

of authority, and you said, "The president of the college has said that lunch for all these people is to be free today." The person would look at the letter, check out the signature, determine that you're in proper relationship, and do it. "In the name of Jesus" is not just a catch word, it's a relationship.

ABIDING

Many times, certainly as young Christians, we experience God doing marvelous miracles, answering impossible prayers, anything that we ask for during the first 6 months, a year, maybe a year and a half, showing us His love and proving in our personal experience that He can do it all. But then comes the time to grow up by starting to abide in a relationship if we are going to continue to go on with the things of God. "In the name of Jesus" is not just a catch word, no, it's an abiding. How do we abide in Christ? By yielding to the power of the Holy Spirit and choosing to obey His commands. (cf. 1 John 2:5-6) How do we obey His commands? By knowing what His commands are. What are His commands? Very simple. "You must love as I have loved." Now that's very simple, except it's absolutely impossible because the only way that we can do that is by God Himself living through us. Our human love is always centered in on itself. God's love is always centered in on the other person. God's love, we see it in 1 Corinthians 13, is completely and totally turned away from self and totally giving and giving and giving and giving and giving and giving. Christ says that is the only command He gives us. "Love as I have loved you". How do we do that, Lord? Well, the only way possible is for us to get out of the way and let the Holy Spirit do the job.

As we live this Ephesians 5:18b-20, "But let the Holy Spirit fill you: speak to one another in psalms, hymns, and songs; sing and make music from your heart to the Lord; and in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ give thanks every day for everything to our God and Father" our lives become a constant source of refreshment to those around us. How can we remain constantly that way? Only the Holy Spirit can do this. If we want to do the will of God in our lives, we must see that reliance upon the Holy Spirit is our relationship with Jesus, and Jesus is our relationship with our Father. Father I choose now and forever to "Always be joyful; pray continually; give thanks whatever happens; for this is what God wills for me in Christ Jesus." Then our relationship with God keeps covering us and enabling us to have ample supply—an abundance of His love to share with everybody who comes. The Ephesians 5 text says this is the way that we in a community need to treat one another. Let your words be edifying, let them be things that lift the other person up. Help them over their bump because there are a lot of bumps in all of our lives.

A Life of Praise starts within each of us when our desire is obedience to Him. What God is doing is working on you and me individually. He's transforming each one of us into the image of His Son. That's His work so that Jesus Christ is the First-born of many, many brothers. That becomes possible because God uses every method that's at His disposal in order to change us. When we choose to be conformed to His Son, we will begin to experience love as Jesus Christ loves. When we love as Christ Jesus loves, we're going to be rejoicing, we're going to be praying and in every way, we're going to be giving thanks because this is what God in Christ Jesus wills for us. Amen.

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A Life of Praise

"By Pat Mullins"

Adapted from a spoken message given by Mr. Pat Mullins at the Episcopal Charismatic Conference, Santa Clara, CA in 1979.

"Always be joyful; pray continually; give thanks whatever happens; for this is what God wills for you in Christ Jesus." 1 Thess. 5:16 - 18. REB

"And in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ give thanks every day for everything to our God and Father." Ephesians 5:18b - 20 REB

As I prayed and sought the guidance of the Holy Spirit about the message He wanted to share with us today I heard in my heart, "Praise - A Life of Praise", and the Lord led me to the above Scriptures to consider and share. We are going to take an overview of them, and then go back to see what we believe He is saying to us in each one of them.

The 1 Thessalonians text is really very personal. He is talking about what the will of God is in Christ Jesus for each one of us. "Always be joyful; pray continually; give thanks whatever happens; for this is what God wills for you in Christ Jesus."

Ephesians 5:18b-20 which is more of an exhortation towards the community, and our relationship to it, says, "But let the Holy Spirit fill you: speak to one another in psalms, hymns, and songs; sing and make music in your heart to the Lord; and in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ give thanks every day for everything to our God and Father." This talks about our relationship to one another and to Him.

