

First Thessalonians 5

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“And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

I Thessalonians 5:23

Introduction:

- A. We now enter into further application and a summary of charges based on their salvation and hope.
- B. Each of his charges at the end of this epistle lead us to consideration of important gospel duties.
- C. The duties here are neither new nor difficult, but it is only by repetition that we learn and do them.
- D. The time has come that men cannot endure sound doctrine as these duties, for they crave entertainment.
- E. If you truly desire spiritual instruction God would give New Testament saints, then follow carefully.

Intro: Paul exhorts them based on Christ’s coming and charges them with miscellaneous duties.

- A. He moves from the comfort of the resurrection to the holiness it should provoke (1-11).
- B. He teaches them to know and esteem the ministers who labored among them (12-13).
- C. He reminds them of their duties one to another in holding fast their profession (14-15).
- D. He summarizes and charges them with numerous duties as he gently concludes (16-28).

5:1 He continues his consideration of Christ’s coming by reviewing the known timing of it.

- A. Clearly he had taught them the timing before, for he admits they know it perfectly (5:2).
- B. They had no need to know the timing, not because they knew it already or did not want to know, but rather because he had taught them before it would be sudden and secret.
- C. Clearly there was much speculation, even in Paul’s day, of when the Lord would come; for he deals more specifically with it in his second epistle (II Thess 2:1-5).
- D. There is no need and no profit in speculation about the timing of such events, for the true profit is in the nature of the event and how we should prepare for it.
- E. The disciples had ignorantly asked the Lord about the timing of Israel’s kingdom being restored, but He had corrected their foolish curiosity (Acts 1:6-7).
- F. “Times and seasons” is an expression to indicate the timing or circumstances of an event or events (Daniel 2:21; Acts 1:7).

- G. It is a travesty of Bible prophecy fomented by the futuristic school that places so much emphasis on timing rather than fulfillment or warning (John 13:19; 14:29; Acts 2:40).
- H. When He comes is not nearly as important as how we should prepare for His coming.

5:2 Paul reminds them the basic feature of His coming is its unknown and surprise timing.

- A. They knew this timing matter perfectly, for he had taught them thoroughly in person.
 - 1. They did not know the time, but they knew the timing was unknown to men.
 - 2. For Paul had taught them in person that the Lord's coming would be unexpected and sudden to catch the unbelieving and slothful unawares.
- B. The "day of the Lord" does not have to be a specific day but rather a specific time.
- C. This second verse introduces the metaphors of both a thief and the darkness of night.
- D. A thief comes without any announcement or warning and when you least expect him.
 - 1. The thief in the metaphor is not a shoplifter, but rather a night robber of houses.
 - 2. Such thieves use all means, in addition to darkness, to steal and be gone secretly.
 - 3. Jesus used the thief metaphor when describing Jerusalem's end (Matt 24:37-51).

5:3 The world will be in perceived peace and safety when the Lord will come in judgment.

- A. As the world advances in certain respects, they will more and more think they control it.
- B. Rather than a thief in this verse, Paul compares His coming to the sudden onset of labor.
 - 1. Labor is outside a woman's control, comes without warning, comes suddenly, brings severe pain and anguish, and cannot be avoided.
 - 2. This is a common Spirit metaphor for the suddenness of an event (Jer 13:21).
 - 3. This is a common Spirit metaphor for the severity of an event (Psalm 48:6; Isaiah 21:3; Jer 4:31; 6:24).
- C. The sudden destruction to come will not miss any of those appointed to judgment.
 - 1. They shall not escape – just as woman who has come to full term cannot escape.
 - 2. Not one of the wicked shall escape Christ's judgment (Matt 23:33; Heb 9:27).

5:4 True saints of God are not ignorant or vulnerable to this sudden and surprise coming.

- A. Having used the analogy of a thief working at night (5:1), he uses darkness further.
- B. The metaphor of darkness now takes on its own meaning – ignorant and careless living.
 - 1. Such "darkness" is common in Scripture – ignorance and blindness to truth.
 - 2. Natural man's heart is darkened by the judgment of a holy God (Romans 1:21).
 - 3. Such sinners live in gross darkness from the truth of God (Ephesians 4:17-19).
 - 4. Living in sin has a blinding affect that is a horrible judgment (I John 2:11).

5. All men are blind by sin, and Satan wars to keep them that way (II Cor 4:4).
- C. Since we are living sober and godly lives in the light, the day should not catch us.
 1. Light is often a metaphor of wisdom and direction from God (Ps 119:105).
 2. The path of the just is as the shining light, shining more and more (Pr 4:18).
 3. God calls on carnal and sleeping saints to rise to His glorious light (Eph 5:8-14).

5:5 There is a fundamental and significant difference between God's elect and all others.

- A. Continuing a metaphor of light and day, Paul says saints are of the light and of the day.
 1. As light and darkness are mutually exclusive opposites, so elect and nonelect.
 2. God has delivered us from the kingdom of darkness into His light (I Peter 2:9).
- B. Children of the light and day are those who soberly watch and prepare for His coming.
- C. Children of the night and darkness are those who foolishly live carelessly without fear.
 1. David wrote of the wicked and their sins as evidence of no fear (Psalm 36:1-2).
 2. Jesus compared this careless living to the days of Noah and Lot (Luk 17:26-30).

5:6 Since the expectation of the righteous is eternal life, we should be sober and vigilant.

- A. Most are slothfully sleeping in their ignorance and sins while the day approaches fast.
 1. While sleep is used figuratively for several things, here it means carelessness.
 2. The world rushes on with an information explosion growing geometrically, but entirely void of any warning of the coming destruction or how to prepare for it.
- B. The cure for being caught by a thief or the Lord is to remain soberly vigilant always.
 1. Note that the opposite of "sleep" is being watchful and sober about His coming.
 2. The words are taken from the metaphors given, but they apply to spiritual living.
 3. We are watchfully sober when we live holy lives in expectation of our Lord.
 - a. Paul taught saints to avoid those who mind earthly things (Phil 3:17-21).
 - b. Paul told Titus to boldly require holy lives of self-denial (Tit 2:11-15).
 - c. Peter exhorted saints to live holy lives without spot (II Peter 3:11-14).
 - d. Jude exhorted to keep themselves in the love of God (Jude 1:20-21).

5:7 He continues the metaphor of day and night to show the character of those in the night.

- A. It is at night that men sleep and/or get drunk, as the Saviour had taught (John 3:19).
- B. The conscience of man usually requires darkness to hide sin (I Cor 4:5; Eph 5:12).

5:8 We of the day as God's elect should put on spiritual armor to prepare for His

coming.

- A. Sobriety is such an important matter when facing grave danger from a holy God.
 - 1. Sober. Grave, serious, solemn; indicating or implying a serious mind or purpose. Quiet or sedate in demeanour; of grave, dignified, or discreet deportment; serious or staid in character or conduct.
 - 2. Grave. Marked by weighty dignity; of reverend seriousness. Serious, not mirthful or jocular; opposed to gay.
 - 3. Solomon declared sober reflection on death was better than mirth (Eccl 7:2-6).
 - 4. Peter taught it for Christ's coming and Satanic warfare (I Peter 1:13; 4:7; 5:8).
 - 5. Was Paul guilty of redundancy when writing to Titus (Titus 1:8; 2:2,4,6,7,12)?
 - 6. Our generation is a laughing pack of hyenas that shall suffer eternal vengeance, when He brings judgment on them for foolish talking and jesting (Eph 5:3-7).
- B. Our life as sons of God in this world is a war, and we gravely err to miss the conflict.
 - 1. We are in a deadly spiritual war (Eph 6:10-18; I Pet 2:11; Rom 7:23; James 4:1).
 - 2. We are fools to take our armor off, let it become rusty, or lose its skilful use.
 - 3. Here the breastplate figures faith and love, and the helmet the hope of salvation.
 - a. Faith protects us from Satan's fiery darts of doubt and discouragement.
 - b. Love protects us from internal strife and Satan's goal of murder.
 - c. The hope of salvation protects us from the world's sorrow and vanity.
- C. Faith, love, and hope are the three great graces listed by Paul in several places.
 - 1. He has already shown these Thessalonians to possess these graces (1:2-4).
 - 2. He wrote Corinth these three are abiding graces, with charity first (I Cor 13:13).
- D. Faith is combined with love, for it is faith working by love that is genuine (Gal 5:6).

5:9 God has appointed some to wrath, but His elect to salvation by the Lord Jesus Christ.

- A. He is a fool who thinks God has not appointed some to judgment (Rom 9:22; I Pet 2:8).
 - 1. The Lord has made all things for Himself, even the wicked for evil (Prov 16:4).
 - 2. Jesus Christ will confess to many in that day He never knew them (Matt 7:23).
 - 3. The doctrine of reprobation is hated and despised by proud man (Jude 1:4).
- B. God has appointed His elect to salvation from before the foundation of the world.
 - 1. They were chosen in Christ and written in the Book of Life (Eph 1:4; Rev 17:8).
 - 2. It is those ordained, or appointed, to eternal life who believe (Acts 13:48).
 - 3. And it was for these appointed that Paul labored so diligently (II Tim 2:10,19).
- C. The only hope of salvation is through the Lord Jesus Christ (John 14:6; Acts 4:12).

5:10 It is the death of the Lord Jesus Christ that has infallibly secured the lives of His elect.

- A. Only by His death could Jesus Christ redeem the elect unto God (Matthew 26:39).
- B. He died for us – as a substitute in our place to pay for our sins (Is 53:5-6; I Pet 3:18).
- C. He did not die to merely make salvation possible or give us an example of service.
- D. Regardless of whether we die bodily or remain to His coming, we will live with Him.

5:11 The coming of our Lord Jesus Christ should provide for both our comfort and edification.

