be unable to serve Christ in ways that you did before, unable to read your Bible. But one thing that you can do is pray, even if it's nothing more than "Jesus, help me," or whatever. That's crucial to being a Christian.

Charles Spurgeon says that prayer is a graceometer, indicating our spiritual health. And Jonathan Edwards wrote a very convicting piece entitled "Hypocrites Deficient In the Duty of Prayer."

Now some people ask—and you may have wondered about it yourselves; I have. If God is sovereign, and He knows and ordains everything from the beginning, from the foundation of the world, if He has everything all figured out, and if He can do everything without us, why pray? Have you ever wondered that? Well, I'm sure most of us have.

Now my pastor gave five compelling reasons for prayer a few weeks ago in one of his sermons. And I'd like to share them with you.

And the first one is obviously what?

Men: It's commanded.

Don: Yes. He commands us to pray, doesn't He? That should end the whole discussion right there, right? It's the same with evangelism. Brian, would you read Matthew 6:6, please?

Brian: You didn't give us the other four.

Don: I know. (*Laughter.*)

Brian: Matthew 6:6. *"But you, when you pray, go into your room. And when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place. And your Father, who sees in secret, will reward you openly."*

Don: Thank you. Corky, would you read Romans 12:12, please?

Corky: *"Rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer."*

Don: Okay. So there is no doubt about it that we're commanded to pray.

The second reason that my pastor gave is because you have a new nature that should want to speak to God and draw near to Him. Before, we were dead. Believe it or not, we hated God. We wanted nothing to do with Him. We might have had a god of our own imagination, and not the God of Biblical revelation, as Bruce says. But we certainly didn't want to have anything to do with the God of the Bible. But now He has made us alive and given us a new nature that should long to draw near to Him.

And not only have we been given a new nature, but we *need* to draw near to our heavenly Father, don't we? You know, atheists can say all they want to about how you Christians are just babies. You can't face life. My neighbor from down the street often says that to me. "You're just afraid to die. That's why you need God."

But you know, I think that at the end of the day, deep down inside, a lot of those people really do need something. They may need alcohol. They may need fantasy football. There is nothing wrong with fantasy football in and of itself. But they need something, don't they? They need something. They have a god of some kind, whether it be pleasure or entertainment or sex or booze, or whatever.

But we need to draw near to God. And isn't it a wonderful thing? All the precious promises of Scripture! For example, He holds our tears in a bottle, that He delights in the prayers of the saints. The Scripture says that the prayer of the righteous is God's delight.

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"Draw near to God and He will draw near to you." These are fantastic promises, and we all know this. We as Christians know the joy that we have.

It seems that sometimes, a lot of times, that our prayers hit the ceiling. But a lot of times we have that sweet communion, that joy that we wouldn't trade for anything, a foretaste of glory. We need to draw near to our heavenly Father. And we should do so often. Yes?

Participant: I remember that in the early '90s I was the pastor of the Sewickley Baptist Church in Sewickley.

Don: Mm-hmm.

Participant: John Guest had written a book on finding deeper intimacy with God.

Don: Okay.

Participant: And the subtitle is *Only a Prayer Away*. And this profoundly touched my life and my ministry in a wonderful way, because it made it easy enough for a child to understand how easy it is to be in communion with our loving heavenly Father.

Don: Mm-hmm.

Participant: And in every circumstance in life, the Lord is only a prayer away.

Don: Boy, that's so comforting, isn't it? We don't have to go through elaborate rituals. We don't have to do what they did in the Old Testament with sacrifices. Jesus has taken care of that. And now we have boldness and access to the throne of grace. And it's tragic that we don't take more advantage of that.

Participant: I'm trying to get the book and I'll put it on the table over there.

Don: Great! Wonderful! Good. Thanks, Doug.

All right, now. Number four. God promises to answer our prayers when we pray according to His will. That's just mind boggling! And again, that's something that only we who know Christ have experienced, and experience individually. That is just absolutely wonderful. He may not always answer them the way that we want. But he will answer them. And it is always for our good. He always does what He does for our ultimate good, to share in His holiness.

