

# 1 Thessalonians 5:18-20 Commentary

1Thessalonians 5:18 in [everything give thanks](#) for [this](#) is [God's will](#) for you in [Christ Jesus](#). (NASB: Lockman)

**Greek:** [en panti eucharisteite; \(2PPAM\) touto gar thelema theou en Christo lesou eis humas](#)

**Amplified:** Thank [God] in everything [no matter what the circumstances may be, be thankful and give thanks], for this is the will of God for you [who are] in Christ Jesus [the Revealer and Mediator of that will]. ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

**KJV:** In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.

**NIV:** give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

**NLT:** No matter what happens, always be thankful, for this is God's will for you who belong to Christ Jesus. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

**Phillips:** Be thankful, whatever the circumstances may be. If you follow this advice you will be working out the will of God expressed to you in Jesus Christ. ([Phillips: Touchstone](#))

**Wuest:** In everything be giving thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

**Young's Literal:** in every thing give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus in regard to you.

**IN EVERYTHING GIVE THANKS:** [en panti eucharisteite \(2PPAM\):](#)

- Ephesians 5:20; Philippians 4:6; Colossians 3:17; Job 1:21; Psalms 34:1; Hebrews 13:15
- 1Thes 4:3; 1Peter 2:15; 1Pe 4:2; 1Jn 2:17
- 1 Thessalonians 5 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [1 Thessalonians 5:18 Giving Thanks in Everything](#) - John MacArthur
- [1 Thessalonians 5:18 In Everything Give Thanks](#) - John MacArthur

**Ruth Bell Graham** - We can't always give thanks **FOR** everything, but we can always give thanks **IN** everything.

It is not an accident that one of the first manifestations of a believer filled with the Holy Spirit is that they are "always (Greek word pas = no exception clauses!) **giving thanks (present tense** - speaks of direction, not perfection) for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father." (Eph 5:18).

**Paul** exhorts the saints at Colossae to continually practice a God "aligned" attitude of gratitude...

**Whatever you do** in word (lips) or deed (life), do **all** (Greek = pas = same word in 1Th 5:18) in the name of the Lord Jesus, **giving thanks through Him** (study) to God the Father. (Colossians 3:17-note)

The prime **OT illustration** of this supernatural response even in the face of overwhelming troubles (If you think you're experiencing trials and afflictions read Job 1:13, 14,15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20) is **Job** who...

said, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I shall return there. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord." (Job 1:21)

**Comment:** Beloved, if this affirmation of Job does not convict you (And be sure and read Job 1:22 if you're feeling smug! cp Php 2:14-note), then you must already be glorified! And remember the OT saints **did not** have the incredible resource we NT believers possess - the indwelling Holy Spirit (Ro 8:9-note)!

**David** steadfastly affirmed...

I will bless the Lord **at all times**. His praise shall **continually** be in my mouth. (Psalm 34:1)

**Spurgeon comments:** **I will bless the Lord at all times.** He is resolved and fixed, **I will** (**Ed:** God won't force us to choose thankfulness. It comes down to a choice, but even that choice is motivated by His indwelling Spirit as in Php 2:13-note); he is personally and for himself determined, let others so as they may; he is **intelligent in head** and **inflamed in heart** -- he knows to Whom the praise is due, and what is due, and for

what and when.

To **Jehovah**, and not to second causes our gratitude is to be rendered. The Lord hath by right a monopoly in His creatures praise. Even when a mercy may remind us of our sin with regard to it, as in this case David's deliverance from the Philistine monarch was sure to do, we are not to rob God of His meed (a fitting return or recompense) of honour because our conscience justly awards a censure to our share in the transaction. Though the hook was rusty, yet God sent the fish, and we thank Him for it.

**At all times, in every situation, under every circumstance, before, in and after trials, in bright days of glee, and dark nights of fear.**

He would never have done praising, because never satisfied that he had done enough; always feeling that he fell short of the Lord's deservings.

Happy is he whose fingers  
are wedded to his harp.

He who praises God for mercies  
shall never want a mercy for which to praise.

To bless the Lord is never unseasonable. **His praise shall continually be in my mouth**, not in my heart merely, but in my mouth too.

**Our thankfulness is not to be a dumb thing; it should be one of the daughters of music. Our tongue is our glory, and it ought to reveal the glory of God.**

What a blessed mouthful is God's praise! How sweet, how purifying, how perfuming! If men's mouths were always thus filled, there would be no repining against God, or slander of neighbours.

**If we continually rolled this dainty morsel under our tongue, the bitterness of daily affliction would be swallowed up in joy.**

God deserves blessing with the heart, and extolling with the mouth --

**good thoughts in the closet  
and  
good words in the world.**

**So how does one emulate and exercise this Davidic attitude of gratitude?...**

**Through Him** (through Christ, our Great High Priest - see study of through Him = through Christ) then, let us **continually** offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips (What does this imply? As physical fruit is borne by abiding, so spiritual fruit is borne by us abiding in Christ and His Spirit in us - Gal 5:22-note, Gal 5:23-note, Jn 15:5) that **give thanks** to His Name. (Hebrews 13:15-note)

**Chrysostom** "gave a practical illustration of this heroic temper by repeating (this attitude of gratitude), as he died in the extreme hardships of an enforced and painful exile. ([James Moffatt - Expositor's Greek Testament - goto Page 42](#))

**Related Resources:**

- Exposition of Ephesians 5:20 (Eph 5:20)
- Exposition of Philipians 4:6 (Php 4:6)

A great many Christians although familiar with this command, have looked on it as a sort of counsel of perfection which is out of reach of most of us mere mortals. We offer our own practical paraphrase of Paul's command saying something like "in most things give thanks" or "in some things give thanks" or "give thanks when you feel like it"! Let's be honest, there are times when the thought of giving thanks is the farthest thought from our mind. We would rather grumble and/or complain. And often we have a "legitimate" (in the world's way of looking at things) reason to gripe. And so we arrive at a "spiritual stalemate" because we really don't want to do what Paul is commanding. It is at times like this what we need to remember the basic spiritual "law" that God never asks us to do something that He doesn't enable us to accomplish. Thanksgiving is often an act of sheer faith. Our intellect says "get upset and complain." But the Spirit says, "give thanks in all things and at all times." If we respond to the Spirit in faith (God allowed it and He will cause it to work out for good) and genuinely give thanks (not legalistically but enabled by amazing grace), we are blessed. We will cease fretting and a beautiful joy and confidence in God sets in. Admittedly this describes the ideal response, and yet one that is within the reach of every believer because we all possess the Spirit and access to just the necessary amount of grace.

The opposite of **giving thanks in all things** is grumbling or murmuring, an attitude and response Paul addressed in his letter to the Philippians...

**Do** all things without grumbling or disputing; **15** (Paul explains why this response is so important) that you may prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world, **16** holding fast the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may have cause to glory because I did not run in vain nor toil in vain. (See **notes** Philippians 2:14; 15; 16)

**Comment:** Notice that "non-grumbling" is not optional and is not just a suggestion. Paul is commanding "non-grumbling" to be the believer's continual response [present imperative]! Remember that when you murmur about your circumstances, in the final analysis, you are murmuring against the One Who has designed every circumstance of your life. So when the urge to murmur comes over you [the old **flesh** will always urge you in that direction - see Gal 5:17-note], remember that you need to view the adverse circumstances with eyes of faith and an eternal perspective [cf 2Cor 4:16, 17, 18], asking the question "Is God still on the throne?" Then make the volitional choice to "Give thanks in everything!"

Thanksgiving is also an excellent antidote for anxiety or worry as we deduce from Paul's famous command in Philippians...

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. (see note Philippians 4:6)

**Robert Morgan** illustrates this spiritual dynamic...

When her children were rebelling against the Lord, Ruth Bell Graham found herself occasionally torn apart by worry. One night while abroad, she awoke suddenly in the middle of the night worrying about her son. A current of worry surged through her like an electric shock. She lay in bed and tried to pray, but she suffered from galloping anxiety, one fear piling upon another. She looked at the clock and it was around three o'clock. She was exhausted, yet she knew she would be unable to go back to sleep. Suddenly the Lord seemed to say to her, "Quit studying the problems and start studying the promises."

She turned on the light, got out her Bible, and the first verses that came to her were these, Philippians 4:6,7. As she read those words, she suddenly realized that the missing ingredient in her prayers had been thanksgiving. "... in everything by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God."

She put down her Bible and spent time worshipping God for Who and what He is. She later wrote, "I began to thank God for giving me this one I loved so dearly in the first place. I even thanked him for the difficult spots which had taught me so much. And you know what happened? It was as if someone turned on the light in my mind and heart, and the little fears and worries that had been nibbling away in the darkness like mice and cockroaches hurriedly scuttled for cover. That was when I learned that worship and worry cannot live in the same heart. They are mutually exclusive." ([In Everything Give Thanks](#))

**James Moffatt** wrote the following regarding 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18...

To comment adequately on these diamond drops would be an outline a history of the Christian experience in its higher levels.

To the natural man who lives for this present world Paul gives a startling injunction. As usual though Paul does not command them to do something he did not model for them as testified by numerous passages...

**Ro 1:8** (note) First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, because your faith is being proclaimed throughout the whole world.

**1Cor 1:4** I thank my God always concerning you, for the grace of God which was given you in Christ Jesus, 5 that in everything you were enriched in Him, in all speech and all knowledge,

**Ep 1:16** (note) do not cease giving thanks for you, while making mention of you in my prayers;

**Php 1:3** (note) I thank my God in all my remembrance of you,

**Col 1:3** (note) We give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you,

**Philemon 1:4** I thank my God always, making mention of you in my prayers

**In everything** ([3956](#)) (pas) (first in the Greek for emphasis!) means **no exceptions!** Every situation. All times. Every circumstance. Good. Bad. Happy. Sad. This all inclusive emphatic adverbial phrase lifts this admonition above the level of natural practice or

possibility. The previous two commands are continuous as to time (always) and this one is universal in scope.

**Really Paul, this is not humanly possible!** To which Paul would probably reply **You're right. It's not. It's only superhumanly possible!**" Okay I see it now -

**It's impossible!**

**But it is...**

**Him-possible!**

And so we're not surprised to see the attitude of gratitude associated with a Spirit filled (controlled, enabled) saint for in the context of Eph 5:18-note, Paul lists one of the "indicators" of Spirit filling writing that he or she is...

always (Same word as in 1Th 5:18 = pas = everything, no exceptions) giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father (Eph 5:20-note)

As alluded to at the beginning of this note, Paul said give thanks *in* everything not *for* everything. Paul is not calling us to be thankful *for* the rebellious kids, or *for* the terminal illness, etc. The preposition is *in* all things. *In* the midst of all things, we can give thanks because God's indwelling Spirit will enable us to do so. Doing so is an expression of our trust in His Sovereignty and Faithfulness, that He will never test us beyond what we are able to endure! (1Cor 10:13-note).

God is sovereign and is over all adversity and all prosperity. The upshot is that everything that is allowed into our lives either from His hand directly or is filtered through His hands of perfect love and infinite wisdom. And so we can give thanks in everything because He is still on the throne and is in control. He El Elyon: Most High God, Sovereign Over All

**William Law** wrote in 1729 in his famous book [A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life](#) wrote that...

If anyone would tell you the shortest, surest way to all happiness and all perfection, he must tell you to make it a rule to yourself to thank and praise God for everything that happens to you. For it is certain that whatever seeming calamity happens to you, if you thank and praise God for it, you turn it to a blessing. Could you, therefore, work miracles, you could not do more for yourself than by this thankful spirit, for it heals with a word speaking, and turns all that it touches into happiness

**Richison** makes a distinction that...

There is a difference in giving thanks "for" everything and "in" everything. If we gave thanks "for" everything that would mean that we give thanks for the Devil and his plan for the world!

Neither do we give thanks necessarily "after" everything. It does not require much faith to trace the hand of God with the benefit of hindsight. However, it takes faith to accept one's lot with gratitude in the midst of circumstances... we need to have the attitude of Samuel in 1Samuel 3:18,

Then Samuel told him everything, and hid nothing from him. And he said, 'It is the LORD. Let Him do what seems good to Him.

Whatever comes in our lives comes in by the will of God, otherwise, He would prevent it. God mixes with His divine compound the bitter and the sweet, the good and the bad, in appropriate proportions so that they work together for good. God knows just the right amount of sunshine and rain. He measures out these things with great precision... ([1 Thessalonians 5:18](#) )

God designs all circumstances for the benefit of the believer. God thinks about your limitations. He knows the proper proportions of adversity that are right for you. We should not concern ourselves with the portion given to someone else. God works in each person's life differently.

He custom designs the structure of their circumstances by divine design. God knows the straw that will break the camel's back. He will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you can bear, but He wants a tested product. Engineers of today's automobiles test drive prototypes so that they know what these cars can tolerate. God wants to bring out the best in us...

God's providential plan for our lives includes all contingencies. God foresees every circumstance that comes into our lives. Not only does He foresee everything that happens to us, but He providentially plans or allows each situation that comes into our lives.

There is no substitute for understanding the will of God for our suffering. Nothing can come into our lives unless the Lord allows it. God must put His initials on everything that comes into our state of affairs. We may

give thanks through tears.

