

1 Thessalonians 5:12-28; "Final Exhortations" July 2, 2023

I. Welcome & Review

A. Good morning! Ohaiyogozaimasu! Welcome to Calvary Chapel Iwakuni.

1. It's great to be here with you all as we gather together to praise and worship our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
2. *Welcome any new faces and those streaming online.*

B. Before we continue any further, let's go ahead and dismiss our elementary aged children to their Sunday School classrooms.

1. As well as the bible English class (Second Service)

C. For the rest of us, we will be finishing up our study of the book of 1 Thessalonians this morning.

1. So, if you have your Bibles with you, go ahead and make your way to chapter 5 of the book of 1 Thessalonians.
2. We started our study of this book at the end of April and here we are 10 weeks later wrapping up our study. I hope you have enjoyed going through Paul's letter to the church in Thessalonica.
3. Lord willing, next week, we'll start Paul's second letter to the church in Thessalonica. But before we can do that we have to finish this first letter.
4. The church in Thessalonica was a very young church, one that was formed after just a few weeks of ministry by Paul and his companions.
 - a. Paul didn't get to spend much time there because of some Jews that were not persuaded by Paul who caused all sorts of problems. They gathered to themselves all sorts of evil men and started a riot within the city, setting the whole city in an uproar.

- b. This led to the church sending Paul and his companions away under the cover of night in secrecy.
 - c. The persecution that began against Paul continued against the church even after Paul left. It was a challenging time for sure.
5. But even though they were young, and they faced a great amount of persecution we read of how Paul spoke of this church as a model church. How they had become an example to all the other churches throughout the region.
- a. People from all over the region had heard about their faith, their labor of love, and their patience of hope in the Lord Jesus Christ.
6. And though they were considered an example to many of the churches, they were still a church that needed some helpful guidance and further instruction on certain topics.
- a. And that is what this latter part of the book has been about. The first half, chapters 1-3 were more informational, while these last two chapters have been more applicational.
 - b. And as we close out this second half of the book Paul has a number of final exhortations for the church to follow.
- D. Our text this morning is going to be 1 Thessalonians chapter 5 verses 12-28. And the title of our message is going to be “**Final Exhortations**”.
- 1. Can I ask you all to please rise in honor of God and His Holy Word?
 - 2. I’m going to read our text this morning from my Bible, I’m reading the NKJV of the Bible. If you are reading from a different translation do your best to follow along.

3. Paul wraps up his letter to the church in Thessalonica with the following in verse 12. He writes... (*R & P*)

II. Intro;

A. Here at the conclusion of his letter, Paul lists out a number of various exhortations and instructions for the church in Thessalonica.

1. These are more than simply a list of suggestions for the church or Paul's helpful advice to a young church.

a. Many of these instructions and exhortation are written in the imperative mood. The imperative mood in the Greek was used to express commands.

2. Paul was using his apostolic authority to set matters straight regarding a number of different topics that the church in Thessalonica needed to be aware of and needed to make sure they were doing.

a. This particular section is extremely overloaded with imperative commands for the church. Here in these 17 verses, there are 17 different verbs written in the imperative mood.

b. Now, when we consider the fact that the book as a whole only contains 20 verbs written in the imperative mood, we can then begin to understand the magnitude of what Paul is saying here.

c. Before us is a list of exhortations and commands that Paul had for the church and as we go through this text, we're going to note the different topics Paul addressed and his commands for the church regarding these topics.

B. For those of you who like to take notes and outline our text, I've taken the liberty of breaking down our text into six different areas Paul addressed with these final exhortations of his.

1. The first of which is found in verses 12 & 13 where Paul gives his final exhortations regarding **God's**

leaders. Take a look at our opening verses once again with me to see what Paul had to say about God's leaders.

III. 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13; Regarding God's Leaders

A. Paul here describes those who have been placed in positions of leadership within the church. These would be like what we refer to as the pastors of the church, or the elders within a church.

1. These are people who labor among the church. The word labor speaks of toil and fatigue. The idea is these are the people who weary themselves serving and working for the church. They take on a greater amount of service than the regular volunteer within the church.
2. These are also people whom God has placed in positions of authority within the church. They are over us in the Lord.
 - a. God has given to the church certain people who have been called into the ministry to serve as leaders. As it states in Ephesians chapter 4, God "Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teacher, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ". (**Eph. 4:11-12**)
 - b. God gave the church these people, these servant leaders, as a gift to the church. That these servants of God would minister to the needs of the body of Christ.
3. These are people that God has given to the church to admonish the church as it states at the end of verse 12.
 - a. The idea behind this word admonish is that they have been given to the church to help instruct and teach the church on proper behavior and belief.

