

Final Instructions before the Final Day

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[0 : 00] to relate well to the pastors i guess sometimes pastors are a bit coy to teach this because it feels like they're kind of propping themselves up well i'm leaving so i can just unleash you know here's the instructions respect those who labor among you respect those who labor among you the apostle is commanding you the word of god is commanding you to respect your pastors it's literally to to recognize your pastors and to hold them up to see them as from god and they they have a direction over you they have a rule that appreciate them lift them up this is this is hard to do in today's sort of very leveling and very um church hopping kind of society where we are can we are church shoppers if anything the pastor's got to perform for us i don't owe him anything that's not how paul speaks and we don't like the idea in society today of a whiff of authority institutional authority bound up in a person it just feels doesn't feel right it grates against our desire for autonomy which is actually one of the great idols of our society and it's hard work and we must learn how to do it we we must learn how to respect the our leaders that god gives one of the reasons we may not respect them is because of their tasks from god which paul describes in this way they have charge over you in the lord and admonish you you may think well i don't want anyone to charge over me in the church you know i'm not going to submit to that and paul says the job description what are these pastors meant to do in your life they are meant to admonish you now what does that mean i mean that's like one of these forgotten verbs we don't even use that verb anymore admonish i encourage you uh look it up in the dictionary i did this week it means to instruct it means to inform the mind but admonish has a strong negative force it means to warn to counsel against going in a wrong direction to tell someone that going in the wrong direction go this way instead it means to reprimand it means to rebuke and i think the temptation of god's people in every age will be to hear an admonishment from a pastor whether one to one or in a context like this in a sermon and the temptation will be to say what does he know what would he know who does he think he is you know i've been around a lot longer than him he can stick that advice up his jumper you know that that's going to be the temptation if not in your words in your heart will be just to be thinking like that friends i challenge you watch your thoughts watch your whispers to your friends but especially all of us don't despise your pastors don't despise your pastors and it doesn't have to be that if god has established this sort of leadership structures that are worthy of respect or deserve respect it doesn't mean that the relationship with the pastor has to be cold or clinical or kind of military like because actually in verse 13 he says esteem them very highly in love this is this is meant to be a loving personal relationship the respect is out of love it's it's a warm thing we've seen in thessalonians paul's heartache and care and concern like a parent for the thessalonians it's a warm intimate relationship but it's one of authority and it's one of respect and paul says esteem them highly because of their work be at peace among yourselves which i take to mean

in this context of esteeming your leaders of respecting your pastors be at peace that is don't be backstabbing your leaders behind their back you know watch how you talk one of my favorite proverbs in the bible in the book of proverbs is chapter six where it says has a list and it has there are six things the lord hates seven that are detestable to him and there's a whole list of things i won't go through them but the but the top of the list or the last one of the list is god hates a man who stirs up dissension among brothers amongst a family paul says be at peace among yourselves internally and in your words esteem your pastors give them the benefit of the doubt don't assume malice don't assume that they're not caring actually trust god by trusting them honor jesus by honoring them you might object um well you might say you don't know the pastors well i've had to put up with you know you don't know the the rat bag pastors i've seen or the ungodly or the power hungry or the egotistical pastors i've seen and it's true paul doesn't address that because the apostle paul here knows the pastors in this church that have been established that they are good and godly men so he he doesn't need to take that into account what would you do in that situation and so i don't really want to go into that because it's true of you as well i know your situation you do not have uh rat bag pastors at least not after today i know who your pastors are they are andrew and jonno and i know who the staff are and who your small group leaders are and who your wardens are and they are godly uh fine christian people and so you can't qualify yourself into disobedience just because someone might abuse a text doesn't deny valid and normal use of it and actually ultimately it doesn't really matter your assessment or whether you agree with the pastor at the time it's not about that it's not about how well you think they are performing uh paul says esteem them highly because of their work because of their office because of who they are and what they do because of the office of pastor it deserves respect you know they are over you in the law the lord jesus has appointed andrew as your vicar you know you you that's worthy of respect um independent of how well you assess his performance on any particular week it's a lot like a marriage and if you haven't learned this lesson in marriage please learn it don't leave without learning it today you promise in marriage to give say husbands you you you promise to give her the honor due to her as your wife what is that saying is it saying just honor your wife on the days where you where she's doing a good job no it's saying give her the honor that's owed because of the officer's wife god has decreed that the office of wife is is worthy of an honor independent of how well she's going and it's same for husbands you promise to give him the honor due to him as your husband there's an honor that's due to husbands even when he's being a rat bag and and doesn't deserve it the title the office of husband is worthy of sort of a baseline of respect and paul is saying it's true of pastors esteem them highly because of their work there's there's an objective reason to do this honoring see at the end of the day i don't think god has designed the body of christ to be this kind of flat democratic thing god has structured his kingdom such that your growth as a christian your joy in the lord is conditional on a number of things one of which is learning how to be in a in an honoring

