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Command Central-Part 1

Let me open by reminding you that we're coming to the end of 1 Thessalonians and we have just completed the doctrinal portion in 4:13-5:11. Before that we have historical narrative and we'll review some of that historical narrative in a moment. But the doctrinal portion is very important to have down pat because we're going to very soon be involved in 2 Thessalonians and 2 Thessalonians comes back to the same doctrinal themes. What doctrinal themes? The rapture and the day of the Lord. Now, you've heard what I had to say and basically what I had to say was that the rapture and the day of the Lord are both imminent, meaning they can occur at any moment and that they occur at the same moment. The rapture is the end of the day of grace and the day of the Lord is the beginning of the day of judgment. It occurred with the Flood, it occurred in the Exodus and it occurs with Church, grace precedes judgment. We live in a day of grace but once the church is removed then immediately, and without warning, the day of judgment begins. So the way I'm arranging this is a historic pattern laid down repetitively in Scripture as a way God works. And yet I didn't find anyone who believed the way I believed, exactly, until the new baby came and I was able to pick up some books I was wanting to get to and check them out. One of them was by John Walvoord, and I don't know why I didn't pick it up sooner and at least read the table of contents. He has a book called *The Blessed Hope and the Tribulation* which is a study of posttribulationism, and one of his chapters is called "The Rapture and the Day of the Lord in 1 Thessalonians 5," and you'd think I would have read this but I just hadn't gotten to it yet. But about that chapter listen to what he says, on page 111, "Hence the rapture could well be the end of the day of grace and the beginning of the day of the Lord." Then he criticizes Bible expositors for not explaining in detail what the day of the Lord is, we did. Later on, page 118 he says, "Although the events of the day of the lord do not begin immediately

after the rapture, the time period as such...could easily be understood to begin with the rapture itself. The opening hours of the day of the Lord do not contain great events. Gradually the major events of the day of the Lord unfold, climaxing in the terrible judgments with which the great tribulation is brought to conclusion." I couldn't agree more, especially with his point about the great judgments not beginning immediately when the day of the Lord begins. Then he makes himself very clear on the same page, "In effect, Paul is saying that the time of the rapture cannot be determined any more than the beginning of the day of the Lord..." That's clearly teaching dual imminence as I've taught. And lastly he says in wrapping up his argument, "...if the rapture occurs before the endtime tribulation and the day of the Lord begins at the time of the pretribulation rapture, then the...beginning of the day of the Lord is the same as the indeterminant time of the rapture itself." So, I found it quite encouraging to see that what I taught you was taught by the great prophecy scholar John Walvoord, arguably the greatest prophetic scholar of the 20th century. It's unfortunate to not see this teaching more widespread because it demonstrates the teaching of grace before judgment more precisely than any view I know and reconciles itself perfectly with Jesus' saying in Matt 24 that the day of the Lord would come exactly like the days of Noah. Only this scenario does that with the necessary precision this expression necessitates.

Alright, as we near the end of 1 Thessalonians we want to review the structure. We divided it into five S'. Each chapter was assigned a basic theme that dominates the chapter. Chapter 1 we said deals with Salvation and the fact of God's election, that God chose the Thessalonians. It deals with the means by which the elect are created in time, namely, the proclamation of the gospel and how when the proclamation of the gospel is coupled with the work of the Holy Spirit it convicts men of sin, righteousness and judgment so that they believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. That's all phase 1 of Salvation. It also deals with phase 2 of salvation in that the Thessalonian believers became living testimonies of the gospel. So much so that their testimony had spread outward, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but possibly as far as Rome. They had turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God and they were waiting expectantly for the Lord Jesus to return to rescue them from the wrath to come, the wrath being the day of the Lord that we've developed in detail over the last four lessons.

