

1 Thess 5:12-22

12 And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord (simply meaning to protect thru spiritual oversight) and admonish you, 13 and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. Be at peace among yourselves.

Paul is speaking to the church and telling them how they are to respond

- to the leadership of the local fellowship.

Paul is addressing the issue of God's ordained leadership

- and how people responded to that leadership.

If people aren't listening to God,

- they're certainly not going to listen to a pastor
- when he address issues in their life.

Unfortunately, people don't always received correction:

- and instead of maturing, people often choose
- to rebel against the leadership God has placed in their life,
- they're ultimately rebelling against God Himself.

What is the role of a Pastor? Spiritual Guidance thru teaching and praying:

Paul said to a young Timothy,

2 Tim 4:2-5

2 Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. (Paul was telling Timothy to be diligent in all of these areas. Why!) 3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, (fallen away believers) but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; 4 and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. 5 But you (Timothy) be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

People didn't and don't endure sound doctrine.

Always be faithful in speech and in conduct.

14 Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all.

This wasn't a directive for pastors only, it was for the entire church body:

The unruly are often careless and out of line.

The term "unruly" was applied to soldiers who wanted to march

- to the beat of a different drum.

Children need direction, they need instruction in their life.

Paul says to warn those in the church who are unruly,

- those who want to beat to their own drum.

But we are also to comfort the fainthearted, the fearful.

- These are the quitters in the church.
- The quitters are those who have no endurance,

Some people have multiple children,

- there may be one that wants to give up on everything.
- He needs encouragement,
- that's why Paul says to comfort them.

The Greek word for comfort is comprised of two words, “para meaning near” and “muthos meaning speech.” It means to speak kindly to one another.

1 Cor 13:11

11 When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things.

Finally, he says to be patient with all.

We do know that Paul exhorted:

1 Thess 2:11

11 as you know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father does his own children,

1 Thes 5:15

15 See that no one renders evil for evil to anyone, but always pursue what is good both for yourselves and for all.

If a person renders evil for evil, then one or both are going to get hurt:

Don't render evil for evil.

Solomon said:

Prov 10:12

12 Hatred stirs up strife,
But love covers all sins.

16 Rejoice always, (in the Greek this would read, always rejoice)

Paul now turns to a bunch of one liners to tell us what God's will is for us

- and the first is to rejoice always:

Paul says to rejoice always. (at all times)

James 1:2-3

2 My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, 3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience.

In the book of Nehemiah, Ezra the Priest and Scribe was sharing the word of God with the people.

As Ezra read the word and was explaining the word to the people

- they began to weep because
- they were beginning to understand
- the meaning of the word.

Then Nehemiah, Ezra and the Levites who were interpreting the word for the people said to them:

Neh 8:9

9 "Don't mourn or weep on such a day as this! For today is a sacred day before the Lord your God."

Neh 8:10

10 And Nehemiah continued, "Go and celebrate with a feast of rich foods and sweet drinks, and share gifts of food with people who have nothing prepared. This is a sacred day before our Lord. Don't be dejected and sad, for the joy of the Lord is your strength!"

The joy of the Lord is our strength!

Our joy comes from the Lord, and it starts with His word.

We have to learn to rejoice. Paul said to the Philippians, I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content.

He said from a Roman prison after he'd been beaten, rejoice in the Lord always.

There is a danger of not learning and storing the word in your heart and not teaching it to your children.

The French author Victor Hugo said more than a century ago,

"England has two books, the bible and Shakespeare.

- England made Shakespeare
- but the Bible made England."

England was once a country that followed one book

- and that book was the bible.

In 2011 about 72% of people polled in England claimed to be Christian.

- In the latest poll conducted in 2021,
- less than half, 46% of the population polled
- called themselves Christian.

How quickly God removes His blessings when people depart from the word.

The Lord promised:

2 Chron 7:14

14 if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.

The result of turning from sin:

Ps 1:1-3

1 Blessed is the man
Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly,
Nor stands in the path of sinners,
Nor sits in the seat of the scornful;
2 But his delight is in the law of the Lord,
And in His law he meditates day and night.
3 He shall be like a tree
Planted by the rivers of water,
That brings forth its fruit in its season,
Whose leaf also shall not wither;
And whatever he does shall prosper.

So as a nation we need to wake up and as individuals we need to be on spiritual alert.

17 pray without ceasing, 18 in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

James said the effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.

When Paul says to pray without ceasing,

- he's not saying to do nothing but pray.
- It actually means "constantly recurring,"
- **not** continuously occurring.

Listen, when Peter was freed from prison, yes, an angel brought him out, but it was the constant prayer that brought the angel.

The devil is never far away when you are too busy to pray.

In Jesus' longest recorded prayer He prayed that His followers would

- “be one as you and I Father are one.”

God is looking for faithful people.

In the book of Matthew chapter 15 Jesus rebuked the scribes and Pharisees,

Matt 15:7-8

7 Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying:

**8 "These people draw near to Me with their mouth,
And honor Me with their lips,
But their heart is far from Me.**

Paul prayed that we “preserve the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.”

If we don't pray things usually don't go too well.

When Jesus healed a blind and mute demon-possessed man the Pharisees heard of it and began to mumble about it. Jesus responded to them:

Matt 12:25

25 "Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand.