Our obligation is to believe God's Word about these matters. The Bible teaches God's providential care of His creatures throughout the Scriptures. ([1 Thessalonians 5:18b](#))

**Montgomery** writes that Paul commands a...

duty not dependent on gratifying times or circumstances. They must practice thanksgiving in every circumstance

There is a silver lining to every cloud. God is with us whatever befalls us, as was so beautifully recorded by William Cowper ([John Piper's description of his life](#) or [Audio version](#)) in his hymn...

[God Moves in a Mysterious Way \(play\)](#)  
[God Moves in A Mysterious Way with Lyrics](#)

God moves in a mysterious way His wonders to perform;  
He plants His footsteps in the sea, and rides upon the storm.

Deep in unfathomable mines of never-failing skill,  
He treasures up His bright designs, and works His sovereign will.

Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take, the clouds ye so much dread,  
Are big with mercy, and shall break In blessings on your head.

Judge not the Lord by feeble sense, but trust Him for His grace;  
**Behind a frowning providence, He hides a smiling face.**

His purposes will ripen fast, unfolding every hour;  
The bud may have a bitter taste, but sweet will be the flower.

Blind unbelief is sure to err, and scan his work in vain;  
God is His own interpreter, and He will make it plain.

As **John Piper** asks "How can we not be thankful when we owe everything to God?" (A Godward Life)

**Give thanks** ([2168](#))(**eucharisteo** [word study] from **eucháristos** = thankful, grateful, well-pleasing - Indicates the obligation of being thankful to someone for a favor done <> in turn from **eú** = well + **charízomai** = to grant, give.; English - Eucharist) means to show that one is under obligation by being thankful. To show oneself as grateful (most often to God in the NT).

**Moulton and Milligan** note that **eucharisteo** originally meant "do a good turn to" or "oblige," and in late Greek passed readily into the meaning "be grateful," "give thanks". Giving thanks is the quality of being grateful, with the implication of also having appropriate (Spirit filled) attitude.

This meaning is common in diplomatic documents in which the recipient of a favor reciprocates with assurance of goodwill. It is also used to express appreciation for benefits or blessings. Giving thanks was an important component of Greco-Roman reciprocity as demonstrated by a copy of a letter written by the Emperor Claudius to a Gymnastic Club expressing his gratification at games performed in his honour. The word eucharista was also common on ancient inscriptions.

**Thanksgiving** expresses what ought never to be absent from any of our devotions. We should always be ready to express our grateful acknowledgement of past mercies as distinguished from the earnest seeking of future mercies.

**TDNT** writes that...

We first find **eucharistos** in the senses "pleasant" and "graceful." **Eucharisteo** means "to show a favor," but this imposes a duty of gratitude and the meaning "to be thankful" or "to give thanks" develops. We also find the sense "to pray."

The Greek world held thanksgiving in high esteem. With the ordinary use we find a public use (gratitude to rulers) and a religious use (thanksgiving to the gods for blessings). Thanks are also a constituent part of letters. ([Kittel, G., Friedrich, G., & Bromiley, G. W. Theological Dictionary of the New Testament. Eerdmans](#))

Don't miss the fact that **give thanks** is in the **present imperative** which calls for this to be our habitual attitude and action! The

**active voice** means that his is a personal choice (enabled by grace and the Spirit) we each must make continually.

**Spurgeon** admits that...

I have not always found it easy to practice this duty; this I confess to my shame. When suffering extreme pain some time ago, a brother in Christ said to me, "Have you thanked God for this?" I replied that I desired to be patient, and would be thankful to recover. "But," said he, "in everything give thanks, not after it is over, but while you are still in it, and perhaps when you are enabled to give thanks for the severe pain, it will cease." I believe that there was much force in that good advice. (**Ed note:** I agree but would add that even if the pain doesn't cease, one's heart assumes a proper perspective to pain).

**Paul** writes to the saints at Colossae...

Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, **giving thanks** (present tense) through Him (Christ Jesus) to God the Father. (see note Colossians 3:17)

The access we have is provided is through Him...

by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh (He 10:20-note).

**F F Bruce** comments that...

Ingratitude is one of the features of pagan depravity in Ro 1:21 (*For even though they knew God, they **did not** honor Him as God, or **give thanks**; but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened.*); the children of God are expected to "abound in thanksgiving" (Col 2:7-note; cf. Col 3:15, 17, 4:2-see notes Col 3:15, 17; 4:2; Eph 5:4,20-see notes Ep 5:4, 20). ([Bruce, F F: 1 and 2 Thessalonians. Word Biblical Commentary. Dallas: Word, Incorporated. 1982](#) )

**Hiebert** adds that...

The Christian should meet adverse circumstances of life not with a spirit of stoic resignation but with a spirit of unflinching gratitude. Paul and Silas had exemplified this spirit when imprisoned at Philippi (Acts 16:25). Such an attitude is made possible only by the grace of God. It can become a vital reality only when the truth of Ro 8:28-note is experienced. When we realize that God works all things out for good to those who love Him and are yielded to His will, thanksgiving under all circumstances becomes a glorious possibility "He who can say 'Amen' to the will of God in his heart will be able to say 'Hallelujah' also." It is typical of a life of unbelief that it lacks thanksgiving (Ro 1:21-note), but a life united with God in Christ Jesus is characterized by a spirit of thanksgiving ([Hiebert, D. Edmond: 1 & 2 Thessalonians: BMH Book. 1996](#))

**Barnes** notes that believers...

can always find something to be thankful for, and there may be reasons why we ought to be thankful for even those dispensations which appear dark and frowning. Chrysostom, once the archbishop of Constantinople, and then driven into exile, persecuted, and despised, died far away from all the splendours of the capital, and all the comforts and honours which he had enjoyed, uttering his favourite motto -- glory to God for all things. Bibliotheca Sacra, i. 700. So we may praise God for everything that happens to us under his government. A man owes a debt of obligation to him for anything which will recall him from his wanderings, and which will prepare him for heaven. Are there any dealings of God towards men which do not contemplate such an end? Is a man ever made to drink the cup of affliction when no drop of mercy is intermingled? Is he ever visited with calamity which does not in some way contemplate his own temporal or eternal good? Could we see all, we should see that we are never placed in circumstances in which there is not much for which we should thank God. And when, in his dealings, a cloud seems to cover his face, let us remember the good things without number which we have received, and especially remember that we are in the world of redeeming love, and we shall find enough for which to be thankful.

For this is the will of God. That is, that you should be grateful. This is what God is pleased to require you to perform in the name of the Lord Jesus. In the gift of that Saviour he has laid the foundation for that claim, and he requires that you should not be unmindful of the obligation. (cf note Hebrews 13:15). (Barnes' Notes on the New Testament)

**J Vernon McGee** writes that **give thanks in everything** means...

in all circumstances, not just once a year, but all the time. This "is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." If you come to me and ask what is the will of God for you, I can tell you three specific things that are the



will of God for you: Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, and give thanks in everything. That is the will of God for you. ([McGee, J V: Thru the Bible Commentary: Thomas Nelson](#) )

**Gary Delashmutt** writes that...

The New Testament teaches that gratitude is related to spiritual health in two different ways. We'll use a medical model to explore this ...

(1) Gratitude is a "thermometer" that indicates the state of your spiritual health. A thermometer is a tool that tells you whether you have one of the symptoms of physical illness (fever). It is not a medicine. You don't put the thermometer in the freezer and then stick it into your mouth to break your fever. You put it in your mouth and it tells you if you have a fever. In the same way, the presence or absence of gratitude in your dealings with God is one of the most reliable indicators of your spiritual health. This is because it (along with serving love) is the normal and natural result of personally understanding and receiving God's grace. Grace means charity—a gift to the undeserving.

(2) Gratitude is a "medicine" that promotes your spiritual health. Gratitude is not a feeling that dictates your choices; it is a choice that affects your feelings. This is what Paul is emphasizing in this passage. Most of the New Testament passages on gratitude are imperatives, addressed to our volition rather than to our emotions. He is not prescribing for us how we must feel; he is calling on us to choose to rejoice and thank God on the basis of what is true--regardless of how happy or thankful we may feel.

This is a key insight into biblical spirituality. It involves our feelings and experiences, but it is not rooted in them, because they are fallen and broken and unreliable. It is rooted in God's truth and our choice to express faith in the truth, often in spite of what we feel. This is why the notion that it is unspiritual to thank God unless you feel grateful is false. Choosing by faith to thank God in spite of intense feelings of depression, disappointment, anxiety, etc. is deeply spiritual. This is why if you wait until you feel grateful to thank God, you will feel less and less grateful. But if you choose to thank God regardless of how you feel, you will feel more grateful more often. It is in this sense that gratitude is a key step of faith (along with serving love) that unleashes God's blessing into your experience. ("Grateful servants are happy people.").

**Wiersbe** wrote...

An attitude of gratitude is a wonderful weapon against unbelief, disobedience, a hard heart, and a bitter spirit. "Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In everything give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you" (1Thes 5:16-18). Instead of complaining about what we don't have, let's be thankful for what we do have, because God always gives His best to those who leave the choice with Him. (Bible Exposition Commentary Old Testament)

We can't control the circumstances of life, but we can control how we respond to them. That's what faith is all about, daring to believe that God is working everything for our good even when we don't feel like it or see it happening. "In everything give thanks" (1Thes. 5:18) isn't always easy to obey, but obeying this command is the best antidote against a bitter and critical spirit. The Scottish preacher George H. Morrison said, "Nine-tenths of our unhappiness is selfishness, and is an insult cast in the face of God." (Bible Exposition Commentary - Old Testament)

(Commenting on Psalm 146:1, 2 Wiersbe writes) God gives us life and breath (Acts 17:25), so it is only right that we use that life and breath to praise Him (Ps 150:6). To receive the gifts and ignore the Giver is the essence of idolatry. The writer promised God he would praise Him all of his life, and certainly this is wise preparation for praising Him for eternity (Ps 104:33). To live a life of praise is to overcome criticism and complaining, to stop competing against others and comparing ourselves with them. It means to be grateful in and for everything (1Th. 5:18; Eph. 5:20) and really believe that God is working all things together for our good (Ro 8:28). A life of praise is free from constant anxiety and discouragement as we focus on the Lord, who is mentioned eleven times in this psalm. (Bible Exposition Commentary - Old Testament)

**BBC** wrote that even the...

Pagans who recognized that Fate or some god was sovereign over everything acknowledged that one should accept whatever comes or even give thanks for it. For Paul, those who trust God's sovereignty and love can give thanks in every situation. (Bible Background Commentary)

**Disciple's Study Bible** notes that...

God's will is that we gratefully acknowledge His hand in all circumstances, not for all circumstances. Circumstances change; God does not. The Christian has an obligation to remain aware of God's goodness regardless of appearances. Continuous prayer involves an attitude of openness to God in all situations and a practice of talking to God about all situations.

**Merrill Unger** wrote that **thanksgiving** is...

A duty of which gratitude is the grace. This obligation of godliness is acknowledged by the universal sentiment of mankind; but as a Christian grace it has some blessed peculiarities. It is gratitude for all the benefits of divine Providence, especially for the general and personal gifts of redemption. The very term most in use shows this; it is charis, which is the grace of God in Christ, operating in the soul of the believer as a principle and going back to Him in gratitude: "Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!" (2Cor. 9:15). The ethical gratitude of Christianity connects every good gift and every perfect gift with the gift of Christ. Moreover, it is a thanksgiving that in the Christian economy, and in it alone, redounds to God for all things: in everything give thanks. This characteristic flows from the former. The rejoicing that we have in the Lord, and the everlasting consolation we possess in Him, makes every possible variety of divine dispensation a token for good. The Christian privilege is to find reason for gratitude in all things: "for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus" (1 Thessalonians. 5:18). ([Unger, M. F., Harrison, R. K., Vos, H. F., Barber, C. J., & Unger, M. F. The New Unger's Bible Dictionary. Chicago: Moody Press](#))

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**A Lost Art** - Thankfulness seems to be a lost art today. Warren Wiersbe illustrated this problem in his commentary on Colossians. He told about a ministerial student in Evanston, Illinois, who was part of a life-saving squad. In 1860, a ship went aground on the shore of Lake Michigan near Evanston, and Edward Spencer waded again and again into the frigid waters to rescue 17 passengers. In the process, his health was permanently damaged. Some years later at his funeral, it was noted that not one of the people he rescued ever thanked him.

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In his book FOLK PSALMS OF FAITH, Ray Stedman tells of an experience H. A. Ironside had in a crowded restaurant. Just as Ironside was about to begin his meal, a man approached and asked if he could join him. Ironside invited him to have a seat. Then, as was his custom, Ironside bowed his head in prayer. When he opened his eyes, the other man asked, "Do you have a headache?" Ironside replied, "No, I don't." The other man asked, "Well, is there something wrong with your food?" Ironside replied, "No, I was simply thanking God as I always do before I eat."

The man said, "Oh, you're one of those, are you? Well, I want you to know I never give thanks. I earn my money by the sweat of my brow and I don't have to give thanks to anybody when I eat. I just start right in!"

Ironside said, "Yes, you're just like my dog. That's what he does too!" (Ray Stedman, Folk Psalms of Faith)

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In a sermon at Immanuel Presbyterian Church in Los Angeles, Gary Wilburn said: "In 1636, amid the darkness of the Thirty Years' War, a German pastor, Martin Rinkart, is said to have buried five thousand of his parishioners in one year, an average of fifteen a day. His parish was ravaged by war, death, and economic disaster. In the heart of that darkness, with the cries of fear outside his window, he sat down and wrote this table grace for his children:

**'Now thank we all our God  
With heart and hands and voices  
Who wondrous things had done  
In whom His world rejoices.**

**Who, from our mother's arms,  
Hath led us on our way  
With countless gifts of love  
And still is ours today**

Here was a man who knew thanksgiving comes from love of God, not from outward circumstances. (Don Maddox)

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Scottish minister **Alexander Whyte** was known for his uplifting prayers in the pulpit. He always found something for which to be grateful. One Sunday morning the weather was so gloomy that one church member thought to himself...