submissive trusting respecting relationship with a pastor and many christians that their growth is hindered permanently and because they haven't learned that lesson they haven't learned that lesson and they haven't learned the joys of actually trusting the pastor and opening yourself up for advice and criticism and encouragement well having addressed the congregation paul then in verse 14 turns to the pastors in thessalonica and addresses them so i guess at this point i'm speaking to andrew and i'm speaking to jonno and uh the the staff of this church and maybe our bible study leaders to a lesser extent but but here's the challenge we urge you beloved or brothers and sisters admonish the idlers encourage the faint-hearted help the weak be patient with all of them so he's he's he's a number of different commands to the pastors to the elders or leaders showing that they will require wisdom because different ministries will be needed for different people in different contexts the first one is is probably the toughest one the confrontational one pastors are to admonish the idlers paul um paul here has already told us receive the ministry of admonishment so my challenge to andrew and to jonno and the other leaders is to is to not sugarcoat your ministry but to be up front and straightforward in your ministry of challenge to this congregation um the idlers who are the idlers well there's a theme in one thessalonians of people who for whatever reason think that they could just be idle be lazy because jesus return is around the corner they can just muck around paul says um rebuke those people the category of either refers to anyone who's disorderly or undisciplined or maybe sort of that really kind of autonomous edgy prickly person admonish those people rebuke them but but not everyone needs that and you'd be a bad pastor if that was what you were doing all the time because there's two or three other categories he says encourage the faint-hearted that is there's a time pastors need to know how to be tender how to be warm how to be patient with people who are struggling how to sit with those who are grieving and console them with the gospel with the hope of jesus christ the only hope there is in the face of suffering and death you know i i encourage the pastors here the leaders here to to be tender with the faint-hearted to persevere with the hurting and the depressed to give them lots of your time to not be impatient with them but to give them lots of your time similarly to he says to help the weak to help those who are weak to not to help them spiritually but to not be so proud as a pastor that you won't help people practically to give them all the support they need and finally paul says to the pastors be patient with all of them so uh andrew reid be patient with this church be patient with them with every person in here don't you know trust god you know ask for the patience of joe remember that god's god's love for this church god's patience for this church will far exceed that of the pastors so andrew you know imitate god in this manner this whole teaching is wonderful i mean you'd miss it if all you thought was um you know just a flat structure of a church what we have here is a richness and a variety and responsibility and uh opportunity to extend trust to others to let them lead you in your life that's a good thing that's a beautiful thing that would be missing i mean i love the fact in 1 thessalonians 2 and 3

