

Fact Sheet for “Final Admonitions”

1 Thessalonians 5:12-28

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ATTITUDES TOWARD LEADERS

ESV ¹² ¶ **We ask you, brothers, to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, ^{13a} and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work.**

This was likely referring to the elders (“those”) among them.

“respect” – This includes appreciating and respecting them and their work.

“admonish” – This Greek word comes from the word for “mind” and means instruction (compare Eph. 6:4).

“esteem them very highly” – Hold them in the highest regard because of the nature of their work.

The thoughts of 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13a are also echoed in Hebrews 13:17.

^{13b} **Be at peace among yourselves.**

The idea here is to maintain rather than to initiate peace.

RELATIONSHIPS AMONG THEMSELVES

¹⁴ **And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all.**

1. The Idle (irresponsible, lazy)

“admonish” – the same word as in verse 12.

Admonishment is firm but instructive (compare 1 Cor. 4:14).

Those who are idle need to be warned stirred up to action.

2. The Fainthearted (despondent, discouraged)

The fainthearted need to be encouraged.

3. The Weak

The weak need to be helped.

4. And we need to be patient with all.

The opposite of patience is retaliation.

¹⁵ **See that no one repays anyone evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to everyone.**

HOLY LIVING

1. Personal Living

¹⁶ **Rejoice always, ¹⁷ pray without ceasing, ¹⁸ give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.**

“Rejoice always”

Be in a constant attitude of prayer

Give thanks “in” (not “for”) all circumstances.

Verses 16-18 are all one sentence. “This” in verse 18 is singular but it refers to the attitude described by the three preceding imperatives. This is God’s will for you! This was also the example of Paul and Silas when they were wrongfully and illegally beaten and imprisoned in Philippi just before coming to Thessalonica (Acts 16:25).

2. Living in the Church

Now we come to verses 19-22, a passage that must be understood in the context of the first century church. These verses are just one sentence in Paul's letter. All these thoughts went together in Paul's mind.

¹⁹ Do not quench the Spirit. ²⁰ Do not despise prophecies, ²¹ but test everything; hold fast what is good. ²² Abstain from every form of evil.

1st Negative – “Do not quench the Spirit”

This has got to be more than emotion. Paul's earlier two references to admonishing would alone be enough to create an emotional “downer”. The Bible likened the Holy Spirit to a flame at Pentecost, and a flame can be quenched. It is the effective working of the Holy Spirit that Paul here warned about hindering. As just one example here are two verses from Acts 15 and the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:8, 28). The question before them was whether or not the Gentiles who came to Christ should be required to take on the Law of Moses. They recognized the Holy Spirit's moving among the Gentiles. To require that the Gentiles take on themselves the requirements of the Mosaic Law would in essence be quenching the Spirit. I don't know the specifics that Paul had in mind here, but I do know that just saying, “This doesn't test out as being right” is not quenching the Spirit.

2nd Negative – “Do not despise prophecies”

Here are two passages that ring in my ears (Eph. 2:19-20; 4:11). When Paul was writing to the Thessalonians the NT did not yet exist. In fact Paul was writing some of it in this letter. He was an apostle. There were active prophets. However Paul wrote in Eph. 2:20 that these two gifts were foundational gifts for the church. The NT often warned about false prophets. In the OT there was a test of a false prophet (Deut. 18:20-22).

1st Positive – “test everything”

The word Paul used for “test” is the same word used in a favorite and well-known passage Rom. 12:1-2).

2nd Positive (a couplet) –

“hold fast what is good”

“Abstain from every form of evil” (KJV “all appearances of evil)

This doesn't mean, “Abstain from everything that looks as if it might be evil but really is not.” It does mean, “Abstain from things that actually are evil, things that others can see in you.”

3. God's Enablement

²³ ¶ Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Notice the emphasis on holiness. There are two words in this verse that have a grammatical form seldom used in the NT, “sanctify” and “be kept”. They communicate Paul's “wish” for the Thessalonians, though this is not at all certain. The next verse is understandable in light of this.

²⁴ He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it.

WRAPPING UP

²⁵ ¶ Brothers, pray for us.

²⁶ ¶ Greet all the brothers with a holy kiss.

This was a cultural kiss on the cheek, and was an outward expression of true Christian love.

²⁷ ¶ I put you under oath before the Lord to have this letter read to all the brothers.

²⁸ ¶ The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.