

## *Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript*

### **Rejoice Always 1 Thessalonians 5:16**

We are approaching the last paragraph of this epistle. In this concluding paragraph of this letter, Paul gives to the Thessalonians some general instructions for Christian living. In doing this, Paul gives a series of principles basic to holy living in **VV. 16-22** and then concludes the body of the letter with a prayer for sanctification in **VV. 23-24**.

The first principle that he shares with us is found in **1 Thess. 5:16** and it consists of only two words, **“Rejoice always.”**

This morning we will be examining this subject of joy. And certainly I think it is obvious that this discussion potentially will have a great amount of personal relevancy to all of our lives. What do we need to know about joy?

#### “REJOICING ALWAYS” IS COMMANDED

Let us again look at **V. 16, “Rejoice always.”** In this verse we are being commanded to rejoice. Not just when the circumstances would be conducive to such a response but even when they are not. I will make a statement that I believe some of you may struggle with but which I believe is totally true. **THERE IS NO EVENT OR CIRCUMSTANCE IN THE LIFE OF ANY CHRISTIAN THAT SHOULD DIMINISH THAT CHRISTIAN’S JOY.**

A story that we have referred to on numerous occasions really brings this point home found in **Acts 16**. Paul and Silas had cast out a demon from a particular slave girl. And as a result of certain individuals who had been negatively impacted by their act, literally seized them and dragged them into the market place in Philippi and brought them before the city officials. Once before the city officials they were then falsely accused. They were charged with disturbing the peace by proclaiming Jewish customs which were not lawful for the Romans to accept or to observe. So up to this point they had been physically assaulted and now falsely accused. As a result of these false accusations the officials became incensed and tore their robes and the crowd became extremely hostile toward them. The officials then ordered them to be beaten with rods. Not with whips but with rods. And it says after many blows had been inflicted upon them they were thorn into prison. And the guard was told to hold them securely. So he put them into the inner most room and fastened their feet in stocks. And how did they respond to all of this? **Acts 16:25, “But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them.....”** This was an expression of what? Joy!! Paul obviously at least in this passage practiced what he preached. And what did he preach? That we as the followers of Christ are to **“rejoice always.”**

This might be a hard message to receive but based on the clear teaching of God’s Word, this is the truth. God has not commanded us to rejoice in certain situations but not in others. He has commanded us to **“rejoice always.”** The Lord expects joy to be the constant companion of His disciples. **IN FACT IF THERE IS ANY EVENT OR CIRCUMSTANCE THAT ROBS US OF OUR CHRISTIAN JOY WE HAVE SINNED.**

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If you are here this morning and you are joyless then you are sinning. You are outside of God's will for your life and it needs to be corrected.

But you may say but how can I do this? This is just not possible. Certainly I see what the Scriptures teach but this is totally beyond my ability. How can I find joy in the midst of marital conflict? How can I find joy in the midst of a wayward child? How can I find joy when I lose my job or my health? How could the Lord expect me to rejoice in the midst of these terrible things. But the point is that the Lord does expect us to do this.

But we need to understand that the Lord never has expected us to produce the joy in our lives that He himself has commanded. Rejoicing always is not the product of our strength, it is rather the product of drawing upon the Lord's strength.

### REJOICING ALWAYS IS SUPERNATURAL

The joy that the world experiences is rooted in themselves and very much dependent upon circumstances. Their joy is present and can even be abounding when their circumstances are good but when their circumstances become difficult their joy will diminish and even disappear because their joy is rooted in themselves. And the problem with this is very obvious we are all weak. We just simply do not have the wherewithal to produce joy in the midst of adversity.

In order to fulfill the command in **1 Thess. 5:16** to rejoice always we must have a joy rooted not in ourselves but rather in the Spirit.

Let me ask you a question is the Spirit of God at this moment "sad?" Is He downcast? And what would the answer be to that question? The answer would be absolutely not. Let me ask you another question, Was the Spirit "sad" yesterday? Or was He downcast? The answer would be absolutely not. Let me ask you another question, will the Spirit be "sad" or "downcast" tomorrow? Absolutely not.

The joy of the Lord is constant. And it is this joy that we must tap into if we are going to be able to fulfill this command. But how is this done?

It is through having a healthy and dynamic relationship with Jesus so that His joy might fill us. Let us look at **John 15** and read **VV. 1-5, "I am the vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. (2) Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it, that it may bear more fruit. (3) You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. (4) Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you, unless you abide in Me. (5) I am the vine, you are the branches."** Now let us go down and read **V. 11 "These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full."** Does the possibility of experiencing a constant unfailing joy appeal to you. If it does then know this, you can experience the possibility of this by coming to Jesus Christ and receiving Him as your Lord and Savior.

