

# 5/9/21 - 1 Thes. 5:16-18 - “The Harmony of the Church, part 3”

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[ 0 : 00 ] Let's turn to the Word, and we're going to continue our series in 1 Thessalonians, and we're going to be, we're coming to the last days of being in this book and being in this study together.

It's been extremely edifying, I believe, in my own walk, in my own preaching and teaching, but also I've heard that it's been encouraging for you as well.

And so that's going to take us today to verse 16, and we're going to be reading to verse 18 in the third part of this passage.

Let's read. 1 Thessalonians chapter 5, verse 16 says, Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing. Give thanks in all circumstances.

For this is the will of God in Jesus Christ, in Christ Jesus for you. It's the Word of the Lord. Today we're going to be continuing in this third part series.

[ 1 : 10 ] The last part is going to be next week as we will put a cap upon what Paul is communicating here within the broad context of Scripture.

Just studying this and praying through it, I've been compelled to break this up into short sections in order to dig deep within the soil of Scripture to see exactly what God wants to speak and command us in his church.

And so in the last two weeks specifically, we've observed how that harmony within the church, as these part series are the harmony of the church, how that harmony is expressed to one another.

We saw that specifically how that harmony is expressed from the congregation to leaders on one another. On one side, but also how the congregation is to respect and treat one another.

And so today we shift the focus slightly, just slightly, to observe how that harmony is not expressed to leaders or one another, but expressed vertically to God with one another.

[ 2 : 25 ] So in other words, Paul is providing exhortations, encouragements, commands, and three of them to be exact of how our hearts should be aligned to God when the church comes together.

So three commands for the gathered church, how our hearts should be aligned to God when we come together. And now as we adventure around Youngstown, there's a plethora of churches, there's a plethora of assemblies that get together that call themselves a church.

And we might be surprised at the various modes of their worship. So some might be a strict psalm singing church. We sing the psalms.

There's tried and true. We sing the psalm. And on the other hand, you might have people who sing the tunes from the radio or modern contemporary singing churches. Some churches may actually not sing at all.

We might also see churches having the modes of worship being expressed through uniforms or robes. For us in this church today, specifically, the sweater vest seems to be a big hit between Pastor Rick and I.

[ 3 : 40 ] We did not plan that, but this happens all the time. We'll coordinate somehow. The unity in the Holy Spirit, right? But some robes, some uniforms, and even hats.

Some people wear hats. Or maybe for the more modern church, skinny jeans. You'll never see me wearing those. Skinny jeans and maybe the long oversized tee.

You might hear the pipe organs blaring or the fog machines fogging. Many various modes of worship clearly exist all around Youngstown, all around the world.

And something that we can begin to understand that in the complexity and the creativity of our God, we can be less concerned at various times about the preferential modes of worship and be much

more concerned with the manner of our worship.

We can disagree on the modes. Some, I believe, I think are less helpful than others. That's my personal conscience. And it's different from yours.

[ 4 : 44 ] However, Scripture is clear in the manner of our worship. Paul begins to exhort this gathered church body to instill within their convictions the great significance in the manner of their worship without any mention of the mode being used.

It is within these verses that Paul exhorts this church to bring an order in attitude. Not necessarily an order of worship.

Saying, here you sing the song, then you do your announcements. Then you sing another song, you have high school ministry announcement. You sing another song, then you have the sermon. This is the order of worship. We can disagree on those things.

But he's bringing an order in attitude, not an order of worship. In our service, when we come together and considering the context of Thessalonica, this will challenge our attitudes.

Especially because these attitudes are counter to our instincts. These are attitudes that we have to work upon. They don't come natural the least bit.

[ 5 : 56 ] And today we will see clearly why the church is called to gather. And specifically, how we are to gather. And we can leave our preferential opinions aside.

They're a great conversation for maybe after the service. But we're going to dive into several commands for us to uphold as we gather regularly, even today.

So let's pray as we dive into some of these exhortations as we look at the third part of the harmony of the church. Let's pray. Father, we come to you today and we need to hear you clearly.

Father, we need to submit ourselves to your word, to your instructions, to your commands. And Father, help us to understand that this word that we have bound in front of us, that we have words upon the screen.