And then number five. Kind of launching off on that, what a privilege that God, from before the foundation of the world, ordains eternal things through your prayers! Our prayers don't change the will of God. But our prayers are part of God's will.

Think about that. Think of how God used the prayers of Moses, for example, to save the lives of the Israelites after the golden calf incident. Or the prayers of Elijah to make it rain and stop raining, or vice versa. Maybe we'll only know in eternity how God used our prayers for the salvation of a loved one, or to turn the tide of history in terms of world events, or whatever.

Does God need our prayers? Couldn't He do it by Himself? Yes. But He gives us the unbelievable privilege of somehow having a part in this. It's unbelievable! It's the same with evangelism, sharing the gospel.

And even though we don't know how to pray, as Romans 8 says, we know that Jesus and the Holy Spirit are interceding for us. And so when you're praying, you're never praying alone. You're praying with Christ. You're praying with the Holy Spirit.

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For example, I don't know how to pray in regard to my mom. Do I pray for a healing? I mean, God is certainly capable of reversing that dementia and giving her the health that she had and the personality that my family has all known and loved all these years. It's unlikely that He's going to do that.

Do I pray for that? Or do I pray that God in His mercy would take her home soon, difficult as that is? I don't know what to pray in that regard.

But do you know what? I do know that the Holy Spirit intercedes for me with groans that words cannot express. And in that I take my comfort. And we should all take our comfort in that.

Now what does it mean to pray without ceasing? Obviously, we can't just be on our knees 24/7 and pray. We are not to be monks. We have things to do, work to do, family to take care of. But it's a constant attitude of prayer, calling on God constantly.

My sister talked about this with me the other day, about how she talks constantly with God when things get stressful and she has a lot of things in her life that she has to deal with. Would that all of us would have that constant attitude of prayer, even while doing other things.

Of course, prayer is sometimes difficult. There are hindrances. I don't know if anybody wants to comment on this or anything else before we go on to our next point.

Participant: I was going to mention, too, that R. C. Sproul wrote the foreword to that book.

Don: For which book? Oh, John Guest's book. Oh, okay. Very good. Yes. Thank you. Wouldn't all of us have given anything to have been with Jesus, to hear His voice and everything like that?

I'll tell you what. Some of my favorite prayers are the Psalms, where David and the other Psalmists express their sadness, their grief, their frustration, their joy! We can come to God and just have no holes barred. In reverence, of course, but honestly knowing that He will hear and answer us. It's a tremendous thing.

Okay. Now we get to what Bruce wanted me to talk about—gratitude. (*Laughter.*) Verse 18. *"In everything give thanks."*

I listened to a sermon the other night and it was entitled "The Rarity of Gratitude." And I think that more and more in our society, we see that this is certainly true. But of course it's central in Scripture.

I don't know if Dale is here today.

Dale: Yes, I am.

Don: You are! Good, Dale, because I have a quote that I think you'll really enjoy, and I hope the rest of you do, too. And I got it, of all things, from an Original Mattress Factory commercial. (*Laughter.*)

Participant: It's gospel then!

Don: Yes, absolutely yes! All right. So here we go. This is from Melody Beatty.

"Gratitude unlocks the fullness of life. It turns what we have into enough, and more. It turns denial into acceptance, chaos to order, confusion to clarity. It can turn a meal into a feast, a house into a home, a stranger into a friend. Gratitude makes sense of our past, brings peace for today, and creates a vision for tomorrow."

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It's not Scripture, but a very profound statement. And of course, it is something that the Scripture is full of admonitions for us to have. Sig, Psalm 100 verse 4, please?

Sig: Sure. *"Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise."*

Don: Yes. It's the hallmark of the Christian, isn't it? You know, if we are really aware of how lost we were—and I don't think that any of us are aware to the point that we should be. But how lost we were and how dead we were in trespasses and sins,. Without any hope and without God in the world, as Paul says in Ephesians 2.

