

GEMS FROM THE ENDINGS OF THE EPISTLES
Part III: Gems From The Ending Of 1 Thessalonians, A. D. 50-54
(1 Thessalonians 5:12-28)

I. Introduction

- A. The epistle of 1 Thessalonians was written around A. D. 50-54 in Paul's second missionary journey (Bible Knowledge Commentary., New Testament, p. 434, 689).
- B. He had gone to Thessalonica and evangelized his readers only to flee from their town a short time later to avoid death from trouble fueled by Hebrews who were hostile to the Gospel, Acts 17:1-14. Paul was relieved to hear that the Thessalonian new converts had remained faithful to Christ regardless of his abrupt departure from them and their persecution for Christ (1 Thessalonians 1:6; 2:17-3:8), so he had much to write to them.
- C. Thus, the closing of 1 Thessalonians 5:12-28 in this epistle has a concentrated series of orders for the good of all believers, but especially for new converts, and we view this passage for our application and edification:

II. Gems From The Ending Of 1 Thessalonians, A. D. 50-54; 1 Thessalonians 5:12-18.

- A. In closing his epistle to new converts, Paul gave directives on relating to Church leaders (1 Thess. 5:12-13), on relating to each other (1 Thess. 5:14-15), on personal living (1 Thess. 5:16-18), on functioning in the local church (1 Thess. 5:19-22) and on God's enabling with each directive (1 Thess. 5:23-24) even before getting to the conclusion (1 Thess. 5:25-28). Such a wide ranging series of directives in such a short writing space reveals the need for new believers to have comprehensive, intensive oversight by more mature believers.
- B. In relating to their leaders, the Thessalonians were to acknowledge those who worked hard among them since such leaders cared for them in the Lord and admonished them, that they thus hold their leaders in high regard in love for their work, 1 Thess. 5:12-13a. In so doing, they were to live in peace with each other, v. 13b.
- C. In relating to each other, the Thessalonians were to do two major things, 1 Thessalonians 5:14-15:
 - 1. The first major thing they were to do was to counsel one another by (a) warning the lazy and disruptive, (b) encouraging the disheartened, (c) helping the weak and (d) being patient with all men who needed to adjust to these counseling directives, 1 Thess. 5:14 NIV. [Significantly, Christian Psychiatrist Dr. Frank B. Minirth told our senior class at Dallas Theological Seminary in 1976 that all effective counseling we would need to do in the pastorate could be reduced to these four directives in 1 Thessalonians 5:14!]
 - 2. Second, the Thessalonian believers were not to pay back wrong for wrong, but always to do what was good for each other and for everyone else, 1 Thessalonians 5:15.
- D. In relating to oneself, the Thessalonians were to rejoice evermore, to pray continually and to give thanks in all circumstances, for that was God's will for them in Christ Jesus, 1 Thess. 5:16-18. Such actions require one to understand that God sovereignly lets all the circumstances he faces in life come his way for his ultimate good.
- E. In relating to each other in church functions, the Thessalonians were carefully to test every ministry, v. 19-22:
 - 1. They were not to quench the Holy Spirit, resisting His work in believers who had the true gift of prophecy (1 Thess. 5:19-20), but to handle all prophetic utterances by testing them against the canon of Scripture for accuracy and so to hold to that which had been proven to be good (1 Thess. 5:21; Romans 12:6).
 - 2. In this way, Paul's readers were to abstain from every kind of evil, be that evil the false ministry of a false prophet or the quenching of the Holy Spirit's ministry of a true, godly prophet (1 Thessalonians 5:22).
- F. If Paul's readers heeded all these orders, the God of peace would set them apart for holy living and ministry, and Paul prayed that God would preserve his readers' whole spirit, soul and body as blameless unto the coming of the Lord Jesus, 1 Thess. 5:23. [Some conservative theologians teach that the soul and spirit are essentially the same thing so that man is a body and an immaterial person, the **dichotomy** view, but this verse supports the **trichotomy** view, the belief that a believer consists of three parts – body, soul and spirit.] Paul was sure that God Who had called his readers to salvation would preserve them unto Christ's return, v. 24.
- G. Paul then urged his readers to pray for his ministry team, to greet all the brethren warmly, to have this letter read to all the believers before his call that the grace of the Lord Jesus might be with them, 1 Thess. 5:25-28.

Lesson: *In closing his epistle to new converts who needed much instruction, Paul succinctly covered a wide range of topics needed by such new converts for their direction and edification.*

Application: *(1) If we are a new believer, we should read and apply 1 Thessalonians. (2) If we know of a new believer, we would do well to direct him to read and apply 1 Thessalonians. (3) If we as experienced believers have recently faced mind-numbing trials, we would do well to get our bearings again by rereading 1 Thessalonians!*