They have been given to help warn people of certain dangers that can come as we walk with the Lord.

B. Paul had two things that he wanted the church in Thessalonica to do regarding God's leaders within the church.

1. Number 1, we see that Paul wanted the church in Thessalonica to **recognize them**.
 - a. This word "recognize" in the Greek is the word "eido" [i-dough] and it can be used to speak of the ability to see, or to know.
 - b. Paul's exhortation here doesn't have anything to do with us being able to see God's leaders or to be able to recognize them out on the street if they happen to pass by us.
 - c. The word here emphasizes the know aspect. Paul wants us to know the leaders God has given and he wants us to acknowledge them. That is what is meant by this word recognize.
 - d. We are to acknowledge them, to recognize their God given authority and to submit ourselves to them. Paul says that God's leaders are to be given the recognition that is due their position within the church.
2. Not only are we to recognize them, but number 2, we are to **esteem them very highly**, or your translation may read that we are to hold them in the highest regard.
 - a. This esteem and regard is not based upon the individual personality of God's leader, but based upon their work's sake.
 - b. Even if we don't necessarily see them as wonderful people or the kind of people we tend to gravitate towards, maybe our personalities are just very different from theirs, we are still to esteem them, to

hold them in high regard based upon the work that they render to the Lord and to the body of Christ.

- c. God's leaders don't have to be your best friends in order for you to esteem them and hold them in high regard. Based purely upon their service to the Lord and the body of Christ, Paul exhorts us to esteem them very highly.
- d. And we do that through our love. Paul said we are to esteem them very highly in love. We should show love to the leader's God has placed over us.
 - i. Remember that "love suffers long and is kind" [even when God's leaders go a little long in their teaching]; "love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely" [we aren't rude to God's leaders, we treat them with respect and don't send them nasty emails, or complain about them to our friends and speak about how they aren't as good as our previous pastor]. [Love] does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil;" [we don't jump to wrong conclusions based upon something one of God's leaders said and assume they have ill intentions] [Love] "does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth" [we can especially rejoice when God's leaders teach us God's truth and live out God's truth] [Love] "bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things." (1 Co. 13:4-7)
- e. May we have a genuine love and appreciation for the leaders God has given to us.

C. When you and I can love and appreciate God's leaders He has given to us, when we recognize them and acknowledge their God given authority, the natural byproduct will be peace.

1. At the end of verse 13 Paul says "Be at peace among yourselves."

2. So many church problems often come from a lack of not recognizing and esteeming the leaders that have been placed over us. We have disagreements with them and we start murmuring and complaining to others which leads to all sorts of problems and divisiveness within the church.
3. But if we would simply honor the leaders God has given us, and esteem them based upon the position God has given them. If we would genuinely love them for the work they do, then we would find peace among ourselves.

D. Back to our text in chapter 5. Paul now turns his attention away from God's leaders and gives a few exhortations regarding **God's people**. Take a look at verses 14 & 15 to see what Paul had to say about God's people.

IV. 1 Thessalonians 5:14-15; Regarding God's People

A. Here Paul brings up how we are to interact with and minister to one another. This isn't something just for God's leaders, but for all of us. Paul says in verse 14, "Now we exhort you, brethren", this is speaking about everyone in the church and how we are to assist others.

B. It would seem that Paul is addressing perhaps some of the more challenging people within the church, people who are difficult to perhaps deal with, people that need a little extra attention than others.

1. Sometimes our tendency may be to quickly cast these types of people off, to write them off as a lost cause and avoid them. But that isn't what Paul would have for us.
2. Paul wants us to help them. To point them in the right direction and do our part to serve them and get them on the right path.

C. In verse 14 Paul highlights 4 different types of people that need some extra attention and ministering to within the body of Christ. Note them with me.