- A. When he was emphasizing the resurrection, Paul exhorted them to comfort (4:13-18).
- B. When he was emphasizing its surprise destruction, he exhorts to holy vigilance (5:1-10).
- C. They were already comforting and edifying each other, but he exhorted them to more.
- D. It is by mutual comfort and edification of all members that churches grow (Eph 4:16).
- E. This is a congregational charge, not a ministerial charge. So this is something you do.
- F. To comfort is to strengthen and encourage another, which we all need frequently.
- G. Our communication should be free of corruption and useful to edification (Eph 4:29).

5:12 Paul defended and supported the ministry by charging them to the care of their pastors.

- A. It is at this point Paul enters into his summary of various exhortations before closing.
- B. Rather than appealing to bare authority, Paul gently beseeches them and calls them brethren, though not necessary (I Corinthians 4:4; II Cor 10:8; 13:10; Titus 2:15).
- C. Ministers are introduced by three different aspects of their vocation, calling, or office.
 - 1. They labor among members by being one also and serving them personally, which rejects the monastic and hierarchical practices of Rome and daughters.
 - 2. They are over the members by their God-given rule in spiritual matters, which power is neither theirs by choice nor by application (I Peter 5:2-3). Their rule is in spiritual matters only and subordinate to the authority of their Captain.
 - 3. The work is admonition – correction, warning, and exhortation to right conduct.
 - a. It is amazing how little patients resist doctors, but how much members do pastors, when the pastor has the Spirit and Scripture over the doctor.
 - b. Wise men will thank God they have a man to admonish them (Pr 9:7-9).
- D. Of course members know their pastors, but do they truly know their labors and trials?
 - 1. It is one thing to casually know, and another to know with conscious affection, attentive regard, loyal respect, caring concern, eager hearing, and adequate help.
 - 2. It is easy to forget them and their work, so Paul exhorts to remember (Heb 13:7).
- E. Ministerial labor is defined to Timothy, labor in the word and doctrine (I Tim 5:17).
 - 1. Rightly dividing the Scripture is an enormous responsibility, but little known.
 - 2. Confrontation, correction, warning, and exhortation to all ages and sexes is hard.
 - 3. Ministers should work harder than others, for the calling and effects are greater; and they usually do, for the qualifications wisely used identify exceptional men.

4. Even in the midst of leisure, which is due, ministers bear great soul burdens.
- F. Admonition is such a worthy service, as progress, let alone perfection, is impossible without it. For correction and exhortation are necessary to perfect the saints.

5:13 He further exhorts them to ministerial affection and to peace and unity within the church.

- A. Due to a minister's work, church members should esteem them very highly in love.
 1. Faithful ministers can cringe promoting their office, but every word of God is pure, and the God-given office is the focus rather than the person in the office.
 2. They are ambassadors of the Most High God and servants of the King of kings.
 3. A true minister rarely expresses personal opinion officially, for he has a royal commission with a published decree that he must faithfully represent to all.
 4. Doctors are given great respect, but they only treat the body, not the eternal soul.
 5. Teachers are given great respect, but they are only guessing at carnal matters.
 6. Politicians are given great respect, but they are only pawns in earthly kingdoms.
 7. Ministers deserve such esteem due to the objective of their lives (Hebrews 13:7).
 8. Paul taught Timothy to promote "double honor" in the churches (I Tim 5:17).
 9. Ministers give their lives to serve the saints in the most important part of life.
 10. To master the Word of God and apply it fairly at all times is a sober obligation.
 11. Though the knowledge and affectionate esteem are personal, it is for their work.
 12. Ministers find their greatest frustration and trouble in bearing with the saints.
 13. m. Ministers must give an account, and how will they account for you (Heb 13:17)?
- B. Not directly connected, but certainly helpful, Paul exhorts the Thessalonians to peace.
 1. Church peace and unity greatly aid ministers by reducing stress and distraction, for personal conflict and division destroy the work of God's Spirit and steal much time from ministers that could be spent in positive and profitable ways.
 2. Cornish was full of deadly carnal strife, stressing Paul (I Cor 1:10-13; 3:1-4), as we find that much of his second epistle was spent defending and rebuking.
 3. How many times did Paul plead for peace and unity (Phil 2:1-4,14; Eph 4:1-3)?
 4. Every father should know the blessing and value of a family at peace with itself.
 5. No wonder the psalmist told of great blessedness in brotherly unity (Ps 133:1).

5:14 Paul exhorts them to mutual duties of warning, comforting, supporting, and patience.

- A. Leaving his gentle beseeching in the previous two verses, he exhorts to their duties here.
- B. Though these are ministerial responsibilities, they are not exclusively so by this verse.
 1. This epistle to Thessalonica is a general epistle, rather than a pastoral epistle.

2. Church members are bound to show this level and kind of care for one another.
 3. It is so easy to identify carnal Christians or false professors by these duties.
- C. Warning the unruly is that corrective action that will keep a church holy and growing.
1. If the offense is personal, our Lord gave the remedy (Mat 18:15-17; Lu 17:1-5).
 2. If the offense is sin, Paul and James gave the remedy (Gal 6:1-5; Jas 5:19-20).
 3. This is true brotherly love of the difficult kind (Leviticus 19:17; Prov 27:5-6).
 4. True love rejoices in seeing its object in the truth, not iniquity (I Cor 13:6).
 5. Just imagine the growth in purity and character, if every member did this duty!
- D. Comforting the feeble-minded is to strengthen and encourage those with weak minds.
1. What a contrast! But how true of every church! In a flock there are rams needing strong correction and old and sick ewes needing gentle assistance.
 2. We come into this world with a feeble mind, and we leave the very same way.
 3. If the Lord tarries, we will have occasion to comfort some with declining minds.
 4. Comfort. To strengthen (morally or spiritually); to encourage, hearten, inspire.
 5. Rather than trying to force meat into a toothless mouth, we sweeten the milk.
 6. The feeble-minded can also be the fearful, oppressed, and discouraged (Ps 38:8).
- E. Supporting the weak is to help those with weak faith, particularly in matters of liberty.
1. We receive converts weak in the faith, but reject their disputations (Rom 14:1).
 - a. Weakness in faith gives up the right to doubtful and foolish questions.
 - b. Strength in faith gives up the right to act for yourself without due regard.
 2. And the limitation of their weakness to matters of liberty is plain (Rom 14:2-23).
 3. And this is also how the strong bear the infirmities of the weak (Rom 15:1-2).
 4. Consider how thoroughly Paul explained this matter to Corinth (I Cor 8:1-13).
 5. And he practiced this kindness greatly, to give a holy example (I Cor 9:19-23).
 6. We don't comfort or support those in sin at all, which this duty does not address at all, but we rather warn, correct, and convert such (James 5:19-20).
 7. There is no room in this text whatsoever for compromise with sin against God.
- F. Patience – longsuffering under affliction – is that godly virtue due to saints and others.
1. Glorious saints knowing the grace of God overlook personal offences (Pr 19:11).
 2. The purest measure of sanctification is charity (Col 3:12-14; Eph 4:2-3,31-32).
 3. Grudge holding, bitterness, repeating past personal offences, and being implacable in personal dealings is the spirit of hell (James 3:14-16; 5:9; Pr 17:9).
 4. As the natural man much loves hatred and war, this is a great testimony of grace.

5:15 Paul exhorts them to avoid revenge and rather show goodness to each other and all

men.

- A. Taking the last of four duties in the previous verse, Paul expands on patient suffering.
 - 1. Being sinners, others will offend and irritate us, which is to be borne patiently.
 - 2. Since revenge is an instinct of sinful hearts, Paul condemned such conduct.
 - 3. Do you remember the elements of charity that refer to this action (I Cor 13:4-7)? As “suffereth long,” “is not easily provoked,” “beareth all things,” and “endureth all things.”
- B. In contrast to revenge, or fighting evil with evil, he exhorts them to goodness instead.
 - 1. And it is to be done “ever,” which indicates our uniform and constant duty to it.
 - 2. And this duty is to be shown to all church members and also all unbelievers.
 - 3. Jesus taught this plainly in forbidding the resistance of evil, which by the context is clearly personal offences easily borne by saints (Matthew 5:38-48).
 - 4. Paul opened this duty further in condemning revenge at Rome (Rom 12:17-21).
 - 5. The purest form of “revenge” is loving your enemy to death in spite of their evil.
- C. The matter at hand is personal offences, not sins against God; and it concerns personal vengeance for personal offences, not the use of godly church censure and judgment.
 - 1. Effeminate Bible corrupters try to condemn all judgment, though there is nothing here or anywhere to condemn magistrates or other rulers from judgment.
 - a. Should parents stop disciplining children? Should governments stop prosecuting criminals? Should nations not defend themselves?
 - b. The “evil” under consideration here is private and personal offences.
 - 2. They pervert Matthew 7:1 to damn all judgment, but the close context (“for” and “and”) limits it to unmerciful and hypocritical personal judgment (7:2-5).
 - a. With this perversion, Mother Teresa can condemn capital punishment.
 - b. With this perversion, Jane Fonda is a peacenik and opposed the military.
 - c. With this perversion, I can display stickers against corporal punishment.
 - d. With this perversion, I can holler against churches practicing discipline.
 - e. With this perversion, I can ridicule and resent church doctrinal stands.
 - f. With this perversion, I can mock and blaspheme strong Bible preaching.
 - g. With this perversion, I can blast naming and censuring sin and sinners.
 - h. These little perverts conveniently justify their judgment of Bible saints.
 - i. Of course they forget the same Lord blessed judgment (Jn 7:24; Jer 5:1).
 - 3. There is not one drop of mercy in this text for those sinning against God.
 - a. Nations and rulers are still to judge and punish evildoers (Romans 13:4).
 - b. Churches still judge sinning members and exclude them (I Cor 5:11-13).
 - c. Parents still discipline children for disobedience (Pr 23:13-14; Heb 12:6).
 - 4. The same Jesus, distorted by most into an effeminate hippie, judgmentally made a scourge for some Christian businessmen and applied judgment (John 2:12-17).

