

NOVEMBER 19, 2023

# "Anyhow"

Scripture: 1 Thessalonians 5:16-22 (RSV)



## AUTHOR

Paul, formerly known as Saul, was a Pharisee (a member of a Jewish sect noted for strict observance of rites and ceremonies of the written law and for insistence on the validity of their own oral traditions concerning the law), born in Tarsus. He believed the Christian movement was dangerous to Judaism, therefore he persecuted Christians without mercy. On the road to Damascus he was converted and became Paul, preacher and missionary known for his 3 journeys and who carried the gospel across the Roman Empire. You can read more about Paul in Acts 7:58-28:31.

## CONTEXT

Paul wrote 1 Thessalonians from Corinth around AD 51, during his 2nd missionary journey (Acts 18:1-18). Thessalonica was the capital of the Roman province of Macedonia and a center of trade and philosophy. The church there was young and was established just 2-3 years before this letter was written. This is one of Paul's earliest letters and was written to encourage the church at Thessalonica, praise them for their faithfulness during persecution, and remind them of the hope they have in the return of Jesus. In our scripture passage today, Paul is giving instructions about holy living.

## ENCOURAGEMENT

We can have joy in spite of our circumstances because our joy comes from the blessings that are ours because we are in Christ.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. The scripture passage tells us to rejoice always, pray constantly, and give thanks in all circumstances. At first glance, does this challenge you?
2. Have you ever grown tired of praying for something or someone?
3. What do you think of the idea that if a prayer is slow in being answered, the delay might be God's way of working his will?
4. Paul was not teaching that we should thank God for everything that happens to us (for all circumstances), but to give thanks in everything (in all circumstances). When something bad happens we do not have to thank God for it but we can be thankful for God's presence with us and for the good that he can accomplish through it. Can you think of a difficult time when you felt God's presence or saw him make "beauty out of ashes"?
5. What do you think quench the Spirit means? Paul warns against this. Have you ever ignored a spiritual gift or calling you've had or discouraged someone else's?
6. How can we test what we read and hear to determine if it is true or false, in regards to those who prophecy?
7. As we prepare to celebrate Thanksgiving, what are you especially grateful for and how can you support and pray for each other?

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