

STUDY NUMBER ELEVEN - 1 Thessalonians 5:12-22

Have You Tried This?

Key Verse 5:18: "in everything be giving thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you."

TEXT:

v.12 Now we are asking you, brethren, to know (recognize) those who are toiling among you, and those who are in authority over you in the Lord and those who are exhorting you,

v.13 and be respecting them very highly in love for their work. Be at peace among yourselves.

v.14 Now we are urging you, brethren, to be admonishing the lazy (idle), be encouraging the discouraged, be paying attention to those who are weak, be patient toward all.

v.15 Be seeing to it that no one gives back evil for evil to anyone, but always be pursuing the good for one another and for all.

v.16 Always be rejoicing;

v.17 unceasingly be praying;

v.18 in everything be giving thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

v.19 Stop stifling the Spirit;

v.20 stop rejecting with contempt prophesyings.

v.21 But be putting all things to the test, and holding fast the good;

v.22 be abstaining from every form (kind) of evil.

INTRODUCTION:

(As Far As You Can Go Without a Passport by Tom Bodett)

Boy, the stuff you get in the mail. Every day there's another ration of impersonal and often insulting letters. "Dear Occupant," "Dear Consumer"--the heck with that. If they haven't taken time to find out who I am, why should I bother with them? I even got one from a government agency addressed "Dear Waste Oil Generator." Come on now. It makes me sound like a piece of heavy equipment. I think they owe me an apology. There's only two kinds of junk mail I look forward to, free samples, and sweepstakes fliers.

I must have gotten six of those sweepstakes deals in one week. They come in all sizes, from ten million on down to a paltry hundred and fifty thousand. One more personal than the last. Very nice. They had my name plastered all over the certificates inside and a nice handwritten note from the president of the company explaining in no uncertain terms why I should not throw this stuff away.

Two million bucks, or eighty grand a year for life. A classic suburban dream home with blue shutters and real shrubbery. Sailboats, stocks and bonds, reflective beach walks, and red sports cars. Makes my heart fibrillate just thinking about it. Enter by March 1 and win a chance at this thirty-five-foot luxury motor home or a trip to Greece, your choice. What a gas.

The point of these things, of course, is to sell you magazines. But I didn't fall for their hard sell. No kidding. I really was just getting ready to order up a few when all this sweepstakes stuff came. So now I'm a real front runner the way I look at it, 'cause I've actually got a few magazine orders stuck to my entry form.

I took the time to sort through all that stuff and found all the secret stickers that qualify me for extra cash prizes and unimaginable luxuries like clock radios and pocket calculators. I got so many things stuck to my entry form it weighs a pound and a half. It took me all evening, and it's pretty gross. But by God, those suckers are going to go the distance. I can feel it.

I'm pretty optimistic about this whole business, as you can tell. I wanna have a washed-out picture of me on next year's sweepstakes envelopes. "You too can be a winner like your neighbor, Tom Bodett." I'll be standing in front of my thirty-five-foot luxury motor home on my way to Greece, my smiling family gathered around.

They say a person needs just three things to be truly happy in this world. Someone to love, something to do, and something to hope for. Well, I've already got someone to love, and filling in all this junk sure gives me something to do, and I hope to win like crazy. So between a good marriage and a post office box key, I've got a heck of a deal going here.

pp. 117-19

In our study of 1 Thessalonians we have been making a SPIRITUAL CHECKUP, and we have been dealing with a great number of practical problems which face a person as he endeavors to live an effective, fruitful and victorious Christian life.

Now we are coming to the conclusion of the epistle, and Paul gives quite a large list of exhortations which he is suggesting could make them even more effective in their Christian living.

This is "Dr. Paul's prescription for living the victorious Christian life," if you please.

William Barclay says:

Paul comes to an end with a chain of jewels of good advice. He sets them out in the most summary way. But every one of them is such that every Christian and every church member should ponder it.

Horne observes:

Paul now brings the main body of the epistle to a close with a chain of jewels of good advice. He sets them out in the most comprehensive manner but with real force.

Lenski makes the following distinction:

The hortations given in 4:1-12 pertain to the individual lives of the members; the hortations found in 5:12-22 deal with the membership as a whole. The admonitions are intended for the congregation. They are the reaction to information brought by Timothy. We may call them fitting; yet not as though they are correcting glaring faults but only as helping the Thessalonians "to abound more and more."

p. 352

J. Vernon McGee puts it together this way:

We come now to a series of 22 commandments for Christians. These are the commandments for believers--not just 10 of them but 22 of them. Up to the time we are saved, God has us shut up to a cross, that is, God is not asking anything of us except this question: What will you do with My Son who died for you? After we have accepted Jesus Christ as our Savior, then God talks to us about our lives. The child of God is not under the 10 commandments as the way of life, he is way above it. He is to live on a much higher plane, as we can see by the commandments in this section. These commandments are practical right down to where the rubber meets the road. It is a wonderful, glorious thing to keep looking for the coming of Christ but it is also very important that we keep walking down here on the sidewalks of life, at home, in the office, in the school room, wherever we are called to walk. The Lord Jesus said, "If you love Me, keep My commandments." There are some Christians who have never listened to His commandments. Well, here are 22 of them. They are given like military orders, brief and terse. They are barked out like a 2nd lieutenant would give them to you.

In making our SPIRITUAL CHECKUP we are going to be considering Dr. Paul's 19-POINT PRESCRIPTION for living the victorious Christian life, if you please.

We are going to need to back up to verse 11 to pick up the first 2 and then the other 17 will be in the verses that we are going to be looking at in this particular study:

v. 11

Therefore be encouraging one another, and be building one another up, one the other even as also you are doing.

COMMAND #1:

"BE ENCOURAGING ONE ANOTHER."

COMMAND #2:

"BE BUILDING ONE ANOTHER UP."

We considered this verse as the last verse in our previous study so we will only mention these 2 COMMANDS.

The little word "BE" is a KEY WORD in this passage. It will occur 15 times in our verses.

v.12 Now we are asking you, brethren, to know (recognize) those who are toiling among you, and those who are in authority over you in the Lord and those who are exhorting you,

COMMAND #3:

"NOW WE ARE ASKING YOU, BRETHREN, TO KNOW (RECOGNIZE) THOSE WHO ARE TOILING AMONG YOU."

Basically the apostle is asking them to recognize the leadership of the church there in Thessalonica.

Paul characterizes Christian leadership in 3 WAYS here in this 12th verse:

- 1.they are "TOILING AMONG YOU,"
- 2.they are "IN AUTHORITY OVER YOU,"
- 3.they are "EXHORTING YOU."

Hebrews 13:17

Obey your leaders, and submit to them; for they keep watch over your souls, as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you.

Ryrie makes this observation:

There were 2 unusual situations among this group which made this admonition necessary. First of all, there was a problem caused by those who had stopped working because of their belief in the nearness of the 2nd coming. Undoubtedly the leaders had rebuked them and the rebuke had not been well received. Therefore Paul enjoins them to listen to the rulers of the church. Second, all the members of this church were new Christians and most of them had been converted about the same time. Some, however, had become officers in the church. It was difficult for a few to take orders from those whom they had known all their lives and who had been saved about the same time.

Hogg and Vine, commenting on the word "TO KNOW" or "TO RECOGNIZE," says:

"To recognize and acknowledge," "to appreciate and value," a purely spiritual exercise possible only to spiritual persons. Non-spiritual persons cannot recognize and would not acknowledge spiritual workers or their work.

(Lonely Husbands, Lonely Wives: Rekindling Intimacy in Every Marriage by Dennis Rainey)

Headship means leading, loving, and serving, not demanding, dominating, or demeaning.
p. 138

He who thinketh he leadeth and turneth around to find no one following, is merely taking a walk.
Benjamin Hooks
p. 139

Paul here in this 3RD COMMAND is challenging us to recognize and respect those who are in authority over us.

This respect for leadership is a reflection of our relationship to the Lord.

An authority problem on the horizontal level is only a reflection of an authority problem on the vertical level in one's relationship to God.

v.13 and be respecting them very highly in love for their work. Be at peace among yourselves.

COMMAND #4 here in verse 13 is:

"BE RESPECTING THEM VERY HIGHLY IN LOVE FOR THEIR WORK."

In verse 12 they are to be "recognizing the leadership that is":

1. "toiling among them,"
2. "in authority over them,"
3. "that is exhorting them."

And now in this 4TH COMMAND they are to be:

"RESPECTING THEM VERY HIGHLY IN LOVE FOR THEIR WORK."

It is RECOGNITION in verse 12,

and RESPECT in verse 13.

BOOST OR BOOT?

A church in Mississippi wanted to encourage its pastor by placing a special article in the church newsletter. The author of the paragraph entitled it, "Boost the Pastor a Bit." The article was sent to the print shop, and a young typesetter went to work on it. When he got finished, it appeared in the weekly church paper with this headline: "Boot the Pastor a Bit." We smile at this simple error, but unfortunately some people do feel that way about their minister.

(From InfoSearch 3.0)

I'M HIS TO COMMAND!

On one occasion, Robert E. Lee, perhaps the best-loved general in the Confederate Army, visited an encampment near the scene of battle at dusk. Riding his famous white horse Traveler, General Lee passed in review as the soldiers stood at attention. A deep silence reigned. Not a single word was spoken. Then, as unexpectedly as he had come, the great general departed. No sooner had he disappeared from sight than a young soldier from Georgia shattered the stillness by shouting in a voice that everyone could hear, "Now then, after what the general has said, will you fight or won't you?" The military leader, of course, had said nothing. Yet the very presence of General Lee, who had captured the allegiance of that young man through his own bravery and example, was in itself a "call to action."

(From InfoSearch 3.0)

(Disappointment with God: Three Questions No One Asks Aloud by Philip Yancey)

The doctrine of the Holy Spirit is the doctrine of "the church": God living in us. Such a plan is the "foolishness of God," as Paul says in one place, and writer Frederick Buechner marvels at the folly: "to choose for his holy work in the world . . . lamebrains and misfits and nitpickers and holier-than-thous and stuffed shirts and odd ducks and egomaniacs and milquetoasts and closet sensualists."