5. This text does not condemn prosecuting criminals or seeking just damages or obtaining court orders for protection under the law from legitimate danger.
 6. There is a huge difference between a slap on the cheek and raping your wife, so that the first should be borne patiently and the last met with Smith & Wesson.
 7. As is often the case, we must rightly divide Scripture to avoid doctrinal shame.
- D. This is one of the most beautiful rules of the Christian religion (Pr 20:22; I Peter 3:9).
1. Rather than Jihad, or holy war against our enemies, we endure their offences.
 2. Is there a better way in which we can be as our Heavenly Father (Matt 5:43-48)?

5:16 Paul commands constant and perpetual joy.

- A. Rejoice. To be full of joy; to be glad or greatly delighted; to exult. Joy. A vivid emotion of pleasure arising from a sense of well-being or satisfaction; the feeling or state of being highly pleased or delighted; exultation of spirit; gladness, delight.
- B. Glory. To exult with triumph, rejoice proudly. Delight. To be highly pleased, take great pleasure, rejoice. [We may assist our joy definition by considering “glory” in Jeremiah 9:23-24 and “delight” in Psalm 37:4 and “triumph” and “glad” in Psalm 92:4.]
- C. Joy is a command, rather than a nice suggestion or a description of a sanctified believer.
1. Paul taught emphatically we should rejoice in the Lord (Phil 3:1; 4:4; Ps 32:11).
 2. This is not mere carnal happiness for the satisfaction of sinful and fleshly lusts.
 3. And this is not for seasons of pleasant emotions, but “always” and “evermore.”
 4. Think of what we have in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ just a little.
 - a. We know God, our Saviour, future, and true wisdom. Why not rejoice!
 - b. God is our Father, gave many promises, and never leaves us. Rejoice!
 - c. We have incomparable peace, prosperity, and pleasure. Why not rejoice!
 - d. There should be great gladness through the gospel (Luke 1:19; 8:1; John 8:56; Acts 13:32,48; Rom 10:15).
 5. Though it is the character of saints (Psalm 21:1-7; 40:16; 64:10; 68:3; 70:4).
- D. How can he command perpetual joy, unless it is a choice that every saint can make?
1. The psalmist described gladness as his choice (Psalm 9:2; 31:7; 104:34; 118:24).
 2. The psalmist would have fainted had he not believed future blessing (Ps 27:13).
 3. Happiness is a choice. You don’t wait for favorable circumstances or emotions.
 4. The psalmist further directed his own soul to hope in God for soul joy (Ps 43:5).
- E. How can he command perpetual joy, unless it has nothing to do with circumstances?
1. We have been corrupted to believe circumstances dictate the terms of joy or not.
 2. Our greedy, covetous, and materialistic society measures happiness by things.
 3. But our joy is in the Lord, not in fragile human circumstances (Phil 3:1; 4:4).
 4. We can rejoice more, even in evil circumstances (Habakkuk 3:17-19; Ps 4:7).

5. A merry heart, based on God's goodness, can have a continual feast (Pr 15:15).
 6. If we seek what Solomon said was vanity and vexation of spirit, we are doomed to joyless failure; and these are all the things done under the sun (Ec 1:14; 2:17).
 7. If we walk by sight, we will be depressed; if by faith, we rejoice in hope (II Cor 4:16 – 5:8). For what pain here can dim the glory of heaven (Romans 8:17-25)?
 8. What of martyrs? They were insensitive to present pain in light of future glory.
- F. How can he command perpetual joy, unless emotions have very little to do with it?
1. We have been corrupted to believe independent emotions cause our happiness.
 2. Have you heard or said, "I'm just not happy today," or "Is he in a bad mood?"
 3. Paul was both sorrowful and joyful at the same time (II Cor 6:10), just as our Lord despised shame for the joy before Him (Heb 12:2). This is our choice to keep the basic joy of wellbeing in Him regardless of circumstances or emotions.
 4. Paul kept on loving the Corinthians in spite of their contrariness (II Cor 12:15).
- G. How can he command perpetual joy, unless sobriety (6,8) is very compatible with it?
1. It is a wicked scorner who distorts sobriety to mean living life without any joy.
 2. At God's right hand, the most solemn place of all, is fullness of joy (Ps 16:11).
 3. Our self-examining souls profit by death, funerals, and mourning (Eccl 7:1-6); yet at the same time we have a foundation of incredible joy at our knowledge of God and our deliverance from death, ignorance, wrath to come, and hell; and nowhere in this mix is there room for the crackling of thorns and songs of fools.
 4. And this is about the same as a frowning person claiming to have joy (Pr 15:13).
- H. A man with the Spirit of God unquenched and not grieved will have joy (Gal 5:22-23).
1. John Baptist leaped for joy in his mother's womb at His presence (Luke 1:44).
 2. The power of the Holy Ghost can give hope, joy, and peace (Rom 14:17; 15:13).
 3. What river brings streams of joy to the city of God but the Holy Spirit (Ps 46:4)?
- I. We choose joy by redirecting our perspective away from circumstances and emotions.
1. God has given you the ability to be full of joy; but you must use it (Col 1:11).
 2. Suffering for His sake should bring joy (Matt 5:10-12; Luke 6:22-23; Ac 5:41).
 3. We look ahead like Jesus (Heb 12:2; Luke 10:20; Rom 12:12; I Pet 1:6-9; 4:13).
 4. We should understand the end or purpose of temptations (Jas 1:2-4; Rom 5:1-5).
 5. God Himself should be enough (Ps 43:4; Isaiah 61:10; Je 9:23-24; Hab 3:17-19).
 6. Do you joy in God's Word (Psalm 19:9-10; 119:143,92; Job 23:12; Jer 15:16)?
 7. Joy comes by keeping God's commandments by the Spirit (John 13:17; 15:11).
 8. Do you joyfully sell all you have to buy the kingdom of heaven (Matt 13:44)?
 9. The ability to enjoy your labor in this life is a gift from God (Eccl 5:18-20).
 10. God will test us with breaking hearts to see if our joy is only Him (Ps 73:25-26).

11. Joy rests on your faith, which is the eye of your soul to the proper vision of life.
 12. God knows we will be cast down, but destruction is the loss of joy (II Cor 4:9).
 13. Can you not rejoice in His wisdom, Scriptures, election, omnipotence, adoption, glory, promises, nature, church, works, glorification, blessings, etc., etc., etc.
 14. Happiness is secured by knowledgeable choices of the will or godly activity based on His commands (Deut 33:26-29; Job 5:17; Psalm 128:1-2; 144:15; 146:5-10; Proverbs 16:20; 28:14; 29:18; John 13:17; Romans 14:22).
- J. Joy is a reflection of your relationship with God, which can vary from good to bad.
1. As we allow the world to distract and consume our thoughts, we lose godly joy.
 2. Sin may have short pleasures, but it will end up painful (Heb 11:25; Ps 36:2).
 3. As we humble ourselves and seek Him again, He restores joy to us (Ps 51:12).
- K. Let the lesson be simple: God should be our exceeding joy for Himself and for His fear.
1. God Himself should be our joy by all His perfection and affection (Psalm 43:4).
 - a. Wisdom, strength, and riches do not compare to Him (Jeremiah 9:23-24).
 - b. The LORD our God has done plenty worthy of our joy (Isaiah 61:10).
 2. God Himself should be our joy by our fear and reverence for Him (Mal 1:14).
 - a. Mere kings demanded and received joyful service (Neh 2:1-2; Esth 4:2).
 - b. He has also threatened us for lack of joy and gladness (Deut 28:47-48).
 3. If anyone or anything competes with Him, He will tear it from our sinful grip.
 - a. Our God is rightly Jealous for the above two reasons (Exodus 34:14).
 - b. We can only serve Him by forsaking all that we have (Luke 14:25-33).
 - c. We will forfeit our life trying to hold on to something (Luk 9:24; 17:33).
 4. Therefore, we must constantly prepare to lose anything and everything for Him.
 - a. Paul counted all things loss and dung in comparison to Him (Phil 3:8).
 - b. We cannot allow idols in our heart when worshipping Him (Eze 14:1-3).
 - c. Life is a constant war not getting attached to anyone or anything here.
- L. What can you do right now to restore your joy in the Lord, if you have lost it somehow?
1. Remember from where you are fallen, repent, and do the first works (Rev 2:4-5).
 2. Pray and ask for it back with His Holy Spirit (Psalm 51:8-10; Luke 11:13).
 3. Count your blessings, taste His goodness, and praise Him from the border of Israel (Ps 139:17-18; 34:8; 33:1; 147:1; 34:1-3; 126:3; Malachi 1:1-5).
 4. Help someone else (I Thess 5:14; II Cor 1:3-4).
 5. In everything give thanks (I Thess 5:18).
 6. Sing by the Spirit and seek the blessing of His joy in your heart (Eph 5:18-20).
 7. Muse and meditate (Job 37:14; Psalm 63:1-8; 143:5; 1:2; 77:11-12; 104:34).
 8. Cut your activities in half and be still (Psalm 4:4; 46:10).

9. Reject and repudiate any hopeless reading or viewing (I Cor 15:33,19; Is 57:21).
10. Go to the house of God (Psalm 122:1).

5:17 Paul commands perseverance in prayer.