1. The first type of person is the unruly person, or your translation may read idle and or disruptive.
 - a. The term is actually a military term. It speaks of someone who has broken ranks, someone who is disorderly in their conduct. One who deviates from the prescribed order or rule.
 - b. It could be that these people are unruly based upon their inaction, their idleness, they aren't doing what they are supposed to be doing. Or it could refer to people that are doing contrary to the standards.
 - c. Either way, Paul says that these kind of people in the church, those who are unruly, disruptive, disorderly; they are to be warned. Paul says **“warn those who are unruly”**.
 - d. The word warn is the same Greek word that was used earlier in verse 12 when speaking about God's leaders that admonish us.
 - e. If we see a brother or sister in the Lord being unruly, doing something that isn't right, something that is sinful, it is our responsibility to warn them, to admonish them.
 - f. Look, God is not mocked, what a man sows he will reap. Galatians 6 tells us “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.” (**Gal. 6:7-8**)
 - g. We need to warn those who are acting unruly. Let them know that there are consequences to not living the way God has called us to.
2. The next people group Paul addresses are those who are fainthearted.

- a. The word “fainthearted” is only used this one time in the NT. It speaks of those who are discouraged, timid, or fretful.
 - b. Paul exhorts us to **comfort the fainthearted**. The meaning of this word carries the idea of encouraging them or consoling them.
 - c. There are some in the church who struggle with being bold, people who are prone to be discouraged and can struggle with feelings of depression or despair.
 - i. We could simply tell them to buck up or to man up. We can look down upon them as if something is wrong with them and won't bother to meet them on their level. This is not what Paul would have for us.
 - d. It is our responsibility to come alongside those people. To meet them where they are at, to encourage them, to comfort them, to speak truth into their life and hopefully get them to a place where they know and live in the strength God has provided for them.
3. The next group of God's people Paul addressed were the weak.
- a. This can be referring to new believers who are still trying to figure things out and being cleansed from the inside out. But it can also refer to people who struggle in certain areas of their walk. They are weak and vulnerable in certain areas. Vices that have taken a hold of them and rendered them weak in the Lord.
 - b. How are we to act toward those who are weak in the faith? Are we to shame them, make them feel inferior because of their weakness, ridicule them, and question their salvation because they are weak?

Are we to lord over them and act high and mighty?
No, of course not.

- c. Paul says **we are to uphold them**. We don't look down upon them, but we come to them and become a support for them. We undergird them, we uphold them. We help them stand in areas where they are too weak to stand on their own.
 - d. There are a ton of people in the church who are weak, but are ashamed to admit it in fear of how other's in the church will respond to them.
 - i. That is a shame. We need to be those that uphold the weak. And we need to be able to be truthful about the areas we struggle in so that we may get the help we need.
 - ii. We all struggle in different areas, and we all need help. Which leads me to the next exhortation Paul had in our text.
4. Paul exhorts us to **be patient with all**.
- a. Here's the truth of the matter. Listen, we are all works in progress. None of us have arrived, none of us have figured it all out, none of us are without error and without weakness. We are a work of God's amazing grace.
 - b. And so we need to be patient with one another. Be patient with me as your pastor, be patient with those who struggle, those who are unruly, those who are fainthearted, those who are weak, those who are too scared to even mention their weaknesses.
 - c. Don't come across high and mighty towards others. Realize and understand that we are all in need of patience. God is patient with us. He is longsuffering toward us and we need to be patient and longsuffering toward one another.

D. In verse 15 Paul has another exhortation regarding God's people. He says "see that no one renders evil for evil to anyone."

1. **We are not to retaliate, or take vengeance upon others.**

2. Really this is the opposite of being patient with one another. When we are not patient, we usually look to take matters into our own hands. And this usually makes the matter much worse.

3. Retaliation is not an option for a Christian. And this is hard to accept because our natural tendency is to get even. Actually our natural tendency is not to get even, but rather to one up each other.

a. If someone does something to us, we want to do that back to them and then some. That's our natural tendency.