You may be here this evening/morning and be saying, "But I have done this, I am a Christian but my joy is very much up and down depending upon my circumstances." This leads us to the very next truth concerning joy.

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### REJOICING ALWAYS IS BASED ON MAINTAINING PROPER FOCUS

Our ability to rejoice as Christians is not determined simply by saying we have received Christ as our Lord and Savior but whether we choose to abide in Him as our Lord and Savior. Abiding in Christ must be our focus and as we do we will experience the fruit of that relationship. Wasn't this the whole point of **John 15:1-5**? Let us again read **VV. 4-5**, **“Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you, unless you abide in Me. (5) I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing.”**

The key word here is **“abide.”** The word translated **“abide”** could also be translated “stay” or “remain.” Clearly this is a word involving close fellowship. We must focus our attention not on the troubles of this world. Not on the disappointments of this world. Not on the heartaches of this world. Not on the pain of this world. But rather on simply one thing. And it would be that we might “abide with Christ.”

When we committed ourselves to become disciples of Christ we hopefully did not think that he was calling us to follow at a distance. We are not to be following at a distance but to be close to Him and enjoy intimate fellowship with Him.

Are you in fact following Him closely so that you could say that you are abiding with Him or remaining with Him. There are two very good indications that you are going in the right direction and both of those are found in **John 15:7**, **“If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it shall be done to you.”**

### THE SCRIPTURES

The importance of the Word in our lives is a very good indication. How in the world could we attempt to say that we are abiding with Him, remaining close to Him, if we show very little appreciation of His Word? If we are going to represent ourselves as abiding with Christ His words must be important to us.

Christian joy is the emotion springing from the deep down confidence of the Christian that God is in perfect control of everything and will bring from it our good in time and our glory in eternity. But where does this confidence come from? It comes God's Word.

If when difficult times come in our lives and we are so far removed from the Words of Jesus, how could we ever rejoice? Christian Joy is the emotion springing from the deep down confidence of the Christian that God is in perfect control of everything and will bring from it our good in time and our glory in eternity. But where does this confidence come from? It is through the word of God abiding in our lives. But not only is the Word abiding in us essential if we are going to truly abide with Christ we must also see the importance of prayer.

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### THROUGH PRAYER

When we think of abiding which will ultimately produce the fruit of joy, we should not simply think of the importance of scriptures in leading us to that deep down confidence that God is in perfect control of everything and will bring from it our good in time and our glory in eternity but we also need to consider the importance of prayer. How in the world could we ever think of ourselves as “abiding” or “remaining” with a close intimate fellowship without seeing the importance of talking with Him, which is what prayer is? Again look at **V.7, “If you abide in Me and My words abide in you (there is the importance of the Word) ask whatever you wish, and it shall be done for you.”** And here we see the importance of prayer. Ask whatever you will in respect to what? In respect to the fruit. Prayer is not a means to get what we want but rather to get what He wants. And what does he want for our lives? He wants our lives to bear fruit and what fruit does he specifically mention in **V. 11?** “Joy!!”

If we would work at maintaining our focus, which is to abide in Christ. If we can appreciate that the only way that this can be accomplished is by continually emphasizing the importance of the scriptures and prayer in our lives we are well on our way to what? ..... REJOICING ALWAYS.

Having said this let me ask you another question. Is it possible though experiencing the joy of the Lord for us to experience at the same time various kinds of emotional pain? And the answer will have to be yes.

Certainly we are called to weep with those who weep. In this world there are many legitimate causes for tears. When we lose a mate we can cry because it is a real loss. If we were to lose a child we can weep because it is a real loss. If we lose our job, our means to make a living, certainly it is not wrong to experience grief. But in the midst of whatever sorrow we may encounter in this life, whatever heartache, whatever disappointment there should always be joy sometimes even in the midst of tears.

### CONCLUSION

What have we learned? That joy is commanded. We are to always rejoice.

What else did we learn? This ability to rejoice always is not rooted in ourselves but rather in Christ. This ability to rejoice always is not natural but supernatural.

And finally we learned? That in order to experience the joy of Christ we must maintain our focus. Our focus must be therefore at all times to abide in Christ. This must be our focus in good times or bad times it must forever remain our focus. If this is our focus the word of God and prayer will be very much at the heart of our lives because it is through this intimate communion that we ultimately develop the deep down confidence that God is in perfect control of everything and will bring from our lives our good in time and glory in eternity.