

**Lesson Five: Sight and Sounds of Words (Module C)
Consonants, Vowels, and Diphthongs
Phonology (Part 5)
Study Aid Level Three: Memory Verses**

The shortest verse in the Greek New Testament is not John 11:35 ("Jesus wept.") as it might appear in the English translations.

1 Thessalonians 5:16 and 17, however, are among the shortest verses by word count (each verse has two words, John 13:35 has three). In a succinctly worded series of imperatives which he announces is the will of God for their lives, apostle Paul admonishes the Thessalonian believers to **"rejoice always, pray constantly**, give thanks in everything; for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus" (1 Thess. 5:16-18).

Paul knows that these believers are "beloved by God" and "elected" (1 Thessalonians 1:4). It is to these saints that he exhorts these seemingly impossible commands. The active joy which Paul speaks here and in many of his other epistles (Phil. 2:17; 2 Cor. 6:10), does not require happy circumstances. Paul's apostolic command to rejoice is in the midst of the Thessalonians' persecutions and afflictions they are presently enduring (1 Thess. 1:4), which are "plain indication of God's righteous judgment so that you will be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which indeed you are suffering" (2 Thessalonians 1:5). This echoes our Lord's words when He pronounces a future covenantal blessing upon those who experience persecution and yet rejoice in anticipation of their Messianic Age reward (Matt. 5:21-12; Lk. 6:22-23). Paul's exhortation demands continued faith on the part of the Thessalonian believers in the midst of their difficulties. This exhortation cannot be successfully accomplished without the one following: "constantly pray".

Paul began his epistle to the Thessalonians by reporting that he and his companions prayed for them constantly (1 Thess. 1:2). Now he concludes the epistle with the exhortation that they also must constantly pray (cf. Rom. 12:12; Eph. 6:18; Phil. 4:6; Col. 4:2). Paul and his companions gave the Thessalonians a good model to imitate, as indicated by their prayer-report in 1 Thessalonians 3:10: "asking fervently night and day". This responsibility to pray, however, is a reciprocal responsibility. It is not coincidental Paul concludes in the epistle's final verses with the admonition: "Brothers, pray for us" (1Thess. 5:25).

Whatever else I may do during the day, if I am not always rejoicing in the midst of difficult circumstances and constantly praying, then I have not fulfilled the

will of God. We may deceive others with our hypocrisy, but God is not impressed. His will for our daily walk with Him is to "rejoice always, constantly pray". I ask myself, "What in my daily life prevents me fulfilling these commandments?" Whatever it may be, it must never take priority over these commandments. 1 Thessalonians 5:16 and 17 may be some of the shortest verses in the Greek New Testament, but apart from walking by the Spirit, they are the most impossible to fulfill.

1 Thessalonians 5:16, 17

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