So 1 Thess 1 is the doctrine of Salvation, 1 Thess 2 is the doctrine of Service. And here Paul shows how they served the Thessalonians with the proper attitude and the proper motive in service. They didn't do it with trickery, they didn't do it to please men, they did it to please God. They didn't do it to impress people with their eloquent speech, they didn't do it because they wanted money, and they didn't do it to get praise from me. But rather they came among them as a mother would her children, to impart life, eternal life to them, and they worked hard, day and night they carried their own load so they wouldn't be a hardship on anyone else. And they taught them as a father would his own children, instructing them in the right way and encouraging them to keep at it so that when they entered the kingdom they would be handsomely rewarded. So they were good examples of how to serve in the body of Christ.

So 1 Thess 1 is Salvation, 1 Thess 2 is Service and 1 Thess 3 is Sanctification or spiritual growth. This is the chapter where Paul challenges them to abound more and more in love for one another, to keep on walking the walk of faith and praying for them because if we are going to grow and advance spiritually then the Holy Spirit has got to bring about the advancement. And when He has answered this prayer and we reach advanced stages of spiritual growth we gain assurance that when we are presented before the Father we will be sparkling clean trophies of His grace. In the meantime we need to watch out for the dangerous sins of sexuality that can do incredible damage to a believer. It is not God's will that we engage in sexual sins but to abstain from them and to excel still more in the doctrines of Scripture and in love for one another and for all men, excel still more and more, never stop excelling because when you stop excelling you start decelling.

1 Thess 4 works out the doctrine of Surety, that is, we can be sure of what will happen to believers who die before the rapture. We can be sure that they will not miss out on that glorious event when God transforms the living saints on earth into their resurrection bodies. The dead in Christ will also be raised and we will all meet the Lord in the air and so we will always be with the Lord.

On the heels of the rapture comes 1 Thess 5, the day of the Lord which assures us we are safe from the day of the Lord. We will not enter the day of the Lord because we will be raptured. So this is the doctrine of Safety. And

only the believer in Christ today is safe, everyone else is still a part of the world system and is unsafe. The world is in great peril and they are living in darkness and marching down a highway to hell. In light of the fact that we are not sons of darkness but sons of light we should live in the light, we should walk in the light as He is light. We should forego some of the pleasures of this world in order to live as we were designed to live, we should be alert to the any-moment arrival of Christ to rapture us, we should put on the armor of God daily with prayer. For God has not destined us for the wrath of the day of the Lord, but for obtaining salvation at the rapture through our Lord Jesus Christ! And we should keep on encouraging one another and pursuing unity with one another. Keep at it.

Now we come to 1 Thess 5:12, **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. ¹³and that you esteem them very highly in love because of their work.** This is instruction regarding how the people should treat the leadership. There was a problem with the Thessalonians respecting the leadership among them. They already had elders and deacons and we know that because we have Acts 6:1-7 and we have Acts 14:23 and Thessalonians isn't written until Paul is in Corinth in Acts 18. Acts 6:1-7 deals with deacons and Acts 14:23 deals with elders. So the offices of elder and deacon had already been established. Paul set them up in Thessalonica before he left. Those are the two offices in the church and they are the only two offices in the church. There is no such thing as popes or bishops or priests and all the hierarchy business that Satan got going early on in the church and has passed down into a lot of denominations that end up crushing and oppressing people. There are only two offices in the church, three if you include the apostles, but they all died so only two today; elders and deacons.

Now the elders have two main responsibilities; teaching the word and praying. The deacons also have two main responsibilities; visiting people and managing the finances. Other things can be added if they take away from the elders' time in teaching and praying. Now, that may surprise everybody but that's what they're supposed to do. And if the elders are taken away from their responsibilities of teaching and praying then they do a sorry job and if the deacons are taken away from their primary responsibilities of visiting and managing the finances then they do a sorry job. I don't mean to say

people in these offices are doing a sorry job because sometimes the people in the offices don't know the job description. Elders teach and pray, deacons visit and manage the finances.

And you don't blend these offices together. God the Holy Spirit set them up as two distinct offices with two distinct roles. They work together of course, but they have different functions. They both have responsibilities, they both have authority, but one oversees the other. They both have official requirements. You don't just sign up and get a badge, that's not what it's about. These men have to be men of high character, it's not an option; the men have to be theologically tested, that's not an option. So, one, test them, multiple choice or something, Q & A, do an oral examination and two, high character, not optional; they must be men of high character, mature believers with proven track records. These are important offices which Jesus Christ has left the church to lead it in His earthly absence.