Certainly the preacher won't think of anything for which to thank the Lord on a wretched day like this.



Much to his surprise, however, Pastor Whyte began by praying...

We thank Thee, O God, that it is not always like this.

That's the habitual attitude of gratitude Paul is calling for in all of God's children, beloved. Gratitude is an attitude that like all spiritual disciplines, needs to be consciously developed and deliberately cultivated in the dependence on the Holy Spirit and the grace in which we stand. There are some practical steps that can cultivate the gracious attribute of gratitude. For example, you can make thanksgiving a priority in your prayer life (Col 4:2-note) rather than focusing only on petitions and requests. There may even be blessed times when your prayer time consists of nothing but gratefulness to the Almighty. You can always thank Him for the various wonderful aspects of your salvation (adoption & sovereign care, forgiveness, inheritance, the gift of His Spirit, freedom from sin's power and Satan's authority, etc) Have you had any prayer times like that recently? And you can thank Him for the "smaller" blessings of life, those things we all too often take for granted. You can ask Him to make you very sensitive to grumbling and mumbling complaints which are the polar opposite of a thankful spirit. You can utilize spiritual songs (Ep 5:20-note) to cultivate an attitude of thankfulness, allowing the words of a wonderful hymn to lift your eyes and heart in a way that nothing else can. Thank people who bless you in even the smallest ways. It will complete your enjoyment of the blessing, and it will increase your capacity to thank God. Reflect on and serve those less fortunate than you. This will remind you of how gracious God has been to you, how far He has brought you, and how much He has blessed you—which will in turn motivate you to be grateful to God.

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**Give Thanks!** (READ: Leviticus 23:15-22) - At harvest time it's natural to thank God for the bounty of His blessings. The Feast of Weeks in ancient Israel, established in Leviticus 23, was a week of joyous celebration and feasting in gratitude for the harvest (Dt. 16:9, 10, 11, 12). Even today as farmers gather their crops, many give thanks to the Lord for the abundance of their harvest.

But what if untimely and persistent rain keeps the farmer from getting his machines into the fields and harvesting the ripe grain? What if a sudden hailstorm flattens the corn? Or a summer drought dries up the fields?

The apostle Paul wrote, "In everything give thanks" (1Th 5:18). That may sound unrealistic. But think about it. The Jews were instructed to celebrate the Feast of Weeks whether the crops came in or not. Likewise, we are to give thanks to the Lord "in everything." After all, our praise is to God, not to a barn full of hay or a crib full of corn.

Yes, we can give thanks. We can do so whether the day goes smoothly or we meet aggravating problems. We can be grateful if we're rich or poor, when we're feeling well or if our health fails. In every circumstance, we can affirm God's goodness and discover reasons to give thanks to Him. After all, our gratitude is to Him and for Him. — David C. Egner ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Consider what the Lord has done  
For you and those you love;  
Then give Him thanks with hearts of praise  
For blessings from above. --Sper

**We don't need more to be thankful for,  
we need to be more thankful.**

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**A Flat Thanks** - The day before Christmas became a thanksgiving day for my family. The station wagon was packed with kids and travel stuff for the 400-mile trip to Grandma's. As is our custom, before leaving we asked God to protect us on the road. He did, but in an unusual way.

As we were cruising down I-75 in Ohio, we ran over some debris in the road. It made a lot of noise, but did no damage—or so we thought. With every passing mile we figured that the crisis had passed. When we pulled off the expressway for gas a few miles later, though, we were in for a deflating surprise. I felt a sickening, sloppy feeling in the front of the car. Both front tires had gone flat.

We weren't happy with having to replace the tires, but we were thankful for God's care. Thankful that we didn't have an accident. Thankful that the tires stayed inflated until we got off the expressway. Thankful for the tow truck sitting at the gas station. Thankful that a repair shop was open. We were thankful for God's answer to our prayer.

Our trials were nothing compared with what the apostle Paul endured. Yet he gave thanks to God, and he said we should be thankful "in everything." Any day can be thanksgiving day, even when things go wrong.— Dave Branon ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

We should be ready to give the Lord thanks

For blessing as well as for test;  
Hearts that are thankful is all that He asks;  
Let's trust Him to give what is best. —Bierema

**If you pause to think,  
you'll have cause to thank.**

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**Everyday Blessings** - Missionary Benjamin Weir was held hostage in Lebanon and imprisoned under miserable conditions for 16 months. In his first interview after his release, he was asked how he spent his time and how he dealt with boredom and despair. His answer stunned the reporters. He simply said, "Counting my blessings."

"Blessings?" they responded.

"Yes," he explained. "Some days I got to take a shower. Sometimes there were some vegetables in my food. And I could always be thankful for the love of my family."

We can understand why the reporters were astonished. It's hard for most of us to be consistently thankful for the commonplace blessings that make life pleasant and comfortable--the unfailing supply of our daily needs, the provision of food and shelter, the companionship of friends and families. There are times when we may even forget the wonderful mercies of God's redeeming grace.

Paul and Silas, though they were beaten, thrown into prison, and placed in stocks, were still "singing hymns to God" (Acts 16:25). May we learn from them, and from Benjamin Weir, to count our blessings no matter what our circumstances. We have many reasons to rejoice. — Vernon C. Grounds ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Are you ever burdened with a load of care?  
Does the cross seem heavy you are called to bear?  
Count your many blessings, every doubt will fly,  
And you will be singing as the days go by. --Oatman

**Praise to God comes naturally  
when you count your blessings.**

---

**Thanks For Fleas** - Corrie ten Boom was an inspiration and challenge to thousands of people after World War II. Hearts were stirred and lives changed as she told with moving simplicity about God's sufficiency to meet her needs, even as a prisoner in a Nazi concentration camp.

Not only was the camp filthy, but there were fleas everywhere. Corrie's sister Betsie, who was imprisoned with her, insisted that 1 Thessalonians 5:18 was God's will for them: "In everything give thanks." But giving thanks in a flea-infested place seemed unrealistic to Corrie—until she realized why the guards didn't come into their barracks to make them stop praying and singing hymns. They wanted to avoid the fleas! So, the prisoners were free to worship and study the Bible. The fleas, yes, even the fleas were agents of grace, and something to be thankful for.

What are some of the "fleas" in our lives? They aren't the big difficulties, but the petty annoyances. They are the little trials from which we can't escape. Is it possible that they are one of the ways the Lord teaches us spiritual lessons and helps us to increase our endurance?

When we are tempted to grumble, let's remember the fleas and give thanks. —Vernon C. Grounds ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

For all the heartaches and the tears,  
For gloomy days and fruitless years  
I do give thanks, for now I know  
These were the things that helped me grow! —Crandlemire

**If you pause to think,  
you'll find cause to thank.**

## FOR THIS IS GOD'S WILL IN CHRIST JESUS: touto gar thelema theou en Christo lesou eis humas

- 1 Thessalonians 5 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [1 Thessalonians 5:18 Giving Thanks in Everything](#) - John MacArthur
- [1 Thessalonians 5:18 In Everything Give Thanks](#) - John MacArthur

**For (gar)** - Whenever you see this [term of explanation](#) consider the "**5P's**" - **P**ause to **P**onder the **P**assage then **P**actice it in the **P**ower of the Spirit

**Take a moment and do a survey of some Scriptural passages related to God's will (interrogate with the 5W'S & H [for many of the passages it will be important to check the context] and write down your observations/applications in your devotional notebook)** - Mt 6:10-note, Mt 7:21-note, Mt 12:50, 26:42, Mark 3:35, Jn 4:34, 6:40, 7:17, Acts 13:22, 21:14, 22:14, Ro 12:2-note, Eph 5:17-note, Ep 6:6-note, Col 1:9-note, Col 4:12-note, 1Th 4:3-note, 1Th 5:18-[note](#), Heb 10:7-note, He 10:36-note, He 13:21-note, 1Pe 2:15-note, 1Pe 4:2-note, 1Jn 2:17-note, Ps 40:8-[note](#), Ps 143:10-[note](#)

**For (gar)** introduces an explanation, in this case Paul explains why all saints should be motivated to continually be grateful. According to **Hiebert** the preposition **for (gar)** "introduces the fact that this triplet of commands is justified because of God's will for the readers."

**Hiebert** goes on to comment on **this** (touto) that

There is some uncertainty as to the intended scope of **'this'** (touto). Is it to be restricted to thanksgiving alone, or does it include all three injunctions?... The context favors this inclusive reference. Rejoicing, prayer, and thanksgiving form a trio that are closely related and must not be separated in practice. If the dove of Christian joy is continually to mount upward, it must fly on the wings of prayer and thanksgiving. ([Hiebert, D. Edmond: 1 & 2 Thessalonians: BMH Book. 1996](#))

**Guzik** comments that...

After each one of these exhortations - **rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks** - we are told to do them because it is the will of God. The thought isn't "this is God's will, so you must do it." The thought is rather "this is God's will, so you can do it." It isn't easy to rejoice always, pray without ceasing, and in everything give thanks, but we can do it because it is God's will. ([Ref](#))

**This is God's will** - Paul was not teaching that we should thank God **for** everything that happens to us, but **in** everything. Even in evil circumstances, we can still be thankful for God's presence and for the good that He will accomplish through the distress.

**Will (2307)** (**thelema** from **thelo** = to will with the "-ma" suffix indicating the result of the will = "a thing willed") generally speaks of the result of what one has decided. One sees this root word in the feminine name "**Thelma**." In its most basic form, **thelema** refers to a wish, a strong desire, and the willing of some event. (**Note:** See also the discussion of the preceding word [boule](#) for comments relating to thelema).

**Zodhiates** says that **thelema** is the...

Will, not to be conceived as a demand, but as an expression or inclination of pleasure towards that which is liked, that which pleases and creates joy. When it denotes God's will, it signifies His gracious disposition toward something. Used to designate what God Himself does of His own good pleasure. ([Zodhiates, S. The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament. AMG](#))

**Thelema** - 62x in 58v -

Mt 6:10; 7:21; 12:50; 18:14; 21:31; 26:42; Mark 3:35; Luke 12:47; 22:42; 23:25; Jn 1:13; 4:34; 5:30; 6:38, 39, 40; 7:17; 9:31; Acts 13:22; 21:14; 22:14; Ro 1:10-note; Ro 2:18-note; Ro 12:2-note; Ro 15:32-note; 1Cor 1:1; 7:37; 16:12; 2Cor 1:1; 8:5; Gal 1:4; Ep 1:1-note, Ep 1:5-note, Ep 1:9-note, Ep 1:11-note; Ep 2:3-note; Ep 5:17-note; Ep 6:6-note; Col 1:1-note, Col 1:9-note; Col 4:12-note; 1Th 4:3-note; 1Th 5:18-note; 2Ti 1:1-note; 2Ti 2:26-note; He 10:7-note, He 10:9-note, He 10:10-note, He 10:36-note; He 13:21-note; 1Pe 2:15-note; 1Pe 3:17-note; 1Pe 4:2-note, 1Pe 4:19-note; 2Pe 1:21-note; 1Jn 2:17; 5:14; Rev 4:11-[note](#). **NAS** = desire(1), desires(1), will(57).

**Thelema** has both an objective meaning ("what one wishes to happen") and a subjective connotation ("the act of willing or desiring"). The word conveys the idea of desire, even a heart's desire, for the word primarily expresses emotion instead of volition. Thus God's

will is not so much God's intention, as it is His heart's desire. It is God's gracious disposition.

Don't complain about thorns among the roses!

Be grateful for roses among the thorns! (Jas 1:2-note; Phil 4:6-note)

All the way my savior leads me;  
What have I to ask beside?  
Can I doubt His tender mercy,  
Who thro' life has been my guide?  
heav'nly peace divinest comfort,  
Here by faith in Him to dwell!  
For I know whate'er befall me,  
Jesus doeth all things well;  
For I know whate'er befall me,  
Jesus doeth all things well;  
Cheers each winding path I tread,  
Gives me grace for ev'ry trial,  
Feeds me with the living bread;  
Tho' my weary steps may falter,  
and my soul athirst may be,  
Gushing from the Rock before me,  
Lo! a spring of joy I see;  
Gushing from the Rock before me,  
Lo! a spring of joy I see;

All the way, my Savior leads me;  
Oh, the fullness of His love!  
Perfect rest to me is promised  
In my Father's house above:  
When my spirit, clothed immortal,  
Wings its flight to realms of day,  
This my song thro' endless ages:  
Jesus led me all the way;  
This my song thro' endless ages:  
Jesus led me all the way;

Do not meet adverse circumstances of life with a spirit of stoic resignation but with a spirit of unflinching gratitude. (Heb 12:5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 see **notes** He 12:5; 6; 7; 8; 9; 10; 11 to help understand this powerful truth of God's discipline & its ultimate purpose... then with that perspective you can offer thanks in everything, even though you may feel or be experiencing sorrow. It is "Him-possible")

In Acts 16 Paul and Silas are in prison in Philippi and Luke records that...

But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them (Acts 16:25)

Such an attitude is possible only by the grace of God and the empowering Spirit of God.