- A. His rule was not a perpetual prayer every waking and sleeping moment from conversion to death, but rather praying without fainting, giving up, losing hope, or quitting.
 1. It doesn't teach – pray all the time; it does teach – don't stop praying for a need.
 2. Rightly divide this text, yet do not cease from confidence in prayer, constant preparation for prayer, sober and holy living fitting of prayer, private practice of prayer, public practice of prayer, and a dependent spirit of prayer.
 3. Our minds are limited, unlike our omniscient God, and cannot pray constantly; but we can pray consistently, persistently, and patiently without quitting and ending the effort because we do not see our desired results in our time frame.
- B. Jesus gave the parable of the unjust judge to teach us not to faint in prayer (Luk 18:1-8).
 1. Observe very carefully that we are told expressly the purpose of this parable.
 2. Our Lord said to take special note of what the unjust judge said motivated him.
 3. Let us also take note that there was no other motive with this unjust judge at all.
 4. So the Lord is much more sure to answer His elect, for we have the house edge.
 5. But also notice that the Lord does warn us that He may bear long with us (18:7).
- C. Not fainting in prayer requires your faith the Lord will answer in time (Ps 27:13-14).
 1. The psalmist would have fainted but for his faith in God's future blessings.
 2. Here faith is defined – believing He will reward diligent seekers (Heb 11:6).
 3. The key is waiting, during which we take courage and receive His strength.
 4. When we have done what we can reasonably do, we go to sleep (Ps 127:1-2).
 5. Properly done, this is the Lord's rule for a carefree life with peace (Phil 4:6-7).
- D. Importunity gets the answer, not mere necessity. Know the difference (Luke 11:5-10).
 1. The lesson is to teach the disciples how to pray (11:1), not with content (11:2-4), but with the same great and irritating persistence and insistence as 18:1-8.
 2. It is easy to read the lesson like this – though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his necessity he will rise and give him.
 3. Importunity. Pertinacity or constancy of action; bothersome pertinacity in solicitation. Pertinacity. The quality of being pertinacious; resolute or stubborn adherence, as to a purpose, design, course of action; persistency; usually in a bad sense; perverse obstinacy or stubbornness; evil persistence. Importunate. To solicit pressingly and persistently; to ply or beset with requests.
 4. Though their friendship was not enough to raise him, the persistence finally did.
 5. Yet the Lord is more than a casual friend, so again we have the house advantage.
- E. Jacob would not let the Lord go when he wrestled with him (Ge 32:24-32; Hos 12:3-4).

1. Facing a horrible family situation, Jacob would not let the LORD go (32:26); this is true persevering in prayer, when even the Lord tells you to stop praying!
 2. And circumstances went from bad to worse, as he became lame while wrestling.
 3. But the blessing was right there around the corner, because he would not let go.
 4. And his name was changed to indicate his powerful victory with God in prayer.
 5. How can a man defeat God in prayer? Because He lets us win for the blessing.
 6. Check out the wonderful blessings Jacob received that day (Genesis 33:4,9,16).
- F. A woman of Canaan persisted with Jesus in spite of five rejections (Matthew 15:22-28).
- G. Paul taught that we ought to continue in prayer (Col 4:2) with perseverance (Eph 6:18).
- H. Continuing in prayer is not just any prayer, but instant – insistent – prayer (Rom 12:12).
- I. We should believe more than ever before due to the great blessings recently received.
- J. There is nothing the Lord cannot give you by following this and other rules of prayer.
1. He wants to give us what we need (Matt 7:7-11; 18:19; 21:22; Mark 11:24; Luke 11:9-13; John 14:13-14; 15:7,16; 16:24; James 5:16; 1 John 3:22; 5:14-15).
 2. But if we cease to pray before the blessing, we are the losers; He is still faithful.
- K. He wants us to wait, for it shows our dependence, our inability, and teaches us faith.
1. If He answered immediately, you would not learn faith, patience, or dependence.
 2. If He answered immediately, you could not express love, confidence, and need.
 3. If He answered immediately, He would not hear as many praises and promises.
- L. Prayer is worship of a deep, personal, and intimate sort. Do you mind He prolongs it?

5:18 Paul commands giving of thanks as God's will in Christ Jesus.

- A. Let us notice a few things from our text directly before comparing other Scriptures.
1. Thanksgiving is not only for those things you wanted, but for all things as well.
 2. It is not enough to be thankful in your heart, you must give it to the Lord.
 3. This duty is set apart by the Spirit's special recognition of it as God's will.
 4. It is specially a duty of Christians, and more is due for Christ than anything else.
- B. The Lord should never have to say of us, "But where are the nine?" (Luke 17:11-19).
- C. Even when bringing our petitions, we come with thanksgiving (Phil 4:6-7; Col 4:2).
- D. Under the Old Testament, God demanded a thankful people (De 28:47; Ps 92:1; 100:4).
- E. Under the Old Testament, true sacrifice was thanksgiving (Psalm 69:30-32; Hos 14:2).
- F. Under the New Testament, God demands a thankful people (Col 3:17; Eph 5:18-20).
- G. Under the New Testament, true sacrifice is still verbal thanksgiving (Hebrews 13:15).
- H. We must be thankful at all times, in all circumstances, and for all things by these texts, yet this rule does not include thanks for our sins or adversities directly, but indirectly.
- I. Unthankfulness blinds men and leads to sodomy and other perversions (Romans 1:21).

- J. And a trait of the perilous times of the last days would be unthankfulness (II Tim 3:1-2).
- K. We may say that thanksgiving includes at least the following points of reference.
 - 1. We take notice of the fact that it has come by the mercy and goodness of God.
 - 2. We place a value upon His blessing in comparison to what was or could be.
 - 3. We admit the great difference between His goodness and our own unworthiness.
 - 4. We specifically bless and praise Him for what He has done in the matter.
- L. Ignoring circumstances, we should be thankful for salvation (II Thes 2:13; II Cor 9:15).
- M. Consult other sermon outlines for much more detail regarding thanksgiving in the Bible.

5:19 Paul commands them to protect and promote the Holy Spirit of God within them.

- A. This is probably the most important subject that can be considered for spiritual religion, victorious living, fellowship with God, and maximizing life and influence in this world.
 - 1. There will be no revival in hearts, families, or church without the Holy Spirit.
 - 2. Is your life powerless, joyless, loveless, dry, lean, dull, and cold? Listen well.
 - 3. Without the enabling power of the Holy Ghost, you can do nothing (John 15:5).
 - 4. We are in perilous times when men love pleasures more than God (II Tim 3:4).
 - 5. Satan cannot afford to have us filled with Holy Spirit power (I John 4:4).
- B. Let us first consider the Holy Spirit as a divine Person little known in this present age.
 - 1. We believe in only one God, though there are three Persons (De 6:4; I John 5:7).
 - 2. The Holy Spirit is God as much as the Father or the Word (I John 5:7); we reject an eternally proceeding Spirit just as we do an eternally begotten Son. These are both lies of the Mother Church invented by Origen, Arius, and related heretics.
 - 3. Scriptures assumes He is God (II Tim 3:16 cp II Pet 1:21; Acts 5:3 cp Acts 5:4).
 - 4. He is called by masculine pronouns, showing His personality (John 14:26; 16:7).
 - 5. He is not some weak or feminine aspect of God, as watching and hearing Charismatic faith healers will cause you to believe. This is Satanic deception.
 - 6. He has and exercises His own will in relationship to the church (I Cor 12:11).
 - 7. He is not just a name, quality, force, attribute, energy, or emanation of God.
 - 8. Charismatic noise about a spirit is the other spirit feared by Paul (II Cor 11:4).
- C. Let us then consider the Holy Spirit in some of His operations and relations to men.
 - 1. He has a role in the eternal covenant of grace (II Thes 2:13; I Pet 1:2; Ac 15:18).
 - 2. He was active in creation of the heaven and earth (Gen 1:1-2; Job 26:13; 33:4).
 - 3. He brought about the conception of Jesus by a virgin (Luke 1:35; Matt 1:18,20).
 - 4. He brought the precious blood of Christ to the throne of God (Hebrews 9:14).
 - 5. He works regeneration in the hearts of the elect (Tit 3:5; John 3:5-8; I Cor 6:11).
 - 6. He gave power for miracles to men (Acts 10:38; 1:5,8; 8:14-19; Hebrews 2:1-4).

7. He shall resurrect and quicken our mortal bodies in the last day (Romans 8:11).
- D. Let us then consider the Holy Spirit in His relationship to us as believers in this century.
1. Jesus promised the Comforter to replace Himself as our own divine Companion, so that God and He (plural “we”) could come to us and live with us forever.
 2. It comforted the disciples, and should us (John 14:16-18,21-27; 15:26-27; 16:7).
 3. This blessing of God’s Presence had been promised long before (Zech 12:10).
 4. The promise of the Spirit would be for believers after His ascension (John 7:39).
 5. This work is to bring the Presence of God for fellowship (Phil 2:1; I John 1:1-4).
 6. Pentecost visibly displayed this gift of Jesus Christ to the church (Acts 2:33).
 7. Jews and Gentiles obtain Him by faith and baptism (Ac 2:38-39; 5:32; Ep 1:13).
 8. The churches prospered after Pentecost by the Spirit (Acts 9:31; II Cor 11:14).
 9. God gave the Spirit to Cornelius out of order for confirmation (Ac 10:44-48).
 10. He is the earnest and seal of eternal life (Eph 1:13-14; 4:30; II Cor 1:22; 5:5).
 11. His Presence assures us of our salvation (Rom 8:15-16; Gal 4:5; I John 4:13).
 12. Our bodies become His very house and temple (I Cor 6:19-20 cp 6:13b-18).
 13. Unbelievers do not have the Holy Spirit, so some will not understand (Rom 8:9).
 14. The fellowship between Jehovah God and individual saints is very personal and intimate, as indicated by “Comforter,” “come,” “dwell,” “abode,” and “grieve.”
- E. The Holy Spirit, as omnipotent God, has the power for us to live victorious lives in joy.
1. Moses, Balaam, Othniel, Samson, Saul, and David did great things by the Spirit (Num 11:25; 24:2; Judges 3:10; 14:19; I Samuel 10:10; 16:14; 18:12; 19:20,23).
 2. Any accomplishments are by the power of the Spirit of God (Zechariah 4:6-10).
 3. Our Lord Jesus Christ had the Holy Spirit without measure (John 3:34; Heb 1:9).
 4. Great men must be Spirit filled (Luke 1:15; Acts 2:4; 4:8,31; 6:8; 7:55; 13:9).
 5. Our brother Paul, the greatest apostle, had a mighty power in him (Col 1:29).
 6. The love of God will be displayed and expanded in a believer’s heart (Rom 5:5).
 7. Observe Paul’s prayer for Holy Spirit power for the Roman saints (Rom 15:13).
 8. Read the high estimate of God’s power and sufficiency at Corinth (II Cor 9:8).
 9. Consider the might of the Spirit for victorious living at Ephesus (Eph 3:14-21).
 - a. God can give mighty strength by His Spirit and glorious wealth (3:16).
 - b. It brings a personal relationship with Christ in our hearts by faith (3:17).
 - c. And He can set our foundation solidly in love – the greatest grace (3:17).
 - d. He teaches the dimensions and nature of Christ’s love for us (3:18-19).
 - e. This mighty power by the Spirit can fill us with all God’s fullness (3:19)!
 - f. There is a power working in us able to exceed our expectations (3:20).
 - g. Let us give glory to God for this unspeakable blessing in Christ (3:21).