This comes informed with a context in mind. That while it applies to us today, it includes a context and the specific reason why Paul is addressing the church in Thessalonica.

[ 7 : 16 ] And by observing the situations in Thessalonica, we can then craft that to apply in our context today. Father, your word is transcendent and we need you to speak today.

So Father, help us to understand your word, to comprehend it, to submit to your word. And Father, we know and we can trust the effectiveness of your word to raise the soul to life.

In Jesus' name. Amen. So before we get into the first section today, we need to preface something here.

We need to understand why the church gathers. Why do those people get together? Specifically at 801 Wick Avenue.

Why do they get together like that? Well, within the framework of the gathered church, God had in mind of making a public and noticeable people. Who have been bought by the blood of Jesus Christ.

[ 8 : 20 ] He has made this framework. Within that framework, the church is identified by its public expression. It's not a name. It's not a building.

It is identified by the assembly of people. It's far from private. It's far from being isolated. It's far from being closed off from society.

The church exists to boldly, publicly proclaim and display the glory of God. Amen. And so the church of centuries past, several centuries past, took this very seriously.

You can look around all the world in various countries and see massive construction projects that took place. Where church assemblies met.

It was known as the bigger and the taller cathedrals can be. The greater the expression of the greatness and the majesty of the glory of God.

[ 9 : 21 ] You see that in New York City at St. Patrick's Cathedral. You see that at Notre Dame in Paris, France. Which is being restored multi-million dollars to restore a piece of history.

They took the glory of God very serious. And the fine details represented the precise intricacies of God as well.

It doesn't take too long to observe the intricacies of God's creativity and of what he desires. You look at Exodus 35 all the way through 40.

The building of the tabernacle. Those curtains had to be a specific length with a certain amount of rings attached to that curtain. Right? And so, obviously.

Well, maybe some intentions were true. Some were maybe for making a self-righteous statement to the world. Obviously, any well-intentioned motive.

[10:22] I can't caricature people's motive in building St. Patrick's Cathedral. But any well-intentioned motive can also turn around and become an idol.

Anything good in this life can turn around and become an idol. And churches began to be defined by a building rather than their people. And so, in this simple reminder, as we get into a couple exhortations today, we're reminded that the church is the assembly of body of believers.

It's the assembled body of believers. The church can gather in a building. The church can gather in a home. The church can gather in an underpass under 680 where it's snowing. The church can gather at Wick Park.

But it does not define the church. The church is defined by the assembled people. And so, where the people of God are, there the church will be. Simple enough. And it is through the gathering of the church that God is glorified by the manner of our corporate participation in worship.

And the world surrounding is witness of. Where the people of God are gathered, God is glorified. And if God is glorified, people are edified.

[11:36] Christ is building his church. And so, we get into the first exhortation today. So, any note takers, take note.

Exhortation 1. A church commanded to rejoice in verse 16. It says, rejoice always. Rejoice always. It's known that John 11 verse 35 is the shortest verse in the Bible.

Maybe some of you recall it. Jesus wept. Right? Well, actually, in the Greek translations, we arrive at the shortest verse in the Greek Bible.

1 Thessalonians chapter 5 verse 16. Rejoice always. Isn't it interesting, too, being the shortest verse in the Greek Bible, that at various times in our lives, the most humbling comments that can ever be said or mentioned to us in life are some of those short, concise, haunting, parental guidance that just leaks, lurches under your skin.

You can't escape from various commands, especially parental ones. It brings to mind that simple phrase, I'm not mad at you, I'm just disappointed.

[13:02] Boy, if you think about that long enough of what actions sometimes cause for your parents, it makes you kind of cringe a little bit. And so we have a very short, compelling truth and commands of Paul's here.

Rejoice always. Think about that. This is a haunting command. That at the time of any trial, any struggle, it's just there to meet us.

Rejoice always. Think about it. This is an attitude that is to supersede circumstance and is a manner in which our emotional condition is mastered by the power of God and the truth of his word. The truth is our flesh doesn't like rejoicing. It's hard. Our flesh loves to complain. Our flesh loves to gossip.