"And yet," Paul continues, "the foolishness of God is wiser than men."

p. 140

A COUPLE OF CROAKERS

... esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake.

Be at peace among yourselves. --1 Thess. 5:13

In his fascinating book When the Saints Come Storming In, Leslie B. Flynn included this story. "A farmer asked a restaurant owner if he could use a million frog legs. Desirous of putting frog legs on the menu more frequently, the owner asked the farmer where he could get so many. He replied, 'My pond is overflowing with them. Their croaking is driving me up the wall.' The restaurateur ordered several hundred frogs. A week later the farmer returned to the restaurant with a sheepish look on his face. 'I was wrong about a million frogs.' Holding up two scrawny frogs, he admitted, 'These two little frogs were making all the racket. I never knew two frogs could sound like a million!'"

A couple of croakers can make an awful lot of racket in a church too. To the pastor and concerned church leaders it may "sound like a million" when they begin hearing statements like these: "I'm not being fed." "Too many stories." "Not enough illustrations." "He spends too much time visiting people and not enough time studying." "He's been here 4 years and he's never been in my home."

Legitimate concerns, prayed about and directed through proper channels, are one thing. Constant complaining is quite another.

Let's determine not to be a croaker.

--D.C.E.

People who criticize and blame

Are seldom those who labor;

They seem to think good things should come

Through others' work or favor!

--H.G.B.

SOME PEOPLE SPEND MOST OF THEIR LIFE AT THE COMPLAINT COUNTER.

(From Our Daily Bread, February 18)

COMMAND #5 is:

"BE AT PEACE AMONG YOURSELVES."

"PEACE" is the fruit of proper recognition of those in authority over us and a respect that is motivated by love for their leadership.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary observes:

They will be living in peace as a result of obeying the former instructions.

Almost all of the relational problems in the church have to do with a power struggle more than a personality conflict.

Recognizing the fact that the work of the devil is to divide and to separate and to get people into warring factions, he gives them this admonition:

"BE AT PEACE AMONG YOURSELVES,"

not fighting or quarreling or bickering as so often is the case.

(Topical Memory System: Life Issues. The Navigators)

We probably can't say that Jesus intended to teach a lesson on anger when He cleaned out the temple, but He did give us a picture in this event of sinless anger. He is our role model for how to be angry without sinning.

When you go up against the Goliath of anger in your life, examine it against the qualifications of sinless anger that Jesus demonstrated: altruistic, free from grudges, directed, usable, in control. When you load your slingshot, aim the stones at the deposits of self-interest, the reserves of bitterness, the replaying tapes of immature responses, the out-of-control appendages.

Then follow Jesus, your role model, in being angry in the right way about the right things. Strive to "take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:5), and in His grace you will let loose the stone that fells the giant.

p. 53

Luke 22:31, 32

Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat; but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.

v.14 Now we are urging you, brethren, to be admonishing the lazy (idle), be encouraging the discouraged, be paying attention to those who are weak, be patient toward all.

This verse begins in a similar fashion to that of verse 12. Back in verse 12 Paul says:

"Now we are asking you, brethren,"

And here in verse 14:

"NOW WE ARE URGING YOU, BRETHREN."

COMMAND #6:

"NOW WE ARE URGING YOU, BRETHREN, TO BE ADMONISHING THE LAZY (IDLE)."

The Bible Knowledge Commentary makes a distinction between verses 12 and 13 and verses 14 and 15:

In vv. 12, 13 we have been talking about one's attitude toward leadership and here in vv. 14, 15 it has to do with relationships among themselves. Here we are talking about their ministering to each other. There are 4 ongoing and continuous responsibilities:

1. the idle need to be warned
2. the timid need encouragement
3. the weak need help
4. be patient with everyone

Paul is saying here in this 6TH COMMAND "TO BE ADMONISHING THE LAZY" or the "IDLE"--caring enough about them to confront them.

1 Thessalonians 4:11

and to make it your ambition to live quietly and to busy yourselves with your own affairs and to work with your hands, even as we commanded you;

The word for "LAZY" or "IDLE" is the word which is used for "a soldier who has left the ranks."

He is out of rank; he is not in order.

Stedman points out on this word:

The word means literally "the disorderly," those out of step with the rest of the crowd. In Thessalonica it meant those who had quit working because they expected the Lord to come at any moment. These people were living off the gifts of others and were not willing to work and support themselves. "Warn them," says the apostle. "Tell them to mend their ways. Do not let them go on like that. Point out to them that this kind of behavior is unacceptable."

Ellicott observes:

The Christian brethren were not only to be at peace with one another themselves, but also to do their best to cause it to be maintained by others.

Barnes describes it this way:

The word here used is one which properly means not keeping the ranks, as of soldiers; and then irregular, confused, neglectful of duty, disorderly. The reference here is to the members of the church who were irregular in their Christian walk. It is not difficult, in an army, when soldiers get out of the line, or leave their places in the ranks, or are thrown into confusion, to see that little can be accomplished in such a state of irregularity and confusion.

p. 57

EVIL HEARTS CAUSE LYING TONGUES

After a thorough physical examination, a man said, "Tell me in plain language, Doc, what's really the matter with me?" "Do you want it straight?" "Yes." "Well, there isn't a thing in the world wrong with you except that you're just plain lazy!" "Okay," drawled the listless patient, "now give me the medical term for it so I can tell my wife!"

(From InfoSearch 3.0)

SERVICE OR SLOTH--WHICH?

Joyce Parfet tells of hearing a minister put together in his sermon these two popular phrases of the day: "What in the world are you doing?" and the somewhat flippant exclamation, "For heaven's sake!" He suggested that every Christian should respond to this question five times, emphasizing progressively a different portion of these combined expressions, as follows: WHAT in the world are you doing for Heaven's sake? What IN THE WORLD are you doing for Heaven's sake? What in the world are YOU doing for Heaven's sake? What in the world are you DOING for Heaven's sake? What in the world are you doing for HEAVEN'S sake?

(From InfoSearch 3.0)

THE VALUE OF WORK

It has been wisely said, "Satan finds some mischief still for idle hands to do."

Charles Kingsley admonishes us, "Thank God every morning when you get up that you have something to do that day which must be done whether you like it or not. Being required to work and doing so to the best of your ability will breed in you self-control, diligence, contentment, and a hundred other virtues which the idle never know." Truly, these are words of wisdom!

Adam Clark is reported to have spent 40 years writing his commentary on the Scriptures. Noah Webster labored 36 years forming his dictionary; in fact, he crossed the ocean twice to gather material needed to make the book absolutely accurate. Milton rose at 4 o'clock every morning in order to have sufficient hours to compose and rewrite his poetry which stands among the best of the world's literature. Gibbon spent 26 years on his book The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, but it towers as a monument to careful research and untiring dedication to his task. Bryant rewrote one of his poetic masterpieces 100 times before publication, just to attain complete beauty and perfection of expression. These men enjoyed what they were doing and each one threw all of his energy into his effort no matter how difficult the job.

(From InfoSearch 3.0)

ARE YOU A LOAFER?

What a terrible sight M. R. DeHaan was that morning! His right eye was swollen shut, his cheek was puffed up as though he had an orange in his mouth, his upper lip was four times its normal size, and he itched all over. The reason? He had been attacked by a bunch of loafers. His beehive was full of honey, literally crowding out the bees. There were thousands of them and they clustered on the outside of the hive. They were idle because there was no room for additional honey. Having nothing to do, they just loafed at the entrance looking for trouble. He recognized the situation and hastily brought an extra section to give the bees a chance to do more work. As he removed the cover to place it on the top, pandemonium broke out. This swarm had always been gentle, so he didn't bother to wear a veil or gloves. Before he could say "scat," he was attacked, and the result--a face like a circus clown!

Why had this gentle colony become so vicious? It was because they were idle. As long as they were busy, they never bothered him; but having nothing to do, they were looking for trouble. They had become loafers. Some Christians fall into this category. They don't know what to do with their leisure hours. Instead of keeping busy studying God's Word, spending time in prayer, visiting the sick, and witnessing to the lost, they get into trouble. And like the bees, they attack the people who are trying to help them.

(From InfoSearch 3.0)

A LEAKY ROOF

A heavy rain had been falling as a man drove down a lonely road. As he rounded a curve, he saw an old farmer surveying the ruins of his barn. The driver stopped his car and asked what had happened. "Roof fell in," said the farmer. "Leaked so long it finally just rotted through." "Why in the world didn't you fix it before it got that bad?" asked the stranger. "Well, sir," replied the farmer, "it just seemed I never did get around to it. When the weather was good, there weren't no need for it, and when it rained, it was too wet to work on!"

(From InfoSearch 3.0)

COMMAND #7:

"BE ENCOURAGING THE DISCOURAGED."

Harold J. Ockenga points out with regard to this word:

It means:

"feebleminded,"

"fainthearted,"

"little soul."

It means:

"the wavering,"

"the discouraged,"

"the weak ones,"

"temptation,"

"obstacles,"

"bereavements,"

and "persecution."

These are probably people who have lost loved ones through the persecution and the circumstances that have happened there in Thessalonica.

Essentially what Paul is saying here is to "put your arm around the weak ones."

Hogg and Vine have further comments on this word when they say:

It is a person with a lack of energy and boldness in which the "disorderly" superabound.

There is sensitiveness to criticism, a dread of persecution, a sense of failure to follow the Lord, an apprehensiveness concerning the future. These are among the causes that produce faintheartedness.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

They tend to become discouraged and despondent more easily than most. They need cheering up; they need stimulation to press on.

GIVE COURAGE!

Now we exhort you, brethren, . . . encourage
the fainthearted.

