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**How Then Should We Live?**

**I Thessalonians 5:12-28 (Lesson #6)**

**Chapter 5:12-28 – Main Idea:** Having been born again, unto a living hope (Jesus rose from the grave and when you and I placed faith in him, we received the earnest of the Holy Spirit as a guarantee that one day we too will receive a new glorified body) (IPet 1:3), should impact how we think and live.

Depending on how you count them, Paul provides a list of 17, or so, things that they should be doing. Seventeen areas of our day-to-day behavior the realities of the gospel should invade.

You will see what starts out as requests or recommendations turns into 14things are all in the **imperative mood**. The imperative mood in the Greek corresponds to the English imperative and expresses a command. Equally, all of these 14 verbs are in the present tense and thus bring with them the idea doing and keep doing.

He then concludes with a pastoral prayer. A prayer for the believers in Thessalonica, and one that we can easily apply to our lives.

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

**Vs 12 – we ask you Brothers...** First, many scholars believe that some in the church in Thessalonica were not adequately respecting the leaders that God had placed over them. We cannot be sure…

We do see that Paul makes this request to brothers and sisters in Christ.

1. **Vs 12 –**The word translated respect is translated a few different ways including; **honor**, **recognize**, or **give recognition**. It is the Greek word is **οιδα** (oy’-da), we have talked about this word a few times, this is something we know by observation. It seems Paul is saying to **recognize**, or even give **recognition** to those who labor among you.

Notice, they are descried as those who “labor” among us. The Greek word is **κοπιάω** (kop-ee-ah’-o), and it means to **labor to the point of exhaustion!**

The calling of a pastor is not to a **life of ease**, but a **life of toil** and **labor**, you and I must recognize that and honor those who answer this high call!

So first, as a congregation, we are to recognize and to respect the pastors that God has provided for us. Related Passages:

*“****17*** *¶ Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching.* ***18*** *For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain," and, "The laborer deserves his wages."” (1Ti 5:17-18 ESV)*

*“Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.” (Heb 13:17 ESV)*

**The pastors labor among them, the people follow and care for the pastors.**

1. **Vs 13a -** To **esteem them very highly**, to have a **high opinion of them**, to **regard them highly**, the Message translates this*: “Overwhelm them with appreciation”*

Do so, **in love. ἀγάπη** (ag-ah’-pay) – We are to **esteem** them in **selfless love**. We are to honor them with a selfless love. We are to **overwhelm them with appreciation**, in **selfless love**.

**Because of their work**… Different Greek word, this is the normal word for work or labor.

Paul is reminding them and us, that we are to honor our pastors in selfless love, because of **their call** to serve as our pastor. Their work, their labor, and their burden.

Being a Pastor is not so much a job, or a career, or an occupation. It is first and foremost a calling! But, you and I are to honor those who labor among us as pastors.

By the way, Pastors, Bishops, Overseers, and Elders are all words for the same office in the church.

You and I are to: **Esteem them very highly in love because of their work.**

1. **Vs 13b - Be at peace among yourselves**

Beginning here, each of these verbs is a present tense, imperative mood, thus we could say be at peace and maintain peace among yourselves.

It is possible that there were tensions in the church, although we do not see that.

This is more than be at peace, we could translate this make peace, be a peace maker, be a harmony creator. Be at one who brings peace into the equation.

Now we have read two verses and already, I could have created two sermons on the directions that Paul is providing here at the close of this first letter to the Thessalonians!

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***14 And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all. 15 See that no one repays anyone evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to everyone. 16 ¶ Rejoice always, 17 pray without ceasing, 18 give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. 19 Do not quench the Spirit. 20 Do not despise prophecies, 21 but test everything; hold fast what is good. 22 Abstain from every form of evil.***

Now Paul moves into rapid fire sermon points, rapid fire theological points around the idea that since Jesus has done so much for you, we should do these things.

**Vs 14a - *we urge you:* παρακαλέω** (par-ak-al-eh’-o) – This word means to **beseech**, **ask**, **desire**, or **intreat**. He then provides a list of things that he is “urging” them to do.

1. Vs 14b- The word translated admonish could be translated warn, so warn the idle.

This is the only place in the New Testament where this word **ἄτακτος** (at’-ak-tos) is used. It is to **deviate from the rule**, it is **disorderly**, it was used of **soldiers who stepped out of rank**.

Of course we are to avoid all forms of unruliness. But the unruliness that most scholars believe Paul is talking about aligns with some of the believers not working. It is the unruliness of idleness.

We saw that last week:

*“and to aspire to live quietly, and to mind your own affairs, and to work with your hands, as we instructed you,” (1Th 4:11 ESV)*

So, the idleness is likely in the matter of work. I will not pick it back up, but the Bible says a great deal about the honor of working.

1. **Vs 14c –** So, warn the unruly, but **speak words of encouragement**, or **admonish**, **calm**, and **console** the **feebleminded** or the **fainthearted**.