4. But as believers in the Lord, we are to let the Lord deal with these matters and trust God to work out these various situations. We need to patiently wait for God and trust that He will see us through, that He will work in and through the various situations we find ourselves in.

a. Romans 12 states, "Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, 'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay' says the Lord. Therefore 'If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head.' Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."
(Rom. 12:17-21)

- b. The idea about heaping coals of fire on his head is a cultural reference to how things were back in that day.
 - c. Back then people would have house fires that they would keep lit especially during the colder winter days for cooking and keeping warm. If your fire went out, it could end up being life threatening if you couldn't get another fire going. In such a case, one would go to his neighbor's house and ask if they had a few hot coals to spare that they could bring back to their house to reignite their own fire.
 - d. People back then would carry the live coals in clay jars upon their heads. The idea of heaping coals of fire upon someone's head was not a way of getting back at someone and burning them for what they did. It was a good deed done to help someone out in a difficult situation.
 - e. What Paul speaks of feeding our enemies and giving drinks to them, he is likening that to doing this great deed toward someone that was in desperation. We overcome evil, by doing good.
5. And that is what Paul says here as well. We are not render evil for evil to anyone, but always **pursue what is good both for ourselves and for all.**
- a. You see, it isn't just about not doing evil, but it is about doing good. It isn't enough to simply abstain from evil, Paul wants us to pursue what is good for all. To do good whenever we have the chance to, even if it is done towards those who have wronged us or come against us.
 - b. We are to trust God to handle those situations and do our best to pursue whatever is good for all people.
- E. Let's continue in our text. In verses 16-18 Paul gives a few more exhortations regarding **God's will** for our lives. Read them with me.

V. 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18; Regarding God's Will

A. People often wonder about God's will for their lives. What God has called them to and what His ultimate desire is for them. Well, here in verses 16-18, Paul lays out three aspects of God's will for our lives.

1. To start with, God's will for our lives involves **rejoicing always**.

a. As believers we are to always rejoice. No matter the time, no matter the season of life we have reason to rejoice because of God's work in our lives.

b. Paul learned to have joy at all times in His walk with the Lord:

i. When he was imprisoned for his faith, he rejoiced and sang hymns to the Lord. (**Acts 16:25**)

ii. When he faced sufferings, he rejoiced because he knew that suffering would produce perseverance; perseverance would build his character, and his character would develop into hope. (**Rom. 5:3-4; NIV**)

iii. Paul took pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. Because he knew that when he was weak, then he became strong. (**2 Co. 12:10**)

iv. In his letter to the church in Colossae he wrote, "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," (**Col. 1:24**)

c. Paul could rejoice always because of the work of Christ in him. He knew that God was at work and trusted that in every season and at all times, God was working out His will and His purposes in and through Paul.

- d. God is at work in our lives too. And for that we can rejoice. God has saved us and is preparing a place for us with Him in eternity. God will one day complete that work and we will be united with Him forever. The fact that God has forgiven us our sins and saved us from the penalty of our sins is reason enough to rejoice always. But on top of that He has given us His Holy Spirit to lead, guide, and direct our lives until the time He calls us home. What else could we hope for?
- i. Paul wrote, “What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? Who shall bring a charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies. Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written: ‘For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.’ Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (**Rom. 8:31-39**)
- ii. We can rejoice because God is for us. We can rejoice because God did not spare His own Son but delivered Him up for us. We can rejoice because God has justified us. We can rejoice because there is no condemnation brought

against us. We can rejoice because Christ died and rose again. We can rejoice because we know that Christ is interceding for us in every moment. We can rejoice because Jesus Christ loves us perfectly and nothing will ever be able to separate us from that love.

iii. Praise the Lord! We have something to rejoice in always; the love of God, displayed through His Son, is our own.

2. Another aspect of God's will is that we **pray without ceasing**.

a. Praying without ceasing is not prayer that continues on and on without any interruption.

i. Paul is not expecting us to wake up and kneel in prayer and to stay in that position throughout the day and to never do anything else. Not that there is anything wrong with that if you have the opportunity to do so, it's just not what Paul was saying here.

b. Praying without ceasing is about maintaining a constant flow of communication with the Lord throughout the day. It carries with it the idea of constant, continuous fellowship with the Lord.

i. The Holy Spirit dwells within us and He is with us at all times. Praying without ceasing involves simply being aware of God's presence and being yielded to His leading and guiding.

ii. Prayer is our basic means of communication with the Lord. We want to have an open line with the Lord throughout the day, so that when His Spirit leads and guides we are responsive to that leading and guiding. We are in communion with the Lord, listening to Him, hearing from Him, and speaking to Him as we go throughout our day.