As someone has said "He who can say 'Amen' to the will of God in his heart will be able to say 'Hallelujah' also."

**Ray Stedman** writes that...

Twice in this letter we have had this phrase, "This is the will of God." We had it first in 1 Thessalonians 4:3, where Paul says, "This is the will of God for you, that you know how to preserve your own body in moral purity." That is the will of God for your body! But here is the will of God for your spirit, your inner life -- that you "give thanks in all circumstances." If you want to do the will of God there are the two areas in which his will is clearly set out for you:

Moral purity for your body;  
Continual thanksgiving for your spirit.

**In Christ Jesus** - Christ Jesus Himself is the pattern and source of a life of habitual gratitude. Gratitude to God found its supreme

manifestation in Christ's earthly life, and it is only in union with Him (see In Christ and also in Christ Jesus) that such a life is possible for the believer. This life is the product of the new life received from Him and is made operative in believers by the indwelling Holy Spirit. In his description of Spirit filled or controlled believers Paul wrote that they are...

**always giving thanks for all things** in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father (Eph 5:20 note)

**Comment:** MacArthur commenting on Ephesians 5:20 writes that

To be thankful always is to recognize God's control of our lives in every detail as He seeks to conform us to the image of His Son. Nothing must grieve the Holy Spirit so much as the believer who does not give thanks. In King Lear (I.ii.283, 312) Shakespeare wrote, "Ingratitude, thou marble-hearted fiend! ... How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is to have a thankless child!" When God brings trials and difficulties into our lives and we complain and grumble, we question His wisdom and love as well as His sovereignty... The only person who can genuinely give thanks for all things is the humble person, the person who knows he deserves nothing and who therefore gives thanks even for the smallest things. Lack of thankfulness comes from pride, from the conviction that we deserve something better than we have. [[MacArthur: Ephesians](#)]

**James Denney** comments that...

The third of the standing orders of the Church is, from one point of view, a combination of the first and second; for thanksgiving is a kind of joyful prayer. As a duty, it is recognised by everyone within limits; the difficulty of it is only seen when it is claimed, as here, without limits: **In everything give thanks**. That this is no accidental extravagance is shown by its recurrence in other places. To mention only one: in Php 4:6 (note) the Apostle writes,

In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

Is it really possible to do this thing?

There are times, we all know, at which thanksgiving is natural and easy. When our life has taken the course which we ourselves had purposed, and the result seems to justify our foresight; when those whom we love are prosperous and happy; when we have escaped a great danger, or recovered from a severe illness, we feel, or say we feel, so thankful. Even in such circumstances we are possibly not so thankful as we ought to be. Perhaps, if we were, our lives would be a great deal happier. But at all events we frankly admit that we have cause for thanksgiving; God has been good to us, even in our own estimate of goodness; and we ought to cherish and express our grateful love toward Him. Let us not forget to do so. It has been said that an unblest sorrow is the saddest thing in life; but perhaps as sad a thing is an unblest joy. And every joy is unblest for which we do not give God thanks. "Unhallowed pleasures" is a strong expression, which seems proper only to describe gross wickedness; yet it is the very name which describes any pleasure in our life of which we do not recognise God as the Giver, and for which we do not offer Him our humble and hearty thanks.

We would not be so apt to protest against the idea of giving thanks in **everything** if it had ever been our habit to give thanks in **anything**.

Think of what you call, with thorough conviction, your blessings and your mercies, — your bodily health, your soundness of mind, your calling in this world, the faith which you repose in others and which others repose in you; think of the love of your husband or wife. Think of all those sweet and tender ties that bind our lives into one; think of the success with which you have wrought out your own purposes, and laboured at your own ideal; and with all this multitude of mercies before your face, ask whether even for these you have given God thanks. Have they been hallowed and made means of grace to you by your grateful acknowledgment that He is the Giver of them. all? If not, it is plain that you have lost much joy, and have to begin the duty of thanksgiving in the easiest and lowest place.

But the Apostle rises high above this when he says, **In everything give thanks**. He knew, as I have remarked already, that the Thessalonians had been visited by suffering and death: is there a place for thanksgiving there? Yes, he says; for the Christian does not look on sorrow with the eyes of another man. When sickness comes to him or to his home; when there is loss to be borne, or disappointment, or bereavement; when his plans are frustrated, his hopes deferred, and the whole conduct of his life simply taken out of his hands, he is still called to give thanks to God. For he knows that God is love. He knows that God has a purpose of His own in his life, — a purpose which at the moment he may not discern, but which he is bound to believe wiser and larger than any he could purpose for himself. Everyone who has eyes to see must have seen, in the lives of Christian men and women, fruits of sorrow and of suffering which were conspicuously their best possessions,

the things for which the whole Church was under obligation to give thanks to God on their behalf.

It is not easy at the moment to see what underlies **sorrow**; it is not possible to grasp by anticipation the beautiful fruits which it yields in the long run to those who accept it without murmuring: but every Christian knows that all things work together for good to them that love God (see note Romans 8:28); and in the strength of that knowledge he is able to keep a thankful heart, however mysterious and trying the providence of God may be.

That **sorrow**, even the deepest and most hopeless, has been blessed, no one can deny. It has taught many a deeper thoughtfulness, a truer estimate of the world and its interests, a more simple trust in God. It has opened the eyes of many to the sufferings of others, and changed boisterous rudeness into tender and delicate sympathy. It has given many weak ones the opportunity of demonstrating the nearness and the strength of Christ, as out of weakness they have been made strong. Often the sufferer in a home is the most thankful member of it. Often the bedside is the surmiest spot in the house, though the bedridden one knows that he or she will never be free again. It is not impossible for a Christian in everything to give thanks.

But it is only a Christian who can do it, as the last words of the Apostle intimate: **This is the will of God in Christ Jesus to you-ward.**" These words may refer to all that has preceded: "**Rejoice alway; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks**"; or they may refer to the last clause only. Whichever be the case, the Apostle tells us that the ideal in question has only been revealed in Christ, and hence is only within reach of those who know Christ. Till Christ came, no man ever dreamt of rejoicing alway, praying without ceasing, and giving thanks in everything. There were noble ideals in the world, high, severe, and pure; but nothing so lofty, buoyant, and exhilarating as this. Men did not know God well enough to know what His will for them was; they thought He demanded integrity, probably, and beyond that, silent and passive submission at the most; no one had conceived that God's will for man was that his life should be made up of joy, prayer, and thanksgiving. But he who has seen Jesus Christ, and has discovered the meaning of His life, knows that this is the true ideal. For Jesus came into our world, and lived among us, that we might know God; He manifested the name of God that we might put our trust in it; and that name is Love; it is Father. If we know the Father, it is possible for us, in the spirit of children, to aim at this lofty Christian ideal; if we do not, it will seem to us utterly unreal. The will of God in Christ Jesus means the will of the Father; it is only for children that His will exists. Do not put aside the apostolic exhortation as paradox or extravagance; to Christian hearts, to the children of God, he speaks words of truth and soberness when he says, **Rejoice alway; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks.** Has not Christ Jesus given us peace with God, and made us friends instead of enemies? Is not that a fountain of joy too deep for sorrow to touch? Has He not assured us that He is with us all the days, even to the end of the world? Is not that a ground upon which we can look up in prayer all the day long? Has He not told us that all things work together for good to them that love God? Of course we cannot trace His operation always; but when we remember the seal with which Christ sealed that great truth; when we remember that in order to fulfill the purpose of God in each of us He laid down His life on our behalf, can we hesitate to trust His word? And if we do not hesitate, but welcome it gladly as our hope in the darkest hour, shall we not try even in everything to give thanks? (**Classic Commentary Collection.** See [AGES Software](#) for their full selection of highly recommended resources)

**Matthew Henry** - If we pray without ceasing, we shall not want matter for thanksgiving in every thing. As we must in every thing make our requests known to God by supplications, so we must not omit thanksgiving, Philippians 4:6. We should be thankful in every condition, even in adversity as well as prosperity. It is never so bad with us but it might be worse. If we have ever so much occasion to make our humble complaints to God, we never can have any reason to complain of God, and have always much reason to praise and give thanks: the apostle says, This is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning us, that we give thanks, seeing God is reconciled to us in Christ Jesus; in him, through him, and for his sake, he allows us to rejoice evermore, and appoints us in every thing to give thanks. It is pleasing to God.

**Andrew Murray** - A joyful, thankful life is what God has destined for us, is what He will work in us: what He desires, that He certainly does in those who do not withstand Him, but receive and suffer His will to work in them. (The New Life)

**William Barclay** - "There is always something for which to give thanks; even on the darkest day there are blessings to count. We must remember that if we face the sun the shadows will fall behind us but if we turn our backs on the sun all the shadows will be in front. ([1 Thessalonians 5 Commentary](#))

A French proverb says "Gratitude is the heart's memory."

Although he was not a Christian as far as I can discern, Cicero has some sage advice remarking that...



A thankful heart is the parent of all virtues.

**Chrysostom's** example of "Praise For All Things"...

Three hundred years after Paul lived John Chrysostom, a good and brave man who preached very plainly against iniquity of all kinds. The empress was not a good woman, so she schemed to have him falsely accused and banished. He died an exile from his home.

Thirty years later, his body was bought back to Constantinople for burial in the imperial tomb. Chrysostom's motto was inscribed on the tomb: "Praise God for everything!"

As his friends testified, "When he was driven from home, when he was a stranger in the strange land, his letters would often end with that doxology, 'Praise God for all things!'"

Where did Chrysostom get his motto? From Paul—"In everything give thanks" (1 Thessalonians. 5:18). (Encyclopedia of 15,000 Illustrations)

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**Henrietta Mears** (in *What the Bible is All About*) sums up this section beautifully exhorting us first to be patiently waiting for Christ's return and then...

While you wait, Paul gives you a grand octave upon which to play great melodies of hope. Strike every note on this wonderful octave. If you do, your life will be rich.

Be joyful always—1 Thes 5:16

Pray continually—1 Thes 5:17

Give thanks in all circumstances—1 Thes 5:18

Do not put out the Spirit's fire—1 Thes 5:19

Do not treat prophecies with contempt—1 Thes 5:20

Test everything—1 Thes 5:21

Hold on to the good—1 Thes 5:21

Avoid every kind of evil—1 Thes 5:22.

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**Our Daily Bread has the following devotionals** (All are [Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))...

**Knowing God's Will** - I tell my friends in jest that I make three difficult decisions every day: What should I eat for breakfast, lunch, and dinner? I live in Singapore, where we enjoy the food of the Chinese, Malay, and Indian cultures, to name just a few. We are spoiled by having so many choices.

Life is full of decisions—far more serious ones than choosing what to eat. Perhaps this explains why some people constantly wonder what God's will is for their lives.

Discovering God's will is not necessarily a complicated process. He has given us many simple and clearly stated principles for life. For example, we are told, "This is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men" (1 Peter 2:15). In 1 Thessalonians 4:3 we read, "This is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality." And in 1 Thessalonians 5:18 we are told, "In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you."

As we live by faith and do what the Bible clearly tells us to do, we can be sure the Lord will lead us through the difficult decisions when the options may not be clear. Above all else, God's will is that we submit to Him and be willing to follow wherever He leads. — Albert Lee

If you will choose to do God's will  
And follow what is right,  
God will confirm to you His truth  
And give you greater light. —D. De Haan

**The best way to know God's will  
is to say "I will" to God.**

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**Be Filled With Thankfulness** - Throughout history, many cultures have set aside a time for expressing their thankfulness. In the US, Thanksgiving Day originated with the pilgrims. In the midst of extreme hardship, loss of loved ones, and meager supplies, they still believed they were blessed. They chose to celebrate God's blessings by sharing a meal with Native Americans who had helped them survive.

We know we've lost the spirit of that original celebration when we catch ourselves complaining that our Thanksgiving Day has been "spoiled" by bad weather, disappointing food, or a bad cold. It's we who are spoiled—spoiled by the very blessings that should make every day a day of thanksgiving, whatever our circumstances.

Billy Graham wrote, "Ingratitude is a sin, just as surely as is lying or stealing or immorality or any other sin condemned by the Bible." He then quoted Romans 1:21, one of the Bible's indictments against rebellious humanity. Then Dr. Graham added, "Nothing turns us into bitter, selfish, dissatisfied people more quickly than an ungrateful heart. And nothing will do more to restore contentment and the joy of our salvation than a true spirit of thankfulness."

Which condition describes you?—Joanie Yoder

A grumbling mood of discontent  
Gives way to thankfulness  
When we consider all God's gifts  
And all that we possess. —Sper

**Gratitude is a God-honoring attitude**

**1Thessalonians 5:19** **Do not quench** the **Spirit** (**NASB: Lockman**)

**Greek:** [to pneuma me sbennute](#), (2PPAM)

**Amplified:** Do not quench (suppress or subdue) the [Holy] Spirit ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

**NLT:** Do not stifle the Holy Spirit. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

**Phillips:** Never damp the fire of the Spirit ([Phillips: Touchstone](#))

**Wuest:** Stop stifling and suppressing the Spirit.

**Young's Literal:** The Spirit quench not

**DO NOT QUENCH THE SPIRIT: to pneuma me sbennute (2PPAM):**

- Song 8:7; Ephesians 4:30; 6:16
- Ge 6:3; 1 Sa 16:4; Neh 9:30; Ps 51:11; Isa 63:10; Acts 7:51; 1 Cor 14:30; Eph 4:30; 1 Ti4:14; 2 Ti 1:6
- 1 Thessalonians 5 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [1 Thessalonians 5:19 Not Quenching the Holy Spirit](#) - John MacArthur

**The Spirit** can be...

1. **Quenched** - 1Th 5:19-note
2. **Grieved** - Eph 4:30-note
3. **Resisted** - Acts 7:51

**Do not quench** - The combination of a negative particle (*me*) with the present imperative suggests that the recipients are being told to stop doing something they have already begun (ie, quenching the Spirit). Note also that the verb **sbennumi** is in the second person plural as are **all** the commands in verses 19-22, indicating that each command is intended for the entire membership of the Thessalonian church. The first two commands are negative (1Thessalonians 5:19; 20) and the remaining three are positive (1Thessalonians 5:21; 22).

