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Paul closed the letter we call 1 Thessalonians with several exhortations or admonishments. He says this in verses 16-18 of the last chapter: ***"Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you."*** (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 ESV)

This is a difficult challenge. It is not human nature to rejoice always, pray without ceasing, or give thanks in all circumstances. Some of our circumstances can be quite dire, and it is not natural to give thanks for the worst things in life. It's hard for me, and I would imagine it is for many of you.

But as I reflect on my years of supporting FEBC churches, I think, collectively at least, we are doing pretty well. I have walked through some very difficult situations with church leaders. Situations that came out of nowhere and threatened the very existence of the church. I have witnessed financial challenges, spiritual challenges, personality conflicts, and many other serious concerns. In a secular setting, many of these challenges would undoubtedly cause the organization to come apart at the seams. But that is not the typical outcome I see among our churches.

Within our churches and within our Fellowship, I see a pattern of leaders who are rejoicing always, even when things aren't turning out how they hoped. I see a pattern of people who pray without ceasing – understanding that God holds the keys to their future. I see strong conviction that we are to give thanks in all circumstances, even the ones we wished we would never have to endure.

This is the will of God in Christ Jesus for us. It is also the key to lasting, faithful ministry. As we view the problems we face in a God-honoring way, we are enabled to keep going despite the challenges. Adversity strengthens our faith, our dependence on God, and our connections with our brothers and sisters who share ministry with us. Shared adversity is part of the glue that binds us.

Whether you are in Canada and recently celebrated Thanksgiving, or in the US and are still looking forward to it, take a moment to size up your circumstances – and give thanks. Perhaps you will realize that you are experiencing incredible blessing, and you can give thanks for that. Or you may find that God is using incredibly difficult circumstances to shape you. It may not be easy but give thanks for that too – right in the middle of it, not just someday when the trouble has passed.

We at the FEBC are incredibly grateful to God for his continued blessing. He is our great Provider. And as we depend on him, we will be grateful no matter what happens next. **Happy Thanksgiving!**



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