- h. Paul had already prayed for the Spirit's exceeding great power (1:15-20).
- 10. The flesh has great strength, but the Spirit of God has more when not quenched.
- 11. Satan has great wisdom, craft, and power; but the Spirit is greater (I John 4:4).
- F. We must now consider our duties toward the Spirit as taught plainly in Holy Scripture.
 - 1. We are commanded to be filled with the Holy Spirit, by Paul's word (Eph 5:18).
 - a. This is a command – imperative mood – a choice opposite drunkenness.
 - b. This is God's work – passive voice – a filling He must do to and for us.
 - c. This imperative, passive construction means, YOU LET GOD FILL.
 - d. Observe the three principal results from this filling (Ephesians 5:19-21).
 - 2. We are commanded to walk in the Holy Spirit, not just live in Him (Gal 5:25).
 - a. There is a great conflict between the flesh and the Spirit (Gal 5:13-25).
 - b. The flesh wants to lead us to sin; the Spirit wants to lead us to godliness.
 - c. We are to mortify or kill fleshly things; we are to choose Spirit things.
 - d. Walking in the Spirit is simply/only doing those things that please Him.
 - e. There is nothing internal by the Spirit not clearly revealed in Scripture.
 - f. Satan leads us astray when he suggests to us there is an easier solution; we are in a war, and he wants us to relax, so he can take us easily.
 - g. Walk in the light and confess your sins for the Spirit (I John 1:1-10).
 - 3. We are not to quench the Spirit of God, which is our principal text (I Thes 5:19).
 - a. Quench. To put out, extinguish (fire, flame, or light, lit or figurative.).
 - b. The Holy Spirit was shown at Pentecost as tongues of fire (Acts 2:1-4).
 - c. The fire of true love cannot be quenched by the waters of great difficulties, which again means to put out or extinguish (S.S. 8:6-7).
 - d. Fire has power, heat, strength, and light; but it can be quenched, put out.
 - e. Sins and concerns of earth quench the Spirit, for bitter strife is from hell and earthly minds are belly worshippers (James 3:14-16; Phil 3:18-19).
 - f. Bad relationships quench the Spirit: consider John (Luke 1:17; I Pet 3:7).
 - g. Carnal Christianity by its very nature quenches the Spirit (II Tim 3:1-5).
 - h. David knew the grievous nature of his sin and consequence (Ps 51:11).
 - 4. We cannot grieve the Holy Spirit, which is a very personal expression (Ep 4:30).
 - a. Grieve. To harass, trouble, vex, gall by hostile action; to oppress; to do wrong, hurt, or harm. To affect with grief or deep sorrow. To vex, trouble, or oppress mentally; to cause pain, anxiety, or vexation; annoy. To make angry; to provoke to anger or resentment; to incense, offend.
 - b. Israel grieved, provoked, wearied, and fretted God with their sins, therefore He punished them severely (Psalm 78:40; 95:10; Isaiah 7:13; 43:24; Ezekiel 16:43; Hebrews 3:10,17).
 - c. We grieve the Holy Spirit when we sin and vex Him (Isaiah 63:9-10), which Israel did when they

- refused the land of Canaan (Hebrews 3:9-10).
- d. Scripture was inspired by the Spirit, and ministers preach by the Spirit, so disobedience and rejection are against God (Num 9:30; Acts 7:51).
 - e. God drowned the earth when He tired of striving by His Spirit (Gen 6:3).
 - f. Fornication causes personal grief to the Holy Spirit (4:8; I Cor 6:13b-20).
5. We can stir up the Holy Spirit within us, as Paul exhorted Timothy (II Tim 1:6).
- a. We love Christ and keep His commandments (John 14:15,21-24; 15:10).
 - b. We choose to walk (Gal 5:25) and be filled (Eph 5:18) with the Spirit.
 - c. We do so by living righteously and mortifying our flesh (Gal 5:16-25).
 - d. God dwells with the humble and contrite and poor (Isaiah 57:15; 66:1-2).
 - e. We do so by praying in the Spirit (Jude 1:20; Eph 6:18; Rom 8:25-27).
 - f. We must sing in the Spirit (Eph 5:18-20; Col 3:16; Jas 5:13; II Kg 3:15).
 - g. There is no shortcut – we deny our flesh and seek Him; when was the last time you fervently did this, in spite of Satan’s lying darts that such is a too extreme and unnecessary (II Cor 15:2; Jer 29:13; Jams 4:4-10).
 - h. Forget the theological, doctrinal, and theoretical; see the personal and practical; for Jesus said, “We will come and make our abode with him.”
 - i. And we must pray for the Spirit like Paul, which if we were really serious would include fasting (Eph 1:17; 3:14-21; Luke 11:13).
 - j. Remember Psalm 143:7-12 and follow Asa’s example (II Chro 15:1-19).

5:20 Paul commands them to receive ministerial preaching and teaching with ready minds.

- A. Prophecy. To speak by (or as by) divine inspiration, or in the name of a deity; to speak as a prophet. spec. To utter predictions, to foretell future events (by inspiration, or generally). In the Apostolic churches, To interpret or expound the Scriptures, to utter divine mysteries and edifying communications (as moved by the Holy Spirit); hence in the 16th and 17th centuries, applied by the Puritans to the interpretation and expounding of Scripture and the preaching of the Gospel.
- B. Prophecy. The action, function, or faculty of a prophet; divinely inspired utterance or discourse; spec. in Christian theology, utterance flowing from the revelation and impulse of the Holy Spirit.
- C. Prophets under both testaments were men God inspired with messages for His people, only a small part of which were predictions of future events, which gift has ceased.
 - 1. Prophesying is not simply the foretelling of future events, but it is also preaching God’s will and the Scriptures by extraordinary revelation from God.
 - 2. Prophets preached and taught God’s law (Dan 9:10; II Kgs 17:13; Ezra 9:10-12).
 - 3. Prophesying included edification, exhortation, and comfort; and it was far superior to speaking in tongues, for it edified the understanding (I Cor 14:1-5).
 - 4. Judas and Silas were prophets who exhorted and comforted saints (Acts 15:32).

5. The Scriptures are called “prophecy” and “the word of prophecy,” which is reference to their supernatural origin rather than their forecasts (II Pet 1:19-21).
 6. Next to apostles, prophets had a similar role to pastors and teachers, in that they taught saints and gave them more perfect knowledge of the truth (Eph 4:11-14).
 7. The partial gift of prophecy ended when perfect Scripture came (I Cor 13:8-10).
 8. The text (5:20) can be interpreted and condensed plainly – love Bible preaching.
- D. It is a horrible but common evil when men despise the men and message from God.
1. Men rejected Noah’s Spirit-led preaching for many years, so God drowned them all for it with a worldwide flood of water (Genesis 6:3; I Pet 3:18-20; II Pet 2:5).
 2. Israel many times despised His words (Numbers 14:21-24; II Chron 36:11-21; Neh 9:26,30; Ps 78:55-64; Amos 2:10-16; Zec 7:11-14; Mat 23:29-38; Ac 7:52).
 3. It is a travesty when men will listen with intentions to disobey, but God will have the last laugh when the announced judgments surely come (Eze 33:30-33).
 4. Prayers of those turning away from hearing the law are abominable (Prov 28:9).
 5. Paul had little patience for those who resisted his preaching (I Cor 14:36-38).
 6. Contentions against the gospel are rejected in Christ’s churches (I Cor 11:16).
 7. So it is taught authoritatively without allowing foolish debate (Tit 2:15; 3:9-11).
 8. What would a great King do to those who abuse His ambassadors (Matt 22:1-7)?
 9. Despising the men is hilarious – for the words are not theirs but God’s – and dangerous – for God protects and revenges harm against prophets (Ps 105:15).
 10. Even hard, negative, critical, and condemning preaching is from God (Hos 6:5).
 11. The wicked can hear neither prophets or those from the dead (Luke 16:29-31).
- E. Paul warned of perilous times when men would resist sound doctrine (II Tim 4:3-4).
1. He warned against an effeminate and carnal Christianity (3:1-4), preferring pleasure over God (3:4), with a form of godliness rejecting God’s authority (3:5), which would prey on women with lots of false “learning” (3:6-7).
 2. This new brand of Christianity would despise sound doctrine and substitute in its place entertainment to satisfy their itching ears (II Tim 4:1-4).
 3. Strong Bible preaching is now considered an outdated and despicable religious practice, as market demand and religious compromise emphasize entertainment.
 4. See the sermon outline for “Contemporary Christianity” to review all the substitutes used today to replace Bible preaching and sound doctrine.
 5. The Jewish scribes had already in Jesus’ day adopted an effeminate, weak, and powerless form of preaching, which He exposed for all to see (Matt 7:28-29).
 6. Judah tried this same thing (Isaiah 30:10; Jer 5:31; 23:28-29; Ezek 22:23-31).
 7. Paul exalted prophets and prophesying far above tongues, but Charismatics flagrantly reverse the Scriptural emphasis by despising preaching without even having God’s gift of tongues, but only sensual babbling (I Cor 12:28; 14:18-19).