So we have Shepherd Elders and we have Servant Deacons. You don't just have one or the other you have both because there's a lot to do in ministry and one office can't do everything and so Jesus Christ split the functions into two offices. That way the Shepherd Elders can focus on what they need to do, studying the word, teaching it and praying and the Servant Deacons can take care of the visitation of the needy and the finances. And that obviously means that the quote "Pastor" doesn't do everything; if he tried he'd end up neglecting the word of God and the church would go to pot. So if a deacon shows up at your bedside at the hospital and he ministers to you spiritually, and he prays for you, and not me, don't be surprised; that's what the NT teaches. It doesn't mean I can't be there at times, it doesn't mean I won't call, it's just that if I have to neglect the word in order to be there I shouldn't. Jesus Christ told me to feed His sheep and if I have to put that aside to go to a bedside I'm out of fellowship and under His discipline.

Now having given a general description of these two offices tell me one church you know on the planet that follows the Lord Jesus Christ's model. All I can tell you about this church is that we're working on getting there and we have men who are willing to say, I recognize that what the NT teaches about my office demands certain things of me and I want to do them. So we are actively working on this. It takes time but you have leadership here who are

willing to put in the time and the effort to fulfill these roles. That much I can tell you. And that much you should be very thankful for.

Now the Thessalonians were not thankful for their leadership, they didn't appreciate them. And here's why. Sin, S-I-N. It's that simple. Here's what happened. Remember, Timothy. Timothy was a young convert, he'd been travelling with Paul and Silas on this missionary journey and he was sort of a go-fer boy, he helped out so Paul and Silas could attend to the word. And when Paul and Silas were locked out of Thessalonica by Jason and some other believers, because they did a stupid thing, Timothy, since he was on the fringe, was not locked out. And so a few months later Paul and Silas sent Timothy back to see how they were doing spiritually and to give them some doctrinal instruction. It's at this point Timothy was being injected into the ministry and he went and found out they were doing good spiritually, they were strong in the faith despite the persecution they were facing. But they had some squabbling going on between the people and the leadership. And in this situation you can see how it got started because all the Thessalonians had come to Christ just three or four months ago. They were all the same age, spiritually speaking, but some of them held leadership positions in the Church. And this just didn't seem fair to some of them, which is a sign of immaturity. But they were looking down their noses at the leadership and saying all the garbage that immature believers say, "Well I don't have to respect that guy, that guy came to Christ three days after me, who does he think he is that he can run around here and lead this church, I've been here longer than him." And all the other idiot things people say. And Timothy saw this was causing problems so he reported it to Paul. And here's Paul's response.

But we request of you, and it's simply a **request**, he's asking them very nicely. But we request of you, brethren, **that you appreciate** and here it means "to respect, to honor, to recognize them." Do you respect the leadership? The elders and deacons at this church? I request that you do, very nicely I request this of you. They weren't doing it so Paul requested it of them. **that you appreciate** or respect **those who** do three things. One, **who diligently labor among you**. Diligently labor means "labor to the point of weariness," you know when you've worked like a dog and you're all tired out. That's what he's saying; you ought to appreciate the leadership who work hard among you, to the point of weariness. Second, **and have charge over**

you in the Lord. There are two senses of this word translated **charge over**, there is the sense of ruling, having a position of leadership and there is a second sense of showing concern for you, caring for you. They're not exclusive. It's true that elders and deacons have positions of leadership over you but it's also true that their function is to show concern for you, to care for you, particularly through teaching and praying. And probably both are involved here and that they do it **in the Lord**, that's demarcating the boundary of their authority, they are over those **in the Lord**, not unbelievers, but believers, which shows you a few things actually.

One very practical application of this expression is that it shows that the church is separate from the state. The state is composed of believers and unbelievers. And the verse says the church leadership is to rule over believers only. Therefore the church leadership should not rule through the sword of the state. Jesus Christ never intended the church to be a state organization that rules over a society of people. He designed it to be a church organization that rules over a subset of society, the believing subset. At the same time this does not mean that a Christian can't serve in political office. Of course they can. They should, they're at least a godly influence on government and government is a divine institution. God created it. So the first thing this shows is that the church is separate from the state, so far as government is concerned.