Notice also in the verse that Paul tells the church to be thankful in everything.

It's not easy to give thanks in everything, in fact it's easier to complain.

Still, we are to bear with those who are weak,

- rejoice with those who rejoice
- and weep with those who weep.

Prayer and thanksgiving are connected throughout the bible.

It's a spiritual obligation that we pray with thanksgiving.

In 1 Thess 1:3 and again in chapter 2:13, Paul said, we are bound to thank God for you always.

Phil 4:11-13

11 Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: 12 I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. 13 I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

Rom 5:3-5

3 And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; 4 and perseverance, character; and character, hope. 5 Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

Everything God does in our life is to make us more like Him.

Paul issued 3 commands in verses 16 - 18.

- Rejoice always, pray without ceasing
- and give thanks in everything.

Then he says in verse 18, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

God's will is that we

- Rejoice always, pray without ceasing
- and give thanks in everything.

His will is that we are busy for Him:

Col 4:12 Epaphras labored fervently for the church (why) so that they might stand perfect and complete in the will of God.

His will is that we do good works:

1 Pet 2:15 For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.

Allow Him to lead:

Ps 143:10

10 Teach me to do your will,
for you are my God!
Let your good Spirit lead me
on level ground!

Paul then felt it necessary to address the topic of prophecy.

Prophecy is one of the gifts distributed by the Holy Spirit.

Some scholars think there may have been prophets in the church at the time

- and they were receiving some backlash
- against their activity and that Paul was in support of these prophets

Other scholars think there were false prophets in the church

- and Paul was warning the church of these false prophets.

Paul says in the next letter to the Thessalonians

- that some in the church were saying the day of the Lord had already come.

God is a God of order, and we are certainly to be aware of any false prophets.

Always remember, the word of God is our primary authority.

Jesus said of the last days,

Matt 24:23-24

23 "Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'There!' do not believe it.

24 For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect.

In Matt 10 & Luke 10 Jesus warned his followers about “wolves”

- that would be openly hostile to the gospel message.

In Matthew 7 there is a more subtle threat,

- and that is that wolves will come in disguised as sheep
- but inwardly they are ravenous.

So, **verses 16-18 speak of** the will of God for daily living.

And **verses 19-22 speak of** the will of God for discerning living.

19 Do not quench the Spirit.

This word “quench” is used 8 times in the NT

- but only once with the meaning of “stifle”
- and that’s here in Thessalonians.

The grammatical tense used here is called “present-tense prohibition” and means to “stop doing” something they have been doing.

It can also mean, “do not at any time practice” something.

We shouldn’t quench the Spirit,

- nor should we go overboard
- and attribute everything to the Spirit.

20 Do not despise prophecies. (a prophet is one who speaks for God) Despise - to hold in contempt.

21 Test all things; hold fast what is good.

Abuses by false prophets and false teachers were common

- both in the New and Old Testament.

1st Jn 4:1

1 Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

It's this same word "testing" used in Thessalonians as in 1 John.

Test - to approve of by holding up to the light.

Testing is a proving to see if something is worthy or not.

We should always test what we read or hear thru God's word. What you hear or read should not contradict scripture.

Some in Galatia turned from the truth because they didn't test what was true:

Gal 1:6

6 I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel,

Test all things:

All things - as in all things, all men, all respects, all angles, all possibilities, all situations.

What should we do before trusting something is authentic, test it to see if it's true.

- Jesus is the Light by which
- all things must be tested thru.

hold fast what is good. - To hold fast means to "hold fast, cling to, maintain possession of, to restrain by never letting go."

To "hold on to" is an important verb and it's used for guarding and keeping Christian truths.

Paul is saying, hold fast and don't let go.

The world doesn't want truth.

- The world wants to do whatever they want.

When Jesus stood before Pilate He was asked "Are You a king?" And Jesus told him, "You say rightly that I am a king."

Pilate went on to ask, "What is truth?"

- Nothing has changed from then to now.
- Unbelievers don't know what truth is.

Paul said to Timothy regarding truth:

1 Tim 6:20-21

20 O Timothy! Guard what was committed to your trust, avoiding the profane and idle babblings and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge – 21 by professing it some have strayed concerning the faith.

Paul was reminding Timothy of the teaching of the heretical group called “Gnostics”

- who claimed to have “special spiritual knowledge.”

When you hear the term “agnostic,”

- that refers to a person who does not know.
- Gnostics claim to know a great deal.

Paul warned against such people bringing in false teachings and lies.

Christianity is under attack:

1 Tim 1:18

18 This charge I commit to you, son Timothy, according to the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you may wage the good warfare,

Paul used military language by urging Timothy as a superior officer would urge his soldiers to fight.

Jude 1

3 Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.

Know what you believe and why you believe:

1 Peter 3:15

15 But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear;

1 Thess 5:21

21 Test all things; hold fast what is good.

22 Abstain from every form of evil.

So Paul says, remove this from your life and put this on!

Rom 13:12-14

12 The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. 13 Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. 14 But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.

So, we are to abstain from evil and maintain that which is good!

23 Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

24 He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it.

25 Brethren, pray for us.

26 Greet all the brethren with a holy kiss.

27 I charge you by the Lord that this epistle be read to all the holy brethren.

28 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.