Keep in mind the believers in Thessalonica were suffering extreme persecution.

Paul used this same word in I Thes 2:11:

*“****11*** *For you know how, like a father with his children,* ***12*** *we exhorted each one of you and* ***encouraged*** *you and charged you to walk in a manner worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory.” (1Th 2:11-12 ESV)*

You and I as ambassadors of Christ are to encourage one another and in particular those who are faint-hearted.

1. **Vs 14d -** Here not only encourage the fainthearted, but **help**, **support**, or **uphold** the weak.

Even though today we may be strong, each of us can have times or seasons of weakness. In fact, God often works through our weakness to bring Himself glory:

*“But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong;” (1Co 1:27 ESV)*

But here Paul is highlighting a weakness that can slow or even stop our advance. Paul is reminding us, that weakness is not fatal, but an opportunity for other believers to rally around that person and help, support, and uphold them.

1. **Vs 14e -** We are a family in the **Lord** and we need to be **patient** with one another.

We do not need to fight and argue about trivial things, we need to be patient with one another and treat one another with love!

The Lord is patient (long-suffering with us)(II Pet 3:9) and you and I are to be long-suffering with our brothers and sisters in Christ.

1. **Vs 15a -** This means that if someone does evil to us, we SHOULD NOT repay them the same.

In fact just the opposite: *“But I say to you, Do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.” (Mt 5:39 ESV*)

*“Do not say, "I will repay evil"; wait for the LORD, and he will deliver you.” (Pr 20:22 ESV)*

*“****43*** *"You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’* ***44*** *But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,* ***45*** *so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.” (Mt 5:43-45 ESV)*

1. **Vs 15b -** Seek to do that which is good, that which is excellent, that which is pleasant and agreeable, do those things to one another and indeed to everyone!

*“So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.” (Ga 6:10 ESV)*

Being a follower of Christ is not simply loving God, it is loving people who are created by Him, in His image!

**I hope you see that the ideas of getting even or holding a grudge are contrary to the life of a believer.**

1. **Vs 16 –** This is the shortest verse in the Greek New Testament. The shortest verse in English is John 11:35 “Jesus wept.” This is the shortest in the Greek. **But, it is jammed with great theological truth!**

*“Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice.” (Php 4:4 ESV)*

When Paul wrote this he was in prison. If he could rejoice in a Roman prison, you and I have every reason to rejoice.

Now this is not about being happy. This is about having joy and rejoicing in Christ!

Happiness is based on our current circumstances. Joy should be based on the reality that we are in a relationship with God, He loves us, He is watching out and caring for us, and He will one day bring us home.

1. **Vs 17 -** Simple, enlightening, and yet a very challenging command. Pray and keep praying. God is always listening, **Don’t quit!**

The idea here is twofold:

1. to be in a constant mental attitude of prayer.
2. Don’t give up on prayer.

Jesus was getting ready to tell a parable about staying constant in prayer, here is what Luke writes: *“And he told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart.” (Lu 18:1 ESV)*

Even when the answer is slow in coming. Keep praying. Remember Daniel?

1. **Vs 18 -** In every situation, be thankful. By the way, this is the will of God, in Christ Jesus for you!

*Give thanks and keep giving thanks in all circumstances. Christians should be marked by thankful hearts!*

Now it seemed like enough to say always be joyful. But now Paul is following that up with always be thankful “in all circumstances!”

*“giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,” (Eph 5:20 ESV)*

*“do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.” (Php 4:6 ESV)*

You and I should be thankful in all circumstance and for everything! Let’s be reminded, this is the will of God.

**What is God’s will for our lives? From I Thessalonians:**

1. That we abstain from all forms of sexual immortality because God’s will is our sanctification.
2. That we give thanks, in all circumstances!

**Vs 19 – We command you** (more rapid-fire items):

1. **Vs 19 - Do not quench God’s moving in your life or the life of other believers.**

The Holy Spirit can be **quenched** (here), **grieved** (Eph 4:30), or even **resisted** (Acts 7:51).

**DO NOT QUENCH the FIRE of the HOLY SPIRIT!**

Now you should be wondering how this was happening in Thessalonica, it is likely explained in what Paul says next.

1. **Vs 20 - Do not account as nothing prophesying and prophecies.**

Two things here:

1. Prior to the completion of the New Testament cannon, God was still speaking and adding additional revelation. This was one of the apostolic sign gifts and proof that Jesus was the Messiah. We see this in ICor 11:4; 14:6; 14:22.

**They were not to despise prophesying or prophecies.**

1. The word **προφητεία** (prof-ay-ti’-ah), points not only to new prophecies, but to prophecies past and to prophecies in the future that the Word of God provides.

