

JOY, PRAYER AND PRAISE

*"Rejoice always, pray without ceasing,
give thanks in all circumstances;
for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you."
1 Thessalonians 5:16-18*

REFLECTION

It is not easy to rejoice always because there are many situations in life that are sad and painful. It is also not easy to pray without ceasing because there are times when there are no more words left to say to God. It is definitely not easy to give thanks in all circumstances because there are times when one experiences so much anger and bitterness within!

Yet, Paul wrote these verses as imperatives. He was implying that joy, prayer and praise ought to be a continuous or recurring themes in Christian life. It felt like Paul was asking the Thessalonians to do the impossible! Surely, he knew how difficult it was, if not impossible, for one to be so! Or didn't he?

The thing is, joy and sorrow can co-exist; so does unceasing prayer and wordless prayer, thanksgiving and anguish. We do not need to deny one and accept the other. Scripture reminds us that when we do not know what to pray the spirit intercedes for us in wordless groans (Romans 8:26-27). The Psalmist whom we are familiar with constantly tossed between thanksgiving and lamentations as well.

In times of deep sorrow, if we were to look only at our own dire situation, perhaps then, there would be very few things that we could be joyful or thankful about. However, if we understand our Christian life and faith as one that is larger than our own private life and consider the corporate community that we are in, then surely, we, as individuals and a corporate body, can have endless joy, prayer and praise!

I suspect Paul understood very well that it is difficult for one to be continuously joyful, prayerful or thankful, because life is not always a bed of roses. He had gone through some very tough times himself. Paul therefore encouraged his readers to consider expanding their perspective, from a personal experience and expression to one that is corporate in nature, one that takes into account the eternal hope they all shared in Christ Jesus.

May God help us to enlarge our lenses to see His goodness and beauty that is present in every life. Through it, may our hearts beat with unending joy, unceasing prayer and everlasting praise!

PRAYER

Father Almighty, how beautiful and excellent are Your thoughts for us! Your will for us is to constantly experience joy, prayer and thanksgiving individually and corporately. Help us, O Lord, to widen our perspectives, so that we may obey Your commands and cherish these precious gifts more and more each day. Amen.

SUPPLICATION

- Do you find it hard to be joyful, thankful or prayerful all the time? Did God give an impossible command or are there hindrances that prevents you from experience them? Invite the Holy Spirit to reveal God's truth to you. Pray also for strength and openness as the Lord reveals them to you.
- Take time this week to ask the Lord to widen your perspectives and enlarge your heart for joy, prayer and praise. What are some things that you can be thankful for and celebrate about? How can you join others in your faith community to experience unending joy, unceasing prayer and everlasting praise?
- Do you know of someone who may be go through a challenging time and can't seem to be able to see beyond his/her problems or find hope? Commit him/her to the Lord in prayer. Ask for eyes, mind and heart to be opened to the Lord's Spirit and work. Seek the Lord if He can use You as His channel of blessing and help.
- For the millions all over the world who are faced with challenging predicament such as wars and diseases do take some time to consider their needs. Would you pray for them to be strengthened? Pray for the Christians that despite their distressing situations, but because of the hope they have in Christ Jesus, they will be able to experience the will of God for them - to rejoice always, pray unceasingly and give thanks in all circumstances. Pray also for those who have yet to know Jesus that they too may experience His saving power.

*These three precepts are an ornament of grace to every believer's neck, wear them every one of you, for glory and for beauty. "Rejoice evermore;" "pray without ceasing;" "in everything give thanks."
- C. H. Spurgeon*

***If you need any prayer or pastoral care support,
kindly contact the pastoral care team via:***

***Email: wecare@brmc.org.sg
Contact: 6592 4011 or 6592 4012***