

Introduction: Where would you go with this sermon text? What would you say to a people who largely knew what they are supposed to do, but who are also very aware of their failures to do so? - Resolve? Technique? Duty?

- How would you approach someone in pastoral oversight visit who had been frequently encouraged, yet little progress? – Is this "Mission Impossible?"

THREE BASIC COMMANDS (vv.16-18a)

- The **basic meanings** are clear
- 1.) **Rejoice** - To enjoy a state of happiness and well being, delight, satisfied; opposite of joylessness, unsatisfied, grieved
- 2.) **Pray** – Talking to God to receive help – opposite of prayerlessness
- 3.) **Give thanks** – to be internally grateful and express it – opposite of ungrateful, complaining, grumbling
- These are all to be **pursued** (indicated by imperatives) – not God mystically giving
- These are all to be **constant** (indicated by adverbs) – not occasional
- These are all to be **with the hear** - not just words

Two Objections

1.) These commands are not viable because of the reality of life

- Doesn't living in a fallen world negate this possibility
- Perhaps a hyperbole – exaggeration for emphasis or effect
- Even by this standard (of frequency), we should ask if we measure up

2.) These commands are not viable because of other biblical commands

- How can we obey the commands to sometimes lament and mourn for our sins (Jam4:9), to weep with others' in their trouble (Rom12:15), to be angry (Eph4:26)?
- There are certain emotions that are a part of who God has created us to be – can we do them at the same time?

THE FUNDAMENTAL REASON FOR THESE COMMANDS (v.18b)

For this is the will of God

- We start with the reality that this is "the will of God" – God's commands and what is required

In Christ Jesus for you

- This is more than the mere law of command, but specifically rooted in the person and work of Jesus Christ – Jn15:5

THE APPLICATION OF THAT REASON TO THESE COMMANDS

- How do we take this "in Christ Jesus" reality and apply it so as to see progress in our lives?
- Our tendency is as **thing go well**, our rejoicing and thanks increase, but our earnestness in pray decreases
- Or when **things are difficult**, our earnestness in pray increases, but our rejoicing and thanks decrease
- **Paul's direction is for all of them to be true and increasing at all times**
- If these are to be accomplished, it is clear that it will not and cannot be based on **temporal circumstances**
- There will also have to be something **transcendent**, something presently **unseen** and **not yet** experienced
- **In Christ Jesus as our example** - 1Pet4:1-2 arm yourselves with the same mind (Heb12:2)
- The cross of daily living is embracing the suffering created by living in a fallen world as the will of God
- The summary is that these are done **in faith**, not based on what we see, but on what we cannot see that God has promised – the sufficiency of the Lord Jesus is indicated by our faith in Him

Faith in regards to:

- The Past – who God has always been, what God has done
- The Present – peace and reconciliation with God, opportunities to display the excellence of Jesus Christ, God using all things for my good to make me like Christ,
- The Future – the removal of these difficulties at Christ's return, future reward
- Christian meditation, prayer, singing, worship are all the **efforts of working these truths into our souls**
- These three (rejoicing, praying, thanksgiving) taken together are really the **essence of worship**
- The **primary place** this is to be pursued is in **private**, before God
- It is then **the overflow** of what we are in private as our heart is changed that it flows out into our conversation and life
- w/o Christ, realities of your past, present, and future to face – before rejoicing, giving thanks, need to seek God