

Excel Still More: Grow in your Perennials (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18)

- We have been learning that God desires His people to “*excel still more*” (1 Thess. 4:1, 10) in their walk with Christ. It is not about getting by or doing just enough in the faith, but striving to abound, to exceed or the word is used to describe leftovers (Luke 9:17). The Lord has excessively blessed us, so we get to and are empowered to imitate Him in this way.
- As we face an increasingly hostile and corrupting culture, the Lord give us three virtuous perennials to keep at the forefront of our mindset and practice.
 - Each are in the imperative mood
 - Each have modifiers standing before the verb (“*always...without ceasing...in everything*”)
 - Each are in the present tense which demands a perpetual application.
 - Each are part of “*God’s will for you in Christ Jesus*”

1. Keep growing in your gladness (5:16: “*rejoice always*”)

- Everyone wants to be happy in life and God commands us as believers to “*rejoice*”. This word describes the inner gift of satisfaction from God that is undisturbed by outside circumstances, people, and things (Ps. 126:3; 2 Cor. 6:10; Phil. 4:4)
 - The church is a fellowship of joy (Acts 2:46)
 - Our future home is an environment of joy (Luke 15:7-10)
- **Why** should believers “*rejoice always?*”
 - Because joy is a supernatural attitude you can’t personally reproduce. It’s a gift (Ps. 4:7-8), manufactured by the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:22) and a kingdom characteristic (Rom. 14:17)
 - Because joy is a stabilizing attitude (Neh. 8:10). Paul wrote the letter of joy (Philippians) while being under house arrest 24/7.
 - Because joy is a stimulating attitude toward living for the glory of God. It motivates zeal for the Lord (Ps. 16:8 and for the lost (Luke 15:7, 10, 32).
- **How** can believers “*rejoice always?*”
 - By confessing sin (Ps. 51:12)
 - By staying close to the Lord (Ps. 16:11; 1 Pet. 1:8)
 - By being in compliance with God’s will (John 15:11)
 - By centering your life on the right goal (Heb. 12:3; James 1:2)

2. Keep growing in your God-dependency (5:17: “*pray without ceasing*”)

- Jesus reminded His disciples and all of His followers that “*apart from Me, you can do nothing*” (John 15:5). This is why we need an ongoing devotion to prayer (1 Th. 5:25; Rom. 12:12; Eph. 6:18; Col. 4:2; 2 Th. 3:1)
- **Why** should believers “*pray without ceasing?*”
 - Because it is the God-ordained mean to gain His wisdom (James 1:5)
 - Because it is the God-ordained means to find “*grace to help in the time of need*” (Heb. 4:16)
 - Because it is the God-ordained means for His children to “*draw near God and He will draw near to you*” (James 4:8; Ps. 145:18)
 - Because it is the God-ordained means for believers to influence others for Christ (1 Sam 12:23; James 5:16; Col. 4:12)
- **How** can believers “*pray without ceasing?*”
 - Develop a habit of relating all of life to God as it unfolds (1 Thess. 5:17)

- Stay interactive with others in prayer (1 Thess. 1:2; 5:25)
- Use all the various elements in your prayers (adoration, confession, thanksgiving, supplication)

3. **Keep growing in your gratitude** (5:18: *“in everything give thanks”*)

- God desires that we live *“overflowing with gratitude”* (Col. 2:6) and ingratitude is a mark of an unforgiven heart (Rom. 1:21).
- **Why** should believers *“give thanks?”*
 - Because it recognizes God’s praiseworthiness in your life (Ps. 50:23)
 - Because it acknowledges God’s preference for what He expects in your life (1 Thess. 5:18; Ps. 92:1)
 - Because it appreciates God’s provision in your life (Col. 1:12; Heb. 12:28; Ps. 118:21, 28)
- **How** can believers *“give thanks?”*
 - Remember what God has done for you (2 Cor. 9:15; Eph. 5:20)
 - Respond with attitudes, words and actions that reflect an awareness of the precious gift of life from God (Ps. 139:14)