he says paul says i was orphaned when i left you it was so hard for me and maybe the reason he didn't say you were orphaned was because he didn't want to undermine their pastors that there were other pastors that were raised up to replace paul and so what what they had are now learning in chapter 5 is uh you miss paul but you honor the old pastor by honoring the new pastor you honor the old outer by honoring the new outer you know it's probably not so much about me but holy trinity we just lost a vicar of 13 years and you know a bit of change of leadership we've got to learn the lesson you honor the old pastor by honoring the new pastor and by honoring the pastor you're honoring jesus you're because they they do their work in the lord well paul at that point explicitly then goes back to just address everyone generally in verse 15 because he says see that none of you so i'm now he's now addressing everyone see that none of you repays evil for evil but always seek to do good to one another and to all um paul doesn't have this expectation of the perfect church where no one gets hurt and there's no evil but what he's saying is the distinctive christian feature is not perfection but your response to people's evil and you don't repay evil for evil but you repay good for evil that is the that is our gospel distinctive not that we are perfect and i think it's a particular mark of christians and should be and it's a mark of the gospel that we repay good for evil because when we do that we're actually embodying what jesus did in going to the cross that he didn't retaliate he didn't lift his hand he didn't raise his voice when when they were uh mocking him and insulting him and torturing him and finally killing him i mean that's our redemption that's the gospel and and this is this is the best non-verbal way you could point to the gospel is by repaying good for evil and and not being sort of clinging to justice such that you think you're deserved to repay you know evil for evil the doing of uh good to one another that is to the church and to all outside the church is is the model of christian life based on the death of jesus paul goes on uh with a number of kind of commands related sort of piety a number of injunctions verse 16 rejoice always pray without ceasing give thanks in all circumstances for this is the will of god in christ jesus for you so here it is exactly from the word of god you've heard god god's word today what is his will for your life his will for your life is that you'll rejoice always you'll pray without ceasing you'll give thanks in everything that's god's will for your life you know often you talk to someone maybe a widow and you know someone who's very very old and they say you know i don't really know why why god has me here still on earth why he hasn't taken me yet well because he wants you to rejoice always pray without ceasing and give thanks in all circumstances and obviously paul has in mind not just good days he's saying this because there are bad days and he's saying especially on the days of suffering on the days of persecution for your faith on the days of ill health trust your heavenly father enough and love the gospel enough that even in deep struggle you can rejoice in god you know in any context you can praise god for the cross you can praise god for the forgiveness of your sins for the hope of eternal life those things are true every day no matter how you feel and so there is always no need to rejoice and give thanks it doesn't say you have to give thanks for every circumstance but in every

circumstance you don't have to thank god that someone close to you has died but you can thank him there'll be good things happening and there'll be good things in that person you can thank god for and there's the hope of the gospel you can thank god for in those tough days so what's the will of god rejoice pray without ceasing give thanks those three things although i could add one more to the list because two chapters ago paul said this is the will of god to abstain from fornication so we'll go ahead and forth to uh you know enjoy uh your sexual relationship with your spouse but otherwise to be chased so that those four things you've got a very good summary of christian piety uh to rejoice to pray to give thanks and to keep your pants on okay so that's christianity okay we'll keep going this is like a sort of a scattergun sermon because it's the end of the book and it's sort of this miscellaneous commands the apostle says verse 19 do not quench the spirit do not despise the words of prophets but test everything and hold fast to what is good it's sad i think when a christian is no longer open to the spirit of god when they're no longer feeling like there's any growth to be had in the christian life that where they are they've been for a long time and there's nowhere else to really go or grow but that's a sad thing because there's always new areas to grow in both in our understanding of the unsearchable riches of christ or in obedience there's always new things to grow in and we ought to be open to the spirit and to not quench the spirit and he names specifically the ministry of prophecy and by that i just take it to mean a ministry of people guided by god's spirit and encouraging each other and so don't don't despise the encouragement of others maybe he has in mind the spirit-led admonition of the pastors you know don't despise that but be open to it but he does add you've got a test you see that there's sort of there are two types of christians you know there are the clothes christians they're stale and stagnant not open to the spirit and then there are those who are so open to the spirit they're just gullible for the latest fad of christian book or whatever there's a place in between when you're open to the spirit but you test it against the scripture you weigh it up and if it's scriptural you hold fast to it if it's not you kind of you know how to discern you know how to reject things and there's a lot out there to reject paul says and i wonder if also in in saying don't despise prophecy he's also alluding to the fact there's often in every age a general despising of ministry of the word and you know don't despise broadly speaking any ministry of the word you know you it's a gift from god verse 22 abstain from every form of evil so don't flirt with temptation paul's saying pull yourself back from every kind of evil hold yourself back from you know there's enough in god's world that's so good that's pure and enjoyable and there's so much just so many good pleasures to be had abstain from evil things you know don't don't get close to them and i think by naming every kind of evil paul knows i think that in every culture we kind of have sanctified evils do you know i mean so we've got evils that we know are wrong you know sexual immorality is wrong and pornography is wrong and you know i mean murder is wrong but then we've got this other evils that the bible calls evil that we kind of tolerate like greed and the worship of wealth and our homes and the idolatry that can be

