

First Thessalonians 5:14-28

Division One- 5:14 = four pastoral injunctions

Division Two- 5:16-18a = three directions for manifesting God's will in spiritual life

Division Three – 5:19-22 = five exhortations concerning prophetic ministry

5:14 – **“And we urge you, brothers,...”** This is addressed to the whole community as has been the whole letter, but it may fall to the leaders mentioned above to take action since some form of leadership will be required to administer these four imperatives

1. **“warn those who are idle,...”**
 - a. “idle” is probably a bad translation that never appeared until 1948 in the RSV. The KJ had correctly translated it “the unruly.” This should be translated “disorderly, so, at least, this could be translated “warn those who are idle and disruptive.”
 - b. The Greek word **ataktos** literally means “out of line,” “undisciplined,” “not maintaining order.” and seems to always refer to disorderly or disruptive conduct.
 - c. This is the corrective action needed to follow-up the teaching from 1 Thessalonians 4:9-12 concerning those who disdained labor and used the generosity of other wealthy believers to provide their living. (This generosity is referred to and encouraged in 1 Thes. 4:9-12 as “brotherly love.”)
 - d. In the Thessalonians case they were “out of line,” but instead of behaving disorderly, they became idle living off the goodness of others. This living off the money and donations of others could have led to a disorderly state and ruined the peace in the community.
2. **“encourage the timid,...”** The “timid” would be those who did not want to continue or could not continue in the faith because of hardships or persecution. “Encourage” also has the idea of “persuade.”
3. **“help the weak,...”** The “weak” could be referring to those who suffered physical sickness or struggled with a weak faith. Key point: The strong were not to disdain the weak if it be physical or in regards to faith. See Romans 15:1 and 14:1
4. **“be patient with everyone.”** “Patient” is not the word **hupomone** which generally refers to enduring difficult situations. This is the word **makrothymeite** which focuses on long suffering in personal relationships. Makrothymia is used in:
 - a. Galatians 5:22, a fruit of the Spirit
 - b. 1 Corinthians 13:4, Love is patient
 - c. Ep. 4:2; Col. 1:11 and 3:12, be patient with each other.

5:15 – **“Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always try to be kind to each other and to everyone else.”**

1. There may have been a tendency to pay back persecutors with some form of retaliation: lies, slander, intimidation, refusal to do business, terrorism, etc.
2. Principle is found in Proverbs 25:21
3. Taught by Jesus in Matt. 5:39-48
4. Implemented by Paul in Romans 12:17-19

Two groups are mentioned as the recipients of our kindness:

1. Each other, the believers
2. Everyone else, those outside the believing community

This is also the case in 1 Thess. 3:12 where Paul prays that “the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else.”

Three Directives for manifesting God's will in your life: Joy, Pray, Thankful

5:16 – **“Be joyful always;”**

The believer's disposition should be joyful. Believers do not deny struggles or suppress grief but there is a strong undercurrent of hope and peace which manifests in every situation as joy.

This “joy” is because of the presence of the Lord in our life:

1. Phil. 4:4 – **“Rejoice in the Lord** always. I will say it again: **Rejoice!**”
2. Romans 14:17 – “The kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and **joy in the Holy Spirit,**

3. Galatians 5:22 – “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, **joy**, peace....”
4. Philippians 2:17-18 – “Even if I am being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service coming from your faith, I am glad and **rejoice** with all of you. So you too should be glad and **rejoice** with me.”

5:17 – “**pray continually;**”

Every activity is carried out with an attitude of prayer since we are conscious of God’s presence and his will

1. Luke 18:1 – “Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up.”
2. Romans 1:9 – “God...is my witness how constantly I remember you in my prayers at all times; and I pray that now at last by God’s will the way may be opened for me to come to you.”
3. Romans 12:12 – “Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.”
4. Ephesians 6:18 – “And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.”
- 5.

5:18 – “**give thanks in all circumstances,...**”

1. Every situation and every circumstances is greeted with thanksgiving and prayer.
2. Ingratitude is a product of pagan depravity in Romans 1:21
3. Believers are thankful:
 - a. Col. 2:6-7 – “So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.”
 - b. Col. 3:15, 17 – “Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful....And, whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.”
 - c. Ep. 5:4 – “Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving.”
 - d. Ep. 5:20 – “...always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

“...for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.”

The sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit in the believers’ life gives expression to:

1. Joy (5:16)
2. Prayer (5:17)
3. Thanksgiving (5:18)

5:19 – “**Do not put out the Spirit’s fire;**”

1. “put out” or “quench” is the image of putting out a fire which is a symbol of the manifestation of the third member of the Trinity Acts 2:3 1 Tim. 1:6
2. “Spirit” is the word *pneuma* meaning “breath,” “wind” or “spirit.” Here it refers to the Holy Spirit.
3. The context is the Holy Spirit manifesting in the gift of prophecy, but the concept applies to all the manifestations of the Holy Spirit in and among the believers.

Q - How can the Spirit’s fire be quenched?

Answer One - The prophet may refuse to utter the message.

- Jeremiah 20:9, the words were like fire in Jeremiah’s bones

Answer Two - Others may rebuke the prophet or prevent the prophet from speaking.

- Amos 2:12, the people of Israel commanded the prophets not to prophecy;
- Micah 2:6, “ ‘Do not prophecy’ their prophets say. ‘Do not prophesy about these things; disgrace will not overtake us.’ ”

Remember Paul’s words to Timothy in 2 Tim. 1:6, “Fan into flame the gift of God.”

5:20 – “**do not treat prophecies with contempt.**”

1. Like the Corinthians the Thessalonians had dismissed prophecy.

2. The Thessalonians had come out of idol worship and pagan temples (1 Thes. 1:9) similar to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 12:1-2)
3. Contemporary Pagan Spiritual Manifestation had been challenged and questioned. The Thessalonians may have been following the current culture:
 - a. Plutarch, a priest of Apollo at Delphi, used the same language as Paul when he speaks of the lack of confidence growing in Delphi concerning the priestesses and their oracles saying “the spirit has been completely quenched.”
 - b. About 40 BC Cicero had challenged the validity of divination and the usefulness of prophecy.
 - c. Epicureans had come against prophecy. Lucretius questioned if there was any valid form of prophecy.
 - d. Xeophanes and Euripides in the 500-400’s BC wrote and spoke skeptically concerning prophecies in the pagan temples.
4. “Prophecies” is from the Greek word “*propheteias*” which refers to an inspired utterance given by God to the believer to be spoken to the church.
5. According to 1 Cor. 14:4 this is similar to tongues by the fact that it is a manifestation of a spoken utterance from God, but it is different from tongues by the fact it does not need to be interpreted, but is spoken clearly in the language of the audience.
6. Prophecy is for the building up of the community of believers according to 1 Corinthians 14:4, “the one who prophesies edifies the church.”
7. The converted pagans of Thessalonica had seen Greek idol worship practice ecstatic speaking and behavior. For example: the Greek god Dionysus was the god of the grape harvest and of the production of wine who’s worship included ecstatic speech and ritual ecstasies. The association of spiritual manifestations with pagan idol worship is referred to again by Paul in 1 Cor. 12:1-3
8. It is possible that the “elite” among the believers may have despised prophecy, especially when it came from those who were “less elite.”
9. May have been a tendency to value other gifts above prophecy as in 1 Cor. 12:28. Paul then encourages the Corinthians to desire spiritual gifts, but especially prophecy in 1 Cor. 14:1.
10. Paul wants the church to be more open to prophecy and be capable of testing and using the utterances.

5:21 – “Test everything. Hold on to the good.”

1. In the Greek this is neuter plural referring to “things” not “every person”
2. Do not despise prophecies, but test and evaluate them
3. Imitation prophets and counterfeit prophets should be detected
4. What is the criteria? There is no criteria given in the context. But, some options to consider are:
 - a. Consistent with previous revelation
 - b. Testimony to Christ
 - i. 1 Cor. 12:3- “I tell you that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, ‘Jesus be cursed,’ and no one can say, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ except by the Holy Spirit.”
 - ii. 1 John 4:2 – every spirit that confesses Jesus came in the flesh is of God
 - iii. Rev. 19:10, “For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.”
 - c. The gifted prophets should know and weigh in 1 Cor. 14:29
 - d. Leadership should be able to discern with gift of discerning between spirits (1 Cor. 12:10)

5:22 – “Avoid every kind of evil.”

Isaiah 1:16-17, Cease to do evil, learn to do good.

5:23 – “May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through.”

1. It is not the Romans who bring peace, but God himself

“May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

1. The eternal human experience includes all three: spirit, soul and body.
2. “coming” is the Greek word

5:24 – **“The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it.”**

5:25 – **“Brothers, pray for us.”**

5:26 – **“Greet all the brothers with a holy kiss.”**

This kiss was a sign of reconciliation and unity in the group.

5:27 – **“I charge you before the lord to have this letter read to all the brothers.”**

5:28 – **“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.”**