***1 Thessalonians 5:16-22 Rejoice always, 17pray without ceasing, 18in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. 19Do not quench the Spirit. 20Do not despise prophecies. 21Test all things; hold fast what is good. 22 Abstain from every form of evil.***

1 Thessalonians 5 is a powerful reminder to the church at Thessalonica, to churches down through the ages, and to this church sitting in Frogsboro, NC this morning. We’re reminded that the Day of the Lord is coming quickly, as a thief in the night. We’re warned not to be caught unaware sleeping on the job, but prepared, dressed in Faith, Hope, and Love, waiting and watching soberly for Christ’s return. In verses 12-15, the church is charged to love the pastor, being at peace with one another, not bringing grief, or causing God’s chosen servant to groan in the spirit, supporting one another, always seeking what is good for the church. It’s a very sobering list. It challenges the church, not to look around and tell everyone else what they’re doing wrong, but to look within and demand I, WE, do better for our Lord.

I want to pick up in verse 16 this morning. *Rejoice always.* Paul gives two words – Rejoice always. Be full of cheer. This from a follower that was beaten, stoned, shipwrecked, imprisoned, feared, hated, rejected, living with a thorn in his side. Choose to rejoice always.

Verse 17 – *Pray without ceasing.* Talk to God at all times. Develop a continual God-focus, so much so that your spirit, your mind stays in communion with God with no interruption.

Verse 18 - *in everything give thanks -* In the whole of your life, be thankful! We’ve become accomplished complainers. If trophies were given for complaining, we’d all have a room full. *For this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.* If the will of God in Christ Jesus is for us to rejoice always, pray without ceasing and, in everything give thanks, it stands to reason that the will of Satan is for us to rejoice never, stop praying, and complain about everything. Gratefulness serves God. Complaint serves Satan. Like Joshua, let us choose this day whom we will serve.

Verse 19 - *Do not quench the Spirit.* We had several DO’s. Now we have Do Not’s. Did you know we have the power to quench the Spirit of God in our life? It says so right here. How do we quench the Spirit, extinguish the flaming presence of God in our lives? Failing to be at peace. Failing to rejoice. Failing to be grateful. Returning evil for evil. Little by little, day by day, moment by moment, the Spirit dwindles, smolders, and becomes barely an ember – why? Because we block the Breath of God feeding the flame of our spirits. The Book of Exodus tells of God’s Spirit inhabiting the Tabernacle. The Book of Ezekiel says that God departed from the Tabernacle, because Israel sinned and chose to quench the Spirit. God’s Spirit burns infinitely brighter than the sun on it’s brightest day. We choose to close the blinds and block His Light.

Verse 20 *Do not despise prophecies.* Do not neglect your Bible, do not ignore your pastor, do not reject God’s leading. How do we despise the prophecies? By failing to rejoice, failing to stay in communion with God, failing to tame our complaining tongues. Neglect of any relationship kills that relationship. Every word, every thought, every action builds or destroys. How are we investing? Praise or complaint – One feeds, the other quenches.

Verses 21 & 22 *Test all things* – Prove all things by prayer and examination. In 1 Cor 3:13, this word **Prove** holds the idea of trying a work by fire. Precious metals are purified, but chaff and straw burn up. Then, after testing, we choose - *hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil.* We Hold Fast, meaning hold close that which is good. We abstain, Hold Away that which is evil. What feeds the Fire of the Holy Spirit? Galatians 5:22-23 *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.* These things cause us to Rejoice and be thankful. What quenches the Holy Spirit? Galatians 5:19-21 *Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.*

God has given us many blessings to rejoice over. On this Old Fashion Day, let’s rejoice in fellowship, in peace, in love. Let’s do nothing to Quench the Holy Spirit. Make no mistake, it is all of us that guard this church. As Israel discovered, and many in America are discovering still, God’s Spirit doesn’t come just because there’s a steeple on top, a pulpit inside, or a sign out front. God’s Holy Spirit arrives person by person, grateful heart by grateful heart, one choice at a time. He dwells in this building only in the same measure He dwells our hearts.