



## IN ALL CIRCUMSTANCES

October 2014

*Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.*

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

I don't know about you, but I complain a lot. I always have something bothering me and I always need to share it with my friends. In fact, I don't know how *not* to share. I guess it's my nature . . . and great failing.

Yet in Paul's letter to the Thessalonians, God uses Paul to tell us not to complain but to give thanks in all circumstances: even when there's something wrong with our health or life situation. God tells us we must *always* be joyful, pray continually and give thanks.

Is that possible?

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And is it really so bad to share our problems with our friends? I believe that if we're going to have close relationships with friends we need to be able to share honestly. Aren't we called to be authentic in our relationships? True . . . as long as we don't become too self-centered but listen to our friends when they have problems too . . . as long as our own troubles are not all we talk about.

Maybe we can be honest about what we're going through *and* thankful at the same time. I have a friend who tells me the problems she's having but invariably will end by saying, "But God is good." It's a bit like how David wrote his psalms. Look at Psalm 13 for example. He's obviously in a desperate state and complaining to God. And yet he ends the psalm with:

*But I trust in your unfailing love;  
my heart rejoices in your salvation.  
I will sing to the Lord,  
for he has been good to me.*

Can we develop a spirit of thankfulness like my friend and David have, regardless of the hard times we face?

It takes consistent listening to God's promises and seeing his goodness. It means taking our attention off ourselves and reaching out to others. It takes looking around and being aware of all that God has done.

A friend sent me an email last night that helped me wake up to how amazing an attitude of gratitude can be. She and her husband had been going through some health issues. In response she wrote, "I realized I had not thanked God for these circumstances, which should be drawing us closer to him."

I think what she wanted to say was how God draws us close when we're in the midst of hardships. It's pretty hard to thank God *for* our hardships, but we can thank him for how he draws us to himself at such times. Now that makes even our difficulties a reason to be thankful, doesn't it?

Yes, it *is* possible to give thanks in all circumstances. Praise God!

marja