[20 : 19] in some families and they're kind of nice don't cast the sins but he says abstain from every form of evil you know don't it's staying from every type of idolatry not just the ones that are accepted as bad in your group but the ones that all the scripture says um are idolatry paul ends with a prayer and i guess in a way this is my prayer for you may the god of peace himself sanctify you entirely may your spirit soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our lord jesus christ it's a great prayer to pray for god to finish what he's begun for god to completely sanctify you body soul and spirit so that you are like christ and you are ready for his coming which is such a big theme in one thessalonians the sure and certain coming of jesus to judge um on the day on that great day paul is confident that it's the work of god may god himself do it um at the end of the day you know there god will work through the challenges and through your response to the challenges of the bible but it's god's work god will do it with you he's not just an assistant in self-improvement or he's not just a guide in your spirituality he is the one who will do it he will sanctify you paul is confident of this and i'm confident of this for you as well because of who god is uh verse 24 as paul says the one who calls you is faithful and he will do this you know the god who has called you is faithful so stick with him he will do it he will do it i don't believe in the power of prayer i believe in the power of the god who is faithful who answers prayer do you see the difference um our hope is not in prayer as a technique but paul prays and he's confident because of who god is because god is faithful paul's prays with confidence and paul prays without ceasing because of who god is god is the faithful one and and he won't he won't leave us he won't desert us i'll share a final quote from my hero john calvin who says of this verse god does not promise that he'll be our father for only one day but god adopts us on the condition that he is to cherish us forever afterwards isn't that nice god does not adopt us just for one day but on the condition that he will um cherish us forever afterwards and he who is faithful will complete the job so stick with him and stick with god's people paul asks the church to pray for him and i would ask that of you as well would you please pray for for us that is for helen and i for our ministry at beric you know here is the command paul asking for prayer for the mission field and although i'm not really a kind of a on the noticeable link missionary person i feel that i am being sent out from this parish in a way on your behalf take what i've learned here and what i've learned from you and and to bless others with it so please pray for us and um our ministry and i wonder also in paul saying pray for us he's sort of saying pray for us pastors i would also exhort you to be praying for andrew reid and for john o and and esteem them in your prayers as well as in your actions verse 26 is a hard one for me i greet all the brothers and sisters with a holy kiss so i repent of speaking against hugging and physical affection here it is in the bible i've got to just do it uh there's nothing there's nothing on earth like the christian church is there that wherever you go you are family by the blood of christ and that that is a precious thing and so

it is right for us to be affectionate with each other and wherever you go you meet christians and you're on them you all you have that instantly it's a great thing i'm sure um when i bump into you in the future you know we will still have that because we are family in christ and and our last command and then another prayer i solemnly command you by the lord it's a bit serious that this letter be read to all of them so paul commands in the lord solemnly that um i guess the the elders would have received the letter that they take the letter to the church for it to be heard and and meditated on um as the words of the apostle of jesus i mean just imagine if i mean we know that paul wrote letters that we don't have that god hasn't preserved in the canon there may have even been some letters paul wrote with admonition with rebukes in them that that was probably the elders didn't like and threw straight in the bin imagine if that happened imagine that the wrath on the day of judgment for for elders who did that in the first century that they held back the word of god although imagine similarly though god's anger and frustration with you if you have the bible but don't read it if you have these letters but don't meditate on them and and and base your life on them and i would encourage you to clamor and to clamor andrew day and night saying give us all the letters give us every chapter of all the books of the bible you know don't be content with just bits and pieces of the bible but be hungry as paul says read the whole letter and so ask ask andrew to give you every chapter do you know i mean don't let anything be held back from god's precious word and i'll let paul's conclusion be mine he says the grace of our lord jesus christ be with you by that he means the grace that was won on the cross when the blood of jesus atoned all your sins may that grace be with you may the grace that in the resurrection of jesus that was won when he was raised on your behalf for your eternal life may that grace be with you may the grace of the lord jesus christ so he is lord he is christ he is king messiah he reigns at god's right hand even now over you may that may his grace shine on you every day and and great by grace he means god's unlimited mercy god's unlimited favor and patience and forgiveness may that be with you always let me pray lord jesus we thank you and we love you and we thank you for your um incredible grace to us thank you that you died on the cross for us that you rose for us and you now reign for us i pray father that you will help us to uh love your word and to heed it and that uh we will know your grace and favor in all we do as we minister to one another as pastors minister to the flock and as the flock respect and esteem their pastors and i pray father will be a church that's marked by rejoicing um and by thankfulness and and by prayer without ceasing please father help us to continue to trust you for jesus sake amen you