- c. This is God's will for your life, that you would pray without ceasing, that you would commune with the Lord and fellowship with Him throughout the day, being attentive and response to His prompting.
3. The third and final thing that Paul mentions as part of God's will for our lives is that "**in everything give thanks**".
- a. I like how Paul words this here. He says "in everything give thanks". We are to give thanks in everything. Paul doesn't say that we are to give thanks for everything, but in everything.
 - i. Paul isn't expecting us to give thanks for everything. It is difficult and near impossible to thank God for death, for disease, for destruction, and deception, and divorce, and disorders, and a whole host of other things. I don't believe God would have us to thank Him for those things.
 - ii. However, we can give thanks to God in those difficult circumstances because we know and trust that God can and will work in and through those difficulties. We know and trust that "all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose." (**Rom. 8:28**)
 - iii. And because we know those things; because we know He is able to work through the most difficult and painful of circumstances we can give thanks to God in them.
 - b. The first two things Paul mentioned involved timing. We are to rejoice always, we are to pray without ceasing. But this third aspect of God's will involves circumstances. We are to give thanks to God in every circumstance of life. For this is God's will for each of us.

B. Moving along, we come to Paul's exhortations regarding **God's Spirit** in verses 19-22. Read them with me.

VI. 1 Thessalonians 5:19-22; Regarding God's Spirit

A. In these four short verses pertaining to the work of God's Spirit in us and around us, Paul gives us five imperatives. Five commands to follow; two that are in the negative and three that are in the positive.

1. Number one, we are **not to quench the Spirit.**

- a. The word quench speaks of extinguishing a fire.
- b. In relation to God's Spirit it speaks of dampening, hindering, repressing, or stifling His influence upon us and the work He desires to do in us and through us.
- c. It is possible to quench God's Spirit.
 - i. It is possible to resist God's Spirit. This is what Stephen accused the Israelites of in Acts 7:51 when he referred to them as stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears. (**Acts 7:51**)
 - ii. It is possible to grieve the Holy Spirit if we continue in unrepentant sin as described in Ephesians chapter 4. (**Eph. 4:30**)
 - iii. The Spirit of God will not force us to do anything that we don't want to do ourselves. We have a choice in the matter.
- d. Paul warns us here about quenching the Spirit of God. And based upon the context it could be referring to the gifts of the Spirit.
 - i. God has given to us various gifts that are to be used for the edification of the body of Christ. He distributes them to each of us as He wills according to 1 Corinthians 12:11. (**1 Co. 12:11**)
 - ii. It could be that Paul is warning us not to hinder, or stifle, or repress, in ourselves or in others, the use of the spiritual gifts God's Spirit has given.

- iii. There are many in the church today that believe God's Spirit no longer gives certain gifts, and there are churches that forbid the use of certain gifts of the Spirit. But to do so would be akin, I believe to quenching the Spirit, hindering and repressing God's Spirit.
- iv. Now, I do think that scripture is clear on how certain gifts are to be used in different settings. How they are to be used in decency and in order within church services and meetings according to the instructions Paul lays out in 1 Corinthians 14. **(1 Co. 14:40)**
- v. How all things should be done for the edification of the body of Christ. **(1 Co. 14:26b)**
- vi. People running up and down the aisles and acting out of control is not what the Scriptures describe as a genuine work of God's spirit, so we wouldn't be in danger of quenching the Spirit if we were to keep people from doing such things.
- vii. People may claim that it is of the Holy Spirit, but one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit is self-control. So people that claim they just couldn't control themselves and also claim it was God's Spirit upon them, have a scriptural difficulty to overcome.
- e. But speaking about the fruit of the Spirit, this does shed light on another way in which we could potentially quench God's Spirit. It could be pertaining to the gifts of the Spirit here, or it could be referring to the fruit of the spirit. And according to Galatians 5:22 the fruit of the spirit is love! **(Gal. 5:22)**
 - i. How can we be guilty of quenching the Spirit of God? By having a lack of love towards one another.

