

1 Thessalonians Pastor Lou DeVizia

1 Thessalonians 5:11 - 28 Fellowship Bible Church; Woodbridge, NJ

Introduction: Paul concludes this letter by firing off a list of things that seem basic, but are in fact things we need to be reminded of all the time. Remember that Paul had very little personal time with this church before being driven by persecutors to Berea. Perhaps that explains the need for this list. Whatever the case, the list presents a very good and succinct picture of good Christian posture and practice.

1. Verses 12-22 - Important Instructions for the Christian Life

- vv.12-13a - Hold those who work in the ministry in high **esteem** and **love** them for the sake of *their work*. The more encouraged they are, the more effective their work is. And that's better for you, by the way...

- v.13b - **Peace** within the body is essential - one of Satan's greatest devices is to sow discord among the brethren.

- v.14a - Godly conduct is essential, and the person who does not behave biblically needs to be rebuked and corrected.

- v.14b - All of us can have periods when we are inclined to be discouraged - we should **comfort** each other in these times. This is essentially the product of *godly relationships*, and this is a great exhortation to *fellowship* - fellowship with other believers in the church is an essential part of a believer's life. Make it a priority, cherish it, nourish it. *You need the body and the body needs you.*

- v.14c - A step beyond comforting the fainthearted, to **uphold the weak** conjures up the notion of really stepping in and bearing the burdens of a brother or sister.

- v.14d - Remember that God is extremely patient and longsuffering towards us. We can certainly **be patient** with others. Patience is a great indicator of spiritual maturity. Elsewhere Paul said that love is patient (1 Corinthians 13).

- v.15 - A profound statement that was lived out in the life of Jesus often. God had great mercy upon us and saved us, and He has blessed us with the hope of everlasting life. There is no need to lash out and try to "pay back" those who we think wrong us, even if we are right. **Pursue what is good**, even where it is undeserved or seems to produce no "return"

- v.16 - The battle is already won. No trouble in this world can separate us from the love of God. Through faith in Jesus Christ we are saved, and no circumstance in life can rob us of that. So **rejoice** continually!

- v.17 - The idea is either: 1) to go throughout your day walking and talking with God; keep Him in your thoughts, in your conversations, talk with Him, meditate on Him and His word... constantly **pray** to Him, acknowledge His presence in all things, include Him in all things; don't take a step without consulting Him, seeking His will, etc. Or, 2) More generally, pray all the time; just do it, every day, and never fail to. Both are good advice.

- v.18 - Every good thing we have is from God, and so we should acknowledge that by giving **thanks** to Him. This is His **will**.

- v.19 - The Holy Spirit in us is the very presence of God alive in us. His Spirit leads us, teaches us, empowers us, convicts us, comforts us. Our disobedience and carnality, however, will **quench** this. Do not, by disobedience or carnality, **cut off** or **extinguish** the **raging fire** that is the Holy **Spirit** of God in you, whom you have if you are in Christ Jesus. Rather, we should constantly be filled with the Spirit (Ephesians 5).

- vv.20-21 - When someone who is of good spiritual reputation and mature faith claims to have some insight into spiritual things, some understanding of the word of God, or something they wish to share which is important, **do not despise** this outright. Rather, hear it and **test** it by the word of God. If it is outside of the Holy Bible or inconsistent with what is taught in the Bible, correct it. Perhaps Paul had the Bereans in mind here, that experience immediately following his time in Thessalonica.

- NOTE: The word **prophecies** in this specific context can mean a word of direct revelation from God, but it is most often used in the Bible in reference to the words of scripture. And remember that Paul wrote this at a time when the New Testament was not complete yet. He is not advocating a free-for-all where anyone says what they want to say. This is best understood to refer to preaching from the Bible in our day.

- v.22 - Do not just abstain from that which *is* evil, but **abstain** from everything that *looks evil*.

2. Verses 23-28 - Paul's Closing Prayer and Blessing

- vv.23-24 - **God of peace** - God brings sinners to peace with Him by the blood of His Son, Jesus Christ. **Sanctify you completely... whole spirit, soul and body...** Everything we are should be set apart for God, set apart from this world and its sinful ways. And God is the one who gives us the strength to be holy, and He is the one who will preserve His faithful. For **He... is faithful, and will do it**.

- v.25 - Pray for those who labor in the word especially.

- v.26 - There should be godly fondness among the brethren.

- v.27 - This letter, as well as the others of the New Testament, are essential reading and study material for churches.

- v.28 - Without the grace of Christ we are hopeless.

Conclusion: Perhaps Paul is squeezing in here many of the things he would have liked to have taught in person. So it is for our benefit that it is written here instead. Take heed Christian, and live by this invaluable instruction.