Our flesh loves vengeance. Our flesh loves to set the record straight. Even just as we saw last week, the antonym of grace being that of retaliation.

[14:22] That is the opposite of grace. That's giving somebody who offends you exactly what they deserve. It's the antonym of grace. And it becomes unnatural at times to rejoice.

And rejoicing always takes work. It takes preparation. It takes community. Why else would Paul give such a command to a persecuted church? Think about the context for us.

Considering Thessalonica. The issues of Paul being driven out. Being accused of civil treason. This church is being watched very carefully under a magnifying glass of what they're going to do next to cause civil unrest.

The Jews are wondering, you're saying Christ is the Messiah? The Greeks are saying you're offending our gods? Nobody was on their side. And this was every day for them.

They didn't have a constitution to protect that right. And so why else would God or why else would Paul give this this command to this persecuted church?

[15:29] Well, we know something. The church, in their vigilance of that of a soldier ready for battle. If you can remember the passage from 1 Thessalonians 5, verse 8.

Ready for battle with the breastplate of faith and love. And the helmet of hope. Ready for battle.

This, friends, should make it completely clear to us that if you are expressing your rejoicing as a flip on Sunday morning.

This flip, you walk in the door and boom, you're a Christian again. You're missing it. This is something that should be transpiring. Should be affecting the culture around us from Monday through Saturday.

Now, in growing up, maybe it's news to you. I played French horn. It's a weird shaped instrument. It has a big coil of brass.

And I never practiced it. But for some odd reason, a miraculous maybe intervention of God. I was winning ensembles.

[16:42] I was winning competitions. I was winning chairs and symphonies and youth symphonies. I don't know how. But if we treat our faith similar to that where we're just like getting by by the luck of a draw at the end of the day.

And maybe we're faking it till we make it. We're missing what God intended for the community of God. And so the fullness of rejoicing you bring to the church gathering is a direct reflection upon the level of rejoicing that you have been practicing.

Throughout the week. Meaning when Paul is telling a discouraged, persecuted, struggling church in Thessalonica. He is commanding them.

It's not an option to align their attitude in hope that exists not within themselves nor within this life.

But hoping God who is not only in our circumstances but he's above our circumstances.

And guess what? He's at the conclusion of our circumstances. And now this isn't to minimize various seasons of, say, lament. Because yes, we are called to lament as his church.

[18:00] But did you not know that true lament is sorrow rejoicing? Think about it. You want to know the manner of how the church ought to gather?

Paul makes it clear in the shortest verse in the Greek Bible. Rejoice. Always. This brings to mind Ephesians 5. Might be up on the screen for you.

How the church is to be addressing one another in songs and hymns and spiritual songs. Singing and making melody to the Lord with your hearts.

Giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.

We're reminded of Colossians 3, 16-17. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts. To which indeed you were called in one body.

[19:04] And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly. Teaching and admonishing one another in wisdom. Singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. With thankfulness in your hearts to God.

And whatever you do in word or deed. Do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus. Giving thanks to God the Father through him. One commentator said Paul is not issuing an order to be happy. But an invitation to worship. Worship is the act of giving thanks to who God is and what he has done.

And where we are in him as forgiven. This church is how we rejoice. Even in lament. In this corporate and plural sense of Paul's command.

And these series of commands stretching all the way back to the middle of chapter 5. The conclusion of his writing begins at verse 12. Within these we see that along with all the other commands.

[20:12] Paul is commanding this church to rejoice. And the object of our rejoicing is God. And the call. And it's a call to our observance. Being obedience to God.

Who is the object of our rejoicing. We also see another aspect of exhortation in this passage. Which is seen as a church commanded to pray.

A church commanded to pray. As verse 17 says. Pray without ceasing. Damaging that up with the neighbor rejoicing.

He's calling this church to pray without ceasing. We often find ourselves off the beaten path of scripture's commands in life. Maybe some. More often than others.

But sure enough. It will happen. Sooner or later we will find ourselves off the beaten path of scripture's commands for our lives. This should not be a surprise.

[21:14] At times our worship music that we sing in church can be so individualistic and personal. That when we sing together it seems more appropriate to just close your eyes.

