The Coming of the Lord

I Thessalonians 5:12-22

Exhortations

Introduction:

Paul has been telling them about the future bliss of the Coming of the Lord in “the sweet By and By”. That is going to be wonderful – “out of this world” - you might say. Now, he brings them back to the present realities, to the “Nasty now and now”

You are still here, in this world. There is work to be done, souls to be saved, believers to be discipled and encouraged, a church to be established for those who follow us.

I. Instructions to Those who are Led – 5:12-13

“And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you,”

These leaders are probable the elders of the church.

A. Recognize (οἶδα) the Rulers – 5:12

1. They Toil (work hard **-** κοπιάω)

“labor” - become weary and tired. They performed their church work before or after they had worked their day job.

2. They Take Charge they Stand before you.

3. They Train

In the Lord = in a truly Christian way. These three –Toil, Take Charge, Train – are still what we describe as good leaders today.

B. Esteem them Highly – 5:13a

esteem them very highly” -- “count them as worthy” -- “count it all joy” (Jas. 1:2)

“Hold them in highest regard” -- This must be done in an attitude of affection – “in ἀγάπῃlove” If you don’t have that kind of love, ask God for it. Like wisdom in James 1:5, He will give love to you liberally and He won’t scold you for asking.” Do this for their works’ sake.

You don’t have to like the way he combs his hair or the car he drives or the way he drives it. Esteem him highly for his office and his performance of his work.

C. Be at Peace among ourselves – 5:13b

“Live in peace with each other”

Notice that the idea is to maintain peace, not to start peace. The Thessalonian church had peaceful conditions; they just had to continue them. This will result from obeying the former instructions.

These are commands. They are absolutely necessary if we desire a Christ-like Church. And those instructions worked for them for them and they will work for TLBC and any church that will follow them.

II. Instructions to Those Who Lead – 5:14-15

“Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all. See that no one renders evil for evil to anyone, but always pursue what is good both for yourselves and for all.”

These instructions are so terse and short and capable of so many ideas that we have to keep within the context to grasp Paul’s meaning here.

A. Help these People – 5:14

1. Warn those who are Disorderly – {Out of line}

“unruly” - undisciplined, insubordinate, idle, lazy.

Idle and lazy seem to be the emphasis here. They have stopped working because of the nearness of the Rapture (4:11)

In 2 Thess. 3:6-8, Paul writes: …withdraw ﻿﻿from every brother who walks ﻿﻿disorderly and not according to the tradition which ﻿﻿he received from us. For you yourselves know how you ought to follow us, for we were not disorderly among you; nor did we eat anyone’s bread ﻿﻿free of charge, but worked with labor and toil night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you,

2. Comfort those who are Despondent

“comfort the fainthearted, (little souled)

Some refer this primarily to those whose relatives had died and they were concern that they had missed the Rapture. (See 4:18 and 5:11) But there they needed to be comforted, here they need to be encouraged More likely, they may be those who needed courage to face those outsiders who afflicted the church.

3. Uphold those who are Dependent–

“uphold the weak” - This weakness is probably not physical, but moral or spiritual.

4. Be Patient with those who are Different –

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“be patient with all”

Be “long suffering” “Rome wasn’t built in a day”. Be as patient with others as God has been and is being with you. The “all” is general enough to include even unbelievers who misunderstand the Gospel and your interest in them.

B. Hold these Principles

1. Prohibit This – 5:15a **﻿**

“See that no one renders evil for evil to anyone,”

**“**Evil for evil” is human.

“Evil for good” is devilish.

“Good for evil” is Divine.

So, don’t operate on the human level with others. Certainly, don’t operate on the devilish level. Instead, operate on the Divine level in all of your relationships with believers and unbelievers. Retaliation is not an option.

2. Pursue This – 5:15b

“always ﻿﻿pursue what is good both for yourselves and for all.”

It is not enough just not to render evil; we must pursue the good -- Not just if I get a chance -- Not just if I feel like it -- Not just once in a while. We pursue the good always and for everyone as much as for ourselves.

III. Instructions to the Entire Church – 5:16-22

A. Always Praise – 5:16

“Always rejoice” – have joy.

This is the shortest verse in the New Testament Greek -- 14 letters. “Jesus wept” is the shortest in English – 16 letters. But it is packed with meaning.

When the wise men saw the star they rejoiced (Matt 2:10) The believer can and should rejoice in spite of meanness and persecution. The believers’ joy is his salvation and the God of his salvation. We are told over and over to rejoice because we let so many little adversities lessen or even darken our joyfulness.

In England they fly the royal flag over the residence when the king (or the queen if that’s all they have) is in residence. Someone has said that Joy is the Christian’s flag. When the joy flag is flying, the King is in residence. It also indicates that this believer is living in the realm of faith, trusting the Lord.

B. Without Ceasing Pray – 5:17a

﻿“pray without ceasing”

Does that mean that we are to pray 24 hours a day? Jesus didn’t do that; neither did Paul. But Paul did maintain his stated times of prayer.

Daniel prayed three times a day with his window open toward Jerusalem. He didn’t stop when it was forbidden.

Illustration: {Bob Palmer} (hacking cough) - The word (ἀδιαλείπτως) without ceasingis used of a person with a hacking cough. He does not cough without stopping. He coughs throughout the day. That is the kind of prayer that Paul is exhorting here.

Two friends can fellowship with each other as they walk along together. There are special times when we pray with requests in mind. We pray with human family, with a friend or with our spiritual family. But throughout the day we are in touch with our heavenly Father.

C. In All things Appreciate – 5:18

“in everything give thanks, for this is God’s will in Christ Jesus for you.”

He does not say for everything (Though he does say that in Eph. 5:20.)

Giving thanks in all things or in every circumstance means that in every circumstance of life, no matter where God puts you, no matter what your difficulties, you can thank God for all He has done for you. You may be praying earnestly that He will change your circumstances. You may be praying for victory. You can thank God that in it all you will be victorious in Christ. So in everything give thanks.

We often wonder about God’s will for our lives. It is one of the most asked questions by Christians: What is God’s will for my life? Yet, here are three basic components of God’s will for every Christian. Here is Christian testimony in relation to God in a very concise statement of three verses, 16-18.

D. Do Not Quench the Spirit – 5:19

“Do not quench the Spirit.”

When Christ went to heaven He sent the Holy Spirit. On the day of Pentecost every believer in Christ was indwelt by the Spirit. Ever since, whenever a person trusts in Christ as his Savior, the Holy Spirit baptizes him into the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13), comes into his mortal body. (I Cor.6.19)

The Holy Spirit is there to teach us, to guide us, to direct us, to convict us, to show us the way to understand the Scriptures.

Yet, we can quench the Spirit. This means to extinguish His fire in our lives. Sometimes we see Christians who we know are saved, but their lives do not reflect the fragrance of the presence of God. What is wrong with them? They are resisting the Holy Spirit, either in their own lives or the church at large. What does it mean to quench the Spirit? It means saying “no” to God, “no” to something to which the Spirit is saying “yes.” We should instead always be saying, “Yes, Lord.”

E. Do Not Despise Prophecies – 5:20

 “Do not despise prophecies.”

In the early church, before the complete Scriptures were written, God spoke to the church through men who had the gift of prophecy. But how do you know that he is giving the word correctly? Paul said in I Cor.14.19 “let one speak and let others judge.”

F. Test All Things – 5:21a

“Test all things”

Listen to the prophet. Then test what he said by the word you already have or other prophet’s messages. We have no need for the prophet and the gift is no longer being given. The idea that the modern preacher is a prophet is a mistake. That there are “prophets” today not Forth-telling but fore-telling is cute, but it is inaccurate.

G. Hold Fast to the Good – 5:21b

“Hold fast that which you find to be good.”

Today, we test what a teacher says by the written Word. Anything a teacher says, he ought to be able and willing to explain why he taught it. But, not necessarily in that class.

 H. Abstain from Every Form of Evil – 5:22

“Abstain from every form of evil.”

In context he is talking about evil doctrine, but he includes all forms of evil. That would take it beyond doctrine.

Illustration: Billy Graham and Elevators.

He word “appearance” does not mean “everything that looks like evil” It is every evil thing in all its forms. Abstain = keep away from.

Conclusion: