

Our Christian Christmas List

- Guess what I describe: tall/wide/thick; book, huge (600 pgs), published every year, early fall. When arrived, kids, adults alike scour thru pages, putting tog Xmas list. Guess? Old Sears cat, one at Xmas called Wish Book. Remember? These Xmas ham sized behemoths were part of Am culture for most of 20th cent. Sears actually publishing cats back in late 1800s. But beg in 1933 (GD), thru 1993 (when offly discont), Sears produced what know as Wish Book. Means if in 20s or younger, this prob isn't part your life exp. But if 30 or older, very likely you've thumbed through thru Sears Wish Book time or two in your life. Raise hand – remem working thru Sears cats as kid? I do: as little boy, look every page; skip over clothes, Barbies, kitchen stuff. Toys! Circle with pen all toys wanted see under Xmas tree; putting together my Xmas list. Guess now, with Amazon, everything online; don't make those big cats anymore. But back in day, we Ams young/old would use Sears cat to put together Xmas list.
- Today looking at 1 Thes 5; Paul making list: of virtues, priorities for Xians to live by. And with Xmas only wk away, I can't help but look this Scr reading, see Xmas list: Christian Christmas list (XXL), with gifts won't find in Sears cat, but God Lord eager to give. Let's work thru this Scr reading today, put together our XXL.
- **Rejoice Always** – vs. 16. Notice, not be happy always. Plenty things happen in lives, make unhappy. Thinking last week's sermon re suf. So how can we, in spite of sufs, rejoice always? Joy is fruit of Spirit (Gal 5: love, joy, peace...). So true joy must come from HS, when he redirects our attention off our circs, onto our status. Spirit gives us joy, even in bad circs, when focus on status: as baptized child of God, connected to Christ (his death, res); as heir of God, who's already given me everything heaven can offer; my enemy Satan already defeated; nothing can pluck me from Savior's hand. You're God's child – your status – gives joy! Lord, for Xmas, help me rejoice always.
- **Pray continually** – vs. 17. If my status is I'm child of God, then God is my loving Father. I want talk to him, consistently, continually, re all kinds things. I can ask for anything (Jesus: ask, seek, knock; daily bread). I can pray for anyone, whatever circs they're in (sick, hurting, dying). And I know my Father hears, answers my prayers with heavenly wisdom. Should never take for granted that when pray, intimate fellowship with God himself; there with me; wants me pray. My birthday prayer book. Good decision. This Xmas, ask God help you (even if from book) to pray consistently, continually.
- **Give thanks in all circumstances** – vs. 18a. Easy when things going well; but much harder when not. But when I focus on status in Christ, then realize even bad circs of life must fit into some good plan. I know, trust God allows bad things happen to me to accomplish his good plan. **“We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him” (Rom 8:28)**. There's plan for me; the more that truth shapes my thinking/faith, the more I can GTAC, even bad circs, hardships. That's on our XXL: God, help us GTAC.
- Notice what 3 gifts have in common: alw, cont, all circs – God wants these remain constant in our lives. **Vs. 18b – follow God's will**. So what is God's will? **“[God] wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim 2:4)**. What God wants. I think why Jesus put “kingdom come, will done” next to each other in LP. His will: kingdom come to heart many people by faith. Makes me wonder: what's my role in that? How can I, we as cong, align our will with God's will, so that intentionalize sharing gospel, letting light shine in dark world? What are we (as indivs, cong) going to do in 2018 to reach out with gospel? Need think re that: ask God help follow his will.
- **Not quench the Spirit** – vs. 19; don't want **“put out the Spirit's fire” (NIV 84)**. Love this picture. Enjoy sitting bonfire? I do. To start: little paper, kindling; light match; fire starts small; just flame. But when add more fuel, pile on some dry wood: gradually fire grows, until got strong, blazing bonfire. Faith like bonfire. Starts small, just flame when HS first converts you. But when HS add more fuel, piles more/more gospel onto your burning heart, gradually fire grows into strong, blazing faith. Fire picture of faith, like at Pent, like in Pent window. So for Xmas asking: not quench Spirit,

put out that fire. When I have bonfire, for safety I have hose right there; spray nozzle, put fire out. Want tell you: Satan's got a hose, constantly spraying water on your fire; wants extinguish faith. How keep fire burning strong? Only one way: got have more fuel, more gospel, more Jesus. When come church, hear word, remem Bap, take Communion, listen sermons, study Bible, sing hymns, say prayers: HS piling more gospel, more Jesus onto fire of your faith, like big bonfire. For Xmas, we're asking God to keep fire burning, and that we not quench Spirit.

- Really imp Xmas gift; so is this: **vs. 20-22 – respect and test all preaching**. Whenever pastor or teacher preaches, shares message from Scr in sermon/class, that message should be respected, and tested vs Bible. What means **vs. 20**. Prophecies here: public preaching, teaching of God's word – should be respected. In Cat, Luther: *"We should fear and love God that we do not despise preaching and his word, but regard it as holy and gladly hear and learn it."* From 3rd Com; means: need go to church; not just sit; pay attention; focus on message! So **vs. 20; 21-22**. Also need compare what hearing to Bible itself; need test message. Remem Bereans from Acts? **"Now the Berean Jews... received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true" (17:11)**. They were testing, comparing, studying, double-checking for accuracy. What I want you do, too, with our preaching, teaching. Not like your pastors will throw in some heresy, see if paying attention; but lot of false teachings out there. And you as Xian have to take ownership of word: make sure what you're hearing lines up with Scripture. Otherwise, it contains error, is to be rejected. What Paul saying here.
- Quite list so far for XXL. Here at end, Paul offers this prayer: **vs. 23**. You know **blameless**: holy, sinless, which none us are, without Jesus. But because of Jesus, God sees us as blameless. So, that's how we want to live; that's why Paul says **vs. 23a. Sanctified** means set apart for something special. As Xian you are diff from sinful world around you; never forget that! You've been set apart bec have special rel with God! Lot people out there hate Christ, don't believe in Christ for forgiveness of their sins. But you're not part that group; you're set apart. So act/live like it! Sanctification means living like Xian, not like unbeliever. **Vs. 23a**. Means for Xmas, want God help us live holy lives. I know I can never be sinless; but I do want God help me sin less. Want sin less freq, serve God more faithfully; that's what means to be sanctified thru/thru.
- Not going find these gifts in Sears cat! Look at list we've put tog for our XXL: **vs. 16-23**. What we want for Xmas. Know what? This is what God wants give us for Xmas. When kid, dad: Kirk, pick 2 or 3 things from Sears cat you'd really like? I'd say: Dad, circled 250 gifts; 6 pg list. He: no, we'll stick with 2 or 3. But these are gifts God wants to give, and does give. Last vs, **vs. 24** (calls you his child). Will give you everything on this XXL. So this Xmas, focus less on stuff – on Sears cat type stuff. Focus on these spiritual gifts; ask God for these; and he will give them to you!

1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

¹⁶ Rejoice always, ¹⁷ pray continually, ¹⁸ give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. ¹⁹ Do not quench the Spirit. ²⁰ Do not treat prophecies with contempt ²¹ but test them all; hold on to what is good, ²² reject every kind of evil. ²³ May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴ The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it.