And just let it be between you and God. As if it's just you and your little vessel up to heaven. And completely undermining the assembled glory of God that is assembled around us.

Right? And we also see this too being mistaken in the Lord's prayer when we pray. As the Lord commanded us a model. He said when you pray, pray like this. He did not say my father. He said our father. He said our prayer. Indicating something of the corporate nature of not only our prayers or our singing. That this, when we come together as his church, our worship is a corporate. Corporate in its context and its expression. And it is easy to mistake. It's an easy mistake in our lives that we make. And one that a church rooted in sound doctrine can be compelled to make progress in.

[ 22 : 25 ] And so here, Paul commands and reminds this church, pray without ceasing. Or in other words, pray continuously.

Pray constantly. Every waking moment, pray, pray, pray. This is an imitative behavior that Paul, after introducing who he is to this Thessalonian church.

Saying, hi Paul, I'm writing this with Silas and Timothy. And we pray, we have not ceased to pray for you. There's been an ongoing sense of that, of that plurality in messaging content to this church. And here we see that continuing. He's saying, pray without ceasing. This should be an attribute of the church and command for the church. This type of prayer is not an isolated endeavor either. Paul is placing prayer within the corporate assembly of his church. There is no prayer closet when the church is assembled. There is no closed door prayer.

[ 23 : 29 ] There's no speaking to God in secret. While there are appropriate times for that, the gathering of the church is not one of them. Now, praying without ceasing is not just for the pastors and elders.

We all have probably said it once or twice. Like, oh, I guess I'm really busy today. I'll just tell the pastor to pray for this and pass it off to the pastors. I mean, we're paying them.

What do we pay them for, right? Pay those pastors. But a command for every disciple. This is a command for every disciple. As said by the psalmist in Psalm 105.4, look to the Lord and his strength.

Seek his face always. This is not for a particular few. This is for the assembled body, Christians. And so considering Stott's remarks on this passage, he says, and I quote, Each congregation should accept the responsibility to engage in serious intercession, not only during the Sunday services, but at a midweek prayer meeting as well.

And we should be praying for our own church members far and near. We should be praying for the church throughout the world, its leaders, its adherence to the truth of God's revelation, its holiness, its unity and mission.

[ 24 : 53 ] We should be praying for our nation, governments, and for a just, free, compassionate and participatory society. We should be praying for world peace, world mission, especially for places and peoples resistant to the gospel.

We should be praying for peace, justice and environmental stewardship. We should be praying for the poor, the oppressed, the hungry and the hopeless and the sick.

We wonder at times if the comparatively slow progress towards any resolution of our prayers is due to the lack of participation in prayer.

The prayerlessness of God's people. There's a mystery within God's sovereign will as he's decreed all things to be and he oversees his creation.

He's decided to decree that he works through the prayers of his people. He works through the prayers of his people. And you would think that this would motivate us to drop instantly to our knees, right?

[ 26 : 05 ] But we have to inventory even our own attitudes in our prayers. Because if your prayers throughout this week would be miraculously answered right now.

I'll have this little wand and boom, answered. Would it be just your life that changed? Or would the entire landscape of the world change?

Or would anything change at all? Have you prayed this week? Again, we're being at war with our flesh.

We are naturally conditioned by sin to be the least persevering beings ever. We get discouraged very quickly. We're next to dogs.

We're not as good as cats though. Cats are very persevering. But we give up quickly at the very instance of our prayers not being answered.

[ 27 : 02 ] We fail at persevering in that manner. And we want answers. We want them now. And we command the Lord. And in this war with our flesh, when our corporate prayers seem shallow or disengaged, of just praying for a couple things, it's not to minimize our prayers.

Don't hear something I'm not saying this morning. But might it be due to a lack of praying that we've engaged in throughout the week?

Just as our lack of rejoicing throughout the week when we're gathered as his body, we kind of feel this disconnect with the sense of rejoicing. Prayer has the power of changing our circumstances in various situations.

But better is the prayer, the power of prayer that changes us. That while, yeah, we can focus on our lives and situations and the world affairs, prayer has a natural tendency of changing us.

Think about it. It's harder to gossip about somebody that you've been praying for all week. When you go to work and that, oh, that guy, he's called off again.