And then if we are really aware of what Christ has done for us, raising us to spiritual life, seating us in heavenly places, giving us eternal life, how could we not give thanks, in addition to all the other blessings? Don't forget, none of this is owed to us. This is all the grace of God. How can we not give thanks?

In fact, lack of thanksgiving is a grievous sin, especially in this context, for pagans. Brian, would you read Romans 1:20-21, please?

Brian: *"For since the creation of the world, His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made—even His eternal power and Godhead—so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened."*

Don: *"Nor were thankful."* Dr. Al Mohler, the Reformed Baptist commentator, says that really, when you think about it, lack of thankfulness is really the primal sin. It's the sin on which all other sins are built.

He asks the profound question. How does an atheist give thanks? You know, thanksgiving is such a nebulous concept in our society. Yesterday on the news, I heard, "Oh, people are thankful for the beautiful weather today." Or people are thankful, or a couple is thankful for a newborn baby who is healthy, or whatever.

And Dr. Mohler points out that the atheist may very well thank other people. But how can an atheist be thankful for the sunshine, or bountiful crops, or family or friends, or good health? I mean, those things didn't come because he worked for them. In order to be thankful, you have to thank someone, don't you?

Participant: Yes.

Don: People think that thankfulness is just contentment and feeling good. But no. Thanks has to be expressed to somebody.

Participant: Don?

Don: Yes?

Participant: It was the same way during the Macy's Thanksgiving Day parade yesterday.

Second Participant: It's spiritual.

First Participant: Yes, very spiritual. They come down in front of Macy's, you know, where the grandstand is, and the TV announcers. On the building it says, "Believe!"

Don: Yes. Believe what? Believe who?

Participant: And I think that, you know, if you weren't in Christ, what are you believing in, or what do we believe?

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Don: Yes. It was like last Sunday, Sig. Good thing you brought that up. Last Sunday I was watching TV when the family was getting together. And they had one of those goofy—my opinion!—Lifetime Christmas movies on. And the boy, who was talking to his dead father, told his mother, "Christmas is about believing!" Well, believing what? It's this nebulous kind of thing about faith. It's this nebulous thing about Thanksgiving.

And I saw the parade. I don't know if it was Macy's or the other one, the one in New York. And the announcers were saying, "Yes, there is a real Santa Claus." (*Laughter.*)

Participant: Jesus.

Don: Yes, right. What did Santa do for us that is of cosmic importance?? But anyway, Robert Ingersol, the atheist, said that he was thankful for many dead artists, scientists, philosophers, etc. But of course, those people obviously couldn't receive his thanks, could they?

The purpose of the first Thanksgiving, contrary to the way that our culture has revised it, was so that the Pilgrims could give thanks to God for preserving them through the harsh conditions they had to endure in bringing them to the New World. And of course George Washington said that very thing in 1789 when he inaugurated the first Thanksgiving.

Now Dr. Mohler also believes that the primary sin of Adam and Eve in the garden in eating the forbidden fruit was a lack of gratitude, in not being thankful for God's abundant provision, and His loving admonition, and believing that they knew best what was best for them. They knew better than God what was best for them. It was a lack of thankfulness.

Now in the account of the ten lepers in Luke 17, Jesus' reaction is very, very revealing. Let me just give you a little bit of background. A lot of you probably already know this. I know I'm going to get graphic. But leprosy was dreadful! It still is! A lot of people still have it today in India. It has been estimated that about three million people around the world have it today.

First of all, there is a sore that spreads, and eventually flesh is eaten away, attacking extremities—hands, fingers, toes. It goes into the bone. And they are not able to feel pain. We may think that's a good thing, but it isn't—not at all. And there is fever and sleeplessness, oozing scabs and a raspy voice. Eyes eventually fall off. Tongues are ulcerated. Fingers and toes fall off. And there is the raw odor of rotting flesh.

And not only that. If you read Leviticus 13, you understand that this was almost a death sentence for the person suffering that disease, because it was isolation. He had to hold on to his lower lip and yell, "Unclean! Unclean!" to passers-by. And of course the Pharisees made other kinds of rules saying that you couldn't even speak to a leper.

