

Speaking to the soul



Joyful, prayerful and thankful

Always be joyful. Never stop praying. Be thankful in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you who belong to Christ Jesus. 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

On the face it, we are looking at three impossible commands here. Being continually joyful, prayerful and thankful sounds wonderful, but can Paul seriously mean that

that's how we should live our lives every single day? What about those times when we are sick, feeling depressed or let down, or when we have just had an accident, or seen the death of a friend? I believe that Paul would confirm that we should indeed be joyful, prayerful and thankful and that that this apparent impossibility is actually possible for all those who belong to Christ Jesus. The point is that our relationship with God changes everything. If it was just down to us, then we would never keep it up. Moans and groans would quickly grab our attention and rob us of any sense of prayerfulness. But as we deliberately open our lives to Christ and allow his Spirit to lead us, these three seemingly impossible commands can actually be achievable.

True joy has nothing to do with our circumstances but everything to do with our relationship with God. That's why James was able to talk about being joyful in the face of suffering (James 1:2). Humanly speaking that sounds like nonsense but, when the focus of our attention is on our relationship with God, it makes sense. He was saying that whatever happens, the relationship that we have with God remains strong – and so joy continues to flow.

The command “never stop praying” makes it clear that prayer is a conversation with God. At times, our prayers will be ones that we share with others as public acts of worship, but most of the time they will be a bubbling chat with God about life. Because God is interested in every single aspect of our lives, everything is a subject for prayer.

Being thankful in all circumstances needs to be carefully understood. We are certainly not saying that everything that happens in life is good. It clearly isn't.

There is much in life that is sad, sinful and destructive. But, because God is present and loving in every moment, we can always be thankful. These three apparently impossible commands are possible when we know that Jesus is truly the Lord of our lives.

QUESTION

How are you going to ensure that you are joyful, prayerful and thankful today?

PRAYER

Lord God, thank you that you want to bless every part of my life. Amen