The command could be paraphrased something like this...

Stop putting out the fire (of the Holy Spirit). Stop hindering and repressing the Holy Spirit, for in so doing you are preventing Him from exerting His full influence!

There is a parallel warning in Ephesians where in the context of allowing unwholesome words to proceed from their mouth (Eph 4:29-note) Paul commanded the saints...

**do not grieve** (present imperative + a negative = stop doing this implying that they were doing it) the Holy Spirit of God, by Whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. (See note Ephesians 4:30).

**Spurgeon** advises...

Do not despise his operations, either in yourselves or in your brethren. Do not quench him by neglect, much less by open opposition.

**Quench** (4570)(sbennumi) means to quench or to extinguish as one does to a light or fire. Figuratively, as used in this verse, it means to dampen, stifle hinder, repress, or prevent the Spirit from exerting His effect or performing His work in the believer. Clearly the reference is not to the person of the Spirit Himself, for He is eternal God and can never be extinguished. The reference is His activity in our hearts.

**John MacArthur** writes that...

The metaphor quench means "to extinguish, stifle, or retard" the power or energy of something [MacArthur, John: 1 & 2 Thessalonians. Moody Press](#) )

The figure of fire is associated with the Holy Spirit in several passages...

**Mt 3:11** "As for me, I baptize you with water for repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, and I am not fit to remove His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. (cf Luke 3:16)

**Acts 2:3** And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them. (**Comment:** The mighty wind filling the house and the fire-like tongues reaching each of the company represent the audible and visible signs that the Holy Spirit had come upon them fulfilling John the Baptist's prophecy that Christ would baptize them "with the Holy Spirit and with fire")

**Hiebert** comment that the figure of quenching the Spirit

points to His sudden and vehement activities in human hearts. It implies "His gifts of warmth for the heart, and light for the mind and His power to kindle the human spirit..."

Since fire is always put out by something outside itself, this prohibition is directed against some hindrance to the Spirit's operation in their midst. It is not indicated whether they are quenching the Spirit in themselves or in others. Both thoughts may be included in this general injunction, yet the connection with 1Thes 5:20 seems to indicate that the suppression of prophetic utterances in the assembly was primarily in view

The precise situation in the Thessalonian church calling forth this injunction is not clear. Many interpreters hold that it arose out of the operation of the charismatic gifts in the Thessalonian church. (Ed note: but this view is refuted by commentators such as MacArthur)...

The general character of the prohibition would certainly leave room for a wider interpretation. Anything that might be permitted in their assembly, or in their own hearts, which was contrary to the nature and work of the Spirit would quench His operations. The Spirit's fire is quenched whenever His presence is ignored and His promptings are suppressed and rejected, or the fervor He kindles in the heart is dampened by unspiritual attitudes, criticisms, or actions. Certainly any toleration of immorality and idleness, against which they have been warned (1Th4:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12), would quench the Spirits working in their midst.

They must not allow the operations of the Spirit to be suppressed either through yielding to the impulses of the flesh or by imposing a mechanical order upon the services that would hamper the free movements Of the Spirit. ([Hiebert, D. Edmond: 1 & 2 Thessalonians: BMH Book. 1996](#))

Does the **context** help us discern that might dampen the "fire" of the Spirit? Notice that in the preceding verse (1Thessalonians 5:18) we are charged to give thanks in everything. What would be the effect on the Spirit if we continually grumbled, complained or murmured? (cf Php 2:14-note) In the following verse (1Th 5:20 -note) what might be the effect on the Spirit if we despised prophetic utterances ([Click](#) for Ray Stedman's balanced comments on prophetic utterances constitute)? In addition to ingratitude and despising prophetic utterance, clearly **sin** in any form will douse "water" on the fire of God's Spirit. The best preventative to

quenching the Spirit is to be continually filled with the Spirit (Eph 5:18-note) and walking by the Spirit (Gal 5:16-note).

**David Jeremiah** agrees, asking...

Do you know what it means to **quench the Holy Spirit**? What do you do when you quench your thirst? You drink some water and the thirst is put away. When you quench a fire, you put it out—you smother it. How do you quench the Spirit of God? You quench the Holy Spirit by not doing something He tells you to do. When you walk in the Spirit and are filled with the Spirit, you don't want to quench Him. When He tells you to do something, you do it. (Jeremiah, D. *God in You : Releasing the Power of the Holy Spirit in Your Life*. Multnomah Publishers)

**F F Bruce** feels that...

As the context goes on to make plain, the activity chiefly in view here is prophecy. In this respect the Spirit may be quenched when the prophet refuses to utter the message he has been given, or when others try to prevent him from uttering it. A good example of the former is Jeremiah's attempt to speak no more in Yahweh's name, when the word held back became, as he said, **a burning fire shut up in my bones** (Jer 20:9), which could not be quenched or controlled. An example of the latter is found in Amos 2:12, where the people of Israel are condemned because they "commanded the prophets, saying, 'You shall not prophesy.'" Cf. Micah 2:6 ([Bruce, F F: 1 and 2 Thessalonians. Word Biblical Commentary. Dallas: Word, Incorporated. 1982](#))

**Vine** writes that...

as fire is always extinguished from without itself the meaning seems to be "do not prevent or obstruct the manifestations of the Holy Spirit's power in others." Here the tense is present continuous, hence the meaning is "desist from quenching" rather than "do not begin to quench."... With this injunction may be compared that in 1Th 4:8 (note), which is aimed against any refusal to obey Him as this is against any refusal to listen to Him...

The peace, order, and edification of the saints were evidence of the ministry of the Spirit among them, 1Cor 14:26, 32, 33, 40, but if; through ignorance of His ways, or through failure to recognize, or refusal to submit to, them, or through impatience with the ignorance or self-will of others, the Spirit were quenched, these happy results would be absent. For there was always the danger that the impulses of the flesh might usurp the place of the energy of the Spirit in the assembly, and the endeavor to restrain this evil by natural means would have the effect of hindering His ministry also. Apparently then, this injunction was intended to warn believers against the substitution of a mechanical order for the restraints of the Spirit. ([Vine, W. Collected writings of W. E. Vine. Nashville: Thomas Nelson](#) )

**Vincent** feels that

The reference here is to the work of the Spirit generally, and not specially to His inspiration of prayer or prophecy.

**John Walvoord** writes that...

it may be concluded that quenching the Holy Spirit is to suppress, stifle, or otherwise obstruct the ministry of the Spirit to the individual. In a word it is saying, "No," and replacing the will of the Spirit with the will of the individual. This, in brief, is the whole issue of morality—whether man will accomplish what he wants to do or whether his life is surrendered and yielded to the will of God. (Bibliotheca Sacra: Dallas Theological Seminary. Volume 130, page 220)

**Ray Stedman** in his down to earth style feels that verses 19 and 20 give two simple commands...

Do not ignore the Spirit's prompting (v19) and do not despise the Scripture's wisdom (v20). The Spirit's promptings always come in two areas: Stop doing what is wrong, and Start doing what is right. If you are a Christian at all you are familiar with the inner feeling that says, "God wants you to do something," or "God wants you to stop doing something." We all have felt this inner guidance. What the apostle is saying is, "Give in to those feelings." When the Spirit prompts you to show love to somebody, do it; do not hold back. I once heard of a man who said, "Sometimes when I think of how my wife works and blesses me, it's all I can do to keep from telling her that I love her!" There is a man being guided by the Spirit, but he is **quenching** the Spirit. Do not do that. Go ahead and tell her you love her. You may have to pick her off the floor afterward, but **do not quench the Spirit!**

**Green** writes that the verb **sbennumi**

At times ... describes an action that makes something disappear completely, such as a person's very existence when death comes, but elsewhere it carries the more moderate meaning of "to attenuate" or "to restrict" something. The exact nuance Paul has in mind is not easy to ascertain, but the first sense is the most likely in the context of prophecy... Some Thessalonians appear to have attempted to prohibit manifestations of the Spirit in their church. Since the presence of the Holy Spirit in the community is compared with fire (Jer 20.9; Matt. 3.11; Luke 3.16; Acts 2.3; 18.25; Ro 12.11; 2Ti 1.6; and John 5.35), the verb "to quench" would aptly describe the attempts to eliminate these manifestations. On the other side, Paul exhorts Timothy about the Spirit's activity in his life by saying, "Fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands" (2Ti 1.6). The manifestations of the Spirit's presence are for the good of the community and for that reason should not be eliminated...

The "quenched spirit" had to do with the cessation of prophecy. The presence of the Spirit in the church was linked inextricably with prophecy among the people of God (Luke 1.67; Acts 2.17; 19.6; 28.25; Ep 2.5; Rev 22.6); so it does not surprise in the least that our author should respond to any attempt to prohibit its use with the exhortation, "Do not quench the Spirit." This was not the first occasion, then, in which the people of God questioned prophecy, even those utterances that were legitimate (Nu 11.26, 27, 28, 29; Amos 2.12; Mic. 2.6). (Green, G. L. The Letters to the Thessalonians. The Pillar New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids, Mich.; Leicester, England: W. B. Eerdmans Pub.; Apollos.)

Here are the 6 uses of **sbennumi** in the NT...

**Matthew 12:20** "A battered reed He will not break off, and a smoldering wick He will not **put out**, Until He leads justice to victory.

**Matthew 25:8** "And the foolish said to the prudent, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are **going out**.'

**Mark 9:48** where their worm does not die, and the fire is not **quenched**.

**Ephesians 6:16** (note) in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to **extinguish** all the flaming missiles of the evil one.

**1Thessalonians 5:19** (note) Do not **quench** the Spirit;

**Hebrews 11:34** (note) **quenched** the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, from weakness were made strong, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight.

In the Septuagint this verb relates to literal fire that is not to go out (Lev 6:13) and figuratively several times of God's wrath which burns like fire and will not be quenched (2Ki 22:17, 2Chr 34:25, Jer 7:20, 17:27, 21:12, Ezek 20:47. 48, Amos 5:6). It is used in Isaiah 66:24 to describe the unquenchable fire of hell. There are 35 uses of **sbennumi** in the Septuagint (LXX) and below are some representative uses...

**Leviticus 6:13** 'Fire shall be kept burning continually on the altar; it is not to **go out** (Hebrew = kabah = quench, put out, extinguish; Lxx = sbennumi)

**2 Kings 22:17** "Because they have forsaken Me and have burned incense to other gods that they might provoke Me to anger with all the work of their hands, therefore My wrath burns against this place, and it shall not be **quenched** (Hebrew = kabah = quench, put out, extinguish; Lxx = sbennumi)."

**Proverbs 13:9** The light of the righteous rejoices, But the lamp of the wicked **goes out**. (Hebrew = daak = be extinguished; Lxx = sbennumi)

**Song of Solomon 8:7** "Many waters cannot **quench** (Hebrew = kabah = quench, put out, extinguish; LXX = sbennumi) love, Nor will rivers overflow it; If a man were to give all the riches of his house for love, It would be utterly despised."

**Isaiah 66:24** "Then they shall go forth and look On the corpses of the men Who have transgressed against Me. For their worm shall not die, And their fire shall not **be quenched** (Hebrew = kabah = quench, put out, extinguish; Lxx = sbennumi); And they shall be an abhorrence to all mankind."

**John MacArthur** writes that...

It is that process of progressive sanctification by the Spirit that Paul warned the Thessalonians not to quench. ([MacArthur, John: 1 & 2 Thessalonians. Moody Press](#))

**Mills** takes a similar approach writing that...

quenching the Spirit means nullifying His power in your life, for you manifestly cannot extinguish Him on a universal basis! How do you nullify His power? Well, simply by living an unsanctified life, for if you profane your vessel He, Who is perfectly pure, will not reside in it. But how do I remedy it when I sin and profane my vessel? 1John 1:8-9 answers this, for if I confess my sin God will forgive me. (Mills, M.. The Thessalonian Epistles: A Study Guide to. Dallas: 3E Ministries)

**Albert Barnes** offers some well reasoned comments on what it means to quench the Spirit writing that...

This language is taken from the way of putting out a fire; and the sense is, we are not to extinguish the influences of the Holy Spirit in our hearts; Possibly there may be an allusion here to fire on an altar, which was to be kept constantly burning. This fire may have been regarded as emblematic of devotion, and as denoting that that devotion was never to become extinct. The Holy Spirit is the Source of true devotion, and hence the enkindlings of piety in the heart, by the Spirit, are never to be quenched. Fire may be put out by pouring on water; or by covering it with any incombustible substance; or by neglecting to supply fuel. If it is to be made to burn, it must be nourished with proper care and attention. The Holy Spirit, in his influences on the soul, is here compared with fire that might be made to burn more intensely, or that might be extinguished. In a similar manner the apostle gives this direction to Timothy

*And for this reason I remind you to kindle afresh the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands.* (see note 2 Timothy 1:6).

