

Imperatives Concerning Spiritual Attitudes and Integrity

Dr. Michael A. Cox

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Text: 1 Thessalonians 5:16-22

1 Thessalonians: [Bibliography](#) or [Manuscripts and Greek Exegesis](#)

UBS 4th Edition Paragraph Topic: Final Exhortations and Greetings

Central Idea of Message: Attitudes and integrity are closely linked. Christians are commanded to maintain wholesome spiritual attitudes and wholesome spiritual integrity.

Introduction: More imperatives! Just what every listener wants to hear! In fact, there are eight found in this short paragraph which detail God's expectations for Christians concerning attitudes and integrity.

I. Imperatives Concerning Spiritual Attitudes (vv. 16-18)

A. Rejoice always (v. 16)

1. Rejoice in the Lord always
 - a) Rejoice in the morning, afternoon, evening, and at night
 - b) Rejoice when your team wins
 - c) Rejoice when your team ... on second thought!
 - d) Rejoice in the midst of a crisis
 - e) Rejoice in the midst of persecution
 - (1) Joy is a fruit of the Holy Spirit
 - (2) God intends for Christians to have constant joy
 - (3) **Christian joy is unaffected by life's circumstances because it is firmly rooted in the purposes of God**
 - (4) **Christian joy sees beyond the present circumstance and discerns a greater good and a loftier destination**
2. The remainder of this section explains how joy can be possible
 - a) By recognizing God's superintendence over all things
 - b) By praying regularly
 - c) By giving thanks regularly
 - d) By not quenching the Holy Spirit

- e) By not despising preaching
- f) By examining all things closely
- g) By clinging to what is good
- h) By abstaining from all forms of evil

B. Pray without ceasing (v. 17)

1. Pray
 - a) Talk to God
 - b) Listen to God
2. Routinely be in the "presence of the Lord"
 - a) In order to rejoice evermore
 - b) Pray without long gaps of silence between you and God
 - (1) Some think they are too busy to pray
 - (2) Paul was busier than most; yet, he found time to pray meaningful prayers!
 - c) Get focused when you pray
 - d) Stay focused when you pray
 - e) **Prayer is an attitude as well as an action**
 - f) Everything the Christian says and does ought to have the fragrance of prayer
3. Do not give up praying
 - a) Petitioning: asking on behalf of yourself
 - b) Interceding: asking on behalf of others

C. In everything give thanks (v. 18)

1. Thank God for everything good
 - a) **Christians are not commanded to thank God for the evil that comes upon us but for seeing us through the evil and sustaining us in spite of it**
 - b) God can bring good out of bad
 - (1) Joseph being sold into slavery
 - (2) Rom. 8:28
 - c) Maintaining joy and giving of thanks are possible only because of God's grace
2. God's will in Christ Jesus is that people thank him
 - a) In the midst of adversity
 - b) In the midst of prosperity
 - c) His will is not always being done
 - d) Jesus is here shown to be the mediator and revealer of God's will

II. Imperatives Concerning Spiritual Integrity (vv. 19-22)

A. Do not quench the Holy Spirit (v. 19)

1. Fire is a symbol of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 3:11; Luke 12:49; Acts 2:3-4)

- a) Fire enlightens, enlivens, and purifies
 - b) Fire can be doused
- 2. Quenching
 - a) By having cold indifference toward spiritual things
 - b) The opposite of Corinth
 - (1) Corinth over-emphasized spiritual gifts
 - (2) Thessalonica under-emphasized spiritual gifts
 - c) God still saves sinners
 - d) God still changes lives
 - e) God still restores families
 - f) God still opens barren wombs
 - g) God still opens doors of opportunity
 - h) By tolerating indecent pseudo-spiritual excesses in our life or in our church
 - i) By allowing sin in our life
 - j) By holding in check the convicting work of the Spirit
 - k) By not obeying the directives of the Spirit
 - l) By rejecting God's grace
 - m) By not nurturing ourself spiritually
 - n) **The Holy Spirit cannot be put out but his work can be stifled**
- B. **Do not despise prophetic utterances (v. 20)**
 - 1. Bible preaching is good for all to hear
 - a) **Do not detest the intelligible proclamation of God's word**
 - b) Do not ignore biblical instruction, exhortation, or warning
 - c) Do not disdain what is preached
 - 2. Be thankful for God's word
 - a) Honor God's word
 - b) Read God's word
 - c) Listen to God's word being taught
 - d) Listen to God's word being preached
- C. **Examine everything carefully (v. 21)**
 - 1. There are many counterfeits: religions, prophets, prophecies
 - 2. Scrutinize all things
 - a) Test them
 - b) Do not simply believe them without examining them thoroughly
 - c) Demand objective verification which is consistent with God's written word, the

lordship of Christ, the incarnation of Christ, and the deity of Jesus

- d) **Hearers have a responsibility not to be gullible (cf. Tolbert 84)**
- e) The context is in reference to preaching and other utterances
- f) **Hold fast to what is good after careful examination: settle in on truth, never budge**
 - (1) Holiness: within [internal]
 - (2) Righteousness: without [external]
 - (3) Faith: within [internal]
 - (4) Works: without [external]
 - (5) Love
 - (a) For God, Christ, and the Spirit
 - (b) For others
 - (c) For self
 - (6) Loyalty
 - (a) Toward God
 - (b) Toward Christ
 - (c) Toward church
 - (d) Toward spouse
- g) A message that is truly from God will motivate one toward what is good in God's sight and away from what is evil in his sight
- 3. Release what is not good
 - a) Let it go
 - (1) Bad habits
 - (2) Secret sins
 - b) Never look back
 - c) Good has its origin in God
 - d) Evil is a distortion of good

D. Abstain from every form of evil (v. 22)

- 1. **When you discern counterfeit preaching, teaching, or prophetic utterance you should distance yourself from it and those who propound it**
- 2. **Do not "flirt" with evil (Larson 76)**
- 3. **Avoid anything that even resembles evil**
 - a) You know what is right regarding ethics
 - b) You know what is right regarding morals
 - c) You know what is right concerning sin
 - d) You know what is right concerning language
 - e) You know what is right concerning alcohol
 - f) You know what is right concerning drugs

Conclusion: What is the condition of your attitude and spiritual integrity?