1 Thessalonians 5:14

One way we can serve the Lord is to encourage fellow believers. When we remind a struggling Christian of

God's presence, the wonders of salvation, and the promises of the Savior, we can lift that person's spirits and restore his flagging faith. Who knows, we may be the deciding factor in an important spiritual battle. Therefore, if we see a fellow believer become fainthearted, we ought to remind him of God's presence and sustaining power.

By contrast, some believers fail to relate the ministry of encouragement to their worship of God. The following story by L. H. Bugbee makes the point: "When Constantinople was being besieged by the Turks in the fifteenth century and the Christian garrison was hard-pressed, they sent for the priests and monks, that they might go up and down the lines encouraging the troops and imparting spiritual reassurance. But the churchmen sent back word that it would . . . interrupt their periods of formal worship and devotion; therefore, they begged to be excused. And on the same ground, many of Christ's followers have excused themselves from practical participation in spiritual conflicts which would have advanced the rule of God in the lives of men."

Attending services, praying, studying the Bible--these are all vital to the Christian life. But if that's all we do as believers, we are falling short. Look around you. Is a fellow Christian struggling? Does someone need your support? Then speak to him of God's power and remind him of Christ's promises. Give him courage. --D.C.E.

Lord, teach me how to love and live,
That I may cheer each heart,
And to my fellowman in need
Some blessing rich impart.

--Anon.

THOT: Good exercise for the heart: bending down and helping another up.

(From Our Daily Bread, June 30)

Barclay says:

In every community there is the fainthearted brother who instinctively fears the worst but in every community there should be Christians who, being brave, help others to be brave.

Horne points out:

Continually encourage in tenderness those of little heart (literally, small-souled), those who instinctively fear the worst. Some of the Thessalonians were worried not only about their dead (4:13-18), but also their own salvation (5:1-11). However, since they were not troublesome like the quitters, they required not warning but encouragement.

1 Chronicles 28:20

David also said to Solomon his son, "Be strong and courageous, and do the work. Do not be afraid or discouraged, for the Lord God, my God, is with you. He will not fail you or forsake you until all the work for the service of the temple of the Lord is finished.

2 Corinthians 4:1

Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we received mercy, we do not lose heart,

2 Corinthians 4:16

Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day.

1 Thessalonians 2:12

exhorting you, and encouraging [you] and bearing witness to the end that you should be walking in a manner worthy of the God who is calling you into His own kingdom and glory.

Stedman says:

Encourage the timid (literally, the small-souled) person, one who feels inadequate and ungifted. Paul is referring to the introverts among us, people who feel out of it, who think they do not belong and cannot contribute anything. Help these folks to find their place.

Barnes says:

In such circumstances, how consoling is the voice of a friend. How comforting is it to feel that they are not alone. How supporting to be addressed by one who has had the same conflicts and has triumphed. Every Christian, especially everyone who has been long in the service of his Master has a fund of experience which is the property of the church and which may be of incalculable value to those who are struggling now amidst many embarrassments along the Christian way. He who has that experience should help a weak and sinking brother. He should make his own experience of the efficacy of religion in his trials and conflicts the means of sustaining others in their struggles. There is no one who would not reach out his hand to save a child born down a rapid stream, yet, how often do experienced and strong men in the Christian faith pass by those who are struggling in the deep waters where the proud waves have come over their souls?

1 Samuel 23:16

And Saul's son Jonathan sent to David at Horesh and helped him find strength in God.

2 Timothy 1:6

And for this reason I remind you to kindle afresh the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands.

FRIEND OR FOE?

Now we exhort you, . . . comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all. --1 Thessalonians 5:14

During the Boer War (1899-1902), a man was convicted of a very unusual crime. He was found guilty of being a "discourager." The South African town of Ladysmith was under attack, and this traitor would move up and down the lines of soldiers who were defending the city and do everything he could to discourage them. He would point out the enemy's strength, the difficulty of defending against them, and the inevitable capture of the city. He didn't use a gun in his attack. It wasn't necessary. His weapon was the power of discouragement.

Encouragement, on the other hand, can be a powerful friend. It strengthens the weak, imparts courage to the fainthearted, and gives hope to the faltering. One of the greatest ministries we can have is to lift the spirits of fellow believers.

Many Christians have become weary in their daily conflict with the evil one and are tempted to give up in their spiritual struggle. They need an encouraging word. Pastors and Christian workers who are disillusioned by criticism and opposition need an expression of appreciation and the assurance of prayer support. With the foe Discouragement taking his toll, they need the friend Encouragement to spur them on.

Encourage someone today!

--R.W.D.

People all around are hurting,
Wounded by discouragement;
God has called us to befriend them,
Bringing His encouragement.

--Sper

A LITTLE ENCOURAGEMENT CAN SPARK
A GREAT ACCOMPLISHMENT.

(From Our Daily Bread, August 26)

"NOW WE ARE URGING YOU, BRETHREN, TO BE ADMONISHING THE LAZY (IDLE), BE ENCOURAGING THE DISCOURAGED, BE PAYING ATTENTION TO THOSE WHO ARE WEAK."

COMMAND #8:

"BE PAYING ATTENTION TO THOSE WHO ARE WEAK."

The Bible Knowledge Commentary defines "WEAK" as:

They have not yet learned to lean on the Lord as much as they should for their spiritual needs.

There is also the suggestion by some commentators that this might be a reference to being weak morally.

Stedman says:

"Help the weak," Paul says, targeting those whom Romans 14 describes as being "weak in the faith"--those who do not know much about the Christian life, who have not learned the truth that sets them free. Perhaps they are uncertain of their salvation, or feel guilty about the past and do not sense that they have really been forgiven by God. Whatever it may be, we are to help them, to hold them fast. That demands a little extra effort: perhaps a phone call, an invitation to lunch, or a quiet discussion about their needs. Paul is telling all of us to watch out for one another.

p. 100

They are young believers. They are still forging their convictions in the light of divine revelation, and many of these things have not taken form yet. Therefore, they are those whom Paul considers "WEAK" in the faith.

Walvoord says:

We are also to support the weak. The weak here apparently refers to weakness in our spiritual life. Some Christians are just weak, that is, they are easily led astray. They have not learned to lean upon Christ to support them, and to help and encourage them. In this church of young Christians, they were exhorted by Paul to "support the weak," and at the same time commanded to "be patient toward all men." While some must have specialized treatment when it comes to patience, there is not a Christian living who does not need to have a little patience administered to him at times. Do not expect anyone to be perfect but have a little patience whenever it is required. "Be patient toward all."

Lenski says:

The weak are not the physically sick but those who were spiritually and morally weak, who thus need to be supported. The word is used in the New Testament only in the middle and means "to hold to," and thus governs the genitive. They are not to be let go and to be abandoned as persons who amount to little but are to be held to and to be supported.
p. 356

Barclay says:

"Cling to the weak" is a lovely piece of advice. Instead of letting the weak brother drift away and finally vanish altogether, the Christian community should make a deliberate attempt to grapple him to the church in such a way that he cannot escape. It should forge bonds of fellowship in persuasion to hold on to the man who is temperamentally weak and likely to stray away.

WEAK SAINTS

. . . comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak,
be patient with all.

1 Thess. 5:14

An elderly man with poor eyesight often found it difficult to read the small print in the hymnbooks at church. One Sunday the congregation was singing a song that contained the line, "Judge not the Lord by feeble sense." This man misread the word sense and sang, "Judge not the Lord by feeble saints."

Seriously, isn't it true that Christ and the salvation He offers are sometimes rejected by unbelievers because they see inconsistency in the lives of Christians? This failure may be due to disobedience or to weakness in the life of struggling believers.

The strong in faith are instructed to assist the spiritual babes and those who have not shown themselves to be good soldiers of Jesus Christ. We are not to criticize them, but rather we are to encourage and instruct them.

In today's Scripture text, Paul emphasized this truth.

"Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all" (1 Thess. 5:14). Yes, we must strengthen and help one another that all may grow in grace. And in Galatians 6:1 he said, "Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted."

As Christians, we must develop a stronger faith in God through prayer and Bible study. Then we will be able to help other saints who are still "feeble." --H.G.B.

Oh, help us live for others, Lord,
And strengthen "feeble knees,"
Lest we should bring reproach on You
By our infirmities!

--Anon.

If we're not as spiritual as we could be,
we're not as spiritual as we should be.

(From Our Daily Bread, May 25)

Hendricksen summarizes it this way:

We have met each group before. Thus, the disorderly persons--that is, those who are out of step, like soldiers who do not keep the ranks--are the fanatics, meddlers and loafers. The fainthearted are probably those who worried about their departed friends and relatives and/or about their own spiritual condition. And the weak could well be those who were characterized by a tendency toward immorality. Thus interpreted, each passage is explained in the light of others within the same epistle, and no novelties are introduced. It is, of course, readily admitted that this representation may not be exact. Thus, for example, the third group ("the weak") may also have included individuals who, though spiritual immature, were not particularly in danger of trespassing the bounds of propriety in matters pertaining to sex. Besides the three groups may overlap to some extent.

p. 136

"NOW WE ARE URGING YOU, BRETHREN, TO BE ADMONISHING THE LAZY (IDLE), BE ENCOURAGING THE DISCOURAGED, BE PAYING ATTENTION TO THOSE WHO ARE WEAK, BE PATIENT TOWARD ALL."

COMMAND #9:

"BE PATIENT TOWARD ALL."

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

This statement summarizes the preceding three.

J. Vernon McGee says:

"Be patient toward all men." That means don't lose your temper. That is so difficult. In business or in our other relationships with people we meet ungodly, unholy, cantankerous, unsaved people who are definitely trying to trip us or to abuse us in some way and it becomes very difficult to be patient and not to lose our tempers. But God commands us to be patient with everybody.

1 Corinthians 13:4 (Phillips translation)

This love of which I speak is slow to lose patience. It looks for a way of being constructive. It is not possessive. It is neither anxious to impress nor does it cherish inflated ideas of its own importance.