Anything that will tend to damp the ardour of piety in the soul; to chill our feelings; to render us cold and lifeless in the service of God, may be regarded as "quenching the Spirit." Neglect of cultivating the Christian graces, or of prayer, of the Bible, of the sanctuary, of a careful watchfulness over the heart, will do it. Worldliness, vanity, levity, ambition, pride, the love of dress, or indulgence in an improper train of thought, will do it. (Albert Barnes. Barnes NT Commentary)

**Guzik** adds that...

We can quench the fire of the Spirit by our doubt, our indifference, our rejection of Him, or by the distraction of others. When people start to draw attention to themselves, it is a sure quench to the Spirit... this command is based on the familiar image of the Holy Spirit as a fire or a flame. Though there is a sense in which fire cannot be created, we can provide the environment in which it can burn brightly. Yet a flame can be extinguished when it is ignored and no longer tended, or when the flame is overwhelmed by something else. ([1 Thessalonians 5](#))

**Matthew Poole** wrote that...

And, by the figure meiosis, he means, cherish the Spirit. The Spirit is compared to fire, Mt 3:11; and he came down upon the apostles in the similitude, of tongues of fire, Acts 2:3; but the Spirit Himself cannot be quenched... there are ordinary gifts and operations of the Spirit common to all Christians, as enlightening, quickening, sanctifying, comforting the soul: men by sloth, security, earthy encumbrances, inordinate affections, etc., may abate these operations of the Spirit, which the apostle calls the quenching it: the fire upon the altar was kept always burning by the care of the priests. Fire will go out either by neglecting it, or casting water upon it. By not exercising grace in the duties of religion, or by allowing sin in ourselves, we may quench the Spirit; as appears in David, Ps 51:10-12 (Ed note: In the OT the Spirit did not indwell believers permanently as in the New Covenant). Not that the habits of grace may be totally extinguished in the truly regenerate, yet they may be abated as to degree and lively exercise. Yet those common illuminations and convictions of the Spirit which persons unregenerate, especially such that live under the gospel, do often find, may be totally lost, (Heb 6:4, 5, 6, -see **notes** He 6:4; 5; 6); and we read of God's Spirit ceasing to strive with the old world, Ge 6:3, and the scribes and Pharisees resisting the Holy Ghost, Acts 7:51 ("*You men who are stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears are always resisting the Holy Spirit; you are doing just as your fathers did.*"), which were not persons regenerate. He may sometimes strive with men, but not overcome them. And there is a quenching of the Spirit in others as well as ourselves -- people may quench it in their ministers by discouraging them, and in one another by bad examples, or reproaching the zeal and forwardness that they see in them. (Matthew Poole's Commentary on the New Testament)

**Henry Morris** adds to Poole's last point (above) writing that...

When the Holy Spirit is clearly using a Christian in a ministry to which He has called him, the Christian should be encouraged and assisted, not criticized and hindered, assuming, of course, that it is really the Spirit's work



and not of the flesh. The best test for this is fidelity to the Scriptures (Isaiah 8:20). ([Morris, Henry: Defenders Study Bible. World Publishing](#))

**Matthew Henry** writes that we are to...

Quench not the Spirit (v. 19), for it is this Spirit of grace and supplication that helpeth our infirmities, that assisteth us in our prayers and thanksgivings. Christians are said to be baptized with the Holy Ghost and with fire. He worketh as fire, by enlightening, enlivening, and purifying the souls of men. We must be careful not to quench this holy fire. As fire is put out by withdrawing fuel, so we quench the Spirit if we do not stir up our spirits, and all that is within us, to comply with the motions of the good Spirit; and as fire is quenched by pouring water, or putting a great quantity of dirt upon it, so we must be careful not to quench the Holy Spirit by indulging carnal lusts and affections, or minding only earthly things.

**Calvin** writes that...

This metaphor is derived from the power and nature of the Spirit; for as it is the proper office of the Spirit to illuminate the understandings of men, and as he is on this account called our light, it is with propriety that we are said to quench him, when we make void his grace.

**Adam Clarke** explains that...

The Holy Spirit is represented as a fire, because it is His province to enlighten and quicken the soul; and to purge, purify, and refine it. This Spirit is represented as being quenched when any act is done, word spoken (Eph 4:29,30-notes Ep 4:29; 30 - "do not grieve the Spirit"), or temper indulged, contrary to its dictates. It is the Spirit of love, and therefore anger (see James 1:20-note), malice, revenge, or any unkind or unholy temper, will quench it so that it will withdraw its influences; and then the heart is left in a state of hardness and darkness.

It has been observed that fire may be quenched as well by heaping earth on it as by throwing water on it; and so the love of the world will as effectually grieve and quench the Spirit as any ordinary act of transgression (cf James 4:4, 1John 2:15, 16, 17). Every genuine Christian is made a partaker of the Spirit of God; and he who has not the spirit of Christ is none of His (Ro 8:9-note). It cannot be the miraculous gifts of the Spirit which the apostle means, for these were given to few, and not always; for even apostles could not work miracles when they pleased; but the direction in the text is general, and refers to a gift of which they were generally partakers.

The **BKC** explains that..

The Holy Spirit's working can be opposed by believers. It is this that Paul warned against. The next verse may give a clue as to how the Spirit was in danger of being quenched by the Thessalonians. 1Th 5:20. There may have been a tendency in the early church, and perhaps in the Thessalonian church in particular, to underrate the value of prophetic utterances. The gift of prophecy was the ability to receive and communicate direct revelations from God before the New Testament was completed (1 Cor. 13:8). Sometimes these revelations concerned future events (Acts 11:28), but often they dealt with the present (Acts 13:2). Perhaps people who had not received prophetic revelations were teaching their own views of such things as the Second Advent, with the result that prophetic revelations tended to be evaluated on superficial terms (e.g., the eloquence of the speaker) instead of on the basis of their intrinsic authority. By way of application, Christians should not disparage any revelation that has come to the church and has been recognized as authoritative and preserved by the Holy Spirit in Scripture. The temptation to put the ideas of men on an equal footing with the Word of God is still present. ([Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., et al: The Bible Knowledge Commentary. 1985. Victor](#))

**J Vernon McGee** writes that...

To quench the Spirit means that you refuse to do the will of God; that is, you are not listening to the Holy Spirit. You refuse to let the Holy Spirit be your Guide to lead you. You and I quench the Holy Spirit when we take matters into our own hands. This is the same teaching that Paul gave to the Ephesian believers: "And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption" (Ep 4:30-note). You cannot grieve a thing; you grieve a Person. The Holy Spirit is a Person, and He is grieved by sin in our lives. Also, He is quenched when we step out of the will of God. ([McGee, J V: Thru the Bible Commentary: Thomas Nelson](#) )

The **Pulpit Commentary** writes that...

By the Spirit here is usually understood the miraculous gifts of the Spirit—speaking with tongues or prophesying; and it is supposed that the apostle here forbids the exercise of these gifts being hindered or checked. In the next verse the gift of prophesying is mentioned. But there is no reason to exclude the ordinary

and still more valuable gifts of the Spirit, such as pure thoughts, holy actions, devout affections, which may be effectually quenched by a careless or immoral life. "Quench not the Spirit." Do not those things which are opposed to his influences. Be on your guard against sin, as opposed to the work of the Spirit in the soul. (The Pulpit Commentary: 1 Thessalonians)

It is written of **Charles Wesley** that...

Until the day of his death he exercised the greatest care to have everything "done decently and in order," and to avoid all fleshly excitements, hallucinations, and delusions (cp Ro 13:12, 14, 14-see notes Ro 13:12; 13; 14); but on the other hand he was careful to encourage every genuine work of the Holy Spirit. "Quench not the Spirit" was to him a solemn warning which he scrupulously and conscientiously tried to follow.

**John Walvoord** writes:

The expression (**do not quench**) is nowhere formally explained in Scripture. **Quenching** is often used in the Bible in its proper physical sense, as illustrated in Mt 12:20, where Christ spoke of not quenching flax, and in Hebrews 11:34 (note), the heroes of the faith are revealed to have "quenched the violence of fire." In Eph 6:16 (note), the shield of faith is said to "be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked." In 1 Thessalonians, however, it is used in a metaphysical sense, meaning according to Thayer, "to suppress, stifle." It is patently impossible to extinguish the Holy Spirit in the absolute sense, or to put Him out. His abiding presence is assured for all Christians. His Person is indestructible. It is, therefore, quenching in the sense of resisting or opposing His will. Quenching the Spirit may be simply defined as being unyielded to Him, or, saying, "No." The issue is, therefore, the question of willingness to do His will."

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**Call Of The Chickadees** - The black-capped chickadee has a surprising level of complexity in the noises it makes for alarm calls. Researchers found that chickadees use a high-frequency call to warn of danger in the air. Depending on the situation, the "chickadee" call can cue other birds about food that is nearby or predators that are perched too close for comfort.

Studies have also found that chickadees don't sense danger from large predators such as the great horned owl, because they're not likely to prey on such a petite bird. But smaller owls, which are closer to the size of the chickadee and more of a threat, prompt sentinel chickadees to repeat the alarm sound of their calls—the chickadee's distinctive "dee" note.

A similar level of awareness might serve us well. In the apostle Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians, he didn't just condemn the evils of the world. He also focused his attention on the matters of the heart that can do harm to us with barely a notice.

"See that no one renders evil for evil to anyone,  
but always pursue what is good."

"Do not quench the Spirit."

"Test all things" (1Th 5:15,19,21)

With the Spirit's help, let's keep attuned to every caution in the Word about our heart. —Mart De Haan [Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#)

How we need a keen awareness  
Of God's voice that is His Word,  
Quiet whispers, gentle nudgings,  
So we'll make Him King and Lord. —Anon.

God speaks to those who are willing to listen.

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**Be Safe--Not Sorry!** - Two young women lost their lives in a fire that swept through their apartment as they slept. Their home was equipped with a smoke detector that was in good working order, but it hadn't gone off. Why? Fire inspectors concluded that the device had been deactivated for a party the night before. The unit had been disconnected to keep it from sounding off because of the smoke from cooking and candles. In Acts 5 we have another example of two people who apparently deactivated an alarm system that could have saved their lives. Ananias and Sapphira must have quenched the Holy Spirit by turning a deaf ear to their consciences, believing they had plenty of good reasons for doing what they did. But their action cost them their lives.

We need to realize that the Holy Spirit was not given to annoy us like a sensitive smoke detector. He doesn't sound false alarms.

When He activates our conscience by bringing to mind a principle or warning from God's Word, it is really His love and wisdom in action.

By weighing the warnings of His love against the cost of our foolishness, we'll soon realize that it's always better to be safe than sorry. —M R De Haan II ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Our conscience is a gift from God,  
It is a guiding light;  
And when aligned with God's true Word,  
It shows us what is right. —Sper

**To ignore your conscience is to invite trouble.**

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Lord light my fire! Light the fire in my local church! Light the fire of Your Spirit in Your Body in America before the day of Your great mercy passes by our land! Do it Father not because we are great or once were great but only because the heathen see the abominations done in "Christian America" and abhor Christianity and ultimately You, O Father of all. For Your Name's sake, for the Name of Christ our Redeemer. Amen.

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#### **O Chambers...**

The voice of the Spirit is as gentle as a zephyr, so gentle that unless you are living in perfect communion with God, you never hear it. The checks of the Spirit come in the most extraordinarily gentle ways, and if you are not sensitive enough to detect His voice you will quench it, and your personal spiritual life will be impaired. His checks always come as a still small voice, so small that no one but the saint notices them.

Beware if in personal testimony you have to hark back and say - "Once, so many years ago, I was saved." If you are walking in the light, there is no harking back, the past is transfused into the present wonder of communion with God. If you get out of the light you become a sentimental Christian and live on memories, your testimony has a hard, metallic note. Beware of trying to patch up a present refusal to walk in the light by recalling past experiences when you did walk in the light. Whenever the Spirit checks, call a halt and get the thing right, or you will go on grieving Him without knowing it.

Suppose God has brought you up to a crisis and you nearly go through but not quite, He will engineer the crisis again, but it will not be so keen as it was before. There will be less discernment of God and more humiliation at not having obeyed; and if you go on grieving the Spirit, there will come a time when that crisis cannot be repeated, you have grieved Him away. But if you go through the crisis, there will be the paean of praise to God. Never sympathize with the thing that is stabbing God all the time. God has to hurt the thing that must go. ([Ref](#))

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#### **J C Ryle...**

Quench not the Spirit. Vex not the Spirit. Drive Him not to a distance, by tampering with small bad habits and little sins. Little jarrings between husbands and wives make unhappy homes, and petty inconsistencies, known and allowed, will bring in a strangeness between you and the Spirit.

