

The apostle Paul closes his first letter to the church with exhortation and blessing.

The section between verses 12 and 22 is relevant given the topic of the close of chapter 4 and the beginning of chapter 5. **In a nut-shell, since we don't know exactly when Jesus is going to return, we need to act as if He will return at any moment! BE READY! And how are we to be ready?**

Some have taken that to mean "get your bags packed and ready to go; sit by the door waiting for the heavenly bus". Pre-tribulation folks have often been accused of this attitude "what's the point of working in a dying/perishing world – it's all gonna be burned up anyway!" Now, as unfair as that is, it must have been based on some amount of truth.

As we will see, Paul has some specific exhortations and warnings for us. But first, let's read a couple of verses that are applicable:

1 Timothy 6:18-19 Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, (19) storing up for themselves a **good foundation** for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.

I will say again, as I have taught in the past: the Scriptures are very clear on doing good works with or without the Spirit of God. Walking in the Spirit will cause joy to spring up in you as you do the things that the Spirit has directed you to do. Even mundane things, if done for the Glory of God, can satisfy the soul! Walking in your own strength, I can guarantee that you will not last more than a couple of weeks "doing good" because you are doing it with your glory in mind and you will grow resentful when you are not recognized by those whom are trying to impress! And it won't take too long when you feel totally burnt out!

*But Pastor Stu, there's a lot to do. What difference does it make as long as it gets done? Well, do you want to store up accolades and the self-satisfaction and payments you get while on earth where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal;?" or do you want to store up treasures in Heaven "where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal."?" Do you want to stand before Him and tell Him "Look at all of the great things I did"...only to have Him respond "who asked you to do those things"?"*

Paul describes several different types of relationships:

### **The first relationship is the one between the shepherd and the sheep:**

(1 Thessalonians 5:12) And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you,  
(13A) and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake.

The word **RECOGNIZE** isn't "recognition" per se, as much as it is "know" or "see"

The word **LABOR** means toiling, to the point of weariness and fatigue.

The word **ADMONISH** is a gentle rebuke, caution or warning. Because of the spiritual

authority given them by God. Certainly, not to “lord” it over you!

The word **ESTEEM** can be thought of as respect and with agape love because of the work they do on your behalf.

In the Wuest expanded translation of the Greek this would be:

“Now, we request of you, brethren, that you **recognize** those for what they are and as entitled to the **respect** due them who **work to the point of weariness** among you and who are in **authority** over you in the Lord and **admonish** you and be **esteeming** them most highly with a divine and **self-sacrificial love** because of their work.

(1 Thessalonians 5:13B) Be at peace among yourselves.

I’d like to suggest that this part of the verse is very much tied to the last 1.5 verses: Any Pastor would tell you that one of the most difficult things to handle is difficult relationships between those in the flock.

In-fighting among “cliques” and or between those who share in ministry responsibilities will wear down a Pastor faster than any single sin or doctrinal difference.

Given Paul’s issues with the church at Corinth, I’m not surprised that it at the top of the list for the flock.

**The next relationship is between the sheep in the flock:**

(1 Thessalonians 5:14) Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all.

Let’s take this one at a time. But first, this is written to the church not just the Pastor:

1. **Warn those who are unruly:** (not necessarily by their acts, but those who have an attitude of insubordination or rebelliousness.
2. **Comfort the fainthearted:** it’s unfortunate that the KJV has the word “feeble-minded” because that’s not the sense of it’s usage. The Greek means “little spirited” meaning perhaps “babes in Christ or those whose faith has not “blossomed” yet.
3. **Uphold the weak:** care for those who are weak, either physically or spiritually (morally).
4. **Patient with all:** endure with strength and gentleness those who are struggling in their walks with Jesus...just as you struggled in yours!

(1 Thessalonians 5:15) See that no one renders evil for evil to anyone, but always pursue what is good both for yourselves and for all.

**Luke 6:35-36** But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil. (36) Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful.

Let it part of your life to pursue the good of all in the church and those outside; the Greek for the word “all” also means “whosoever” and is used in that way in John 3:16!

## The next 3 are for each person in the church!

(1 Thessalonians 5:16) Rejoice always,

I think we all know that this is a MAJOR theme in both the Old and New Covenant Scriptures. 145 times in the Old and 42 in the New! And those who have read the letter to the Philippians know that it's used there the most (10 times). In the Old it appears 56 times in Psalms but I was surprised to see it used 13 times in Deuteronomy and 22 times in Isaiah!

