

LIVING IN LIGHT OF HIS COMING  
WEEK 6 NOTES  
Live Faithfully (Part 1)  
1 Thessalonians 5:12-18

Paul is transitioning into the closing section of his letter to the church. He is stringing together pearls of truth consisting of short, staccato sentences, that on the surface seem simple...until we begin putting them into practice. His letter continues to focus on daily faithful living while we anticipate the return of Christ.

**I. Live Faithfully within the Church**

Verses 12-15 deal with our relationships within the local church congregation. Paul is speaking tenderly to this church—not demanding or condemning. As you read, hear the tone of these words. They are loving words written like a loving father to his children. Christ is speaking this way to you.

Paul address three relationship or groups of people that we will relate to within a local church: relationship with leaders, other church members, and the world outside of the church.

**A. Leaders.**

Paul is never saying that church leaders are more important than other members. He is saying they have a different function. The word of leader that Paul uses applies to elders, bishops, pastors and teachers. Today, every church is has a unique governance. This passage applies to a Christ -center church, however they have chosen to interpret and apply Scriptural truth to the hierarchy of shared leadership. He explains the three-fold function of a church leader

1. Labor among you—continuous toil, a God-given responsibility, not a time clock kind of job, a calling to minister
2. Have charge over you—the responsibility to spiritually lead. It too is a continuous action. To have charge does not mean 'to lord over us.' It means to lead spiritually in the context of church life.
3. Give instruction—the continuous action of admonishing us to follow and obey God's Word.

2 Corinthians 11:28-29 is a very personal chapter about the Apostle Paul. He tells how many times he has encountered persecution and tribulation, but he also talks about the weight of leading churches. The responsibility of leading a congregation is an awesome responsibility entrusted by God to very few people. Leaders are certainly accountable to their churches, but they are more accountable to God Himself. 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13 reminds us to esteem highly those who lead us. This high regard is not perfunctory flattery, but a true demonstration of agape love. Our regard for them, like their service to us, is a continuous action.

Verse 13 ends with a simple, but often neglected sentence. *"Live in peace with one another."* How we conduct ourselves within the body of Christ matters—our reputation in the community

natters. And when there is disagreement or problems within the body, keep those disagreements “in house.” Pray and work together to solve problems—like a healthy family, not like feuding cats.

### **B. Other believers (verse 14-15)**

Paul gives a list of different kinds of people within the church—people who are struggling. He admonishes those who are more mature and stronger in their faith to come alongside the struggling.

**Admonish the unruly.** *Unruly* is a word military term used to describe a soldier out of rank, a soldier going his own way to the harm of the whole. We often struggle with self-centeredness. We see the individual(ourselves) as more important than the whole. The church however is to function as one unit, a whole. When one ember is going rouge, a mature believer comes alongside to admonish—not scold or police, but to gently lead them back into fellowship with the whole.

**Encourage the fainthearted.** To encourage means to get close and speak tenderly in order to build up their faith. The fainthearted are those who get discouraged easily in times of trouble and are in danger of throwing in the towel. We are to speak gently to them, building up their faith in Christ.

**Help the weak.** This phrase literally means, “Don’t let them fall!” Paul is not referring to the physically weak, rather the spiritually weak. We are to help them grow in their faith, not depending on rules to guide their behavior, but depending on the Holy Spirit who empowers us for living according to God’s Word.

**Patient with all people.** While this phrase includes ALL people, let’s just keep it within the church for a moment. Patience is a spiritual fruit that only the Holy Spirit can produce in us (Galatians 5:22). It is a longsuffering characteristic. The unruly, fainthearted, and weak will require patience as we walk beside them, admonishing, encouraging and helping.

Verse 15 addresses a common mindset in the culture of the day. It was common to repay evil with evil and good with good. In other words, if someone did something bad to you , you were expected to do something bad in return. Jesus turned this way of thinking upside down. Matthew 6:38-48 we read those familiar words, but I say t you, love your enemy and pray for those who persecute you.” Likewise, we do good to everyone not just those who treat us well. Jesus said in Matthew 6:46, “If you love those who love you, don’t the tax collectors do that?” Paul is reintegrating the teaching of Christ and, like Jesus, contrasting a Christians behavior to unbelievers. (Romans 12:17-21)

### **C. All people**

Twice in these few verses, (vs 14 and 15) Paul reminds us that we will interact with unbelievers. We are to respond with patience, doing good and not evil to them. How we behave outside of the local congregation is just as important as how we behave within the local congregation. Our life in Christ is not an act we put on when we are with other Christians. It is a genuinely

transformed life living in a dark and sinful world. We are called to be lights, and we must conduct ourselves as children of light—having the very nature of Christ in us.

