

A Study of 1 & 2 Thessalonians (NIV 1984)

“To the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”
(1 Thess. 1:1b and 2 Thess. 1:1b)

1 THESSALONIANS 5:12-15

Paul’s letters commonly include a loosely organized series of general exhortations near the conclusion, as found here in 1 Thessalonians 5:12-22. Unlike the contents of the previous section of our study, these instructions are not so much aimed at specific issues or problems in the church but rather aimed at the broader life of the believers. Because of the similarities between this passage and Romans 12:11-18, it has been suggested that Paul has inserted a traditional Jewish-Christian exhortation; however, in the topics addressed, one can still see Paul’s concern for the Thessalonian church’s particular situation. Even these general instructions are especially fitting for a church in its early stages of development, still acutely vulnerable to confusion about the content of faith, to internal strife, and to pressure from a hostile environment.

1) Note v.12. What relationship term is used? Have you noticed how often in this letter Paul has used this relationship term?

2) Note v.12. They are asked to respect those doing what 3 things?

- “work hard” – translates literally and accurately the Greek word which indicates laboring to the point of weariness
- “are over you” – could suggest either the exercise of leadership and direction (cf. 1 Timothy 3:4-5, 12; 5:17) or care and assistance (cf. Romans 12:8), or the term could be expressing both ideas
- “admonish” – indicates instruction in correct belief and behavior, especially as it addresses some problem or deficiency (cf. 1 Thessalonians 5:4; 2 Thessalonians 3:15)
- “respect” – here it means “to know,” but in the context it implies a recognition of the vital function for which these leaders have been gifted and, consequently, cooperation with and submission to their nurturing work

3) Note v.12. How are these people “over you?”

4) Note v.13. Hold them in what? In what? Because of their what?

The tense of the verb indicates continuing action.

5) Note v.13. Live how? With whom?

The tense of the verb also indicates continuing action.

6) Note v.14. Paul urges the brothers to do what four things?

- “warn” – has the same idea as “admonish” earlier; that is, it has the sense of offering correction; do note that it is the whole church’s task to warn and not just a task of the leaders
- “idle” – should be understood not so much as laziness but rather rebellious irresponsibility or willful idleness
- “timid” – probably refers to those who are in a state of discouragement
- “encourage” – indicates the comfort and strengthening given to those in grief or pain
- “weak” – probably refers to those who are weak in faith (see context)
- “be patient” – indicates primarily the restraint of anger (must remember that God is patient with all so we must extend the same (cf. 2 Peter 3:9))

7) Note v.14. As a sort of reminder to us, be patient with whom?

8) Note v.15. Make sure that nobody does what?

9) Note v.15. Always try to be what? Try to be this to what 2 groups?

- “make sure” and “try” – these are in the present tense, implying continual action
- “make sure” – can also be translated “watch” and it suggests a constant vigilance against the temptation to pay back wrong for wrong
- “try” – is a strong expression often meaning “pursue” and so implying here an active, ardent effort to do good in place of evil
- “each other” – refers to Christian brethren
- “everyone else” – refers to those outside of the faith (the challenge would be to extend this to even those currently persecuting them)

1 THESSALONIANS 5:16-18

1) Note v.16. Be what? How often?

“be joyful” – is literally “rejoice,” the consequence of having received God’s salvation and therefore an attitude unaffected by outward circumstances (cf. 2 Corinthians 4:16-18; Philippians 3:1; 4:4; Colossians 1:24)

2) Note v.17. Do what? How frequently?

“pray continually” – describe a state of constant prayer which is to be a feature of the Christian life as it expresses confident dependence on God’s provision (cf. Philippians 4:13)

3) Note v.18. Give what? On what occasions?

“give thanks in all circumstances” – is a natural response to the reality of salvation as both a present and a future experience (See Romans 8:28-39)

4) Note v.18. For this is what? For whom? In Whom?