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#### **D L Moody...**

In 1st Thessalonians, 5th chapter, we are told not to Quench the Spirit. Now, I am confident the cares of the world are coming in and quenching the Spirit with a great many. They say: "I don't care for the world;" O perhaps not the pleasures of the world so much after all as the cares of this life; but they have just let the cares come in and quench the Spirit of God. Anything that comes between me and God -- between my soul and God -- quenches the Spirit. It may be my family. You may say: "Is there any danger of loving my family too much?" Not if we love God more; but God must have the first place. If I love my family more than God, then I am quenching the Spirit of God within me; if I love wealth, if I love fame, if I love honor, if I love position, if I love pleasure, if I love self, more than I love God who created and saved me, then I am committing a sin; I am not only grieving the Spirit of God, but quenching Him, and robbing my soul of His power. (D. L. Moody. Secret Power)

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#### **Woodrow Kroll...**

When we fail to yield ourselves completely to Him, we quench the Holy Spirit... Now, do you know what it means to quench the Spirit of God? It doesn't mean that we extinguish Him as you would quench or extinguish a fire. It means that we stifle Him. We stifle His influence in our lives. And it's very possible for us to be cleansed of every sin except unyieldedness. And if this is so, we cannot be filled with the Spirit of God. So, make sure that you unreservedly yield yourself to God for whatever He wants from you. Just be transparent and open before Him. ([The Holy Spirit Fills You](#))

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**Spurgeon** writes that...

If you are filled with the Spirit of God, and wish to retain his gracious presence, speak about him. Note this, "Be not drunk with wine, wherein is riot; but be filled with the Spirit; speaking." That is a curious word to follow so soon. The Holy Ghost is not a dumb Spirit; he sets us speaking. "Speaking to yourselves"; it is a poor audience; but still it is a choice audience if you speak to your brethren. "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." Beloved, when the Spirit of God fills you, you will not only speak, but sing. Let the holy power have free course: **do not quench the Spirit**. If you feel like singing all the while, sing all the while, and let others know that there is a joy in the possession of the Spirit of God which the world does not understand, but which you are feeling, and to which you wish to bear witness. Oh, that the Spirit of God would come upon this entire church, and fill you all to overflowing! May the members of other churches that are here to-night take home fire with them, and set their churches on flame! The Lord bless you, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen. (From his sermon [FILLING WITH THE SPIRIT AND DRUNKENNESS WITH WINE](#))

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**A B Simpson** has some interesting thoughts (be a Berean - see note Acts 17:11) about what it means to **quench the Spirit** writing that it

has reference, perhaps, mainly to the hindrance we offer to His work in others, rather than to our resistance of His personal dealings with our own souls.

Among the various hindrances which we may offer to the Holy Spirit may be mentioned such as these:

**1. We may refuse to obey His impulses in us when He bids us speak or act for Him.**

We may be conscious of a distinct impression of the Spirit of God bidding us to testify for Christ, and by disobedience, or timidity, or procrastination, we may quench His working, both in our own soul and in the heart of another.

**2. We may suppress His voice in others, either by using our authority to restrain His messages, when He speaks through His servants or refusing to allow the liberty of testimony.**

Many hold the reins of ecclesiastical authority unduly, and thus lose the free and effectual working of the Holy Ghost in their churches and in their work.

There is a less direct way, however, of politely silencing Him by forcing Him out, and so filling the atmosphere with the spirit of stiffness, criticism, and a certain air of respectability and rigidity that He gently withdraws from the uncongenial scene, and refuses to thrust His messages upon unwilling hearts.

**3. The Spirit may be grieved by the method of public worship in a congregation**

It may be either so stiff and formal that there is no room for His spontaneous working, or so full of worldly and unscriptural elements as to repel and offend Him from taking any part in a pompous ritual. An operatic choir and a ritualistic service will effectually quench all the fire of God's altar, and send the gentle dove to seek a simpler nest.

**4. The Spirit may be quenched by the preacher, and his spirit and method**

His own manner may be so intellectual and self-conscious, and his own spirit so thoroughly cold and vain that the Holy Ghost is neither recognized nor known in his work. His sermons may be on themes in which the Spirit has no interest, for He only witnesses to the Holy Scriptures and the person of Christ, and wearily turns away from the discussion of philosophy, and the stale show of critical brilliancy over the questions of the day or the speculations of man's own vain reason.

Perhaps his address is so rigidly written down that the Holy Spirit could not find an opportunity for even a suggestion, if He so desired, and His promptings and leading so coolly set aside by a course of elaborate

preparation which leaves no room for God.

#### **5. The spirit of error in the teachings of the pulpit will always quench the Holy Spirit.**

He is jealous for His own inspired Word and when vain man attempts to set it aside He looks on with indignation, and exposes such teachers to humiliation and failure.

The spirit of self-assertion and self-consciousness is always fatal to the free working of the Holy Ghost.

When a man stands up in the sacred desk to air his eloquence and call attention to his intellectual brilliancy, or to preach himself in any sense, he will always be deserted by the Holy Spirit. He uses the things "that are not to bring to naught the things that are." And before we can expect to become the instruments of His power, we must wholly cease from self and be lost in the person and glory of Jesus.

#### **6. The spirit of pride, fashion and worldly display in the pews, is just as fatal as ambition in the pulpit**

Such an atmosphere seems to freeze out the spirit of devotion, and erect on the throne of the lowly Nazarene a goddess of carnal pride and pleasure, like the foul Venus that the Parisian mob set up in the Madeleine at Paris in the days of the revolution, as an object of worship. From such an atmosphere the Holy Ghost turns away grieved and disgusted.

#### **7. The quickening and reviving influences of the Holy Ghost are often quenched in the very hour of promise by wrong methods in the work of Christ's church.**

How often, on the eve of a real revival, the minds of the people have been led away by some public entertainment in connection with the house of God, or its after-fruits withered by a series of unholy fairs and secular bids for money, and the introduction of the broker and the cattle-vender into the cleansed temple of Jehovah, as in the days of Christ.

#### **8. The spirit of criticism and controversy is fatal to the working of the Holy Ghost**

The gentle dove will not remain in an atmosphere of strife. If we would cherish His power we must possess His love, and frown down all wrangling gossip, evil speaking, malice, envy, and public controversy in the preaching of the Word.

Sometimes a single word of criticism after an impressive service will dispel all its blessed influence upon the heart of some interested hearer, and counteract the gracious work that would have resulted in the salvation of the soul.

A frivolous Christian woman returning one night from church with her unsaved husband, was laughing lightly at some of the mistakes and eccentricities of the speaker. Suddenly she felt his arm trembling; she looked in his face and his tears were falling. He gently turned to her, and said: "Pray for me; I have seen myself tonight as I never did before." She suddenly awoke with an awful shudder to realize that she had been frivolously wrecking his soul's salvation, and quenching the Holy Ghost.

And so, public controversy is as fatal to the Spirit's working as personal criticism.

It is when the children of God unite at the feet of Jesus, and together seek His blessing, that He comes in all the fullness of His life-power.

The Spirit may be quenched in the hearts of our friends by unwise counsel, or ungodly influence.

The little child may be discouraged from seeking Christ by a worldly parent, or the ignorant assumption that it is too young to be a Christian, or too busy with its studies, or its social enjoyments, for such things.

The attractions of the world and claims and pressures of business, may be interposed in the way of some seeking heart, and we find in eternity that we put a stumbling-block in our friend's way, from which he fell into perdition.

Let us be very careful lest, in our willfulness and pride, we not only miss ourselves the inner chambers of the

kingdom of heaven, but hinder those that would enter from going in.

Oh! if we would cherish the faintest breath of life in the rescued waif that has been snatched from a watery grave, if we could fan the expiring flame of life in a friend's bosom, let us be careful lest we quench the spark of everlasting life in a human soul, and stand at the last, responsible for the murder of immortal beings, and crimson with the blood of souls. "Quench not the Spirit." (A. B. Simpson. Walking in the Spirit)

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**Be Safe--Not Sorry!** - Two young women lost their lives in a fire that swept through their apartment as they slept. Their home was equipped with a smoke detector that was in good working order, but it hadn't gone off. Why? Fire inspectors concluded that the device had been deactivated for a party the night before. The unit had been disconnected to keep it from sounding off because of the smoke from cooking and candles.

In Acts 5 we have another example of two people who apparently deactivated an alarm system that could have saved their lives. Ananias and Sapphira must have quenched the Holy Spirit by turning a deaf ear to their consciences, believing they had plenty of good reasons for doing what they did. But their action cost them their lives.

We need to realize that the Holy Spirit was not given to annoy us like a sensitive smoke detector. He doesn't sound false alarms. When He activates our conscience by bringing to mind a principle or warning from God's Word, it is really His love and wisdom in action.

By weighing the warnings of His love against the cost of our foolishness, we'll soon realize that it's always better to be safe than sorry. —Mart De Haan ([Our Daily Bread. Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Our conscience is a gift from God,  
It is a guiding light;  
And when aligned with God's true Word,  
It shows us what is right. —Sper

**To ignore your conscience  
is to invite trouble.**

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1Thessalonians 5:20 **do not despise prophetic utterances.** ([NASB: Lockman](#))

**Greek:** [propheteias me exoutheneite](#); (2PPMM)

**Amplified:** Do not spurn the gifts and utterances of the prophets [do not depreciate prophetic revelations nor despise inspired instruction or exhortation or warning]. ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

**Barclay:** Don't make light of manifestations of the gift of prophecy. ([Daily Study Bible](#))

**NLT:** Do not scoff at prophecies, ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

**Phillips:** and never despise what is spoken in the name of the Lord. ([Phillips: Touchstone](#))

**Wuest:** Stop counting as nothing divine revelations given in the local assembly by the one who receives them,

**Young's Literal:** prophesyings despise not

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**DO NOT DESPISE PROPHETIC UTTERANCES: propheteias me exoutheneite; (2PPMM):**

- 1 Th 4:8; Nu 11:25-29; 1 Sa 10:5,6,10-13; 19:20-24; Acts 19:6; 1 Cor 11:4; 12:10,28; 13:2,9; 14:1,3-6,22-25,29, 30-32,37-39; Ep 4:11,12; Rev 11:3-11
- 1 Thessalonians 5 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [1 Thessalonians 5:20 Responding to God's Word](#) - John MacArthur

**Hiebert** comments that "Do not treat prophecies with contempt" names a specific action whereby the Spirit may be quenched.

**Despise** (1848)(**exoutheneo** from **ek** = an intensifies + **outhenéo** = bring to naught) is a strong verb which means to despise



someone or something on basis that it is worthless or of no value. To consider as nothing. To treat someone contemptuously as if completely worthless or despicable. To treat something or someone with contempt or to treat as of no account. To set at naught. To make something of no account (disregard, disdain, reject with contempt, despise).

**Williams** paraphrases it "Stop treating the messages of prophecy with contempt."

As noted with the negative command in verse 19, the combination of a negative particle (*me*) with the **present imperative** suggests that the recipients are being told to stop doing something they have begun -- they were to stop despising prophetic utterances. Note also that the verb **exoutheneo** is in the second person plural as are **all** the commands in 1Thes 5:19, 20, 21, 22, indicating that the command is intended for the entire Thessalonian church.

**Barclay** sums up Paul's command explaining that "The prophets were really the equivalent of our modern preachers. It was they who brought the message of God to the congregation. Paul is really saying, "If a man has anything to say, don't stop him saying it." ([Daily Study Bible Online](#))

**BDAG** writes that **exoutheneo** means...

(1) to show by one's attitude or manner of treatment that an entity has no merit or worth (disdain)... (2) to have no use for something as being beneath one's consideration (reject disdainfully)... (3) to regard another as of no significance and therefore worthy of maltreatment, treat with contempt. ([Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., & Bauer, W. A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature](#))

There are 11 uses of **exoutheneo** in the NT...

**Luke 18:9** And He also told this parable to certain ones who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and **viewed** others **with contempt**:

**Luke 23:11** And Herod with his soldiers, after **treating** Him **with contempt** and mocking Him, dressed Him in a gorgeous robe and sent Him back to Pilate.

**Acts 4:11** "He is the stone which **was rejected** by you, the builders, but which became the very corner stone.

**Romans 14:3** (note) Let not him who eats **regard with contempt** him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats, for God has accepted him.

**Romans 14:10** (note) But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you **regard** your brother **with contempt**? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of God.

**1 Corinthians 1:28** and the base things of the world and the **despised**, God has chosen, the things that are not, that He might nullify the things that are,

**1 Corinthians 6:4** If then you have law courts dealing with matters of this life, do you appoint them as judges who are of no account in the church?

**1 Corinthians 16:11** Let no one therefore **despise** him. But send him on his way in peace, so that he may come to me; for I expect him with the brethren.

**2 Corinthians 10:10** For they say, "His letters are weighty and strong, but his personal presence is unimpressive, and his speech **contemptible**."

**Galatians 4:14** and that which was a trial to you in my bodily condition you did not **despise** or loathe, but you received me as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus Himself. (Paul is saying that during the time of trial in connection with my physical disability, the Galatians showed no disdain.)

**1 Thessalonians 5:20** do not **despise** prophetic utterances.

There are 6 uses in the (1 Sam. 8:7; 10:19; Prov. 1:7; Jer. 6:14; Dan. 4:31; Amos 6:1) and here are 2 representative passages...

**1 Samuel 8:7** And the LORD said to Samuel, "Listen to the voice of the people in regard to all that they say to you, for they have not **rejected** (Hebrew = ma'ac = reject, despise, refuse; Lxx = exoutheneo) you, but they have **rejected** (Hebrew = ma'ac = reject, despise, refuse; Lxx = exoutheneo) Me from being king over them.

**Proverbs 1:7** The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; Fools **despise** (Hebrew = buwz = to despise, hold in contempt; Lxx = exoutheneo) wisdom and instruction.

**Prophetic utterances** (4394) (**Propheteia** from **pró** = before or forth + **phemí** = tell) has the literal meaning of speaking forth, with no connotation of prediction or other supernatural or mystical significance.