Let me show you:

*“****20*** *knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone’s own interpretation.* ***21*** *For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.” (2Pe 1:20-21 ESV)*

“Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written in it, for the time is near.” (Re 1:3 ESV)

As believers, we need to be open to the disclosure of God’s word and God’s will through fellow Christians exercising the gifts of teaching and/or prophecy (as they point out great truths from past prophecies or yet unfulfilled prophecies).

**Never forgetting the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. (I Cor 14:32)**

1. **Vs 21a -** The Greek word translated test is **δοκιμάζω** (dok-im-ad’-zo) – It means to test by examination.

**You are I are to test everything we come across in life with the word of God. How do we know the will of God, by the word of God? How do we know the truth of God? Only through the word of God. How can we be sure on the explanation any prophecy, not by what men say, but what God has said. (Caveat ICor 14:32)**

**Whatever the pastor says, whatever I say, needs to be “tested” against the word of God.**

**Side note: You all have my email and feel free to reach out any time with questions or if you feel I was wrong about a particular point.**

**This does not mean we discount people if they say one thing that we believe is not in line with the scriptures (for they will), but rather we reject that particular point.**

We need to be like the Bereans:

*“10 The brothers immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea, and when they arrived they went into the Jewish synagogue. 11 Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so.” (Ac 17:10-11 ESV)*

1. **Vs 21b - Test everything… Hold fast to that which is good.**

This Greek word means to **hold**, to **detain**, to **retain**, **restrain** or even **hinder**. It is used in other places of things that we should hold or retain.

*“and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you —  unless you believed in vain.” (1Co 15:2 ESV)*

*“Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful.” (Heb 10:23 ESV)*

Let us with equal zeal, hold to that which is true and good.

1. **Vs 22 -** These young Thessalonian converts were told to **“abstain”** from **every form of evil.**

Stay away from every form of evil. You have been born again, you are waiting for the redemption of your bodies, hold yourself back from every form (Greek word is appearance, form, or figure) of evil.

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***23 Now 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. 24 He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it. 25 Brothers, pray for us. 26 Greet all the brothers with a holy kiss. 27 I put you under oath before the Lord to have this letter read to all the brothers. 28 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.”***

Here in verse 23, appears to be Paul’s closing prayer for the believers in Thessalonica. Just as the first half ended of the letter ended in a pastoral prayer that the Thessalonians would be marked by holiness at the coming of Christ (I Thes 3:11-13), so this half does too.

Paul also adds why they can live life with great confidence in vs 24, namely because: **“He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it.”**

**Vs 23 –** The opening of the prayer… ***The God of peace –*** This is more than a name of God, but literally who God is. He is the God of peace. God is the ultimate peace maker!

You and I were enemies of God. But God broke down that hostility through the blood of his Son.

*“****7*** *For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God’s law; indeed, it cannot.* ***8*** *Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.” (Ro 8:7-8 ESV)*

**Vs 23 – Here we see a prayer that God will sanctify them completely.**

The word means to **set apart**, or **consecrate**. Paul is praying that God will continue to do the sanctifying work in their lives.

In one sense we are sanctified (ICor 1:2) and in another sense we are being sanctified (by the word and our obedience).

Paul is praying that the on-going work of sanctification, by God the Father would continue.

**Vs 23 – Paul is praying that their whole spirit, soul, and body would be preserved blameless.**

**The Greek word translated preserved, τηρέω** (tay-reh’-o) means to **keep** or **guard** and points to the preservation of our Father.

*“****3*** *¶ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,* ***4*** *to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading,* ***kept*** *in heaven for you,* ***5*** *who by God’s power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.” (1Pe 1:3-5 ESV)*

**So this has to do with our being completely sanctified.** Here it is again, another mention of the “coming”, the **παρουσία (**par-oo-see’-ah) of the Lord.

This is the forth time Paul has mentioned the “coming”, the **παρουσία** of the Lord. Here are the other three:

*“For what is our hope or joy or crown of boasting before our Lord Jesus at his coming? Is it not you?” (1Th 2:19 ESV)*

*“****12*** *and may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, as we do for you,* ***13*** *so that he may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.” (1Th 3:12-13 ESV)*

*“****15*** *For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep.* ***16*** *For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.* ***17*** *Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord.” (1Th 4:15-17 ESV)*

The mention of spirit, soul, and body is to remind us that God is redeeming the entire human nature.

**Vs 24a –** But the good news is, God is faithful, and He will finish what He has started in us.

**Vs 24b – *He will surely do it!*** A reminder, that God will do what he promises.

*“And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.” (Php 1:6 ESV)*

**Vs 25 –** Paul has been praying for them and now he asks that they pray for them.

**Vs 26 –** We are to love one another and greet one another with love when we meet.

The love for one another that we sense in Paul and in the early church should replicate itself in us today. We should love one another.

**Vs 27 *- I put you under oath before the Lord Himself, have this letter read to all the brothers.***

**Vs 28 –** The close… ***The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.*** What a great way to end and what a great reminder of what we need each day!

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**Faith Lessons:**

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