I am reminded of Bill Gothard's little pin that he gave to his students. It said:

"Please be patient, God is not finished with me yet."

What a beautiful picture we have in this verse as to what should be done in the local church with regard to being constructively involved in one another's lives, caring and supporting one another as the Lord provides the opportunities.

v.15 Be seeing to it that no one gives back evil for evil to anyone, but always be pursuing the good for one another and for all.

COMMAND #10:

"BE SEEING TO IT THAT NO ONE GIVES BACK EVIL FOR EVIL TO ANYONE."

The Bible Knowledge Commentary observes:

The opposite of patience is retaliation in some form.

Romans 12:19-21 (Phillips translation)

Never take vengeance into your own hands, my dear friends, stand back and let God punish if He will, for it is written, "Vengeance belongeth unto Me, I will recompense," and these are God's words. "If thine enemy hunger, feed him, if he thirsts, give him to drink; for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head." Do not allow yourself to be overpowered with evil, take the offensive, overpower evil by good.

1 Corinthians 13:5, 6

[Love] does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth;

Walvoord says:

In verse 15 a great Christian principle is stated. "See that none render evil for evil unto any man, but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves and unto all men." Someone has said that there are 3 standards:

1. the standard of the heathen, wicked world which does evil in response to good,
2. there is the attitude of the so-called cultured world which is to do good toward those who do good to them,
3. there is the attitude of Christian faith to do good to them who do evil to us. This is contrary to the natural man. It is contrary to natural ethics but it is according to the word of God.

(Cages of Pain by Gordon Aeschliman)

Bitterness is the deadly virus of the soul.

It enters our system through the betrayal of others and then is left to accomplish its destructive work long after the violator has moved out of our immediate life. It is in this regard the cruelest of all pain, because it is effective to remind us each moment of our waking hours that we are the worthless playground of others' exploits, and it lingers to destroy us bit by bit--rather than with the swift and decisive swoosh of the guillotine.

First the emotions are ravaged, then the energy is drained, next the hatred mounts, and the soul is poisoned by its need for revenge. Finally the spirit is suffocated: Bitterness has achieved its master's work.
p. 87

(Yes, Lord, I Have Sinned, But I Have Several Excellent Excuses by James W. Moore)

Remember how Archie Bunker put it: "What's wrong with revenge? It's the perfect way to get even." And I remember the story about two little boys who got into a fight on the schoolground. When the teacher went out to break it up, one little boy said, "He started it when he hit me back!"

p. 16

Some years ago, our family went away for a short trip. We were gone for only three days, but while we were out of town, the electricity went off. We had a turkey in the freezer section of our refrigerator, and when we returned and opened the door into the kitchen, we knew immediately what had happened. That turkey had spoiled, and the horrible odor had permeated everything. We had to throw away everything in the refrigerator--even the ice-cube trays. The stench of that spoiled turkey saturated everything.

I thought to myself, resentment is like that in our souls. It literally permeates the spirit and poisons the soul.

p. 59

(The Christian Salt & Light Company by Haddon W. Robinson)

Ramon Narvaez, the nineteenth-century prime minister of Spain, was dying and was asked by a priest, "Does your Excellency forgive all your enemies?" "I do not have to forgive my enemies," replied Narvaez. "I have had them all shot." We often shoot our enemies.

p. 174

(Simple Faith by Charles R. Swindoll)

None was better at insults than Winston Churchill, who had no love affair with Lady Astor. Actually, the feeling was mutual. It's reported that on one occasion she found the great statesman rather obviously inebriated in a hotel elevator. With cutting disgust she snipped, "Sir Winston, you are drunk!" to which he replied, "M'lady, you are ugly. And tomorrow I will be sober." That may be a classic example of how not to handle an insult.

pp. 101-2

(A Pretty Good Person: What It Takes to Live with Courage, Gratitude and Integrity by Lewis B. Smedes)

Why do we hang on to it? For one reason, nothing on earth makes us feel more virtuous than remembered wrongs. Or gives us such perverse pleasure. Homer, the ancient Greek poet, noticed how it "rises within our soul and becomes in our madness a thing more sweet than the dripping of honey." Hate is the soul's cocaine; it gives us a sweet high, but sooner or later it brings us low.
p. 106

(Better Homes and Jungles. Renamed Family Survival in the American Jungle by Steve Farrar)

Leonard Holt was a paragon of respectability. He was a middle-aged, hard-working lab technician who worked at the same Pennsylvania paper mill for nineteen years. He was a Boy Scout leader, an affectionate father, a member of the local fire brigade, and a regular church attender, admired as a model in his community. Until the day he snapped.

On one carefully planned day, Leonard Holt, a proficient marksman, concealed two pistols in his coat pockets and drove to the mill where he had worked for so many years. Wordlessly, he walked slowly into his shop and began firing. He filled several coworkers with two or three bullets apiece, eventually firing more than thirty shots, killing men he had known for more than fifteen years. People were shocked. Leonard a murderer? It just didn't make sense.

Puzzled police investigators finally pieced together what lay behind this brief reign of terror. Down deep within Leonard's heart rumbled a mountain of resentment. His monk-like exterior concealed the seething hatred within. The investigation revealed that several victims had been promoted over Leonard. He was eaten alive by his bitterness and resentment and his rage finally came crashing to the surface. Beneath his picture in Time magazine, the caption told the story: "Responsible, Respectable, and Resentful."

Leonard Holt was stuck between floors and it ate him alive. He allowed his disappointment to master him. William H. Walton once observed that "to carry a grudge is like being stung to death by one bee."

pp. 155-56

(Finding the Heart to Go On by Lynn Anderson)

"Pray for those who misuse you. Return good for the evil that's done to you. You must do forgiveness." We do our way into better feelings. We do not feel our way into better doing. If we wait until all that bitterness is swept out of the corners of our feelings before we do right by someone who has hurt us, we might just as well give up. The bad feelings may never completely go away. But if we begin now dealing with that person, as if he had been totally forgiven and as if all the bad feelings were gone, giving him full personhood and affirmation, somehow the bitterness eventually dissipates. Jesus didn't just tell us how to forgive, He showed us how on the cross.
pp. 209-10

(Comfort from the Cross: Help for the Hurting from the Seven Last Words of Christ by Nina Mason Bergman)

I inquired of Dr. Arthur G. Riewald, a consulting psychologist in Birmingham, Michigan, "What happens to emotional health if a person chooses to cling to anger and not forgive an offender?" He responded,

To be the recipient of insensitivity or the hostile action of another cannot help but trigger feelings of hurt and often anger. We need to recognize and acknowledge to ourselves the hurt that we feel. But having done that we need then, to affirm our worth to Christ and our worth to ourselves by accepting the insensitive act for what it is: an expression of another's fear or frustration or lack of knowing us as deeply as we need to be known. To do otherwise is to store up feelings that eat away at our emotional and physical healing. Any therapist has seen many times the painful isolation of the person who will not forgive.

p. 25

GETTING EVEN

A man who doesn't like having smoke blown in his face has developed a way for fellow nonsmokers to fight back. He calls his \$3.99 product "Revenge." It is a foul-smelling disinfectant that comes in a pocket-sized spray can. According to its inventor, the spray gives cigarette smokers a dose of their own medicine--bad air. The aerosol canister contains 75 squirts of nonflammable spray that can irritate the noses and eyes of people who have blown their own irritant in the noses and eyes of others.

(From InfoSearch 3.0)

TIME FOR SILENCE

F. B. Meyer has written the following: "How much is lost by a word! Be still keep quiet. If they smite you on one cheek, turn the other also. Never mind your reputation; it is in God's hands. You will only mar things by trying to retain it. Are you misunderstood? Leave it to Him. You are in His care. Are you wronged? It will be all right; just be meek, lowly, and gentle. Let the Lord keep you in perfect peace; stay your mind on Him. Be quiet before the world and rest in Him. Speak not a word of argument, debate, or controversy. Mind your own business and be still!"

(From InfoSearch 3.0)

"BE SEEING TO IT THAT NO ONE GIVES BACK EVIL FOR EVIL TO ANYONE, BUT ALWAYS BE PURSUING THE GOOD FOR ONE ANOTHER AND FOR ALL."

COMMAND #11:

"BE PURSUING THE GOOD FOR ONE ANOTHER AND FOR ALL."

Philippians 2:3, 4

Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.

(Disciplines of a Godly Man by R. Kent Hughes)

Along with this, the discipline of deference must be carefully practiced. Many men never forego a planned pleasure for the sake of their wives. For some men, golf is synonymous to Dante's Paradiso, but the entrance to a department store is like the gates of Dante's Hell, bearing the inscription: "Abandon all hope all ye who enter here." But if you love your wife, there must be times when you forsake the heavenly greens because you value her interests and simply love her.

TIME/ROMANCE

Lastly, I must mention the discipline of time and romance. Years ago, in the Midwest, a farmer and his wife were lying in bed during a storm when the funnel of a tornado suddenly lifted the roof right off the house and sucked their bed away with them still in it.

The wife began to cry, and the farmer called to her that it was no time to cry. She called back that she was so happy, she could not help it--it was the first time they had been out together in twenty years!

p. 44

v.16 Always be rejoicing;

This is COMMAND #12:

"ALWAYS BE REJOICING."

Philippians 4:4

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!

George Mueller used to say:

I never allow myself to begin a day without facing before God anything that has left me unhappy or distressed because I want to be before Him always in the spirit of joyfulness.

Walvoord points out:

This verse is the shortest verse in the Bible. Some think that "Jesus wept" (John 11:35) is the shortest, and in the English it is. In the New Testament in Greek 1 Thess. 5:16 is the shortest verse in the Bible. It contains only 2 words and they are short words. Whereas in the original for "Jesus wept" there are 3 words and they are longer words. Even though it is the shortest verse in the Bible it certainly says a great deal.

