

Ten Simple Words

The Our Father (the Lord's Prayer) has its challenges for us. Some may feel the biggest challenge that the sacred prayer proposes is when we pray, "...forgive us our trespasses **AS WE FORGIVE** those who trespass against us..."—which implies "**to the extent that** we forgive others—we will be forgiven." That prompts us to think about how we may judge or treat or not forgive others, and especially how we need to reach deep down and FORGIVE others!

But for me, the challenge I often stumble through the most in this familiar prayer are the words "Thy Kingdom come, THY WILL BE DONE" because it seems such a monumental task: 1) to know what God's Will is for me—especially since I most often feel I am left alone to figure that out, and 2) to have the strength and "will power" to see it through, once I do sense the direction God wants me to go—or NOT to go.

Yet recently, I discovered what Saint Paul refers to as "...the Will of God for you in Christ Jesus," in 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18. I thought, "Finally, **THIS** is the Will of God, spoken clearly for me to see, and hopefully, to adhere to..." "What is it? What is it?!" My eagerness and excitement to **KNOW**—actually **KNOW**—what God's Will for my life could be was palpable! Then I read it:

**"Rejoice always.
Pray without ceasing.
In all circumstances give thanks."**

Immediately, I recoiled and felt deflated!

WHAT? Oh, I get the "Rejoice" and the "Pray" and the "Give thanks"...I can see that...but the

"Always," "without ceasing" and "in all circumstances"—**THAT** was way beyond my spiritual pay grade! I wanted, so much, to **KNOW** the Will of God for me, to be able to truly follow in the Way of Jesus, to solve this gigantic mystery! But when Paul proclaimed it—straight out—I flinched! I could accept part, but not the whole. Was I a doubter? Was I unwilling to accept this challenge? How could I **NOT** believe in the Will of God, when Paul said it so plainly and simply? Sometimes it takes a wake-up-call to burst us into belief in our willingness and ability to face a God-given challenge.

Example: Many years ago, I was rollerblading on a bike path in Minneapolis, and my skate hit a twig and I went flying up and over—landing right on my back! BAM! I laid there for a moment, wondering if I had broken my back or my neck...I heard the OOOs and Ahhs of bikers and joggers and walkers on the path, stopping to see if I was all right. Gratefully, I did not break anything—but my brand-new SONY Walkman tape player; it did not survive the fall. My cassette tape and various plastic pieces were scattered on the tar. I was helped to my feet by sympathetic, caring on-lookers and helped to a nearby bench. Having witnessed my stupendous fall, they catered to me like the Good Samaritan would have, as I caught my breath and mumbled, “Yeah, I’m OK, I’m OK...” while inner-yelling to myself, “Thank God I’m OK!”

Now, taking the words of Paul, “Rejoice always? In all circumstances give thanks”? This seemed impossible! My back was bruised and scraped; my ego had been cast upon the tar in my embarrassment over taking such a spill; and my new, precious SONY Walkman and my favorite tape (classic Stevie Wonder) had been crushed and scattered all over the pavement! In ALL circumstances give thanks? Rejoice ALWAYS?! If I would have known that THAT was the Will of God at that moment, I probably would have smirked with a “Yeah, right!”

But looking back on it now, some 30 years later, I see how, indeed, I could have had broken bones in that swooping fall onto my back, but I didn't. As I see now, God had a plan...for me to “safely” survive that nasty fall, and possibly another gift or two.

I rested a while on the bench, then picked up my broken Walkman and various shattered plastic debris, skating away—cautiously—this time. I am able to reflect on this now and see how **hilarious** the whole episode really was! Here’s a guy just trying to enjoy a warm, sunny day in his fancy rollerblades; then accidentally taking flight and, acrobatically, landing flat on his back—losing only his Walkman...and his pride!

Hey, maybe the Will of God was to save me from my own inattentiveness to the pathway because I thought my attention to Stevie Wonder in my headphones deserved more of my attention than being safe and keeping a keen eye out for obstacles on the bike path. To this day, I have never again listened to anything—or even wore headphones—while rollerblading, so all my attention can be focused on the path, realizing that the best attitude is “Safety First.” I learned that lesson well.

So, what about this “Pray without ceasing”-deal? If I was continually praying the Our Father or conversing with the Lord, how would I get anything done? I would be drowning in prayer. Hmmm...I just now recalled

that I once heard a Jesuit priest named Anthony de Mello say something like “If you live an authentic, loving, aware, trust-in-God life...**your whole life itself can become a prayer.**” **Pray without ceasing!** It IS possible!

My initial gasp at seeing those *10 simple words* about the WILL OF GOD in 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 have now been countered with the reality that Paul had spoken God’s Truth. **I can** “Rejoice always,” and “in all circumstances give thanks,” knowing that God has always “got my back!” And **I can** “Pray without ceasing” as my life BECOMES A PRAYER through being authentic, loving, aware and trusting in God.

Always Rejoice! Always Pray! Always Give Thanks! As I look back, I never would have thought a near-tragic fall on my rollerblades in 1987 would have now given me the Grace to see a fresh, new view of the Will of God in my life, and now to not be afraid to carry my cross and rejoice in God’s PLAN for me—even when I may not have seen it at first, in the heat of the moment in ’87.

Paul’s challenge, inspired by the Our Father, has given me a new view of God’s Will for me—to count my blessings, and get back up and travel on—each and every time I fall...as I attempt to figure out this **Will of God** in my life, prompted by the challenge to...rejoice always...pray without ceasing...and, in all things give thanks!

by Rich Melcher