Every authentic action in our spiritual life must begin with an honesty in our motives for whatever we are doing. If perhaps the reason we are doing whatever we are doing is not correct with God, the Holy Spirit can always bring about change if we are honest in our relationship with God. Praise of God is a prime example of how important our motive is to actual communion with the God we are praising. One of the things that we have found in our own life experiences is that unless we're able to enter into praise and thanksgiving all by ourselves, in a tough situation, it's difficult to be authentic about what we are doing when we are praising God in and with a community whether that be in a prayer meeting or at Mass.

IT STARTS WITH RELATIONSHIP

Rev. Juan Carlos Ortiz, in his book, THE CALL TO DISCIPLESHIP, emphasized praise in his church in Argentina. He writes about how the Lord spoke to him very, very strongly and said, "Tell your people to quit praising because they are paying me lip service. Until they can get that

word of praise down into their own hearts individually, I don't want to hear it." Their church became very quiet for a time as each person had to look down into their own heart and ask: "Why am I praising? What is going on in me?" We find a life of praise has to start with my own personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ, and my response to the Holy Spirit prompting me in my everyday life. Unless it starts there, we can be praising, but with the wrong motivation, and the interior sense of hypocrisy will soon stop me from continuing.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer's book, LIFE TOGETHER, talks about the potential of trading a social, political, or another kind of organization, for a prayer group or some new religion, because it fills the same kind of a need. Some of us entered into the Charismatic Renewal or a prayer group for the same reason we would join the country club—we begin doing all the things that others do, in order to be acceptable. If we come to the Lord and come into community with others "to be accepted" as our motive, we're doomed to have a real problem. Sooner or later that community will disappoint us, let us down, and we will leave it for the same reasons we left the country club. The life of praise, and the life in the community of God, has to start deep within us from a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and a desire to do what He tells us to do.

THE WORK IS THE HOLY SPIRIT'S

Let's look at our first text. "We urge you, friends, to rebuke the idle, encourage the faint-hearted, support the weak, and be patient with everyone. See to it that no one pays back wrong for wrong, but always aim at what is best for each other and for all. Always be joyful; pray continually; give thanks whatever happens; for this is what God wills for you in Christ Jesus." (1 Thess. 5:16-18) This is the starting point of a maturing relationship with God. We know from our own experience that finding the will of God, and doing it, has been the upper most desire since our coming into relationship with the Holy Spirit. How often do we say, "O, Lord, if I only knew your will, I'd do it." "Father what is your will for me right now in this situation? What is it you want me to do here, Lord?" First and foremost, He says love, and the only way that the love will flow in our lives is when there is an inner joy, when we are always joyful. Oh how we must see that the words of instruction in the Bible are not meant for the natural man to obey. All the teaching in the Bible is directed at the growth and maturing of the new life within—Christ Jesus. How difficult and frustrating it is to try year after year to be perfect and holy as the Bible demands and continue to fail. We either quit, or begin to compromise the Word of God because we can't live it. It was never meant that I could live it except in faith in God the Holy Spirit!! Only God, through the indwelling Holy Spirit can bring it to pass in the child of God. But HE CAN DO IT!!

SPIRIT, SOUL, AND BODY

In order for us to understand how God works His charatcer into us to be our life, we're going to talk about man as a tri-part being with a spirit, soul and body. The body is the way we contact the world. The soul is the center of my self-consciousness; the will, emotions, thoughts, and all the rest of the mind. The spirit is the center of my God-consciousness. As adults, when we ask Jesus into our heart, all that Baptism promised by faith becomes real in experience; our spirit is completely re-created and receives a new nature, the nature of God. The soul is also going through a transforming process which renews the mind, emotions and intellect along the lines of the word of God.