Hendricksen says:

The Thessalonians were no strangers to the "joy unspeakable and full of glory" (1 Pet. 1:8), the "great joy" which resulted from the incarnation of Christ and from the redemption wrought through his cross. Yet with persecution from without and disturbances within, there was a danger (humanly speaking, of course!) that this joy would disappear. Hence, Paul, who himself again and again rejoiced in the midst of persecution and hardship, urges his readers to always be joyful.
p. 138

Horne observes:

Joy is to be distinguished from happiness. Joy depends upon Jesus, happiness upon happenings. Joy is based on Christ, happiness upon circumstances. Joy is a fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22). Happiness, the fruit of one's shallow emotions. Paul herein states that believers are always in all circumstances to be joyful.

Ockenga points out:

The basis of such good cheer in the presence of tragedy, loss, disappointment and trouble is a faith in God who orders all things for good through His own sovereignty. Such can even say, "Blessed are they who are persecuted for righteousness sake." There is an underlying blessedness which enables the Christian to rejoice even in the midst of suffering.

LIFE AT ITS BEST

In 1983 an extensive survey was conducted in the United States by a leading polling agency. Questionnaires were distributed to people of various ages and occupations. The key question was this: What are you looking for most in life? When the results were compiled, the analysts were surprised. Most of them had expected answers that would suggest materialistic goals, but the top three things that people wanted in life were love, joy, and peace--the first three fruits of the Spirit!

(From InfoSearch 3.0)

THE JOY OF SALVATION

In an interview for Discipleship Journal, J. I. Packer, the eminent British theologian who wrote Knowing God, was asked what gives him joy. "The first and basic thing," he responded, "[is] knowing that I am a child of God--knowing that I am secure in His hands, that He is my Heavenly Father, that this is His world and everything that happens to me is programmed by Him for my good, so that in the deepest sense I have nothing to worry about. I would testify in any company," Packer went on, "to the fact that this is the complete opposite of where I was and what I was before I became a Christian . . . Because then I was running, if not scared, at least nervous. I was insecure. I didn't know where I was. I was frightened of many things. And God has changed all that. There is joy in the knowledge of that relationship."

(From InfoSearch 3.0)

HOW WESLEY LEARNED TO PRAISE

John Wesley was about 21 years of age when he went to Oxford University. He came from a Christian home, and he was gifted with a keen mind and good looks. Yet in those days he was a bit snobbish and sarcastic. One night, however, something happened that set in motion a change in Wesley's heart. While speaking with a porter, he discovered that the poor fellow had only one coat and lived in such impoverished conditions that he didn't even have a bed. Yet he was an unusually happy person, filled with gratitude to God. Wesley, being immature, thoughtlessly joked about the man's misfortunes. "And what else do you thank God for?" he said with a touch of sarcasm. The porter smiled, and in the spirit of meekness replied with joy, "I thank Him that He has given me my life and being, a heart to love Him, and above all a constant desire to serve Him!" Deeply moved, Wesley recognized that this man knew the meaning of true thankfulness. Many years later, in 1791, John Wesley lay on his deathbed at the age of 88. Those who gathered around him realized how well he had learned the lesson of praising God in every circumstance. Despite Wesley's extreme weakness, he began singing the hymn, "I'll Praise My Maker While I've Breath."

(From InfoSearch 3.0)

v.17 unceasingly be praying;

COMMAND #13 is:

"UNCEASINGLY BE PRAYING."

1 Thessalonians 3:10

night and day praying as earnestly as possible that we might see your face and complete what is lacking in your faith?

1 Thessalonians 1:2, 3

We are always giving thanks to God for all of you, making mention of you in our prayers; constantly bearing in mind your work of faith and your labor of love and your perseverance of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the presence of our God and Father;

Paul himself was certainly a wonderful example of this admonition given here.

CONTINUAL COMMUNION is the key to CONTINUAL JOY.

Spurgeon said:

When joy and prayer are married, their firstborn child is gratitude. Long as they live must Christians pray for only while they pray, they live.

To Paul, prayer was like breathing. As he was praying, he was alive spiritually; and as he breathed, he was alive physically.

Walvoord explains this verse by saying:

It means first of all that Paul maintained his stated times of prayer. Daniel prayed 3 times a day. When the decree was given that he should not do it, what did he do? Did he stop? Did he cut out one of them? Or did he close the windows? No, he went right on faithfully 3 times a day. He continued in prayer without ceasing. He went right on praying at His stated times. It represents the fact also that we are always in touch with God. Certainly 2 friends can be in the same room and be in harmony and fellowship one with the other, even though they may not be talking with each other all the time. Paul is saying, "Do you want a really rich experience? Begin a walk of fellowship with the Lord, not only at stated times of prayer in which you bring all your needs to the Lord, but also the unbroken walk of communion, praying without ceasing."

Ockenga says:

Here again is an impossible standard if it means vocal expression of petition, praise and intercession without intermission. Paul himself did not do this as his life reveals. Rather, he meant that we are to realize a sense of God's presence in our work, travel, conversation, relaxation and even sleep. There will be seasons of waiting upon the Lord in which petition, praise and worship will be given and there will be times when ejaculatory prayers will be thrust up to the Lord, but the attitude is one of prayer.

PRIMED FOR PRAYER

Pray without ceasing.

1 Thessalonians 5:17

When I was a young boy, we lived in a house that did not have running water. Instead, we had a pump attached to our kitchen sink, and we could always draw cool refreshment from underground springs. If we used the pump frequently, the water poured out at the first stroke. But when it hadn't been used for several hours, the water level subsided, and we would pump a long time without results. Then we would prime it by pouring water into it, and our efforts would be rewarded.

So it is with prayer. We must constantly be on speaking terms with God through confession of sin and fellowship with the Lord. Then the desire to pray and the words to say will always be fresh, no matter how insignificant the problems we bring to Him. If, however, we neglect prayer, it will become more difficult for us to talk with the Lord, for the water level will recede. The best way to "prime the pump" is to keep it in constant use.

British writer Samuel Chadwick had this to say: "To pray as God would have us pray is the greatest achievement on earth. Such a prayer life costs. It takes time. . . . All praying saints have spent hours every day in prayer. . . . In these days, there is no time to pray; but without time, and a lot of it, we shall never learn to pray."

Are you in the habit of talking with Jesus? Do you have a special time to be alone with Him? He wants your fellowship and your praise; He waits to have you bring your requests to Him. Therefore, let's heed the biblical exhortation to "pray without ceasing."--H.G.B.

Of all Thy gifts we ask but one,
We ask the constant power to pray;
Indulge us, Lord, in this request,
Thou canst not then deny the rest.

--Wesley

THOT: Praying frequently helps us to pray fervently.

(From Our Daily Bread, November 17)

CONSTANT CONTACT WITH GOD

Pray without ceasing.

1 Thessalonians 5:17

Most Christians associate praying with special occasions in life. We bow our heads before meals, kneel at our bedside before going to sleep, or quiet our hearts in a worship service. We also petition the Lord when we're facing some big decision or difficult trial. Now none of this is wrong. Yet, in today's text the apostle Paul tells us to "pray without ceasing." He had in mind an attitude of heart that doesn't require a particular posture or an audible expression. I believe he's telling us to maintain contact with God at all times and to trust Him so implicitly that our petitions won't be clustered around just certain occasions.

Astronaut John Glenn was asked by the press if he felt a great need for God's protection as he prepared to soar into the loneliness of outer space. His answer was very striking. He said that his religion was such an integral part of his life that he didn't believe he had to make an emergency appeal to the Lord.

I am sure Mr. Glenn was not implying that it's wrong to seek God's help at special times, or that he himself didn't pray about his important mission. But his response highlights a significant fact about Christian living. We must learn to rely so completely upon God that we will naturally commit the large as well as the small experiences to His providential care. Knowing that He continuously works in our lives to accomplish His purposes, we will enter each new day with the consciousness that He is with us every moment. Yes, our lives will be marked by fewer and fewer emergency prayers and filled with a constant contact with God.

--D.J.D.

Prayer time is any time
The Spirit bids you pray;
So keep in touch with God
Each moment of the day.

--Brandt, alt.

THOT:Some people treat God like a lawyer--they go to Him only when they're in trouble.

(From Our Daily Bread, May 24)

Charles Ryrie points out on this verse:

"Without ceasing" outside the New Testament is used as a "hacking cough." Just as a person with a hacking cough is not always audibly coughing, though the tendency to cough is always there, so the Christian who prays "without ceasing" is not always praying audibly, and yet, prayer is always the attitude of his heart and life.

Keith Miller, in his book A Taste of New Wine, writing about effective praying, says:

To remind myself of God's presence I decided to pray every time I walked to and from the drinking fountain in the hall. Things began to happen. As I walked to the offices and spoke to people I was praying, and I began to pray for them. Although I could not notice any outward difference in my own attitude, some of the love and concern I began to feel for these people must have communicated itself to them because without my saying anything about my new invention in that situation, people began to come into my private office and talk to me about their inner lives. I soon realized that behind the smooth, sophisticated faces in that company were many frustrated, lonely and often frightened little boys and girls reaching out in the darkness of their souls for some meaning, some purpose in life. I began to see the extent of the need for Christ in the lives of successful people.

Philippians 4:6, 7

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

UNCEASING PRAYER

Pray without ceasing.

1 Thessalonians 5:17

What does it mean to pray without ceasing? In his book Keep On Keeping On, Harold L. Fickett, Jr., told about a pastor's wife who had for a long time been perplexed by this command. She had ideas of spending long sessions on her knees in formal prayer. But that was frustrating to her in view of her many responsibilities as a busy wife and mother. It just wasn't feasible. Fickett said, "As she thought about this, the answer came to her. She realized, 'I can pray when I am washing the dishes . . . cleaning the house . . . driving the kids to school, and . . . preparing for the responsibilities I have at church.' When she began to put this idea into practice, she discovered that she was literally living in the presence of the Lord."

