

## First Thessalonians 5:12-14

After answering 3 questions (4:9; 4:13; 5:1), Paul turns to a list of imperatives beginning with the leadership. Paul now begins closing his letter by mentioning several matters while providing advice and admonition. There are now 14 or 15 imperatives given to the Thessalonians.

5:12 – “**Now we ask you, brothers, to respect those who work hard among you, who are over you in the Lord and who admonish you.**”

1. The first imperative does not use a word like “command,” “demand,” or “require,” but instead is softened with the word “ask” from **erotao** which means “to request”
2. Greek/Roman culture viewed manual labor to be the work of slaves, even the lowest of slaves since some slaves were educated and served as teachers and other skills. Paul labored (2:9) and, along with others may have had a difficult time earning and maintaining respect as a leader among believers in this culture.
3. “respect” is **eidenai** and means “recognize,” “acknowledge.” It comes from **oida** meaning “know.”
4. “work hard” or “labor” is **kopiaio** and means “to grow weary” and “to work with effort.” The Greek word **kopiaio** refers to both physical labor and mental labor. It was used by Paul frequently to describe ministry. Paul uses the noun form of this word in 2:9 and 3:5 to identify “our labor” (referring to Paul, Timothy and Silas) in Thessalonica.
  - a. 1 Corinthians 15:10 – “I labored more than all the others.”
  - b. Galatians 4:11 – “lest I have labored in vain among you.”
  - c. Phil. 2:16 – “as you hold firmly to the word of life. And then I will be able to boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labor in vain.”
  - d. Col. 1:29 – “To this end I strenuously contend with all the energy Christ so powerfully works in me.”
  - e. 1 Tim. 4:10 – “That is why we labor and strive, because we have put our hope in the living God, who is the Savior of all people, and especially of those who believe.”
  - f. 1 Cor. 3:8 – “The one who plants and the one who waters have one purpose, and they will each be rewarded according to their own labor.”
5. “over you” is from **proistemi** and means to stand before someone with the purpose being:
  - a. “to lead,” “to direct”
  - b. “to protect,”
  - c. “to care for”
  - d. “to stand in the first place, to preside”

The NIV translation “over you” is weak when compared to this same words use in:

- Titus 3:8, 14 – “I want you to stress these things, so that those who have trusted in God may be careful to **devote** themselves to doing what is good. These things are excellent and profitable for everyone... Our people must learn to **devote** themselves to doing what is good, in order to provide for urgent needs and not live unproductive lives.”
  - Romans 12:8 – “...if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to **lead** (NIV footnote: “to provide for others), do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.”
  - 1 Timothy 3:3, 5, 12 – the father is to **manage** his household and **care** for his children
  - 1 Timothy 5:17 – “The elders who **direct the affairs of the church** well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching.”
    - o (ESV – “Let the elders who **rule** well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching.”)
  - Romans 16:2 – here the saints of Rome are told to “stand by” Phoebe when Paul writes: “I ask you to receive her in the Lord in a way worthy of the saints and to **give her any help** she may need from you, for she has been a great help to many people including me.”
6. “admonish” is **noutheteo** and means to warn of impending disaster if corrections are not made. It is correction those who are in error.
  7. The leaders that Paul commends here are recognized for three things:
    - a. “work hard among you” – labor and grow weary with physical and mental effort
    - b. “are over you in the Lord” –care, protect, serve, provide, manage, lead,
    - c. “admonish you” – warn and correct

5:13 – **“Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work.”**

1. “highest regard” is from two Greek words:
  - a. “highest” – *huperekperissou*, or *hyper-ek-perissou*, which is an adverb meaning “exceedingly high” and “very high”. This is a double compound of an already strong adverb “abundantly.” In a sense, it is a triple intensive adverb which is also used by Paul in Ephesians 3:20 where it is translated “immeasurably more” in the NIV, “far more abundantly” in the ESV and “exceeding abundantly above” in the KJ.
    - i. *Hyper* means “exceedingly.”
    - ii. *Ek* means “more.”
    - iii. *Perissou* means “abundantly.”
  - b. “regard” – is from *hegeomai* which means “to consider” and “to esteem” or “to honor.”
2. No noun is used to indicate a title such as “overseer,” “elder,” “deacon.” These leaders are recognized because of their WORK not their title or office or appointment.
3. “in love” qualifies what the “regard” these leaders are to receive. It is in Christian love, not in worldly fanfare or celebrity status or as “the great man anointed of God,” but in Christian love.
4. Instead of offices Paul identifies them by their work and for their labor, NOT by their title, office or assigned position. This answering the question: What comes first, the title or the work? What comes first, the position or the product? In this case the work and the product identify the leader, not the title and not the assigned position.

**“Live in peace with each other.”**

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” 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.

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 Matt. 5:39-40 and Romans 12:19

5:16 – **“Be joyful always;”**

5:17 – **“pray continually;”**

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

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

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.

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

1. “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.
2. 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.
3. Prophecy is for the building up of the community of believers according to 1 Corinthians 14:4, “the one who prophesies edifies the church.”
4. 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
5. It is possible that the “elite” among the believers may have despised prophecy, especially when it came from those who were “less elite.”

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

1. Do not despise prophecies, but test and evaluate them

5:22 – **“Avoid every kind of evil.”**

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.”**

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.”**