## **II. Live Faithfully in your own attitudes and practice. (Verses 16-18)**

Three short phrases that should be a trilogy for every Christian's life. This 3-part instruction has nothing to do with our feelings, but everything to do with the Holy Spirit working in us and through us.

*Rejoice ALWAYS, Pray WITHOUT CEASING, IN EVERYTHING, give thanks.* All three phrase are ongoing actions, not just when we need something or feel like it. Only the Holy Spirit can do this in us. This is not Pollyanna thinking rather it is a life flowing from a transformed mind. And it is God's will for us. His holy and perfect desire for us is to be conformed to Christ.

### **A. What? (defining)**

*Rejoice means joyful.* Joy is an inner contentment that only Christ can give. Joy is different than happiness because it is not based on external circumstances. Joy is a fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22).

*Pray with out ceasing.* Prayer is the verbalization of a surrendered life. It is the greatest indicator of a Christian's dependence on Christ. Lack of prayer is the greatest indicator of pride. Prayer is relational. We pray because we are related to God through Christ. We pray in Jesus name because we are related, and we have the privilege of coming before God's throne of grace in prayer. To pray in Jesus name also means we are representing Jesus in our prayers—we are praying for and about the things Jesus would pray for and about.

Prayer is conversational based on relationship, not a time slot, not a list of request, it involves listening as well as talking. To pray without ceasing is to be poised at all times for conversation with God.

*In everything, give thanks.* The very nature of thankfulness assumes there is a recipient of our thanks. God is the recipient of our thanks. Ephesians 5:20, "Always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus." Certainly, we find it easy to be grateful for tangible blessings that we define as good. But we are being asked to be thankful for and in everything—even the things we do not define as good.

### **B. Why? (Why live this way?)**

We live rejoicing, praying and giving thanks because it is God's will for us. God's will is always holy and always perfect. Living in God's will (rejoicing, praying, thanking) protects us and sets us free.

#### **Protection from:**

- a. Discontentment. Hebrews 13:5..."being content with what you have." We live in a world that begs us to compare. Comparison is the greatest hindrance to contentment. A thankful, joyful, praying life protects us from the pitfalls of discontentment.
- b. Bitterness. Hebrews 12:15, "See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many may be defiled".

Bitterness is like a plant with deep roots, growing and affecting everyone around it. Rejoicing, praying, and thanksgiving prevent bitterness from taking root in our lives especially when difficulties come. Bitterness always takes root in a thankless life.

**Freedom:**

Jesus said in John 10:10, “I have come that you might have life and have it abundantly.” A life filled with rejoicing, prayer, and thanksgiving is a full life, a life constantly being readjusted and freed from all the cares, and distraction that pull at us.

**C. How do we live this way?**

1. **Have a higher perspective.** Elizabeth Elliot said, “Face the facts, then see things from God’s perspective.” **Isaiah 43:18-19** urges us to avoid getting bogged down in the painful things of the past—face them and deal with them but don’t stay there. God is doing a new thing—new each day—in our lives. **Romans 8;28** tells us God causes all things to work together for good. But we do not get to define “good”. God does. “Good” is whatever brings God glory. He works for good in the lives of His people. **Genesis 37-50** is the account of Joseph. In the midst of all the trial and heartache in his life, he repeatedly takes God’s perspective (Genesis 45:5,7,8, and Genesis 50:20 are examples)

2. **Cultivate.** Psalm 39:3, “Trust in the Lord and do good. Dwell in the land and cultivate faithfulness.” Faithful living is cultivated. It takes time. *To dwell in the land means* to remain in the circumstances God has allowed you to be in. If God is not changing your circumstances, He is changing you in your circumstances. We cultivate our thoughts by taking every thought captive—frisking every thought at the doorway of our minds. We cultivate faithful living as we allow God to transform our thinking. (Romans 12:2). Before rejoicing, prayer, and thankfulness can be a reflex, they must be a discipline—practiced daily (Philippians 4:9)

3. **Abide.** Jesus said in John 15:5 “I am the vine; you are the branches. He who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.” We cannot, to any degree, live the Christian life faithfully, without continually abiding in Christ. *To abide* means to settle down and live there—a relationship of communion, sharing the same heart, mind, and direction. Abiding changes us on the inside, producing good fruit that is demonstrated in the way we live. Abiding includes prayer—both listening and speaking, hiding God’s Word in our hearts, cooperating with the Holy Spirit in the transforming process, living every moment in communion with Christ.

Paul’s instructions to the church are tender. He loves them so much. Christ loves us tenderly as well and desires for us to live in faithful obedience while we wait for His return.