All but one time in the Gospels, it is used by Jesus.

When do we rejoice? Not just at all times, but no matter what our circumstances are.

**Colossians 1:24** I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church,

**1 Peter 4:12-13** Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; (13) but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy.

I read 2 related quotes by Spurgeon that I thought were relevant:

*"I am bound to mention among the curiosities of the churches, that I have known many deeply spiritual Christian people who have been afraid to rejoice . . . . Some take such a view of religion that it is to them a sacred duty to be gloomy." (Spurgeon)*

*"Turn this book over and see if there be any precept that the Lord has given you in which he has said, 'Groan in the Lord always, and again I say groan.' You may groan if you like. You have Christian liberty for that; but, at the same time, do believe that you have larger liberty to rejoice, for so it is put before you." (Spurgeon)*

Rejoicing in tribulations and sufferings is exceedingly difficult. But it shows the wisdom of the One in whom we believe: no matter what happens, keep your eyes on Jesus and your thoughts on our real home! Even at the worst of times, we ultimately have a choice as to how we think about and feel about our circumstances.

(1 Thessalonians 5:17-18) pray without ceasing, (18) **in** everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

Obviously, we cannot pray without "stopping". But, how about turning our thinking around: We're not just asking, we are praising, worshipping, singing COMMUNICATING with God, and we **can** live each day in a conversation with God. This isn't out-loud all the time but your inner voice speaking to Him; I often cry out "Help" when studying or dealing with a difficult situation – this isn't a verbal thing it's an inner voice thing. Same goes for thanking Him. We are not thanking Him just for stuff but it says "in everything"...

Also note that this is actually 1 longer sentence:

**1 Thessalonians 5:16-18** (16) Rejoice always, (17) pray without ceasing, (18) in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

Therefore, all three things: rejoicing, praying and giving thanks are the will of God for us who are in Christ Jesus!

Don't know the will of God for your life? **Start here!**

### **Next, the church in worship:**

(1 Thessalonians 5:19) Do not quench the Spirit.

Good choice of words! Don't pour water on the fire of the Spirit!  
How does one quench the spirit?

1. Adhering to traditions, oft-repeated liturgical prayers
2. Being negative
3. Being critical
4. Being doubtful
5. Being indifferent

(1 Thessalonians 5:20) Do not despise prophecies. (21) Test all things; hold fast what is good.

Some commentators declare out right that there is no need for prophesy today; that everything that needs to be said has been said! I think in terms of predictive prophesy, this might be the case, and related to the church as a whole.

But what about prophesy directed to individuals?  
Your thoughts?

(1 Thessalonians 5:22) Abstain from every form of evil.

The KJV says "the appearance of evil". Some believe that this may be related to the last verse about testing prophesy. But, I think it's also appropriate to think of this as how we behave:

Examples?

**Paul ends with prayer and a request for prayer, a call for the church to be loving and appropriately affectionate and a charge to them to share his epistle with all of the churches in the area.**

(1 Thessalonians 5:23) 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.

This is the only place where all three facets of life are used. However, spirit and soul are sometimes used interchangeably. For our understanding, the soul is comprised of our will, emotions and our minds which is to say that you are a "sentient" being. the spirit is that part of you that is God-given so that you can commune with Him. Most believe that not only is the soul regenerated at our re-birth, but the spirit as well.

Regardless, of how one looks at it, the LORD Jesus will ensure that we are preserved blameless at his Judgement Seat. I say this because of the next verse!!!

(1 Thessalonians 5:24) **He who calls you *is* faithful, who also will do *it*.**

(1 Thessalonians 5:25) Brethren, pray for us.

Paul knew the power of prayer...to pray and to receive grace and mercy because of the prayers of the saints offered to God for him!

(1 Thessalonians 5:26) Greet all the brethren with a holy kiss.

On the cheek...even men to men!

(1 Thessalonians 5:27) I charge you by the Lord that this epistle be read to all the holy brethren.

The word CHARGE does not mean "I command" but rather, "swear to me" or "make a vow that you will do this"

(1 Thessalonians 5:28) The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you. Amen.

Paul ends how he began: Praying that the Grace of the LORD would always be with them!