- F. Hearing the preaching of God's word is a great blessing we should cherish and desire.
1. Israel gloriously celebrated hearing and understanding Scripture (Neh 8:1-12).
 2. For there had been times when the Word of God was very precious (1 Sam 3:1).
 3. Solomon, who knew the gospel little, told us to buy it and sell it not (Pr 23:23).
 4. We should be thankful for the privilege of hearing things unknown (Matt 13:17).
 5. The affect it should have in our life is to gladly trade all for it (Matt 13:44-46).
 6. The noble Bereans gave the classic example of not despising prophesyings, for they received the preached word with a ready mind and believed it (Acts 17:11).
 7. Cornelius had the desirous spirit for instruction we all should have (Acts 10:33).
 8. Men who preach the gospel are described as having beautiful feet (Rom 10:15).
 9. It can be taken away by God's judgment to leave us starving (Amos 8:11-12).
 10. God can close up the prophets or preachers, if a people will not hear (Is 29:10).

5:21 Paul commands them to carefully examine and test teachers and teachings they did hear.

- A. Having taught their duty to receive, esteem, and desire sound doctrine from their teachers (5:20), Paul exhorts them to the Christian duty of checking the teachings.
1. Prove. To make trial of, try, test. To make trial of, put to the test; to try the genuineness or qualities of; to try, test. Try. To ascertain, find out (something doubted, obscure, or secret) by search or examination; to sift out.
 2. The command is not to second-guess politicians with American Opinion or The Spotlight, to compare appliances with Consumer Reports, or to analyze business strategies with "what-if" financial modeling. It is the "things" of Acts 17:11, which are the "things" taught by the prophesyings of verse 20. God does not care about politicians, appliances, or business ventures – they are all vanity.
 3. Christians have a God-given duty to check preachers and teachers by the Bible.
- B. Because we exalt authoritative and dogmatic preaching, we are accused of being a cult.
1. "Cult" is simply a childish slur with a moving definition used by ignorant fools.
 2. Cult. A particular form or system of religious worship; esp. in reference to its external rites and ceremonies.
 3. These enemies who use the word cannot define it meaningfully; and when they make the attempt, it would condemn most every authority in most every setting.
 4. Because they know they don't have any truth, they are paranoid of it; since truth would condemn their manmade definitions, opinions, and jobs, they want to condemn anyone who believes they do have truth. Quite perverted, isn't it?
 5. They condemn us for criticizing the doctrine and practices of others, but they cannot even recognize that is all they do when criticizing us, and that falsely.
 6. Roman Catholics hold papal infallibility, baby sprinkling, Limbo, celibacy for priests and nuns,

required fasts, no mixed marriages, no salvation outside Rome, the soul-probing confessional, fee-based services, the doctrine of transubstantiation, and many more controlling doctrines, yet cultphobes never attack them as a cult, showing Satan's use and approval of both them and Rome. Never has there been a Christian sect with more mind control than Catholicism.

7. Paul was accused of heresy, but it didn't bother him much at all (Acts 24:14).
 8. If men think highly of us, it proves we are abominable to God (Luk 6:26; 16:15).
 9. If they blindly reject confidence in Scripture and our God-given responsibility to judge heresy and offences, they can jump or fall into their ditch (Matt 15:14).
 10. Jesus was warned of offending the Pharisees, but He didn't care (Mat 15:12-14).
 11. We are thankful to be a cult of New Testament worship of Jesus Christ, for it places us in His company with the apostles and marks those who use it as fools.
- C. We do not follow any man or religious system blindly, due to the command of this text.
1. We are not a "cult" in any evil way or a distorted church of blinded believers.
 2. Paul here commanded them to test and prove the teachings they heard and to accept, believe, and obey only that which was good according to the Scriptures.
 3. The Bereans were "noble" for checking Paul's inspired teachings by the Scriptures, how much more should we check uninspired preachers (Acts 17:11)!
 - a. Though Paul did great miracles, they proved him anyway (Deut 13:1-5).
 - b. The best of men are but men at best, so all men must be carefully proved.
 - c. They searched the Scriptures to confirm his words as either truth or not; they did not measure by feelings, opinions, traditions, experiences, etc.
 - d. And this noble activity of hearing and proving was a daily exercise.
 - e. Since we have the Scriptures in every home and on every lap, we can prove things more easily, even while the message is being presented.
 - f. Wise saints will observe the Bereans heard Paul with very ready minds.
 4. The only criterion for truth is Holy Scripture, and it demands our dogmatism (Psalm 119:128; Is 8:20; Gal 1:6-9; I Tim 6:3-5; II Tim 3:16-17; II Pet 1:19-21).
 5. We do not measure truth by popularity, longevity, authority, or familiarity; these and all other substitutes for Holy Scripture must be rejected as vain and foolish.
 6. We are Bible Christians, and we must often maintain this privately and publicly; for there is no other basis for truth, godliness, and true religion than Scripture.
 7. Only the foolish simple believe every word, and we reject that (Pr 14:15). We are not dummies following a charismatic dictator or a threatening organization.
 8. We let God be true, and every man a liar, even ourselves (Romans 3:4; Jer 17:9).
- D. There were great reasons to prove and test prophets, their teachings, and their writings.
1. Jesus warned His apostles of false prophets using His name (Matt 7:15; 24:24).
 2. Paul warned the elders at Ephesus of false teachers like wolves (Acts 20:29-31).

3. He also described many who were already corrupting God's Word (II Cor 2:17).
 4. H warned of Satan's false apostles teaching another Jesus (II Cor 11:2-4,13-15).
 5. He had to deal with false brethren on a regular basis (II Cor 11:26; Gal 2:1-5).
 6. Paul warned the Ephesians by epistle of cunningly crafty deceivers (Eph 4:14).
 7. False epistles were being forged, even to these Thessalonians (II Thess 2:1-2).
 8. Paul warned Timothy about false teachers creeping after women (II Tim 3:6-9).
 9. Paul exhorted Titus to shut the mouths of subversive teachers (Titus 1:9-11).
 10. Peter also warned of damned false teachers that would creep in (II Peter 2:1-3).
 11. And Jude also warned of these reprobates and their profane gospel (Jude 1:4).
 12. John's loving name for them was "antichrists," and there were many (I Jn 2:18).
- E. John exhorted his readers to try every spirit and teacher, even apostles (I John 4:1-6).
1. Notice the plain directive to not believe every spirit, or every preacher (v1).
 2. John directed them to determine if their teachers were of God or were false (v1).
 3. The problem was widespread and serious – there were many false prophets (v1).
 4. How do you try spirits? Check the teacher by his doctrine. It is that simple (v2).
 5. Observe and remember that you do not try the preacher by your gut feel (v2).
 6. The Holy Spirit is known by correct doctrine, not warm and fuzzy feelings (v2).
 7. If they didn't agree with apostolic doctrine of Christ, they were antichrist (v3).
 8. There is more than one spirit in the world. We cannot forget it (v3; II Cor 11:4).
 9. This standard of doctrinal criteria can be applied to all things (v3; Ps 119:128).
 10. This is a spiritual war manifested by doctrine, which we have already won (v4).
 11. And those walking in the Spirit will be preserved from lies and persecution (v4).
 12. Their persons, doctrines, and ambitions are compatible with the world and its carnal orientation with a false spirituality, but God's saints reject them all (v5).
 13. How do we find truth and God's true saints? By apostolic doctrine – "us" (v.6).
- F. The church at Ephesus had put this into practice and found them liars (Revelation 2:2).
- G. As much now as ever, or even more than ever due to the present information explosion, we are bound to examine every teacher and teaching at the tribunal of Holy Scripture.
1. We are assaulted by more ideas, theories, doctrines, and teaching than ever.
 2. The perilous times of the last days would include our present information explosion and multiplication of teachers with a great void of truth (II Tim 3:1-7).
 3. These perilous times would see fables replacing sound doctrine by a heaping pile of false teachers and charlatans funded by carnal Christians (II Tim 4:1-4).
 4. The cure was simple for God's ministers – the Holy Scriptures (II Tim 3:8-17).
 5. It is by faithful preachers that men are saved from these errors (Eph 4:11-14).
 6. Regardless of how well received, how graciously presented, how nobly sounding, how anciently

affirmed, we must reject all but plain Bible doctrine.

7. If we test other things out before purchasing or using, how much more religion?
- H. Once we identify and confirm the truth of God, we will not let it go for anything at all.
 1. Fast. Firmly fixed in its place; not easily moved or shaken; settled, stable.
 2. Holding fast is setting it as fixed and final and not modifying it for anything.
 3. We buy the truth, which actually comes free by grace, and sell it not (Pr 23:23).
 4. We earnestly contend for it against all opposition, for the truth of God was once delivered to the saints – truth is not developing (Jude 1:3; Gal 2:5; Titus 1:9-11).
 5. We will answer those we judge sincere (Prov 9:8-10; 22:20-21; 26:5; I Pet 3:15).
 6. We will not answer those we judge to be scorers (Mat 7:6; 15:12-14; Pro 9:6-8; 26:4; II Thess 3:1-2; II Timothy 2:16,23; I Timothy 1:4; 4:7; 6:4-5; Titus 3:9).

5:22 Paul commands them to avoid even the appearance of evil in doctrine and in their lives.