- ii. The Spirit's work in our hearts and in our lives can be hindered by bitterness in our hearts, by hatred within, and jealousy without, by harboring animosity towards others. And that will definitely quench the Spirit of God in us.
 - iii. The fruit of God's spirit is love. God's Spirit desires to produce in us His love, but we can hinder that work by holding on to things that are contrary to God's love. We need to let those things go.
 - iv. We can't allow bitterness, and hatred, and regret, and jealousy, rob us of the love God desires to work in us and through us. Open up your heart and let it be filled with His love and let your heart be a channel of God's love to the world around you.
2. Back to our text. The second command Paul had for us regarding God's Spirit pertains to us **not despising prophecies**.
- a. Prophecy is one of the gift's given by God's Spirit. In fact, according to Paul, it is something we should all desire to have.
 - i. In 1 Corinthians 14 Paul writes, "Pursue love, and desire spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophecy. For he who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God, for no one understands him; however, in the spirit he speaks mysteries. But he who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men."
(1 Co. 14:1-3)
 - ii. So prophecy is something that brings edification to the body of Christ. It can be a word of exhortation, or a word of comfort.
 - b. Now, when we speak about prophecy, we have to understand it in two different ways.

- i. Most of us think of prophecy as fore-telling the future. That God gave some people the ability to be speak about events in the future that God was going to do. Many of the OT prophets were given this ability. And even some in the NT were given this ability to speak about God's future work.
 - ii. But prophecy can also refer to forth-telling. Forthtelling is different from foretelling. While foretelling involves speaking about future events, forthtelling simply means to publish or to make public something that has already been written.
 - iii. And really that is the heart of what prophecy is all about. It is making known the already revealed word of God. The gift of prophecy is more commonly used when we speak forth the existing word of God.
 - iv. A prophet is someone who proclaims God's word, one who speaks out the counsel of God with the conviction that God has given them this word to speak forth and deliver. One who believes that God has given them a message from God's Word to God's people.
 - v. I believe there are many modern prophets who are in the church boldly proclaiming God's message to God's people today and we should not despise them nor the message they deliver.
3. However, we are **to test it**. Which is the third command Paul gave to us as it pertains to God's Spirit.
- a. We are to test all things against the revealed word of God. If someone claims to prophesy on behalf of the Lord, then their message better line up with the already revealed word of God.
 - b. God's word is the standard and all things must be tested against it.

- i. The apostle John gave similar exhortation in his first letter. He wrote, “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.” (1 Jn. 4:1)
 - ii. The Bereans were actually commended for the way they tested the things Paul shared with them. Paul went to them after his time in Thessalonica and noted how diligent they were in testing everything that Paul said, unlike those who were in Thessalonica.
 - Acts 17 states regarding the Bereans, “These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.” (Acts 17:11)
 - c. And so Paul commands us to not quench the Spirit and not to despise prophecy, but at the same time requires that we test all things according to God’s standard.
4. And as we test all things, we are then to **hold fast what is good**. This was the fourth commandment Paul had regarding God’s Spirit.
- a. To hold fast implies the sense of continuing belief. We receive things, we test them, and those things that are good, we cling to, we hold fast to them. We don’t give them up.
 - b. We have a need to hold fast to, to cling to that which is good, to that which is in accordance with God’s Holy standard.
 - c. We live in crazy times. We live in days and times where people call evil good and good evil. We need to cling to that which is good and not allow ourselves

to be manipulated into surrendering that which is good in exchange for a lie.

5. The fifth and final exhortation from Paul regarding God's Spirit was that we **abstain from every form of evil.**

a. The word "form" here speaks of a kind or manner of something. We are to abstain from any and all forms or kinds of evil. We aren't to have anything to do with them.

b. And this is connected to the previous command of Paul's. We are to hold fast to that which is good and at the same time abstain from or keep away from every kind of evil.

c. In this world we will encounter evil. We will come across it. We cannot avoid contact with every kind of evil because this world is evil and is ruled by evil.

d. However, while we cannot keep ourselves from seeing and being exposed to varying forms of evil, we can, by the Spirit's empowering in our lives, abstain from or refrain from engaging ourselves in any of those activities.

e. That is Paul's heart for us. That we would abstain from all forms of evil in this world.

B. Let's move along in our text and note Paul's final exhortations to the church in Thessalonica regarding **God's work.**

VII. 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24; Regarding God's Work

A. This is such a powerful and important message here in these verses.

1. Paul has been giving us all these commandments, all these exhortations, all these things that we must do and must not do. And it can seem overwhelming to try and do all these things.

2. But the truth of the matter is that these exhortations of Paul's are not just overwhelming they are downright impossible. None of us can do these things in and of ourselves.
3. But that's just it. Paul isn't telling us we have to do all these things in our own strength. That we have to work really hard at doing these things; no, that isn't it at all.