[ 28 : 14 ] Let's go talk about it around the whole office about that person. It's hard to talk about these people if you've been praying for them constantly, without ceasing.

It changes us. And maybe it's us that need to change, not necessarily these other individuals, right? Let God deal with them. So it leads us to the main point.

If this happens at an individual level of God's command to pray for his church, can you imagine the effect this would have at the corporate level when God's church falls to its knees in prayer and pleading and petition and intercession for situations and circumstances?

It shouldn't just come and go with the tides of experiencing God's blessing. It should be coming in our plenty. It should be coming in our lack.

When we have a lot or we don't have anything, this should not be contingent on our level of receipt from God or the investment on our return. This is not contingent upon anything.

[ 29 : 24 ] This is a command, whether you feel like it or not. This is God's command for his church and his expression that he desires for his church to ensue.

So we see the last command in this series of commands of the third exhortation. The church commanded to give thanks.

To give thanks. Verse 18. He says simply, in the third command, give thanks in all circumstances. Thinking about thankfulness, it should be interpreted, especially by a Christian who have received the exact opposite of what we deserve, by the grace of God.

We should know something about thankfulness, right? We should know something about it.

Thankfulness should be one of the most prominent characteristics of God's church next to love.

[ 30 : 33 ] And this is because a proper understanding of God's grace in our lives will align and ignite our hearts that are hopeless without him. Think about it.

But salvation is given to us through Jesus Christ. If that's news to you, welcome. This is good news. Salvation, being saved from our sin, has been given to us through Jesus Christ.

We have not earned a single bit of that. We don't deserve the least bit of that. We deserve wrath. And we cannot be thankful for any of our own efforts.

Oh God, I'm glad that you made me respond to the gospel and that you have brought all these things. I'm so thankful for myself and myself and myself.

The church, being thankful in the object of who God is and what God has done. This is the expression of our worship. This is the direction of our thankfulness.

[ 31 : 36 ] It's the true north pointed directly at the cross of Jesus Christ. And at the cross of Jesus Christ, you find blood stains that should have been ours.

You find whips. You find shackles that should be ours. But God. The two most powerful words to me in the Bible.

But God. He gave his only son to die in our place. To suffer the wrath of God that was headed for us. God doesn't send people to hell.

We're already on our way there. Apart from Christ. The reason why people go to hell is because they love the darkness rather than the light. We have to understand this.

That God saved us from his own wrath. And this is not of our own doing. This is a gift of God. And this, church, is why all our circumstances can be overflowing with thanksgiving.

[ 32 : 42 ] Our thankfulness in all circumstances is achieved because of one single circumstance. Where we as sinners were given the exact opposite of what we deserve.

An amazing grace it is. Why is it as though the church is filled with some of the most unthankful people?

Who God has purchased and ransomed by his blood. Being disgruntled. Being pessimistic. Being thankless folks at times.

It wasn't too long ago that I was reflecting on this aspect. What reason can we ever give to God? Why we're not being thankful in our lives.

And it brought to mind the one instance where the last installation we had was Pastor, or no, two installations ago was Pastor Rick.

[ 33 : 47 ] And I was standing in line at Sam's Club. And I was picking up a cake for him. And so I hear this disgruntled argument going on with a customer in front of me.

And, you know, me being a creeper, I sort of like leaned into the conversation a little bit. I just wanted to tune in what the situation is about. Do I need to intervene?

And come to my surprise, there was a customer picking up a cake for a church event. And the words weren't placed exactly where they needed them to be.

The S looked like an R. She put the cake back in the baker's hand and said, I need it redone. Along with a couple derogatory comments to me as if I'm a caring bystander.

As I was, I was very compassionate. I was like, oh, that's a shame, man. That poor cake. It's going to get eaten. It's just a cake.

[ 34 : 56 ] And just imagine, at this moment, this situation that we chuckle about, that we can look at from the outside. Isn't this us at various times of fighting with our flesh to want to take that cake and smash it right in a baker's face?

Right? We get frustrated. That comes natural to us. It is unnatural to respond in thankfulness, saying, God, I'm going to look at the bigger picture here. Yeah, that S looks like an R.