- A. In this text are two senses, which are not contradictory, but rather complementary.
 1. Abstain. To keep or withhold oneself, to refrain. To keep oneself from feeling, doing, or indulging in something. To avoid participation in some activity.
 2. If we look at context, before is doctrinal proving and after is personal holiness.
 3. God's law is very broad (Ps 119:96), so let us avoid unfairly restricting a verse.
 4. Since both applications are certainly true, we shall not exclusively choose one.
 5. We usually use this verse to condemn even what seems like sin in our own lives.
 6. But it also condemns even a semblance of doctrinal compromise in others.
- B. We are to avoid even the appearance of any compromise by teachers or members.
 1. If we even smell compromise or confusion of doctrine or Scripture, we reject it.
 2. We must earnestly contend for the faith once delivered to the saints (Jude 1:3).
 3. We must count every word of God pure and oppose all corruption (Prov 30:5-6).
 4. Variations are to be marked, avoided, and cursed (Romans 16:17-18; Gal 1:6-9).
 5. If God's saints had done this, there would not be 10,000 variations of the gospel.
 6. If compromising brethren are not corrected, they should be withdrawn from; and our methods toward them should be intense efforts to save them (Jude 1:23-24).
- C. We are personally bound not only to abstain from sins but even what looks like sin.
 1. Clearly, Scripture has many expressly stated prohibitions and commandments.
 2. But we are also to avoid even the suspicion of others that we are violating them.
 3. We are describing a very high standard of holiness, most glorious and beautiful.
 4. Moses had long before taught them to keep far from a false matter (Ex 23:7).
 5. Solomon, teaching us to avoid temptation, emphasized the same (Prov 4:14-15).

6. For example, we must do all things in an open and honest way to avoid suspicions of our activities in the sight of all men (Romans 12:17; II Cor 8:21), which rule applies very well to our business and financial dealings with all men.
 7. For example, we must avoid things that may appear as evil to weak brethren, as some in the early churches would think if they saw you eating meat (I Cor 8:10), which rule applies well to things like alcohol, tobacco, dress, entertainment, etc.
 8. For example, Jesus paid a tribute tax He was legally exempt from in order to avoid the public offence of an explanation not easily recognized (Mat 17:24-27), which rule applies well to civil obedience regardless of your knowledge of law.
 9. For example, though all things might be lawful – not specifically condemned in the Bible, that does not mean they are expedient or edifying (I Cor 6:12; 10:23), which rule applies well to things like music, hobbies, friends, reading, etc.
 10. Because what other people think of our actions reflects on Jesus Christ and His doctrine, we are to avoid any offence to the world (I Corinthians 10:31-33).
 11. We should let our good works be seen for the greater glory of God (Matt 5:16).
 12. And it is our duty to grow in favour with God and men and seek that good reputation that commends the gospel, not condemns it (Luke 2:52; Prov 22:1).
 13. This does not mean at all that we ever (1) compromise Scripture to please men (Acts 5:29), (2) modify our liberty for scornful Pharisees (Matt 15:14; Mark 3:1-6; Rom 14:1), or (3) make a public pretense for religious show (Matt 6:5; 23:5).
 14. Stated positively, we are to emphasize holy living that is always visible to all.
 15. We are to be shining lights without blame, harm, or rebuke in a dark and perverse world, as true sons of God bringing glory to the gospel (Phil 2:14-16).
- D. Consider the rule's value, which would take us far from sin and far toward holiness.
1. It is hard to commit a sin when you are avoiding even the appearance of that sin.
 2. By avoiding the circumstances of sins, we would be insulated from those sins.
 3. The great work of holiness is one of action, not profession, which causes us to emphasize the recently taught wise proverb, actions speak louder than words.
 4. The safe position is to lean to the side of virtue, not approach the line with sin.
 5. If we hated sin and loved holiness, we would avoid provision for it (Rom 13:14).
 6. The things that ought to occupy our minds and attention are all listed (Phil 4:8).
 7. Even what we think is sin is sin, even if it is not expressly sin (Rom 14:14, 23).
- E. For application, activity with the opposite sex is guarded for appearance and temptation.
1. Sexual sins are one of the flesh's strongest temptations, one very often surmised due to this fact and its lascivious appeal, and one very damaging to the gospel by virtue of the world knowing the Bible condemns it. Saints hate sex sins (4:3-8).
 2. Due to the nature of sexual sins, they are committed with great effort at deception and secrecy, so that only a few offenders are ever caught in the act.

3. The state courts of this country, knowing this difficulty of proof for plaintiffs, will give the judgment of adultery with imperfect circumstantial evidence indicating two things that illustrate our text – mere inclination and opportunity.
 4. Inclination is even slight evidence of romantic interest in another person to whom you are not married i.e. romantic communication, holding hands, etc.
 5. Opportunity exists when two unmarried parties are alone and unsupervised, and the setting would suggest amorous activities – behind closed doors.
 6. These two kinds of circumstantial evidence need not be exclusive of other conclusions or beyond all doubt for a court to presume guilt worthy of judgment.
 7. Therefore, by application, Christians should avoid evidence of either inclination or opportunity, which create the definite appearance of evil, even to unbelievers.
 8. To avoid inclination, conversation, correspondence, and physical contact must be very sober, pure, and proper between unmarried persons, including email.
 9. To avoid opportunity, situations of being alone with the opposite sex where fornication could occur should be avoided at great lengths, allowing for wisdom.
 10. Unchaperoned dating by the romantically inclined has the strong appearance of fornication; and frankly speaking, very likely has the reality of it as well.
 11. Children make good chaperones in a car, but they are quite worthless in a house.
 12. If saints were to follow these two rules, they could never get close to adultery.
 13. A man and woman not married to each other have no business alone in a house.
- F. For application, our conduct on the job ought to clearly reflect our lives as Christians.
1. We have seen diligent employment as something to show the world (4:11-12).
 2. Consider the list of verses in the outline “Actions Speak Louder than Words,” where great weight is given in Scripture for our conduct to become the gospel.
- G. For further application, we can and should apply this rule to every part of our lives.
1. Our speech, even if not expressly sinful, should avoid any appearance of evil.
 2. Our marriages can appear evil – breaking God’s laws – to family and others.
 3. Our children should be trained, provided for, and governed for good appearance.
 4. Our civil obedience in all matters should be without reproach for all to see.
 5. Our dress should not compromise the modesty and holiness of Christian women.
 6. Our vacation destinations should be considered well to avoid evil impressions.
 7. Our hobbies should be chosen or sacrificed based on their appearance to others.
 8. Our music should be such as is associated with sober and godly Christianity.

5:23 Paul blesses them with a prayer for their complete sanctification before Christ’s coming.

- A. This verse and the one following are often understood and applied to the final phase of our salvation –

our glorification; but they rather address our practical sanctification.

1. We certainly believe our glorification is by God's faithfulness (Rom 8:29-39).
2. We also certainly believe our call to practical holiness (Rom 12:1-2; II Cor 7:1).

B. In light of their holiness as his purpose for the last couple chapters, Paul blesses them with a prayer and promise of God's faithfulness in providing the strength (3:11 – 5:22).

1. The "God himself" of 3:11 is the same expression as the "very God" of our text.
2. The division in the epistle is between 3:10 and 3:11, where exhortation begins.
3. Consider the love (3:12), holiness (3:13), walking duties (4:1-2), sexual purity (4:3-8), brotherly love (4:9-10), professional integrity (4:11-12), conduct worthy of His coming (4:13 – 5:11), ministerial esteem (5:12-13a), unity and peace (5:13b), brotherly duties (5:14), no personal revenge (5:15), joy (5:16), prayer (5:17), thanksgiving (5:18), walking in the Spirit (5:19), receiving teaching (5:20), doctrinal integrity (5:21), and avoiding even evil's appearance (5:22).

C. Paul calls on the very God of peace, Who is truly and really Source and Reason of it.

1. He calls on the Lord as the God of peace, for the importance of it (1:1; 3:13,15).
2. But first notice the truthful and specific identification of this God by the "very."
3. Very. Really or truly entitled to the name or designation; possessing the true character of the person or thing named; properly so called or designated; = True.
4. This is a similar expression to opening the section with "God himself" (3:11).
5. Remember, the Thessalonians saints needed peace from suffering (2:14; 3:1-4).
6. Peace is a glorious blessing of God (1:1; Romans 5:1; II Cor 5:18-21; Is 26:3-4).
7. Peace is a great rule of godliness (3:13,15; Matt 5:9; Gal 5:22-23; Jas 3:17-18).

D. Sanctification is a great and glorious objective, for which Paul sought the God of peace.

1. Sanctification is to make a thing holy or pure and hallowed or dedicated for God's use; it is to consecrate something for divine purposes [see notes for 4:3]. It is not enough to define sanctification as "set apart." What does that mean? It isn't from the Scriptures. Let us emphasize the true sense, sanctity = holiness.
2. Holiness is God's will and necessary for us to walk and please God more (4:1-8), and it was Paul's goal for their hearts at the coming of Jesus Christ (3:11-13).
3. Though they were thankful to God for the lives of these saints, they pressed on zealously to perfect them before God our Father, Jesus Christ, and the saints; for our holiness is still imperfect (Ps 130:3; Is 6:1-5; 64:6; Luke 5:8; Phil 3:7-15).
4. Paul's great goal for them – shown by the words "to the end" – was blameless character before God, even our Father, at Christ's coming (3:13; Col 1:28-29).
5. We are dealing with fixed, unblameable holiness in the hearts of these saints.
6. How do 3:13-14 go together? It is by unfeigned love of the brethren – a true transforming of character – that we purify our hearts before God (I Peter 1:22).
7. For further consideration of the importance of holiness, see the notes for 3:13.
8. We are holy eternally by election (Ep 1:4); legally by Christ's death (Heb 10:10-14), vitally by the

Spirit's work (Eph 4:24); and finally by God (Jude 1:24-25).

9. But we are called to practical holiness (I Pet 1:13-17; Rom 12:1-2; II Cor 7:1).

10. Take the time to soberly review the sermons and/or outlines for HOLINESS.

E. Paul expands his prayer to seek the Lord for their unblameable holiness at His coming.

1. There is no ability or need to philosophically or metaphysically dissect between our soul and spirit, as this division is a power of the Word of God (Heb 4:12).

2. Please note the language is very similar to what we had in 3:11-13 and 4:1-8.

3. But what about our bodies? Can they be holy? Indeed (Rom 12:1-2; II Cor 7:1)!

4. He will preserve us blameless in four phases with or without our prayers.

5. But He is also able to sanctify us unblameable in practical holiness (Luke 1:6).

6. What blame will you lay against any person walking in the light (I John 1:7)?

7. We are praying for something that is possible but often missed by God's saints.

8. His prayer here is like in I Cor 1:7-9; Eph 3:14-19; Col 1:9-11; Heb 13:20-21.

9. These verses do not guarantee holiness, but rather promise us His mighty help; for sinless perfection and perseverance without effort are both heresies. Practical holiness is a commandment, not a guarantee; but He will give strength.