Vine notes that...

Though much of the Old Testament prophecy was purely predictive, see Micah 5:2, e.g., and cp. John 11:51, prophecy is not necessarily, nor even primarily, = foretelling. It is the declaration of that which cannot be known by natural means, Matthew 26:68, it is the forth telling of the will of God, whether with reference to the past, the present, or the future, see Genesis 20:7; Deuteronomy 18:18; Revelation 10:11; 11:3. The relation between Aaron and Moses illustrates the relation between the prophet and God, Exodus 4:16; 7:1...

With the completion of the canon of Scripture prophecy apparently passed away, 1Corinthians 13:8, 9. In his measure the teacher has taken the place of the prophet, cp. the significant change in 2Peter 2:1. The difference is that, whereas the message of the prophet was a direct revelation of the mind of God for the occasion, the message of the teacher is gathered from the completed revelation contained in the Scriptures.

Instructions given to the prophet of apostolic days serve as a general guide to the teacher now. Building up the saints is to be his sole aim, 1Corinthians 14:5, 12, 26; Ephesians 4:12; to this end his words must be distinctly spoken, and his language must be suited to his hearers, 1Co 14:7, 9, 11, 16; he must avoid confusion of every kind, since confusion is of the flesh, not of the Spirit, 1Co 14:32, 33. Teachers are to defer one to another, 1Co 14:30, nor is any teacher to be judge of the profit, or otherwise, of his own utterances, 1Co 14:29. Acceptance of these divine regulations is evidence of spirituality, 1Co 14:37, 38.

**Propheteia** or prophetic utterances in its purest form is found in the Scriptures themselves, the speaking forth of the the Word of God. Propheteia in fact refers specifically to the Scriptures in Peter's epistle...

But know this first of all, that no **prophecy** of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, for no **prophecy** was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God. (See **notes** 2 Peter 1:20; 21)

Paul gives perhaps the best definition of the prophetic gift in 1 Corinthians...

But one who prophesies speaks to men for edification and exhortation and consolation. (1Corinthians 14:3)

In short, prophetic utterances are to build up, encourage and comfort believers.

The gift of prophecy today is the most clearly illustrated by the gift of preaching, of proclaiming the Word of God. God used many Old and New Testament prophets to foretell future events, but that was never an indispensable part of prophetic ministry.

In the well respected theological journal Bibliotheca Sacra, the late Dr John Walvoord makes the following statements...

Divine revelation, of course, received a tremendous addition when Jesus Christ came in the flesh. He was a revelation of God in His person and life as well as in His **prophetic utterances**. Throughout the apostolic period special revelation continued as God communicated truth to individuals and to churches. (Volume 130, page 23)

The Olivet Discourse is one of the great **prophetic utterances** of Scripture dealing not only with the age as a whole in its progress and signs of the end but portraying the great truth of the second coming of Christ later to be expounded in greater detail in the Book of Revelation. (Volume 129, page 315).

The OT has a pointed example of despising or showing contempt for prophetic utterance in 2 Kings...

Then he (Elijah) went up from there to Bethel; and as he was going up by the way, young lads came out from the city and mocked him and said to him, "Go up, you baldhead; go up, you baldhead!" (2 Kings 2:23)

There is little doubt that Paul's instructions regarding **prophetic utterances** followed by the command to **examine everything carefully** relates in some way to what occurred in the church at Thessalonica between the first and second epistles. In his second letter Paul wrote...

Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming (**parousia**) of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together (episynagoge) to Him (referring to his previous letter where he had explained the Rapture - see 1Th 4:13, 14, 15, 16, 17-see **notes** 1Th 4:13; 14; 15; 16; 17), that you may not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the Day of the Lord has come. (**2 Thessalonians 2:1-2**) (**Comment:** Undoubtedly some in their midst had claimed a message or prophetic utterance that the church was in now in the **Day of the Lord** but when examined carefully with Scripture, this utterance could be proved false.)

Hiebert explains that...

**Prophecies** refers to the utterance of various declarations of the divine counsels under the immediate inspiration of the Spirit. The plural noun without the article denotes the individual cases as the Spirit spoke through the prophets for the instruction and edification of the church. The prophetic function held an important place in the life of the early church. In Ephesians 4:11 (note) the **prophets** are named next to the apostles as Christ's gift to the church. They were the human channels through whom the Spirit made known His will and purpose for His people. The prophetic revelation might at times concern the future (Acts 11:28) but not necessarily so. The prophetic message generally was in the nature of instruction and guidance concerning the present (Acts 13:2). The basic function of the prophet was to "speak forth" the counsel of God.

Through this important gift, the Spirit guided the development of the e and doctrine of the young church. With the completion of the divine revelation in the New Testament canon such direct communication of new spiritual revelation has ceased. Today the prophetic ministry in the church is not the disclosure of new revelation directly from the Spirit but rather the proclamation of God's message for His people as gathered from the inspired Scriptures under the illumination of the Spirit and made relevant to the contemporary situation. Believers need to be on guard against any professed revelation from the Spirit today that goes beyond, or is inconsistent with, the revelation embodied in the Scriptures. ([Hiebert, D. Edmond: 1 & 2 Thessalonians: BMH Book. 1996](#))

**J Vernon McGee** applies this passage writing that believers today are not to...

look down upon Bible study as something that is beneath you. Do not be indifferent to the Word of God. We have a lot of folk who are in Christian service, but they are ignorant of the Bible and they look down on Bible study. Occasionally I hear such a person saying, "You just spend all your time in Bible study and you don't do anything. What you need to do is get out and get busy." Well, what is needed is to get busy studying the Word of God, and after you do that you will see how to get busy and really be effective. ([McGee, J V: Thru the Bible Commentary: Thomas Nelson](#) )

**Comment:** As an aside I spoke recently to the secretary in a local Bible church in which the leadership has made the decision that they want to avoid teaching too much doctrine! Paul would tell them stop looking with contempt on sound doctrine or perhaps he would say don't hypocritically call yourself a Bible church!

**Clarke** comments that Paul is saying...

*Do not suppose that ye have no need of continual instruction*

Without it ye cannot preserve the Christian life, nor go on to perfection. God will ever send a message of salvation by each of his ministers to every faithful, attentive hearer. Do not suppose that ye are already wise enough; you are no more wise enough than you are holy enough. They who slight or neglect the means of grace, and especially the preaching of God's holy word, are generally vain, empty, self-conceited people, and exceedingly superficial both in knowledge and piety.

**Ray Stedman** has an excellent summary writing that Paul's command says in essence...

Do not ignore the Scripture's wisdom: Do not despise prophesying. Unfortunately, because of certain cultic tendencies in our day, we think of prophesying as some special power to predict the future either for ourselves individually or for the world at large. But prophesying was not that. Dr. F. F. Bruce, who is one of the great expositors of our day, says prophesying is

declaring the mind of God in the power of the Spirit.

In those early days, before the New Testament was written, this was done orally; prophets spoke the mind of the Spirit in an assembly. But since the writing of the Scriptures we have very little need for any kind of prophesying other than that based upon the Scriptures. **So prophesying really becomes what we call today expository preaching and teaching.** It is what I am doing right now. It is opening the mind of God from the Word of God. Do not despise that, says the apostle. That is the wisdom of God. That is telling you how to act, how to think and how to order your life. Do not treat it lightly. It will save you countless headaches and heartaches if you observe it. ([Loving Christianly](#)) (Bolding added)

**John Calvin** has a similar explanation observing that...

This sentence is appropriately added to the preceding one, for as the Spirit of God illuminates us chiefly by doctrine, those who give not teaching its proper place, do, so far as in them lies, quench the Spirit, for we must always consider in what manner or by what means God designs to communicate himself to us. Let every one,

therefore, who is desirous to make progress under the direction of the Holy Spirit, allow himself to be taught by the ministry of prophets.

By the term prophecy, however, I do not understand the gift of foretelling the future, but as in 1 Corinthians 14:3, the science of interpreting Scripture, so that a prophet is an interpreter of the will of God. For Paul, in the passage which I have quoted, assigns to prophets teaching for edification, exhortation, and consolation, and enumerates, as it were, these departments. Let, therefore, prophecy in this passage be understood as meaning—interpretation made suitable to present use. Paul prohibits us from despising it, if we would not choose of our own accord to wander in darkness.

**Matthew Poole** surmises that some of the Thessalonians...

despise it (prophecy) because of the outward meanness of the persons which prophesy; some, through a proud conceit of their own knowledge; some, by a contempt of religion itself. (Matthew Poole's Commentary on the New Testament)

**Barnes** feels that...

The reference here seems to be to preaching. They were not to undervalue it in comparison with other things. It is possible that in Thessalonica, as appears to have been the case subsequently in Corinth, (cp. 1Co 14:19), there were those who regarded the power of working miracles, or of speaking in unknown tongues, as a much more eminent endowment than that of stating the truths of religion in language easily understood. It would not be unnatural that comparisons should be made between these two classes of endowments, much to the disadvantage of the latter; and hence may have arisen this solemn caution not to disregard or despise the ability to make known divine truth in intelligible language.

A similar counsel may not be inapplicable to us now. The office of setting forth the truth of God is to be the permanent office in the church; that of speaking foreign languages by miraculous endowment, was to be temporary. But the office of addressing mankind on the great duties of religion, and of publishing salvation, is to be God's great ordinance for converting the world. It should not be despised, and no man commends his own wisdom who contemns it (Albert Barnes. Barnes NT Commentary)

**Guzik** writes...

We recognize that the Lord speaks to and through His people today, and we learn to be open to His voice. Of course, we always test prophecies (following the command to test all things), but we do not despise prophecies.

**James Denney** adds that...

The prophet was a man whose rational and moral nature had been quickened by the Spirit of Christ, and who possessed in an uncommon degree the power of speaking edification, exhortation, and comfort. In other words, he was a Christian preacher, endued with wisdom, fervor, and tenderness; and his spiritual addresses were among the Lord's best gifts to the Church. Such addresses, or prophesyings, Paul tells us, we are not to despise.

Now **despise** is a strong word; it is, literally, to set utterly at naught, as Herod set at naught Jesus, when he clothed Him in purple, or as the Pharisees set at naught the publicans, even when they came into the Temple to pray.

Of course, prophecy, or, to speak in the language of our own time, the preacher's calling, may be abused: a man may preach without a message, without sincerity, without reverence for God or respect for those to whom he speaks, he may make a mystery, a professional secret, of the truth of God, instead of declaring it even to little children; he may seek, as some who called themselves prophets in early times sought, to make the profession of godliness a source of gain; and under such circumstances no respect is due. But such circumstances are not to be assumed without cause. We are rather to assume that he who stands up in the Church to speak in God's name has had a word of God entrusted to him; it is not wise to despise it before it is heard. It may be because we have been so often disappointed that we pitch our hopes so low; but to expect nothing is to be guilty of a sort of contempt by anticipation. To **despise not prophesyings** requires us to look for something from the preacher, some word of God that will build us up in godliness, or bring us encouragement or consolation; it requires us to listen as those who have a precious opportunity given them of being strengthened by Divine grace and truth. We ought not to lounge or fidget while the word of God is

spoken, or to turn over the leaves of the Bible at random, or to look at the clock; we ought to hearken for that word which God has put into the preacher's mouth for us; and it will be a very exceptional prophesying in which there is not a single thought that it would repay us to consider. (**Classic Commentary Collection**. See [AGES Software](#) for their full selection of highly recommended resources)

**Vincent** has a lengthy, interesting note on prophetic utterances writing that...

The emphasis on prophesyings corresponds with that in 1 Cor. 14:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 22 ff. Prophecy in the apostolic church was directly inspired instruction, exhortation, or warning. The prophet received the truth into his own spirit which was withdrawn from earthly things and concentrated upon the spiritual world. His higher, spiritual part (pneuma), and his moral intelligence (nous), and his speech (logos) worked in harmony. His spirit received a spiritual truth in symbol: his understanding interpreted it in its application to actual events, and his speech uttered the interpretation. He was not ecstatically rapt out of the sphere of human intelligence, although his understanding was intensified and clarified by the phenomenal action of the Spirit upon it. This double action imparted a peculiarly elevated character to his speech. The prophetic influence was thus distinguished from the mystical ecstasy, the ecstasy of Paul when rapt into the third heaven, which affected the subject alone and was incommunicable (2Cor. 12:1, 2, 3, 4). The gift of tongues carried the subject out of the prophetic condition in which spirit, understanding, and speech operated in concert, and into a condition in which the understanding was overpowered by the communication to the spirit, so that the spirit could not find its natural expression in rational speech, or speech begotten of the understanding, and found supernatural expression in a tongue created by the Spirit. Paul attached great value to prophecy. He places prophets next after apostles in the list of those whom God has set in the Church (1Co 12:28). He associates apostles and prophets as the foundation of the Church (Eph. 2:20). He assigns to prophecy the precedence among spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 14:1, 2, 3, 4, 5), and urges his readers to desire the gift (1Co 14:1, 39). Hence his exhortation here.

In summary in issuing this negative command, Paul is saying that some in the Thessalonian church had a low opinion of prophesying and/or viewed this activity with contempt. Whatever the exact nature of the problem that evoked the tendency to undervalue prophecy, Paul is declaring that they must guard themselves against the reaction of despising all prophesying. Believers need to remember that wherever the Spirit of God is at work, the devil will seek to introduce confusion. They must not disparage the true manifestations of the Spirit but be alert to detect the false, which leads into the next section.