

¹⁶ **Be joyful always;** ¹⁷ **pray continually;** ¹⁸ **give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.**

Do you ever get bored? How long is your attention span? If you do get bored, and if your attention span is getting shorter, you are not alone. Decades ago commercials were a full minute long. In the recent past the average commercial was 30 seconds long. Today, the target time of many advertisers is 15 seconds. Advertisers have realized that viewers soak up more information in 15 seconds, and after that they turn their brains off.

According to another study has shown that our shrinking attention span has also led to increased restlessness between gadgets, with users switching between smartphones, tablets and laptops up to 21 times per hour. Therefore, with all these different screens demanding our attention, the average user today will spend on average 147 minutes a day on a smartphone. (That compares to 113 minutes per day watching TV.)

So, what does this all mean for us? I think it becomes harder today for God to keep our attention. Let me ask you this: How many times have you heard the story of Jesus' birth? How many times have you been told that you are a sinner? How many times have you heard that Jesus has died for you? How many of you have already begun to tune me out? We have been certain of our salvation for years. There is nothing new about that. Here we are here today, and we are told that at Thanksgiving we are to be thankful for all that God gives us. Yet, we are also told that at the same time, you need more. You need to get more at the pre-black Friday sales. You need to get more on Black Friday. You need to get more on Small Business Saturday. You need to get more on Cyber Monday. After all, Christmas is coming! (And, oh, by the way, tomorrow is Thanksgiving.)

The Apostle Paul reminds us: *Don't let that happen. Remember what God has done for you. As you do, "Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances."*

Be joyful. What does a "joyful" Christian look like? Does this mean that God wants us to around laughing all the time? *I'm so happy for another car repair.*
I'm so happy about having to face a serious surgery.
Isn't it great that my life seems to be falling apart.

There are days that we are as happy as can be. Then there are those days when everything hurts. Those days when everything seems to be going wrong? Jesus reminds us that it isn't always easy to see the Christian's joy on the outside. It's there. It's in here. It's in our hearts because Jesus lives in our hearts. He gives us joy. He gives us peace. You are not alone! Be joyful in Christ.

Pray continually. How do you do that? Does that mean that you are mouthing prayers or folding your hands from the moment you wake up in the morning to the time we drift off to sleep at night? It means that prayer becomes a part of our life. For those that have a cell phone --- how do you feel when you forget it at home? It's like a part of you is missing. You don't know what to do, because our phones have become a part of us. It's kind of sad when you think about it. Paul says that there is something that is much better than any phone. We have a direct line to God. We can go to him always with anything. There is nothing that is too big or too small for God. Use that wonderful gift God has given you – pray continually.

Give thanks in all circumstances. That's a tough one, isn't it? Why is that? Maybe it's that attention span thing. We focus on here and now. That whole big picture thing and God controlling everything is so difficult for us to remember at times. How do we do that? Paul says: **"in Christ Jesus."** That little phrase changes everything. In a world that is moving faster and faster, remember that little phrase; because **"in Christ Jesus"** we can give thanks for every day of our lives. We continue with the anthem of our choir.....

⁶ So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, ⁷ rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.

Who is your favorite Superhero? Growing up, mine was Spiderman. Spiderman had almost everything that a Superhero could want. (At least, I thought, in the mid '60's.) Spiderman had super strength and agility, the ability to cling to most surfaces, shoot spider-webs using wrist-mounted devices of his own invention, which he calls "web-shooters", and react to danger quickly with his "spider-sense", enabling him to combat his foes. But what was unique about Spiderman was that he was one of the first teenage Superheroes. In the early 1960's, teenagers in comic books were usually just the sidekicks. Spiderman was different. He had no superhero mentor like Captain America or Batman. He was THE MAN. He had everything that you could want from a Superhero. However, if you would have run into Peter Parker on the street, not in his "Spidey" suit, you might look at him and say: *Really? Is that it? That's Spiderman?*

If you lived at the time of Jesus, and ran into him on the street, would you say what Peter said: **"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God;"** (Mt. 16:16) or would you have answered like Nathaniel: **"Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?"** (John 1:46) Would you see the Superhero who would conquer Satan, or would you see a carpenter from a small town?

As the Apostle Paul is writing to the Colossians, he wants them to see Jesus for who he was. He wanted them to know with complete confidence that Jesus is the entire complete package. There were people who wanted them to think that Jesus was no "superhero," let alone the Son of God. Paul wanted people to know that Jesus is the real thing. **"So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness."**

These are words of encouragement for believers. He heaps up words to show who Jesus is: This is God's Savior. This is the Lord of the world. There is no more. There is no great superhero than Jesus. Satan wants us to believe that there must be something more. God says: *No!* This is it! Now walk with him. You are connected to him. You are built up in him. He gives you strength. Don't let anyone take that away from you! What is going to happen to you as you do that? Your life is just going to **overflow with thankfulness.**

Don't let the message of the Gospel bore you. Don't let Satan rob you of the joy that you have in Jesus. Don't get distracted by everything this is asking for your attention. Trust Jesus. Give thanks to Him. Amen.