10. We pray for God to give us our daily bread, but we certainly don't stop working for it or shopping for it. God blesses our efforts, so that He does give us bread!

11. We pray for God to lead us not into temptation and to deliver us from evil, but we certainly make our own efforts to avoid fleshly provision; and we thank Him.

12. God's grace does not do it all for us; it teaches us how to be holy (Tit 2:11-15).

F. Let us apply this text to our own lives, that we might pray and seek to be wholly holy!

1. Paul was confident God will complete His good work in us (Philippians 1:3-6), so there is no lack or hindrance on His part, only on our stubborn, carnal part.

2. We face no temptations that are not both common and escapable (I Cor 10:13).

3. Though we sin, we can be blameless by confessing and forsaking (I John 1:7,9).

4. We pray God to work holiness in us (I Kgs 8:58; Ps 39:4; 51:6,10; 119:27,35-36,173; 138:8; 141:4; Eph 3:14-19; Phil 2:13; Col 4:12; Heb 13:21; I Pet 5:10).

5:24 Paul encourages them with the faithfulness of God to complete the good work in them.

A. In light of his prayer for their complete sanctification (5:23), Paul appeals to God's faithfulness to provide the strength for the task, for He called them to holiness (4:7).

B. He didn't say God is able to do it and might do it: he says God is faithful and will do it!

C. Paul was confident of a specific, true, and real thing – God's continued work (Phil 1:6)!

D. We are not fatalists – we reject practical sanctification as certain without our obedience.

E. He is a Rewarder of them that diligently seek Him – this is our simple faith (Heb 11:6)!

- F. He gave identical confidence in God to these saints in the second epistle (II Thes 3:3-5).
- G. Moses wrote the right balance between God's faithfulness and our obedience (Deu 7:9).
- H. Paul used similar language in commending and blessing the Corinthians (I Cor 1:1-9).
 - I. God's faithfulness includes sinful temptations of life, which we can beat (I Cor 10:13).
- J. God's divine power for godliness is available when we give all diligence (II Pet 1:1-11).

5:25 Paul begs for their prayers in his and the other ministers' lives and labors in the gospel.

- A. Consider the injunctions he used to encourage the Romans to pray for him (Rom 15:30).
- B. Without the blessing of God upon preacher and hearer, there will be no fruit at all.
 - 1. The gift of the ministry is given to men who are but earthen vessels (II Cor 4:7).
 - 2. Paul purposely chose to reject the educational tools of preaching, so that any faith or obedience resulting would be entirely by God's power (I Cor 2:1-5).
 - 3. Unless the Lord opens hearts, as with Lydia, they are helpless (Acts 16:14-15).
 - 4. Unless the Lord gives repentance, there is nothing they can do (II Tim 2:24-26).
- C. There are clear objectives for our prayers for ministers revealed in the New Testament.
 - 1. Pray for verbal utterance to make known the mysteries (Eph 6:19-20; Col 4:3).
 - 2. Pray for boldness in speech over fear, as they should (Eph 6:19-20; Phil 1:18-20).
 - 3. Pray for the gospel to have free course and be glorified (II Thes 3:1; Mat 13:19).
 - 4. Pray for them to be delivered from unreasonable men (II Thess 3:2; Rom 15:31).
 - 5. Pray for their ability to make things manifestly clear to hearers (Colossians 4:4).
 - 6. Pray for churches and hearers to receive their service (Rom 15:31; II Cor 1:11).
 - 7. Pray for their refreshing with joy by the brethren, by God's will (Rom 15:32).

5:26 Paul exhorts them to personal and intimate public salutations of one another.

- A. As children of God and saints in His church, we realize "blood is thicker than blood," in that the blood ties in Jesus Christ are stronger, deeper, and more precious than family. So warm physical expressions of affection and unity should be pleasant, not painful. And it should not surprise us that Peter refers to it as a kiss of charity (I Peter 5:14).
- B. Personal and physical greetings are incompatible with envy, strife, bitterness, division, or enmity, which exalts physical affection as a protective tool against such things; and the apostle was always opposing these sins to magnify the unity and peace of the Spirit.
- C. We hug relatives, close friends, and others in moments of great affection or appreciation; but kissing is quite rare in our society other than for romantic purposes.
- D. We find all the kissing exhortations among his salutations, not among the rules of brotherly love (Romans 16:16; I Cor 16:20; II Cor 13:12; I Thess 5:26; I Peter 5:14). And they are so positioned in his salutations to likely be little more than the "xox" we put at the end of some personal letters with words such as, "Give everyone a hug for me."

- E. Kissing was part of salutations in the New Testament (Mark 14:44), but such salutations were not universal, especially such personal and intimate ones (Luke 7:44-46; Gal 2:9).
- F. We find little difference here from their practice of washing feet, which was done in their culture for the dry and dusty climate and lack of socks and enclosed shoes. And there is further similarity with the anointing of oil, which was also a kindness due to climate that was shown sometimes but not always (Luke 7:46).
- G. Jesus told the disciples to wash one another's feet (John 13:12-17), but we know this merely illustrated humility and service; for the churches did not practice such a rite, or Paul would not have used it as a unique mark of exceptional widows (1 Tim 5:10). It is amazing to hear the proponents of feet washing argue adamantly for the one while rejecting the other out of hand, though it has even more Scriptural foundation.
- H. Jesus understood there was no need for feet washing with closed shoes (John 13:10).
- I. We want to do more than shake hands, for a handshake holds the other at a distance, and shaking hands is not considered a very personal or intimate form of greeting or saluting among good friends. You do not greet close family with handshakes.
- J. If we choose the literal and direct sense of this text as a literal and perpetual rule, do men kiss women? (Women kissed Jesus very intimately.) On the hands? On the feet? On the lips? How often? How long? Both morning and evening services? With or without hugging? The reason these questions exist is because it was a social custom, which we have lost and therefore neither understand the method or the limitations.
- K. And how could we keep the designation "holy," since kissing would be so very unusual to both participants and observers, due to its lack of use in our culture and society?
- L. The right hand of fellowship given to Paul was a public act of authoritative approval (Gal 2:9), not a personal greeting or salutation of personal affection and love, which leads us to separate it from our practice of greeting our new members with affection.
- M. If we lived in a country where kissing was accepted as appropriate greeting by intimate friends, we might well apply this passage differently, with the rules of that culture.
- N. Even in a culture and time where it was accepted, Paul always limited it to a "holy kiss," which rejected any lascivious kiss (Pr 7:13) or treacherous kiss, like that of Judas.
- O. Therefore, we will continue to apply this passage with regular hugging between those of the same sex and infrequent hugging of those of the opposite sex, which is the more intimate form of greeting in our society and culture, and far superior to casual greetings.

5:27 Paul charges them to make sure the epistle was read to all the members of the church.

- A. Public reading of Scripture to men, women, and children had been done fervently (Deut 31:12; Josh 8:33-35), and its public interpretation was greatly appreciated (Neh 8:1-12).
- B. Paul charges them with an oath for public reading, but Rome condemned such with a curse: they could not bear the liberating power of Scripture. It was just 1963 with the Second Vatican Council that they stopped performing their services unintelligibly in Latin in the United States and allowed lay people to

read the Scriptures for themselves.

- C. Robert Raikes, the liberal owner and editor of the Gloucester Journal, invented Sunday Schools in 1780 to keep the unruly children off the streets on Sunday, their only day of freedom from working in the factories.
 - 1. He combined the teaching of reading with character training and the catechism as a successful method to reduce the crime rate among the poor of the cities.
 - 2. These Sunday schools became the rage, as most Christian churches have them today in some form or fashion in most nations of the world.
 - 3. Sunday schools effectively destroy family worship, replace ordained preaching with lay teaching, reduce the sobriety of worship, reduce the public reading of Scripture, introduce entertainment into worship, and dumb down Bible learning.
- D. The public reading of Scripture should both be emphasized and appreciated (Rev 1:3).
- E. Paul charged the Colossians to swap epistles with the church at Laodicea (Col 4:16).
- F. We are most blessed to have all his epistles inspired by the Holy Ghost (II Tim 3:16).
- G. Even our children are to be taught the Word of God in childhood (II Timothy 1:5; 3:15), which is done Scripturally and best by devoted parents and a faithful pastor.

5:28 Paul closes the epistle with his standard signature of the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.

- A. The de-merited favor of Jesus Christ in our lives is our single most necessary blessing.
- B. Every epistle Paul wrote concludes with this personal mark of his (II Thess 3:17), even the epistle to the Hebrews, which so many want to deny to Paul (Hebrews 13:25).
- C. Grace is His operative kindness toward us from predestination to glorification.
 - 1. Constant remembrance of His grace is certainly a duty of thankful saints.
 - 2. Still facing the combined foes of Satan, the world, and our flesh, we are dependent upon fresh supplies of grace to serve acceptably (Hebrews 12:28).
 - 3. While the eternal, legal, and vital aspects of His grace have been given, we need practical grace on a daily basis to serve Him faithfully (Heb 4:16; James 4:6).
 - 4. If He withdraws His practical grace, we will quickly and severely backslide (Job 36:17; II Samuel 24:1; II Chronicles 32:31; Luke 22:31-32).
 - 5. For this reason He taught us to pray for His preservation (Matthew 6:13).
 - 6. Such practical grace was important to Paul (II Thessalonians 3:5; Eph 3:14-19).

Conclusion:

- A. Surely we can find something in this chapter we need to be doing better. May the Lord help us!
- B. This chapter is the spiritual religion of the Lord Jesus Christ as given to His apostles for us.
- C. And it includes the glorious hope of His strength to enable us to do it for His honor and glory.