She had found a way to do what I believe the apostle Paul meant when he said, "Pray without ceasing." Of course, he could have meant that there should be no break in our pattern of prayer. In other words, there should never be any period in our lives that is characterized by prayerlessness. This is certainly in keeping with Scripture. I believe Paul also meant that praying should be something like breathing--natural, spontaneous, and continuous. When a problem confronts us, when we're reminded of a friend in distress, or when we're made aware of some other need, we can breathe a prayer to God right on the spot. And we can do this at any time, even when doing something else.--R.W.D.

Prayer is the Christian's vital breath,
The Christian's native air,
His watchword at the gates of death:
He enters heaven with prayer.

--Montgomery

If you are too busy to pray, you are too busy.

(From Our Daily Bread, November 30)

"USE THE PUMP OFTEN!"

Pray without ceasing.

1 Thessalonians 5:17

When I was a young boy, one of the houses in which we lived did not have the convenience of city water. Instead, we had a pump at one end of our kitchen sink. Anytime we wanted a drink, we could always use it to draw cool refreshment from the underground springs. If you have lived in similar circumstances, you know that when a pump is used frequently the water pours out with the first stroke of the handle. But if it hasn't been used for quite a while, the level subsides, and you have to work the handle up and down many times before you get any results. The crystal-clear liquid flows only after much priming and great effort.

The same is true with prayer. If we keep our lines of communication open to Heaven, our words flow spontaneously from our hearts whenever we want to talk with the Lord. Every trial, no matter how insignificant, becomes an occasion to go to God and seek His blessing and guidance. On the other hand, if we neglect to commune with Him regularly, it becomes increasingly difficult to find refreshment and encouragement for our souls. The "pump of prayer" will serve us effectively only when we keep it in constant use.

Have you experienced the comfort and strengthening power that comes when you speak unceasingly with Jesus about your burdens, your hopes, your joys? Remember, you are dependent on God for everything, and without Him you can do nothing.

Let's learn to be in the spirit of prayer at all times.

--H.G.B.

Keep your prayer-lines up to Heaven,
Talk with Jesus every day;
Living thus in sweet communion,
Joy will light your pilgrim way.

--Bosch

THOT: A Christian's heart should always be on its knees.

(From Our Daily Bread, November 2)

v.18 in everything be giving thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

COMMAND #14:

"IN EVERYTHING BE GIVING THANKS."

Romans 8:35-39

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Just as it is written, "For Thy sake we are being put to death all day long; We were considered as sheep to be slaughtered." But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, 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.

Ryrie says:

This trilogy of injunctions concludes with the exhortation to be thankful in every circumstance. The meaning is not that we are to be thankful for everything but in the midst of any situation or circumstance we should find causes for thanksgiving in what God has done for us. This triad of precepts is without question the will of God for the believer.

William Barclay says:

There is always something for which to give thanks. Even on the darkest day there are blessings to count. We must always remember that if we face the sun the shadows will fall behind us, but if we turn our backs on the sun all the shadows will be in front.

Horne points out:

In every circumstance of life, in the midst of trials from without or frictions from within, give thanks to God. Constant joy with unceasing prayer will lead to a continual expression of thankfulness to God at every turn of life. As those who are in Christ Jesus we will thereby be conforming to His will for us.

Lenski says:

We need to learn the secret of the happy Christian life: thankfulness. If everything actually conspires to do us good, how can we do otherwise and always rejoice? What if we do not always at once see and feel the good? Is there not joy in anticipating the sight? The Christmas tree is already being decorated although the doors are still closed, yet how the little hearts beat with expectant joy!

Walvoord says:

What does it mean, "In everything give thanks"? It does not necessarily mean for everything give thanks. It means this: that in every circumstance of life, no matter where God puts you, no matter what your difficulties are, in those circumstances you can thank God for all He has done for you. You may be praying earnestly that He will change your circumstances. You may be praying for victory. You can thank God that in it all you will be victorious in Christ. So in everything give thanks. This recipe, of course, is the will of God, as we have it stated so plainly here, "this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you."
pp. 96-97

Ockenga points out:

In addition Paul urged, "In everything give thanks." Thanksgiving is parallel to rejoicing in everything. It is the God-ward reach of our attitude. To give thanks in bereavement, persecution, loss and trial demands a dependance upon God, a faith in His goodness and a trust in His wisdom. It is a recognition that things do not just happen but are the result of a personal power which directs the events which befall us.

BUSY PRAYING

Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing.
In everything give thanks. 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

The brief but pointed admonitions of our text hold for us the secret of a quiet heart amid the turmoil and clamor of a hectic world. Rejoicing, petitioning, and thanking are all facets of one spiritual exercise that should fill every spare moment of our waking hours. We are to be in constant touch with Heaven through prayer. At times we will go into a quiet room, shut the door, and talk to the Father in secret. There will also be occasions when we'll unite with others before God's throne. But the instruction of these verses is to weave the thread of communication with the Lord so thoroughly into the warp and woof of our daily activity that it actually becomes part of the fabric of our lives.

In his book Purpose in Prayer, E. M. Bounds tells us that General "Stonewall" Jackson apparently had learned this lesson well. The great military leader said, "I have so fixed the habit of prayer in my mind that I never raise a glass of water to my lips without asking God's blessing, never send a letter without putting a word of prayer under the seal, never take a letter from the mailbox without a brief lifting of my thoughts heavenward, never change my classes in the lecture room without a minute's petition for the cadets who go out and for those who come in."

Do we really believe that our loving Heavenly Father is with us moment by moment? Are we convinced that He is deeply concerned about every detail of our lives, and that He is caring for us? If these truths grip our souls, we will keep busy praying, rejoicing, and giving thanks in everything. --D.J.D.

What a Friend we have in Jesus,
All our sins and griefs to bear!
What a privilege to carry
Everything to God in prayer!

--Scriven

THOT: True prayer is a way of life, not just an emergency route!

(From Our Daily Bread, April 25)

Barnhouse confesses:

"In everything give thanks for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." This is one of the most difficult things to do. It is easy to thank God when everything is running along smoothly but when the bottom drops out of life can you still say, "Oh, thank God, things are going wrong!" This is what Paul means and if we understand and believe that God controls all of our circumstances, that "all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to His purpose," we can thank God even for the unpleasant things, realizing that He is working out His ultimate purpose in them. How well we thank God in everything is one of the factors that measure how much we have grown in Christ.

(Beyond the Mirror: Reflections on Death and Life
by Henri J. M. Nouwen)

All of these interruptions presented themselves as opportunities to go beyond the normal patterns of daily life and find deeper connections than the previous safeguards of my physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being. Each interruption invited me to look in a new way at my identity before God. Each interruption took something away from me; each interruption offered something new. Beyond the success of teaching was the inner peace of solitude and community; beyond the bond with my mother was the maternal presence of God; beyond the comforts of North America were the smiles of the children of God in Bolivia and Peru; beyond the academic career was the vocation to touch God in those whose minds and bodies are broken; beyond a very nurturing friendship was the communion with a God who asked for every part of my heart. In short, beyond the many "social arrangements" that make for a good life are the many possibilities of a relationship with the God of Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, Jacob, Leah and Rachel, the Father of Jesus, whose name is Love.
pp. 10-11

THE TROUBLE I'VE SEEN

An elderly man about to repair the roof of his house was seen climbing a ladder with nails stuffed in his mouth and a hammer in his hand. Later a neighbor heard him praising the Lord. Curious, he asked, "What's all the shouting about?" "I swallowed a nail and dropped my hammer," came the reply. "Well, I can't see why you're happy about that." "Oh, but I am!" the old gentleman retorted. "I'm thankful I didn't drop the nail and swallow the hammer!"

(From InfoSearch 3.0)

LIVING ABOVE THE CIRCUMSTANCES

An unknown poet writes these comments: "Circumstances! How we pet them; how we give them right of way! But the Master never planned that we should fall beneath their sway. Paul made circumstances serve him, made them glorify his Lord; turned each trial into blessing as he boldly preached the Word. 'These things turned to my advantage,' this old warrior oft would say. 'For our good they work together,' though they seem to shroud the day."

(From InfoSearch 3.0)

SINGING IN THE RAIN

The way birds react in a rainstorm is interesting. The duck is altogether indifferent to the rain--oblivious to its effect. The chicken becomes a most miserable, helpless creature in the downpour. But the robin sings in the rain, saving its sweetest note for the most raging part of the storm.

(From InfoSearch 3.0)

J. Vernon McGee says:

"This is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." If you come to me and ask what is the will of God for you, I can tell you 3 specific things that are the will of God for you:

1. rejoice always
2. pray without ceasing
3. give thanks in everything

That is the will of God for you!

This is a very clear and important segment. These 3 PRESENT TENSE COMMANDS really give a graphic description of God's will for our lives as believers:

1. "ALWAYS BE REJOICING,"
2. "UNCEASINGLY BE PRAYING,"
3. "IN EVERYTHING BE GIVING THANKS."

"IN EVERYTHING BE GIVING THANKS; FOR THIS IS THE WILL OF GOD IN CHRIST JESUS FOR YOU."

The reason for the command to "BE GIVING THANKS" is stated in the last part of the verse:

"FOR THIS IS THE WILL OF GOD IN CHRIST JESUS FOR YOU."

There is no article in the Greek text so the word "THE" is added. We surmise from this that this is PART of God's will, not all of it.

When reading these verses in the Greek text, one recognizes how very close together these last 3 INJUNCTIONS are:

1. to be rejoicing,
2. to be praying,
3. and to be giving thanks.

These are 3 MARKS of a real Christian:

1. He is HAPPY,
2. he is PRAYING,
3. and he is THANKFUL.

Oftentimes this verse is read as if it should mean for everything that comes into our lives we are to be giving thanks. This is not what the verse says. It makes it quite clear that in the midst of everything, we can find the Lord is sufficient for each trial, and so we are simply saying, "Thank you."