I am, in the spirit, what God says that I am, period. That is an unchangeable fact. If God says that I am free from anger and full of His love because He made me a new creation, then I am—whether or not I feel it. I need to come to that starting point. From any other starting point, I can enter into confusion saying, "since I don't feel like I am loving, I must not be" and then I find that I am giving more eternal power to my feeling than to God's word. If God's word, the Bible, says that He has made me a new creation,

(He's talking about the spirit realm), then I am a new creation, in the spirit realm. God's word says it, therefore I am. In the spirit realm, I am completely healed in every way. In the spirit realm, everything that God says about me is absolutely true. The problem is whether or not I know it in my soul.

LET YOUR MIND BE REMADE

Paul's letter to the Romans is his "good news". Briefly, he unfolds for us God's plan that each person must come to the end of their own self-sufficiency and be continuously filled, over-powered, and led by the Holy Spirit. Then with that experience in place, He tells us in Romans 12:1-2 "Therefore, my friends, I implore you by God's mercy to offer your very selves to him: a living sacrifice, dedicated and fit for his acceptance, the worship offered by mind and heart. Conform no longer to the pattern of this present world, but be transformed by the renewal of your minds. Then you will be able to discern the will of God, and to know what is good, acceptable, and perfect." He also tells us "Offer your very selves to Him... but let your minds be remade," and everything else will then be changed. We need to have our minds renewed so that our soul will become always joyful because joy is one to the attributes of God. He is always joyful. God doesn't have any reason to be worried because His resources are far greater than anything that would ever confront Him or us. Therefore, He has no reason to be anxious or worried, and neither do we. He is always in control. In our own life, we need to enter into the reality that, in the spirit realm, God is always in control if we are submitted to His Holy Spirit. All to often we run into problems within our soul or our body when we're trying to figure the thing out for ourselves, without God.

THE UNCHANGEABLE FACT

God has said that by the Holy Spirit, in my human spirit, I am to be joyful. Looking at the fruits of the Spirit in Galatians 5, we see what is already resident in the Holy Spirit is present in our human spirit, and that nature of love, joy, peace, etc. is going to grow to be a fruit of our whole life as we abide in God through His word in the Holy Spirit. The fruits are love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, fidelity, gentleness and self-control. Those are godly characteristics and attributes resident in our re-created spirit, but when most of us started this walk with God, they weren't yet evident as part of our soul or body. We didn't think or feel that way all the time. We most often didn't respond that way either. But our response doesn't change the fact that in the spirit, we are what God says we are. If God has said that we are to be joyful, and our mind, our feelings, our emotions, and everything else doesn't yet agree with that fact, they have no bearing on the problem whatsoever. We need to get our mind and our hearts in line with what the Spirit of God says. We can only do that by faith and trust in God; but if we will choose the Word over our feelings, in obedience, then we will find that the fruit of our human spirit will be brought under control by the Holy Spirit.

Therefore, because of the indwelling Holy Spirit, and our response to Him, we can choose to agree with our spirit and "be always joyful". In our spirit, we are always patient. In our spirit, we are filled with God's love. In our spirit, we are long-suffering. In our spirit, we are everything that God says we are. We are love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, fidelity, gentleness and self-control. That became true the moment we received from God His life into our spirit and became a re-created person. 2 Corinthians 5:17 says, "For anyone united to Christ, there is a new creation: the old order is gone; a new order has already begun." You are a new creation in Christ Jesus. The new creation is not what my face looks like or what my mind thinks like. It is what my spirit actually is.

AGREE WITH GOD'S WORD AND OBEY

Next, God tells us in Romans 12:1-2 that we have to get our minds in order so that we agree with God's word. Going back to the 1 Thessalonians text—"this is God's will for you". If we know that something is God's will for us and we're not doing it, I think we need to recognize that we're in disobedience. If God says, "I want you to..." and we don't do it, we're in disobedience. That's a nice, clean, clear definition. So God says, "Be always joyful..." and we're saying, "But God, I don't feel joyful." God says, "Pray continually." We say "I don't feel like praying" or "I don't want to pray." We need to realize we're in disobedience to God's will for