B. The wonderful thing about these verses is the promise of **God to do the work for us.**

1. The God of peace Himself will sanctify us completely. Our whole spirit, body, and soul will be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ not because of our own efforts, not because we overcame and succeeded on our own. No, we will be preserved blameless because of God's work in us.
2. God started a work in us the day we gave our lives to Him and were saved. And God promises to complete the work that He began in us.
 - a. Philippians 1:6 describes how we can be "confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in us will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ." (**Phil. 1:6**)
 - b. Our confidence to accomplish and follow through with all these exhortations is not in ourselves, but in the God who sanctifies us, in the God who is faithful.
3. Paul says in verse 24 of our text, "He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it." God is faithful. He will complete the work He began in us. He will enable us to follow through and do all these things that Paul lays out for us.
 - a. Even when we blow it and fall short, God will not give up on us. The Scriptures assure us that even when we are faithless, God remains faithful for He cannot deny Himself. (**2 Tim. 2:13**)

b. Don't think you have to do it on your own. God never intended it to be that way. He is going to do the work in us and through us. He is going to mold us and shape us and make us more and more like Christ day by day, until the day of we meet the Lord for all of eternity.

C. Let's take a look at Paul's final exhortations as he wraps up this letter in verses 25-28 where he speaks of things regarding **God's church**.

VIII. 1 Thessalonians 5:25-28; Regarding God's Church

A. In these final verses Paul mentions just a few final things before signing off, but I think it important that we take note of these things he mentions because I believe these are things that are vital for the church.

1. Paul wanted the church to do a few final things and commended them to one final thing. And these are things that I believe are in important part of every church.

B. Paul started these verses off by requesting prayer from the Thessalonians.

1. This shows the humility of Paul. This was a brand new church. A young church, a church that didn't know as much as Paul, a church that was not as mature and far along in their walk as Paul, and yet Paul knew and understood his need for their prayers.

2. And if Paul needed people in the church to be praying for him, how much more do we need it?

3. I believe that in this small verse about requesting prayer we see a very vital aspect of church ministry and what we need to be doing for one another as we gather together in fellowship each week.

4. We need to **be praying for each other**. Not just at church, but throughout our days, in our quiet times, in our devotions, in our family prayers, our prayers before

meals, and any other time you are praying throughout the day, remember to pray for each other.

C. Paul then requested that the brethren all greet one another with a holy kiss.

1. This of course was a cultural custom back in the day and still is part of the customs and culture of many middle eastern peoples; to greet one another with a kiss.
2. The idea here is that we show genuine affection towards one another. That **we love one another** and that we show that love in practical ways.
3. In our world and custom today, we may say greet one another with a warm hug, or a firm handshake, or a pat on the back. These are all gestures of affection that we can demonstrate toward one another.

D. Paul then charged the church by the Lord that they read this letter to all the church.

1. This reminds me of the importance of getting together and reading God's word together. We are to **spend time in God's word with one another**. Reading it and studying it and applying it to our lives.

E. And lastly, Paul ended his letter the same way he began it; with grace.

1. Paul's letter opened "grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." (**1 Thes. 1:1b**)
2. And he ends it with, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen."
3. And this brings it full circle. In God's church we need to have prayer for one another, we need to have love for one another, we need to be reading God's word with one another, and **we need to be gracious with one another**.
4. If the church would be busy about these things, I'm confident we would be in a good place and would be

growing into the kind of church God desires us to be.
Amen? Amen.

IX. Conclusion / Communion

- A. Well, this morning we're going to close our time together by coming to the Lord's table through communion. This is something that we do as a church body on the first Sunday of each month as a way to constantly remind ourselves of all that Christ has done for us.
- B. And this morning we were given a great reminder of what He did for us. How He loved us and gave Himself for us. And that because of His sacrifice we have the assurance of God's great work in us and through us.
- C. And so the worship team is going to come forward and the ushers are going to distribute the communion elements.
 - 1. And as they do, I want to encourage you all to remember what Christ has done for us and the blessings we have now because of that sacrifice.
 - 2. Feel free to just spend the next few minutes in prayer, thanking Him for all He has done, feel free to join in with the worship team as they lead us in praise as well.
 - 3. And then after a few minutes, I'll come back up and lead us in partaking together as a church family. Let's spend some time with the Lord.