Ephesians 5:20

always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father;

Hogg and Vine point out:

The will of God refers to His gracious design. To do the will of God, then, is to yield ourselves to the accomplishment of His designs for us by obeying Him in all that He has revealed to faith.

We saw back in chapter 2:18 that Satan carries on a HINDERING MINISTRY. Certainly if this hindering ministry is seen in the lives of Christians, it is seen in failing to follow the will of God in this very practical area of "GIVING THANKS."

IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN WORSE

In everything give thanks.

1 Thessalonians 5:18

The word "everything" takes in a lot of territory, especially when it defines the circumstances in life in which we are instructed to give thanks. We readily see how it covers the broad field of blessings and good things that make life pleasurable. But what about suffering? Can we be thankful when distressed and in pain? Yes, even in life's adversities, we can be grateful that our situation is no worse.

In his old age, President James Madison suffered from many ailments and took a variety of medicines. It is said that a longtime friend from a nearby county sent him a box of box of vegetable pills, one of his own home remedies, asking to be informed if they brought relief. In time he received one of those gracious and carefully worded letters for which Madison was noted. It went something like this: "My dear friend, I thank you very much for the box of pills. I have taken them all; and while I cannot say I am better since taking them, it is quite possible that I might have been worse if I had not taken them."

For the Christian, such a response is more than a pleasantry. No matter what is lost, there is always something left. Is this not true even when our condition appears hopeless? At the edge of despair God extends His staying hand and reassures us that we can always depend on Him. He will not let us go. No wonder the apostle could urge us to give thanks "in everything." He knew that God works in everything for our good. --D.J.D.

We can give thanks in everything
And say, "Your will be done,"
For God's at work in everything
To make us like His Son.

--D.J.D.

Don't grumble because you don't have what you want;
be thankful you don't get what you deserve.

(From Our Daily Bread, March 7)

THANKS IN EVERYTHING

In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God
in Christ Jesus for you.

1 Thess. 5:18

A pastor was talking to the mother of a little girl who had just recovered from a near-fatal illness. The woman said, "Wasn't God good to give us back our child?" The minister was about to voice his agreement when an arresting thought entered his mind. The woman was surprised when he answered, "Yes, but would not God have been just as good, or just as kind, if your child had not been spared?" The mother hesitated. Her face clouded over. At last, though half-heartedly and without conviction, she conceded that her pastor was right.

It takes an unshakable confidence in the wisdom, power, and love of God to give "thanks always for all things" (Eph. 5:20). This does not mean we delight in pain and suffering. We simply cling to His unchanging attributes. It's easy to be happy when everything seems to be going our way. We readily express thanks to God when we receive the things we desire. But there's often an opposite response when we find ourselves in adverse situations and our heavenly Father does not grant our requests. The trusting child of God, however, learns to praise the Lord in every circumstance.

Romans 8:28 has become so familiar to many of us that we sometimes fail to appreciate it. But it's a comforting truth that "all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose." If we really believe that, we will give thanks in everything. --R.W.D.

Thanks for thorns as well as roses,
Thanks for weakness and for health;
Thanks for clouds as well as sunshine.
Thanks for poverty and wealth!

--Storm

If you don't get everything you want,
think of the things you don't get that you don't want.

(From Our Daily Bread, October 12)

THANKFUL IN EVERYTHING?

In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God
in Christ Jesus concerning you. 1 Thessalonians 5:18

Is it possible to express gratitude in every situation of life? In answering this question, we must look carefully at two important prepositional phrases in today's text. They are "in everything" and "in Christ." The expression "in everything" is not the same as "for everything." We don't give thanks for evil and its awful results. To say "thank God" when a person suffers or is killed reveals a calloused insensitivity. Yet the most tragic circumstance is not without its mercies and blessings.

The well-known Bible commentator Matthew Henry made the following entry in his diary after he had been robbed: "Let me be thankful--first, because I was never robbed before; second, because although they took my wallet they did not take my life; third, because although they took my all, it was not much; and fourth, because it was I who was robbed, not I who robbed." He was thankful in a situation created by evil.

Remaining grateful when our lives are touched by evil is possible because we are "in Christ." This means we now live in a new spiritual realm, we have new life through our union with Christ, and we are objects of God's special care. Distinguishing between "common grace" and "special grace," J. I. Packer said, "God is good to all in some ways, and to some in all ways." To be in Christ is to be assured of God's unfailing love in hardship, trial, and disappointment. He is always working to conform us to the image of His Son. That's why we can thank Him--in everything! --D.J.D.

We can give thanks in everything
And say, "Thy will be done."
For God's at work in everything
To make us like His Son.

--D.J.D.

THOT: If you can think of nothing for which to give thanks, you have a poor memory.

(From Our Daily Bread, October 10)

In summary then, in these 3 verses, we have seen in capsule form a picture of the genuine Christian. He is:

always rejoicing,
 unceasingly praying,
 and in everything giving thanks.

Habakkuk 3:17-19

Though the fig tree does not bud
 and there are no grapes on the vines,
 though the olive crop fails
 and the fields produce no food,
 though there are no sheep in the pen
 and no cattle in the stalls,
 yet I will rejoice in the Lord,
 I will be joyful in God my Savior.
 The Sovereign Lord is my strength;
 he makes my feet like the feet of a deer,
 He enables me to go on the heights.

v.19 Stop stifling the Spirit;

COMMAND #15:

"STOP STIFLING THE SPIRIT."

Walvoord says:

In verses 19-22 there is a further admonition. These 4 verses relate to the 1st command of this section, "quench not the Spirit."

Stedman says:

The prompting of the Spirit always comes in 2 WAYS:

1. Stop doing what is wrong.

2. Start doing what is right.

If you are a Christian you are familiar with the inner nudge that says: "God wants you to do something," or "God wants you to stop doing something." Paul is saying give in to those feelings when the Spirit prompts you to show love toward somebody, do it. Do not hold back. I once heard of a man who said, "Sometimes when I think of how my wife works and blesses me, it's all I can do to keep from telling her how much I love her!" There is a man who is being guided by the Spirit but quenched the Spirit. Don't do that. Go ahead and tell her you love her even if you have to pick her up off the floor afterward.

The word for "STIFLE" in the Greek text has a number of meanings. In the authorized version, it is translated "to quench." It also means "to withdraw fuel from the fire" or "to drown it by pouring water on it."

The COMMAND here in this 19th verse is to let the Holy Spirit guide and prompt them and not to squelch the Spirit in their lives.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary points out:

The Spirit is a flame that warms the heart and lightens the mind and powers people's spirits. It is the effective work of the Spirit that Paul warned against hindering. The Spirit can be opposed by believers.

There are 3 THINGS about the Spirit's ministry that we can consider here:

1.The unbeliever can RESIST the Spirit:

Acts 7:51

You men who are stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears are always resisting the Holy Spirit; you are doing just as your fathers did.

2.The Christian can GRIEVE the Holy Spirit:

Ephesians 4:30

And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

3.We can QUENCH the Holy Spirit as we have here in verse 19.

Acts 24:24, 25

But some days later, Felix arrived with Drusilla, his wife who was a Jewess, and sent for Paul, and heard him speak about faith in Christ Jesus. And as he was discussing righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come, Felix became frightened and said, "Go away for the present, and when I find time, I will summon you."

1 Thessalonians 4:8

Therefore, the one who is rejecting [this] is not rejecting man but God who also is giving his Holy Spirit to us.

(Escape the Coming Night by Dr. David Jeremiah
with C. C. Carlson)

What a warning this is to churches that have lost their first love. When my wife and I were in Europe we visited beautiful churches with graveyard interiors. We went to the great tabernacle in London where Charles Spurgeon once preached to overflow audiences. My heart was saddened to sit in that vast worship hall with less than a hundred people in attendance.

Surrounding us in every country are church buildings which are no more than clerical caskets, lined in rich satin, gilded with gold, and buried in complacency.
p. 39

(Simple Faith by Charles R. Swindoll)

One Sunday afternoon a preacher asked his wife, "Do you think I put enough fire in my sermon?" She answered, "To tell the truth, I didn't think you put enough of your sermon into the fire!"

If cleanliness is next to godliness in a home, brevity and clarity are next to accuracy in a sermon. Truth spoken to the point sticks, and anyone who makes a living with his or her voice will testify that preparing a short message is a much greater challenge than a long one. You really have to have a clear picture of what you want to say.

A sculptor was once asked by a group of visitors how he carved such a realistic lion when he didn't have a model. His response brought smiles, though he wasn't trying to amuse them: "I simply carve away anything that doesn't look like a lion."
p. 79

I believe that one of the critical areas where we stifle the ministry of the Holy Spirit is in the area of laughter and humor:

(Splashes of Joy in the Cesspools of Life
by Barbara Johnson)

Laughter is not only good for the body, it's good for the soul. Psychologically, the ability to see humor in a situation is as important as the laughter, itself. A sense of humor can help you overlook the unattractive, tolerate the unpleasant, cope with the unexpected, and smile through the unbearable. A genuine sense of humor is the pole that adds balance to our steps as we walk the tightrope of life. And, if we happen to fall into one of life's inevitable cesspools, a healthy sense of humor can help us cope. I like the saying:

OUR FIVE SENSES ARE INCOMPLETE
WITHOUT THE SIXTH--A SENSE OF HUMOR

p. 109

HAPPY IS THE WOMAN WHO CAN LAUGH AT HERSELF;
SHE WILL NEVER CEASE TO BE AMUSED.

I believe that if we can divide our problems into those that can be solved quickly and those that cannot, we will have come a long way toward relaxing when confronted with things that we cannot change. Humor is God's weapon against worry, anxiety, and fear. Remember that:

FEAR IS THE DARKROOM
WHERE NEGATIVES ARE DEVELOPED.

p. 110

There are many reasons to laugh, so go ahead. Since it takes forty-three muscles to frown but only seventeen muscles to smile, why not conserve energy? Keep this in mind:

AN OPTIMIST LAUGHS TO FORGET;
THE PESSIMIST FORGETS TO LAUGH.

p. 111

KEEP THE FIRE GOING!

