

1 Thessalonians 5:17

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Pray without ceasing.

Analysis

Pray without ceasing—*adialeiptōs proseuchesthe* (ἀδιαλείπτως προσεύχεσθε, 'unceasingly pray'). *Adialeiptōs* (ἀδιαλείπτως) means 'without intermission, constantly.' This can't mean 24/7 verbal prayer (which would prevent work, sleep, etc.) but rather attitude of continual communion with God. Paul modeled this: 'night and day praying exceedingly' (3:10), 'we give thanks to God always' (1:2), maintaining prayerful orientation throughout daily activities. Prayer becomes the atmosphere of life, not isolated events.

Unceasing prayer includes:

1. set prayer times (morning, evening, meals)
2. spontaneous prayers throughout the day (brief ejaculations: 'Lord, help!')
3. prayerful mindset (God-awareness coloring all activities)
4. responsive prayers (thanking God for blessings, seeking guidance in decisions).

The devout Jew prayed three times daily (Dan 6:10); the devout Christian maintains continual prayer-connection. This doesn't mean constant verbalization but persistent God-consciousness. Brother Lawrence called this 'practicing the presence of God'—cultivating awareness of God's presence in mundane tasks, making all of life prayer.

Historical Context

Paul's instruction echoes Jesus's parable teaching persistence in prayer (Luke 18:1-8). Early Christians developed patterns facilitating constant prayer: 'breath prayers' (short repeated phrases like 'Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me'), Psalter recitation, daily offices (structured prayer times), and workplace prayers (asking God's blessing on tasks). Medieval monastics prayed hourly through the night; lay believers prayed morning, midday, evening, and bedtime. Contemporary distracted culture challenges unceasing prayer; recovering ancient practices (breath prayers, hourly reminders, prayer-saturated Scripture meditation) can help.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. How do you practice 'unceasing prayer' throughout daily activities rather than limiting prayer to specific times?
2. What specific practices help you maintain God-consciousness ('pray without ceasing') amid distractions?
3. How do you distinguish between unceasing prayer (continual communion with God) and constant verbalization (impossible standard)?

Interlinear Text

ἀδιαλείπτως προσεύχεσθε

without ceasing

G89

Pray

G4336

Additional Cross-References

Romans 12:12 (Prayer): Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer;

Colossians 4:2 (Prayer): Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving;

Ephesians 6:18 (Prayer): Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;

Luke 18:1 (Prayer): And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint;

Luke 21:36 (Prayer): Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.

1 Peter 4:7 (Prayer): But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer.