

1 Thessalonians 5:12-22
The Legacy of Godly Living

Introduction

1. We have studied a host of topics in this letter to the Thessalonians:
 - a. Imitating Christ
 - b. Ministering to one another
 - c. Encouragement
 - d. Purity
 - e. Love
 - f. Hope
 - g. Watchfulness (Rapture and 2nd Coming)

2. Today we get to the final set of instructions Paul had for the Thessalonians:
 - a. How many of you remember what Jesus said were the two greatest commandments?
 - b. The 10 Commandments can be separated into these two commands:
 - 1) The first four relate to loving God:
 - a) Do not have any other god's before God
 - b) Do not make/have idols
 - c) Do not take the Lord's name in vain
 - d) Remember the Sabbath and keep it holy

 - 2) The remaining six related to loving others:
 - a) Honor your mother and father
 - b) Do not murder
 - c) Do not commit adultery
 - d) Do not steal
 - e) Do not bear false witness
 - f) Do not covet

 - c. Our passage today actually breaks down into these two commands or principles as well:
 - 1) Paul gives some final instructions on interpersonal relationships
 - 2) Paul gives some final instructions on our relationship with God

A. Paul's final instructions regarding interpersonal relationships (5:12-15)

1. We are to recognize and appreciate those who labor diligently in the Church (12-13a): **“But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction, 13 and that you esteem them very highly in love because of their work...”**
 - a. There are a lot of things to unpack in this verse
 - b. First, what does Paul mean by **“appreciate”** and **“esteem”**?
 - 1) The word **“appreciate”** here (NAU) might also be translated as respect (ESV, NIV), give recognition to (CSB), or even acknowledge (NET) in your copy of the Bible
 - 2) The Greek word simply means “to know” but in this context Paul clearly has in mind more than simply knowing these people, especially because of what else he says

- 3) The word “**esteem**” comes from a word that means *to hold an opinion* and Paul even tells us what kind of opinion to hold—one that is filled with or high in love, thus “**esteem them very highly in love**”
- c. Second, who is it that we are to appreciate and hold in high regard?
 - 1) Those who “**diligently labor among you**”
 - 2) Those who “**have charge over you**”
 - 3) Those who “**give you instruction**”
 - 4) Grammatically, these all refer to one group of people (not three different groups), and represent the local church leaders (likely elders and deacons)
 - 5) Notice that it’s their WORK—what they do, not their status or position—that is to motivate our appreciation and high regard for them: “**because of their work**” (13)
2. We are to live peacefully with one another (13b) : “**Be at peace among yourselves**”
 - a. Being peaceable is supposed to be one of the hallmarks of being a Christian
 - b. Romans 12:14-21 (READ)
 - c. Jesus told his disciples: “**Salt is good; but if the salt becomes unsalty, with what will you make it salty again? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another.**” (Mark 9:50)
 - d. Paul repeated these words in 2 Corinthians 13:11: “**Finally, brethren, rejoice, be made complete, be comforted, be like-minded, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you.**”
 - e. In Ephesians 4:3 he wrote that we are to “**be diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.**”
 - f. In Hebrews 12:14 the write called on his readers to “**pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord.**”
 3. We are to admonish one another (14a): “**We urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly**”:
 - a. The word for “**admonish**” here is the word for counsel, but in this context it refers to warning or reprimanding those who are “**unruly**” which means to be “**out of order**”
 - b. Your translation may say admonish or warn the “**idle**”, “**undisciplined**” or “**lazy**”
 - c. See 2 Thessalonians 3:7-15
 - d. In Genesis 4:9, after Cain murdered his brother Abel, and God asked him where his brother was, Cain replied, “I do not know. Am I my brother’s keeper?”
 - e. That idiom has come to reflect what many people think—I am not responsible for the wellbeing of others
 - f. While the Bible does call individuals to take responsibility for their own wellbeing, it also calls us Christians to be concerned for the wellbeing of others
 - g. This includes when we see other believers living in a way that dishonors Jesus
 - h. Look at Galatians 6:1-4 (READ)

Confronting Mark at Seminary about his relationship

4. We are to encourage one another (14b): “**encourage the fainthearted**”
 - a. Paul has already addressed the value and need of encouragement earlier in this letter, but here he specifically refers to encouraging “**the fainthearted**”
 - b. Who are the “**fainthearted**”?
 - 1) The word refers to being *disheartened or discouraged*

- 2) Proverbs 18:14 says, **“The spirit of a man can endure his sickness, but as for a broken spirit who can bare it?”**
- c. At some point, we all get a bit discouraged, disheartened and need fellow believers to come alongside to encourage and comfort us
- d. In fact, did you know that one of the reasons we suffer is so that we can encourage and comfort others when they suffer (See 2 Corinthians 1:3-7): **“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, 4 who comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. 5 For just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, so also our comfort is abundant through Christ.”**
5. We are to help one another (14c): **“help the weak,”**
- a. Along the same line as the above, we are to help the weak
- b. This is an interesting one because the word for help more specifically means to hold firm to something or stick close to it
- c. Weak here can refer to those who are weary, or even those who are physically sick
- d. So, we might paraphrase this as **“stay close to those who are weary or sick”**
- e. Isn't that a neat—and powerful—word picture?
- f. In Romans 15:1 Paul wrote this: **“Now we who are strong ought to bear the weaknesses of those without strength and not just please ourselves.”**
6. We are to be patient with one another (14d-15): **“be patient with everyone. See that no one repays another with evil for evil, but always seek after that which is good for one another and for all people.”**
- a. I don't think it's a coincidence that Paul included this word regarding patience right after the two above regarding admonishing the unruly, encouraging the fainthearted and helping the weary or weak
- b. Patience is supposed to be another hallmark of believers
- 1) 1 Corinthians 13:4: **“Love is patient...”**
- 2) 2 Timothy 2:24 says that servants of Christ are to be **“patient when wronged”**
- 3) James called on his readers to be patient in the midst of interpersonal conflict and struggle (James 5:8)
- 4) Peter reminded his readers that God is longsuffering and patient with us (2 Peter 3:9)
- c. At the heart of patience is the desire to **“seek after that which is good for one another”** rather than returning **“evil for evil”**

<p>B. Paul's final instructions regarding our relationship with God (5:16-22)</p>
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1. We are to maintain a disposition of worship (16-18):
- a. What do I mean by disposition of worship?
- 1) A person's disposition refers to their temperament, character, personality—in essence, what other people see in those things--For instance, if someone says you have a cheerful disposition, it means that generally speaking you come across to others as a cheerful person
- 2) So, having a disposition of worship means that when others look at us, they see individuals who reflect an attitude of worship in everyday life

- b. Paul uses three imperatives to describe this in the next three verses (16-18a): **“Rejoice always; 17 pray without ceasing; 18 in everything give thanks;”**
- 1) The first imperative is to **“Rejoice always”**:
 - a) You may have heard that joy and happiness are not the same thing Biblically
 - b) We have to be careful because they are synonyms in some respects
 - c) However, there do appear to be differences
 - d) For instance, happiness is based on circumstance and most often refers to one’s emotions, whereas joy is based on one’s well-being and refers to a state of mind
 - e) This is why James can command joy in the face of trials (James 1:2): **“Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, 3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. 4 And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.”**
 - f) It’s also why Paul was able to have joy in times of affliction and suffering:
 - 2 Corinthians 7:4: **“I am overflowing with joy in all our affliction.”**
 - Colossians 1:24: **“Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake.”**
 - 2) The second imperative is to **“pray without ceasing”**:
 - 3) The third imperative is **“to give thanks in everything”**
- c. We often misunderstand worship to be something that we do on Sunday mornings, but worship is something we should be doing all day long simply in the way that we live—Romans 12:1: **“Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.”**
2. We are to cling to sound teaching (19-22): **“Do not quench the Spirit; 20 do not despise prophetic utterances. 21 But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good; 22 abstain from every form of evil.”**
- a. There are two primary commands here and they both relate to how one values and responds to Biblical truth
 - b. The first was not to quench (extinguish) the Holy Spirit by considering prophetic utterances of no value or as worthless
 - c. The second was to examine everything that was presented as prophecy and keep what was good and throw out what was bad
 - d. In the first century, the Church had to rely upon certain sign gifts like prophecy and tongues to receive the Word of God, but it appears these gifts diminished over time as the Bible was written
 - e. Today, an equivalent idea charge to us might be that we are not to despise Bible teaching, but examine it careful and keep what lines up with the Word and toss what does not

C. Conclusion
