

1. The Community, respecting it's leadership 12-13

We ask you, brothers, to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, ¹³and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves.

- Why must we respect and esteem very highly our church leaders?

2. The Community growing together 14-15

¹⁴And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all. ¹⁵See that no one repays anyone evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to everyone.

- What does it mean to seek to do good to one another when they are "idle", "weak" or "fainthearted"?
- Why does Paul introduce the concept of retaliation into this mix?
 - Why is patience so important?

3. Communion with God 16-18

¹⁶Rejoice always, ¹⁷pray without ceasing, ¹⁸give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

- Always Joyful, prayerful, thankful!
- How? Think of God being present with you as you go through your day - He is with you in Spirit. In your heart and mind talk to Him, petition, give thanks, and rejoice.

4. Prophecy: Do not quench the Spirit 19-22

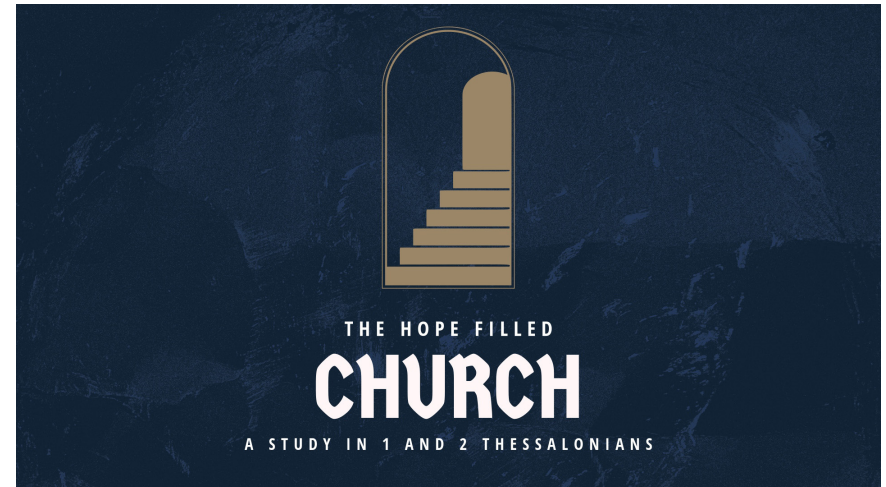
¹⁹Do not quench the Spirit. ²⁰Do not despise prophecies, ²¹but test everything; hold fast what is good. ²²Abstain from every form of evil.

- No contempt despising (of people's claims) - it could be that this prophecy source is the Holy Spirit,
- There are some false prophecies, but test and hold fast to good.

5. Benediction: God's Intention for us: 23-24

²³Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it.

- What is God's intention for you? Call you, save you, sanctify you, resurrect you - "He will surely do it."
- What is our part? See the list of action steps above.



1Thess. 5:12-28

We ask you, brothers, to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, ¹³and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves.

We ask you brothers: In the N.T. Epistles there is a common and repeated core of Christian teaching. Here the moral instruction Paul elaborates is very similar to what he used in his letter to the Romans (Rom. 12:3-17) and elsewhere. What seems to be a random collection of moral exhortations fired in a shotgun way, is really part of a set outline of teaching. That outline touches on their social obligations toward church leadership (5:12-13), toward specific groups within the church (5:14), and to those outside the Christian community (5:15).

respect those who labor among you: We can speculate that Timothy may have named elders within the congregation during his trip to Thessalonica (cf. Titus 1:5; Acts 14:21-23), in which case the following exhortations would be calculated to affirm such people in the eyes of the other believers in the church. To respect a leader is to show humble deference to their leadership and correction.

esteem them very highly: What legitimized this leadership was not their status or social rank, as was commonly the case in both Greek and Roman society, but the labor they undertook among the members of the congregation. While leaders may have been benefactors (Jason), the authority and leadership they exercised derived from their relationship with the Lord (cf. 4:1; 2 Thess. 3:12). Their work often involves the very

difficult effort of firmly and lovingly admonishing members of the congregation by correcting their doctrinal and moral errors. For these reasons, they are to be recognized, respected and held in highest regard.

Be at peace among yourselves.: Peace was considered one of the fruits of the presence of the Spirit in the life of the believer (Gal. 5:22; Eph. 4:3). Peace might be the absence of discord and the maintenance of harmony between the members of the church community.

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This section addresses the themes of proper Christian character before God (5:16-18) and the proper function of prophecy in the church (5:19-22). Look for a long list of action steps that Paul urges the members to take.

we urge you, brothers... admonish the idle: The task of maintaining the well-being of the Christian community did not fall to leaders exclusively. The members of the church shared a mutual responsibility to help one another for their building up in the faith. The first concern Paul points to are those who are the "idle", who are "disorderly" or "undisciplined" in the community. In 2 Thess. 3:6-7, 11 there is an extensive discussion regarding the ones who were doing no work. They are spoken of as the "disorderly". The fact that the apostles needed to return to this theme indicates that such people not only ignored the apostolic teaching but also refused to heed the correction that came from their leaders and fellow members of the community.

...encourage the fainthearted: The "faint-hearted" or timid were in danger of giving up their faith. Either the adversity they suffered (3:3-4) or the death of the loved ones in the community (4:13-18) would have been sufficient reason for some of the members of the church to become greatly discouraged. The responsibility of the rest toward these people was to encourage them so that they would not lose heart.

....help the weak, be patient with them all: The "weak" are those who lack physical strength and energy or those who are liable to psychologically break or give way under pressure. Greek society did not consider weakness to be a virtue in any way; but the church's response to the weak was to be different. The brothers and sisters were to "patiently" help such people, which meant that they should take an interest in them, pay attention to them, and remain loyal to them while encouraging their growth.

always seek to do good to one another: Resisting the natural desire to repay evil for evil, the brothers and sisters are urged/entreated by Paul to do the radical opposite: "do good" within the congregation and within the surrounding community to people who have not done good to you.

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing: In this grouping of three exhortations, Paul turns to the habits that characterize Christians' relationship with God. He focuses on "rejoicing" or joy (v. 16), prayer (v. 17), and gratitude (v. 18). Joy should always be in their lives, in whatever circumstances they found themselves, by recognizing that in the midst of the most agonizing situations the presence of God through his Spirit can infuse the soul with hope and the heart with joy. This joy is rooted deeply in the gospel (Luke 2:10-11) and became one of the primary distinctives of the Christian community.

give thanks in all circumstances: Now he encourages the Thessalonians to give thanks to God as an essential part of their relationship with him. Giving thanks to God

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²⁰Do not despise prophecies,

²¹but test everything; hold fast what is good.

²²Abstain from every form of evil.

²³Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it.

²⁵Brothers, pray for us.

²⁶Greet all the brothers with a holy kiss.

²⁷I put you under oath before the Lord to have this letter read to all the brothers.

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

was a key element in Christian worship (Matt. 26:27; Mark 8:6; Luke 22:17, 19; 1 Cor. 11:24), but here in v. 18 the focus is on the daily thanksgiving of believers.

Do not quench the Spirit: The last group of imperatives Paul delivers includes five exhortations that concern the use and control of prophecy within the church. Some people in the congregation were prohibiting prophecy. The apostle counters this tendency by saying that although this manifestation of the Spirit should be regulated, prophecy should not be banned from the meetings of the assembly.

Do not despise prophecies, but test everything: We are not told why some members of the church wanted to curtail prophetic activity in the community, but we do know that during this era there was a rising skepticism about the validity of prophecy. There were problems in more than one congregation with false prophecies, and for that reason measures were put in place to help the church distinguish between genuine and bogus manifestations of the Spirit (1 Cor. 14:29; 1 John 4:1-3; also 1 Cor. 14:39). The apostle's counsel is that the reaction of the church should be more balanced than simply rejecting prophetic utterances: Test everything. Hold on to the good. John uses the same verb to inform his readers that they should put the content of prophetic speech to the test (1 John 4:1-2). Prophecies that are tested and found genuine are good; such prophecies serve for the building up of the church.

Abstain from every form of evil: The call to reject the inauthentic prophecies is the final exhortation of this grouping: Avoid every kind of evil. They should shun every kind of evil, whatever its nature, including false prophecy.

Now may the God of peace...: Paul has come to the end of the first letter to the Thessalonian Christians. In the letter's closing, the author includes a blessing expressed in the form of a prayer (v. 23) and assures the believers that God will faithfully carry out his work in their lives (v. 24). He then requests that the Thessalonians pray for them (v. 25). God is the one who called them and will carry out his work in their lives through the agency of the Holy Spirit.

sanctify you completely: The apostle's desire is that God will sanctify them through and through. The moral sanctification of the church was a principal concern of its founders (4:3, 4, 7, 8), especially as they stood in anticipation of the coming of the Lord (3:13).

Resources used or adapted for this outline: Green, G. L. (2002). The letters to the Thessalonians. Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans Pub.; Apollos. Beverly Roberts Gaventa, (1998) First and Second Thessalonians, John Knox Press, Louisville, Ky