Quench not the Spirit.

1 Thessalonians 5:19

The Holy Spirit kindles a flame in our hearts to purify us and make us effective witnesses. But we must keep the fire burning by walking in obedience to Christ. Paul exhorted, "Quench not the Spirit," indicating that we can greatly hinder His work in our lives.

Two missionaries in Korea discovered that they had violated the command of 1 Thessalonians 5:19. They had disagreed on a policy matter and had left a conference with bad feelings toward each other. But when they got back to their respective stations, neither had peace. Both sensed that something was wrong. Each felt a lack of power in his witness. Finally, one of them could stand it no longer, so he boarded a slow-moving train and traveled 100 miles to see his fellow worker. When the two men met face to face, they embraced and both of them wept. Then, getting down on their knees, they asked God to forgive them and to rekindle their spiritual fervor. As a result, they returned to their labors with a new sense of the Holy Spirit's glow in their hearts. Moreover, the news of their reconciliation brought conviction to many believers who were at odds with one another. A wonderful revival followed and souls were won to Christ.

Don't quench the Spirit. Let His fire burn in your heart. If you're afraid you have all but extinguished it, confess your sin and ask God to revive you. When you do, the flame will once again blaze brightly, and you will feel the warmth of His presence.

Christian, keep the fire going by living in daily fellowship with the Savior! --H.V.L.

Come, Holy Spirit, heavenly Dove,
With all Thy quickening powers;
Kindle a flame of sacred love
In these cold hearts of ours.

--Watts

THOT: The human spirit FAILS unless the Holy Spirit FILLS!

(From Our Daily Bread, August 3)

v.20 stop rejecting with contempt prophesyings.

COMMAND #16:

"STOP REJECTING WITH CONTEMPT PROPHESYINGS."

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

We must not disparage or set aside any revelation of scripture.

1 Thessalonians 4:8

Therefore, the one who is rejecting [this] is not rejecting man but God who also is giving his Holy Spirit to us.

2 Peter 1:19-21

And so we have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts. But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.

2 Timothy 3:16, 17

All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

Stedman says:

Dr. F. F. Bruce, one of the great expositors of our day, says, "Prophesying is declaring the mind of God and the power of the Spirit."

(Simple Faith by Charles R. Swindoll)

What is so bad about judging? And why would Jesus have reserved some of the strongest words in His sermon for this? Four answers come to mind:

- oWe never know all the facts.
 - oWe are unable to read another's motive.
 - oWe are prejudiced people, never completely objective.
 - oWe put ourselves in a position we are not qualified to fill . . . namely, we play God.
- pp. 190-1

v.21 But be putting all things to the test, and holding fast the good;

COMMAND #17 is:

"BE PUTTING ALL THINGS TO THE TEST."

Whereas we have 2 NEGATIVE COMMANDS in verses 19 and 20:

1. "stop stifling the Spirit,"
2. "stop rejecting with contempt prophesyings,"

we have 2 POSITIVE COMMANDS in verse 21.

The word "BUT" forms the contrast.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

They are to test what they hear and read by comparing it with scripture.

Acts 17:11

Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily, to see whether these things were so.

1 Corinthians 2:14

But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.

1 John 4:1

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

Isaiah 8:20

To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word they have no light of dawn.

What Paul is saying, in essence, is for us to test all the manifestations of the spirit in the local assembly.

Paul in this verse gives us validation to make a SPIRITUAL CHECKUP.

"BUT BE PUTTING ALL THINGS TO THE TEST, AND HOLDING FAST THE GOOD."

COMMAND #18:

BE "HOLDING FAST THE GOOD."

Hebrews 2:1

For this reason we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it.

Hebrews 6:19

This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast and one which enters within the veil,

v.22 be abstaining from every form (kind) of evil.

COMMAND #19:

"BE ABSTAINING FROM EVERY FORM (KIND) OF EVIL."

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

Counterfeit teaching and living should be rejected and avoided.

What Paul is saying in essence here is: "Keep holding yourselves away from every kind of evil."

1 Thessalonians 4:7

For God called us not for uncleanness, but in holiness.

Alan Redpath, in his book The Making of a Man of God, says:

David was called a man after God's own heart. That was the caliber of the man, the height to which he had risen. He had become king of all Israel and he had defeated all his enemies. He had risen now to the peak of his life and career when, suddenly, the devil tripped him up. Oh, from what heights of blessing it is possible for a man to fall, to what depths of sin a man can descend even with all that spiritual background. The higher the pinnacle of blessing, authority, and publicity he has attained by grace, the deeper and more staggering can be his collapse. There is never a day in any man's life but that he is dependent upon the grace of God for power and the blood of Jesus for cleansing. If ever you pray for men in positions of Christian leadership, you are praying for those who are the special targets of the attacker, the devil. This was David's background. Here was the sort of man who slipped, whom Satan defeated and humiliated, the man who crashed so low. "Wherefore, let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

All the water in the world,
 However hard it tried,
 Could never, never sink a ship
 Unless it got inside.

All the evil in the world,
 The wickedness and sin,
 Can never sink your soul's fair craft
 Unless you let it in.

Nehemiah 5:15

But the earlier governors--those preceding me--placed a heavy burden on the people and took forty shekels of silver from them in addition to food and wine. Their assistants also lorded it over the people. But out of reverence for God I did not act like that.

Daniel 1:8

But Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine, and he asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself this way.

2 Corinthians 6:17, 18

Therefore, come out from their midst and be separate," says the Lord. "And do not touch what is unclean; And I will welcome you. And I will be a father to you, And you shall be sons and daughters to Me," Says the Lord Almighty.

CONCLUSION:

What are some of the lessons that we can learn from this particular study?

LESSON #1: We are commanded to recognize and respect the leadership over us in the body of Christ.

LESSON #2: We are to be busy about the Lord's work.

LESSON #3: We are to be encouraging the discouraged.

LESSON #4: We are to be patient with everyone.

LESSON #5: The Christian is to be joyful no matter what the circumstances may be.

LESSON #6: We are commanded to maintain constant communion with our Savior.

LESSON #7: We can be giving thanks in all things because His sovereignty has allowed it.

LESSON #8: We can be guilty of grieving and quenching the Holy Spirit.

LESSON #9: We must accept and obey the teaching of scripture.

LESSON #10: We are to steer clear of all evil.

As we come to the end of this particular study, HAVE YOU TRIED THIS?, I would like to challenge you to consider these 19 COMMANDS that we have studied. And then ask yourself the question: Have I ever really tried to live like this?

We have focused primarily on verse 18 as the KEY VERSE for the study, but all 19 commands fit together to help us understand what a real Christian life looks like.

Let us review them once more:

COMMAND #1:

"BE ENCOURAGING ONE ANOTHER."

COMMAND #2:

"BE BUILDING ONE ANOTHER UP."

COMMAND #3:

"TO KNOW (RECOGNIZE) THOSE WHO ARE TOILING AMONG YOU, AND THOSE WHO ARE IN AUTHORITY OVER YOU IN THE LORD AND THOSE WHO ARE EXHORTING YOU."

COMMAND #4:

"BE RESPECTING THEM VERY HIGHLY IN LOVE FOR THEIR WORK."

COMMAND #5:

"BE AT PEACE AMONG YOURSELVES."

COMMAND #6:

"BE ADMONISHING THE LAZY (IDLE)."

COMMAND #7:

"BE ENCOURAGING THE DISCOURAGED."

COMMAND #8:

"BE PAYING ATTENTION TO THOSE WHO ARE WEAK."

COMMAND #9:

"BE PATIENT TOWARD ALL."

COMMAND #10:

"BE SEEING TO IT THAT NO ONE GIVES BACK EVIL FOR EVIL TO ANYONE."

COMMAND #11:

"BE PURSUING THE GOOD FOR ONE ANOTHER AND FOR ALL."

COMMAND #12:

"ALWAYS BE REJOICING."

COMMAND #13:

"UNCEASINGLY BE PRAYING."

COMMAND #14:

"IN EVERYTHING BE GIVING THANKS."

COMMAND #15:

"STOP STIFLING THE SPIRIT."

COMMAND #16:

"STOP REJECTING WITH CONTEMPT PROPHECYINGS."

COMMAND #17:

"BE PUTTING ALL THINGS TO THE TEST."

COMMAND #18:

BE "HOLDING FAST THE GOOD."

COMMAND #19:

"BE ABSTAINING FROM EVERY FORM (KIND) OF EVIL."

(In the Eye of the Storm: A Day in the Life of Jesus
by Max Lucado)

And I hope you never forget the last Lighthouse Law: Approach life like a voyage on a schooner. Enjoy the view. Explore the vessel. Make friends with the captain. Fish a little. And then get off when you get home.

Good sailing!

p. 260

(Living with Your Dreams by David A. Seamands)

Here are some practical suggestions, five important R's for resisting times of attack which come through recurring feelings.

Recall their source--Satan, the father of lies

Reiterate your will to forgive

Refuse to allow guilt or condemnation a place in your heart

Remember God is faithful and will continue to change your feelings

Rejoice that God is pleased with you every step of the way.

p. 132

STUDY #11 - 1 Thessalonians

What are some of the lessons that we can learn from this particular study?

LESSON #1: We are commanded to recognize and respect the leadership over us in the body of Christ.

LESSON #2: We are to be busy about the Lord's work.

LESSON #3: We are to be encouraging the discouraged.

LESSON #4: We are to be patient with everyone.

LESSON #5: The Christian is to be joyful no matter what the circumstances may be.

LESSON #6: We are commanded to maintain constant communion with our Savior.

LESSON #7: We can be giving thanks in all things because His sovereignty has allowed it.

LESSON #8: We can be guilty of grieving and quenching the Holy Spirit.

LESSON #9: We must accept and obey the teaching of scripture.

LESSON #10: We are to steer clear of all evil.