

FIVE NEW TESTAMENT COMMANDMENTS

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“Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you ... Test all things; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil” (1 Thessalonians 5:16-22)

In the Old Testament, we received 10 commandments which God gave to Moses to give to the people of Israel, as well as to us. And there are another five commandments, which St. Paul wrote to the people of Thessalonica, and for sure, these five commandments can serve us and help us to lead a Christian life.

- ☞ **Commandment 1 : Rejoice always**
- ☞ **Commandment 2 : Pray without ceasing**
- ☞ **Commandment 3 : Give thanks**
- ☞ **Commandment 4 : Test all things**
- ☞ **Commandment 5 : Abstain**

1. REJOICE ALWAYS

Sometimes this commandment may seem difficult because we are told to rejoice ‘always’. This means rejoice when you succeed, and rejoice when you fail. Rejoice when the life is smooth, and rejoice during times of hardships. Rejoice in good health, and rejoice in sickness. Therefore, the words “rejoice always” may seem unbelievable, but in Christ, you will not only believe that joy can be always, but you will be able to practice such joy, and this commandment is very important in our lives as Christians.

There are four reasons through which we lose our joy :

- ☞ By committing sin
- ☞ By facing a problem
- ☞ By fearing what will happen to us in the future
- ☞ By feeling we have a meaningless life

Therefore, in order to lead a joyful life, please get into contact with the Lord Jesus Christ, and

through this love and this contact and this commitment to be one of the sons or one of the daughters of God, regarding sin, no problem - you can repent and confess. Concerning problems, say "God is present", which means that God is powerful enough to solve any problems regardless of how difficult they may seem. And His Holiness the late Pope Kyrillos VI, always had a lovely response to those who were worried about their problems : "Don't be afraid, for what is fire today will be ash tomorrow."

Therefore, through repentance you rid yourself of sin, through faith you can tackle any problem, through love you can handle any fear, for love drives out fear, and if you feel you have a meaningless life, serve. The purpose and meaning of our life here on earth is to experience the love of God, and to convey this love to others through service. So, to summarise :

- ☞ When you commit sin, repent and confess
- ☞ When you face a problem, have faith that God can solve it for you
- ☞ When you are afraid, through loving and trusting Him, you will believe He will do what's best for you
- ☞ When you feel your life is meaningless, serve

If you maintain this spiritual pattern in your life, for sure your life will be joyful always. The characteristic of a Christian is joy, and the church fathers mention that a humble person is always joyful and smiling because he passes on all his concerns to the Lord, in full faith, and so he is always at peace.

Please, my dear young people, be committed to the Lord, and come into contact with the Lord. Have the Lord abiding inside your heart and lives, and you will enjoy the Christian joy which is always infinite; the joy that can stand against anything which may keep us anxious, sad or annoyed.

2. PRAY WITHOUT CEASING

Joy does not come except through prayer. Our church offers many different types of prayer : the holy Mass, Agbia prayers, and even the Jesus Prayer, which is "My Lord Jesus Christ have mercy upon me!" If you repeat often this short and beautiful prayer, you will always feel the presence of the Lord. And when you ask the Lord to come and bless you, He will come for sure. Through prayer, you are going to enjoy the presence of the Lord and the power of the

Lord dwelling inside you through the Holy Spirit, who is even known as the 'Paraclete', meaning 'Comforter'. Therefore, by having the Holy Spirit dwelling inside you, you will always feel comforted.

3. GIVE THANKS

He who is always joyful in Christ, because he prays without ceasing, will be thankful in all things. You will thank the Lord in every occasion, in every condition, and for all things, as we pray in the Agbia. The Church teaches us that before we begin any prayer, or ritual, or occasion, whether it be a wedding, or funeral, or Mass, etc, we first pray the Thanksgiving Prayer. And this is because we believe that regardless of the situation, the Lord is preparing the best thing of all for everybody. And this is a fact - God will always do the best for our salvation and our happiness, and therefore the Christian person is always thankful.

4. TEST ALL THINGS

The Christian person has an internal light which helps him to differentiate right from wrong. In life you are going to face many situations and will be forced to make certain choices. Therefore, you need someone to guide you; you need some light. And this light comes through three sources :

- ☞ The gospel, "Your words are a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path"
- ☞ The church teachings, such as sermons, books, spiritual meetings, which are all Biblically based
- ☞ The confession father, who will give solutions to your questions, and absolution for your sins

Read the Bible as much as you can, attend spiritual meetings as much as you can, be regular in confession as much as you can.

You need the power to differentiate between right and wrong and to be able to implement your decision. Therefore you need the light of the Lord inside you, and this light will give you the power and the ability to implement your decisions.

You must not be a dependant personality, having a weak personality with negative flexibility, for in so being, anyone can lead you astray and you will be a failure. We don't want you to be isolated from the society, but we want you to have the strong flexibility to say 'yes' when something is right, and 'no' when it is wrong. You must be different, and dare to be different. We want you to be an ambassador for Christ, to be the salt of the earth, and the light of the world.

5. ABSTAIN

St Paul is not asking us to be sinless, but is asking us to 'abstain'. Therefore, if desire starts, please abstain, and be convinced that to abstain from committing sin is for your profit and benefit, and that committing sin is destructive. To abstain from sin will be easy for you because you have the Lord dwelling inside you, and so these feelings will be very weak in comparison to the grace of the Holy Spirit abiding in you. Therefore, once desire stirs, you will be able to maintain self control, through the Lord, and abstain from committing sin.

In the western world, sin is easy, and offering itself openly. But sin is the most dangerous thing in the life of any person, or family, and the society generally. Therefore even if sin presents itself to you, try your best, calling on the help of the Lord, to abstain. And the Lord will give you power to stand against any sin or harmful desire. You are not an angel, but you are the temple of the Holy Spirit - this is more powerful than an angel! For even the angels are sent to serve us.

To conclude, please keep these 5 commandments in your heart and mind : rejoice, pray, give thanks, test, abstain.

If you rejoice in the Lord, it will be through your prayers, and through this experience of joy you will be thankful all the time. And being satisfied in the Lord you will test all things, and have the power to abstain from every form of evil.

Jesus Christ the Lord is your light, Jesus Christ the Lord is your life, Jesus Christ the Lord is your eternity. Every Christian will enjoy the light, the life, and the eternity, not in heaven only, but now, because the Kingdom of God is inside you.

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