And so it was really like excommunication from the life of the people of God. Imagine if you couldn't fellowship with fellow believers in church, or in a group gathering like this. What a horrible thing it would be! Well, that was the way of life for the leper.

And so when Jesus heals those ten people miraculously, and restores everything immediately, no wonder Jesus is grieved that the only one giving thanks was not even a

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Jew, not even someone who should have known better, but a Samaritan. Bill McCoy, Luke 17:15-19, please?

Bill: *"And then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, returned, and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down on his face at His feet, giving Him thanks. And he was a Samaritan."*

"So Jesus answered and said, 'Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine? Were there not any found to give glory to God except this foreigner?' And He said to him, 'Arise, go your way. Your faith has made you well.'"

Don: Yes. That's interesting. Weren't they all made well? I think that this man may very well have been saved that day. I don't know. But we have much more to be thankful for than those men, don't we? Because, as horrible as leprosy is, as horrible as cancer is, as horrible as auto accidents are, as horrible as anything we may be going through in this life is, hell is infinitely more horrible.

And, of course, what is the point of the whole story? You know, I've often wondered why God would treat those people that way. Well, I think that it was an illustration of the depths of our depravity, the depths that we have been rescued from, as far as our sin is concerned—our deadness in trespasses and sins and being raised to life in Christ. That is the whole point of the illustration of the plight of the leper. And so we have something infinitely more to be thankful for in Christ and what He has done.

And are we thankful? Do we express that? Not only that, but for all the many, many blessings that God has given us—family, food, the Christian church, Christian friends. And the list could go on and on—health. Things that God doesn't owe us, but that He gives us because He loves us.

And then Corky, would you read Philippians 4:6-7, please?

Corky: *"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be known to God. And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."*

Don: Oh brother, you don't know how many times I've had to remind myself of that verse. I think we all do, because it's very easy to be anxious, isn't it? But we are to be anxious for nothing, but by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving—how important that is!—to make our requests known to God. And we are promised that the peace of God in Christ that passes all understanding *will*—not might, but will--guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. That is a precious, precious promise.

And of course we know that Bruce is always talking about the will of God. And one of the aspects of the will of God that Bruce talks about is this very thing that it says in verse 18, that we are to *"give thanks in all circumstances, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you."* What more can I say? Any questions or comments?

Participant: Don, I think it's interesting to note that throughout Scripture, grief and joy are inseparable twins.

Don: Mm-hmm.

Corky: Read the Psalms.

Don: Oh, yeah!

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Corky: In the beginning in the Garden, when Adam and Eve sinned so greatly, in those very first verses God set the stage for Jesus to come back and redeem us.

Don: Amen.

Corky: And so it's inseparable. And that's what life is. So God is commanding us to see and feel His presence in the midst of everything that Satan throws us in this world.

Don: Oh, Corky, that's so well said. And there is no grief that is senseless, is there? There is no grief that doesn't have a purpose. And I think of Romans 8:28 again, that "*all things work together for good to those who love the Lord and are called according to His purpose*"—even the things that we can't get a grip on or can't understand, even the result of our sin. In preaching to others I preach to myself, brothers, that's for sure. Thank you, Corky. That's great.

Well, brothers, I thank you. I pray that we will all just continue to learn this and be instructed in these very great and precious truths of God's word. Sig, would you close us in prayer today?

Sig: Me!

Don: Yes, you!

Sig: This must be the will of God.

Transcriber's Note: Sig makes some preliminary comments.

Sig: Let's pray, then. Heavenly Father, gracious God, You have so wonderfully taught us this morning, and opened Your living word to our hearts and our minds, that we may grasp more of Your truth, in Your Son Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit who leads us to all truth. So we come back to You, God our Father, as You all live and reign together as One from here unto eternity. ... Asking it all in the most wonderful and powerful name, the name of Jesus Christ.

Don: And all the Brave Men said,

Men: Amen.

Don: Thank you, brothers.