But, man, look at this in perspective of the situation. This person might need the gospel. Because at that point, that church member, whatever religion that they belong to, they lost a baker for Christ that day.

This is just one instance that came to my mind in reflecting. And I'm sure a plethora of instances can come to your mind. And I'm not saying that I'm up here a spiritually elite person that does everything perfect.

I'm a work in progress. Just as we all are. But does our level of thankfulness attract people to the gospel? Or does it detract them? Is it a magnet that has the two opposites that attract each other?

[ 36 : 03 ] Or are we constantly walking around like misrepresenting Jesus as polar opposites? That push people away.

In this, we are challenged with quite a task. Giving thanks, as Paul says, in all circumstances. And we have to look at not only the individual sense, but also the corporate sense, as we've seen in these commands.

If this happens at an individual level of God's command to give thanks, Monday through Saturday. Can you imagine the effect that this would have at the corporate level?

When God's people gather, expressing thankfulness as one body. We turn enough heads away from us throughout the week probably, but that would turn some heads in.

What are these people thankful for? We'll tell you about it. Giving thanks in all circumstances demands we surrender temporal for eternal.

[ 37 : 07 ] We surrender, it fixates our attentions. We surrender our immediate trouble for the eternal promise waiting ahead. It's a realignment process that we constantly have to be realigned.

Come on, Ohio drivers. You know what realignments are with our potholes. It's a constant endeavor in our Christian walks as well. We have to realign, and that is why Paul is saying this today.

And this is not saying that we should dismiss or minimize various situations. That we're supposed to just magically be happy people. Well, if you just lost your mother last week, Mother's Day is probably a very sorrowful time.

It stinks being separated from people. And so this isn't to say that you have to put on the Christian fake happy face and everything like that. Because just as we saw in 1 Thessalonians chapter 3 verse 1, that Christians are supposed to properly feel anxious.

We are supposed to embrace our anxiety at various times for other people in a proper context. We are, according to 1 Corinthians chapter 2 verse 3, there is a proper fear that we should have.

[ 38 : 22 ] And even Galatians chapter 1 verse 6 and 5 verse 12, there's a proper expression of anger that we can have. We don't have to be fake, but our aim at the glory of God as the object of God being the object of our worship, we are able to come regardless of our circumstances, embracing whatever situation we have and saying, God, I give this to you because I know that you can handle this and I know you hear me.

That is the source of our thankfulness. And this is not minimizing our challenges or circumstances. We should embrace our seasons of grief, as we saw not too long ago, and anxiety. Just as Paul did, our thankfulness should not be contingent upon the blowing winds of our lives, but in the truth of who God is. Thankfulness in God is a sure and steady anchor of understanding God's promise of salvation in our lives.

And as John Calvin says it, thankfulness is a soil in which pride does not easily grow. And those who have experienced this attitude of thankfulness can attest.

As we come to a close, I've mentioned it before and I'll remind us again today, if you're new with us, I don't know what churches you've been to in the past.

[ 39 : 45 ] Maybe some people you're wondering like, when's the Mother's Day sermon going to happen? He's not having a sermon about Mother's Day. He's not...

Why would he choose this passage to preach about? What's going on? Are they thankless people? Are they not rejoicing? Are they angry? Maybe he's talking about a church member in the line of Sam's Club.

You may be accustomed to topical preaching of the past. You may be accustomed to headline preaching. Latest thing on the news is what you preach on the next day.

And sort of craft the text to fit within that mold. Here within our family, we believe the last person you want in the driver's seat at the pulpit is me.

My ideas. My agendas. You have enough of that in other pulpits. You don't have my agenda. You don't have my ideas. And so in this, we place Scripture as the commander and controller in our gatherings.

[ 40 : 47 ] And we're going to see exactly why next week as we conclude the fourth part of this little section of Scripture. But we can rest assured that just as these three commands in this passage of the gathered church that we studied today, and also being tied with the previous commands in the passage previously of the harmony of the church over the past two weeks, these are not my ideas.

These are not suggestions. This isn't Brent's revelation at midnight as I'm rocking a child. These are not creative suggestions. This is commands of the Lord.

