



SCRIPTURE

November 23, 2025

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

SUNDAY REFRESHER

Paul's words in 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 sound almost impossible: rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances. But Paul isn't calling us to pretend life is fine or to ignore what hurts. He's inviting us into a way of seeing God that refuses to let circumstances take the lead role in our story. Life changes fast. One moment everything is smooth, and the next moment a relationship collapses, a diagnosis hits, or the bottom falls out financially. Circumstances shout. Anxiety spirals. Fear narrates. Perspective disappears. Yet Scripture says that giving thanks in all circumstances is God's will because gratitude forms us into the kind of people who see reality rightly — people who remember that God is still God, even when life is not good.

Thankfulness isn't for God's benefit. God lacks nothing. He is not strengthened by our gratitude, but we are. Thankfulness rewrites the narrative when fear is trying to write a different one. It refuses to let the moment define the truth. Even in suffering, even in loss, even in grief, thankfulness says, "This situation is real, but it is not ultimate." God's goodness does not fade when circumstances darken. His character does not shift with our emotions. Just as Corrie and Betsie ten Boom learned in a flea-infested barracks, thanksgiving doesn't remove the hardship, but it reframes it. It keeps hardship from pretending it is the final word. When we give thanks, we anchor our hearts in a God who does not change and who promises to work all things together for our good.

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

- *What did God say to you through this passage and teaching?*
- *Did God reveal anything new to you?*
- *How is this relevant in your journey to make disciples who Love God and Love people?*

QUESTIONS

- *Where is it hardest for you to give thanks right now?*
- *What circumstance has been trying to act like it is God in your life?*
- *What truth about God do you need to speak over your situation today?*

ADDITIONAL REFERENCES

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 | Acts 17:24-25 | Ephesians 5:20 | Psalm 100:4-5 | Malachi 3:6 | Romans 8:28 |
Philippians 1:21

CONCLUSION

If you are in Christ, your worst circumstance cannot undo your best reality. You are forgiven, loved, and held secure. Even death cannot threaten you because, as Paul said, “To live is Christ, to die is gain.” Bonhoeffer called death “the supreme festival on the road to freedom.” That is the confidence that allows us to give thanks even when life is breaking our hearts. Gratitude does not deny the pain. It simply refuses to let the pain define what is ultimately true.

So name the circumstance honestly. Then name what is true about God. “Even though (circumstance), God is still _____.” “Even though (circumstance), God, I’m thankful that You are _____.” Let thanksgiving become the defiant act that reminds your heart that circumstances change, but God never does.