This is the word of God. And so it has authority over our lives. Because we see that as this passage comes to a close, we just read, Rejoice always.

Pray without ceasing. Give thanks in all circumstances. But wait, there's more. For this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

In this, the will of God is set forth for the gathered church. This entire exhortation is in the plural sense. We can argue about that all we want.

[ 42 : 05 ] And try to argue context. Paul is sending this church off well until he was able to write another letter. If you just flip to the right, you see second Thessalonians. But wait, there was more for the Thessalonian church.

Continued encouragement. But right now he's saying this is not an option for you. The society in Thessalonica, they can come for your head. But you need to rejoice always.

You need to pray without ceasing. You need to give thanks in all circumstances. This is the will of God for you and Jesus. Right? This is set forth for the gathered church.

To rejoice, to pray, to give thanks. This is consistently. There's time frames attached to this. This is without wavering, without ceasing. Regardless of our excuses and our circumstances.

That might prohibit us from doing so. The manner of our gatherings do not take a vacation. Being the manner of our worship. This manner of our gatherings does not take a vacation.

[ 43 : 08 ] It's not up for grabs. But this must be presence at all times. The direction of our rejoicing or praying or thanksgiving is rooted in obedience to the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

If our Father rejoices over us. If Jesus is interceding for us. How can we be ever so quickly of fleeing our responsibility and the attitude that we ought to have of doing the same towards God? So I challenge all of us to evaluate last week. Last time you were in a Sam's Club line. In accordance with the command of God.

Through the word of God. The Christian life is the corporate church life. And through this our unity and regular gatherings express the glory of God. And is an image of what eternity with Jesus Christ will look like.

You want to wonder what that looks like? Take a look around. This is what it looks like. But do we find it more difficult to rejoice when we're together?

[ 44 : 18 ] Do we find it difficult to pray when we are together? Do we find it difficult to give thanks when we are together? If it seems to be.

Might the root of this disconnect be personal irresponsibility of neglecting God's commands throughout the week? You walk into church and boom. You're a Christian.

Walk out. Complete double life. Has your week neglected God's commands? And you show up on Sunday morning acting like you're flipping a switch of holiness.

It wouldn't take very long. It wouldn't take very long. Trust me. In our basically publicized lives through social media and everything.

It wouldn't take very long to maybe evaluate social media pages and see exactly how we're doing. Are we promoting the gospel in these areas of our lives?

[ 45 : 14 ] Or are we promoting our own self-righteousness? We have to align ourselves with the truth of God and the word of God because God's glory is at stake.

May we prepare ourselves and bear true witness to the world individually and compel our community in a vibrant display of what the gospel is all about.

And like I said, if you're new with us today, you haven't heard the gospel. That you this good news that you've thought all this time you had to take a shower to be saved.

You had to like that helps in some instances. But you had to do X, Y, Z. You had to work for your salvation. You had to give a certain amount of money in order to be forgiven, to be taken years off of purgatory, to reduce the amount of judgments that God is having upon your life.

If you have been exposed to that false gospel, come to light in the true gospel. Because it is not based on your merit.

[ 46 : 22 ] It's based on Christ's merit for you. But God, being rich in mercy, reached down into history, became human and was placed under the law to save those under the law.

And he died an appropriate sacrifice on your behalf. It is not of your own doing. Through his blood, you are atoned.

Your sin is forgiven. And thus being the source of supernatural ability to be thankful, to pray, to rejoice.

So I ask you, I invite you to trust in Jesus Christ through his sacrifice on the cross. If you have ears to hear today, I trust that the work of God is already pounding your heart.

You're ready to respond to the gospel. Don't do this alone. Come see one of us. If you've seen anybody on stage, anybody in this church could probably help you.

[ 47 : 22 ] It doesn't take just me. We would like to walk with you on that journey. Come and join this family. We're all making progress together. We're one beggar, showing another beggar where to find bread.

By the grace of God. May we all continue to heed the command of God's word to live our lives one step behind Jesus Christ in our attitudes and affections.

Regardless of the direction, the winds of our lives try to sway us. And what our flesh demands, we turn. Let's pray as we come to the Lord in prayer and ask him to help us in this.