A second thing this shows is that the church leadership are to care for believers, they're not supposed to be running all kinds of social programs in the community, their role is once again to care for believers not the whole world. That's their job. It doesn't mean the church can't have any relationship to the world. We do have a relationship to the world, we're to love one another and all men, etc...but the leadership in these two offices, so far as the offices are concerned, do not have a responsibility to the world.

So first, the people in a local congregation should respect those who diligently labor among them and second, those who are in leadership have charge or care for those in the Lord and three, Paul singles out those who **give you instruction**. You could take it just as teaching but it's more specific in this context. It's the idea that when I teach you the word I'm trying to help you avoid a false course. It would be like someone on a ship who was an expert navigator, but he didn't steer the ship. You would want to get the counsel of

the expert navigator because he could help you avoid a dangerous course. And that's the sense of this term and we'll see it again in verse 14 when Paul says, "admonish the unruly," that is, counsel them back onto the course away from the danger. If you see a Christian going down the tubes, stop them, don't just stand there and watch them, get in the way, you don't let believers just run headlong into destruction.

Now these are the leadership and I hope that we're doing this and I ask you very politely to respect the leadership. So we can summarize v 12 this way - appreciate those who work hard among you, who care for you and who warn you of danger.

Verse 13, not only should you respect them but **you** should **esteem them very highly in love because of their work**. By the way, it is work. It's not manual labor but it's work, it's work to learn this book, it's work to study foreign cultures, it's work to study geography, it's work to study other languages, it's work to be precise, it's work to think about it, it's work to pray about it, it's work to orchestrate it into an oral teaching that communicates to people what the Lord is saying. And because it is work **you** should **esteem them very highly in love**. **Esteem** being a word of the mind, of the intellectual process. You should think of them, we might say, very highly in love, superabundantly. And I have nothing to complain about in this department so far as my ministry here and your response to me. However, Paul did have something to complain about. The Thessalonians were looking down on their leadership. Whenever a person does that it's an ugly picture. I've seen people do it and I've talked to pastors who have people like this in their congregation and they're unruly. They will not come under the authority of the elders and they're dead weight at that church, they pull the whole thing down and they cause more problems than you can shake a stick at and it's these people I wish would just leave. These kind of people always know better, always think the elders are doing something wrong, but if you put it to them and said, alright, you don't like the way we're doing it, you do it, they wouldn't have a clue what to do. It's the same thing with all these people who love to point fingers at everybody else. They have all the great ideas but if they get in the position they wet their pants. So, Paul says, esteem them very highly, superabundantly in love.

Then at the end of v 13 he turns away from the leadership to the congregation in general. How should they treat everybody else? Very simple, **Live in peace with one another.** Don't be causing problems all the time. Now here Paul begins a great string of imperatives, what I call command central. By the time we reach v 22 he will have given 15 imperatives. This is one of the most highly concentrated sections of imperatives in the entire NT. 15 commands in just 10 verses and you can see how short some of the verses are. Two of them are just two words apiece. So we have a whole series of commands and anytime we have commands we want to remember that as we walk through the Christian life we're going to face situations where we have to make a decision. And we may not like the decision we *should* make but the whole point of the Christian life is that we now have the Holy Spirit as a *modus vivendi*, but we still have the flesh, so we can live according to the flesh or we can live according to the Spirit and there's a conflict in each one of us. And it's our responsibility to yield to the Spirit and obey these commands. That's what we *should* do.

So the first one is **Live in peace with one another.** This is within the church; he's emphasizing peace with one another inside the church. And by golly if we can't live in peace among ourselves how are we ever going to be a testimony to the world? Please tell me why anyone in the world want to become a Christian if we can't do this among ourselves? Out there we see strife and chaos, in here we ought to have peace and stability. We should live in peace with one another as a testimony.

Verse 14, and imperatives two, three, four and five admonish, encourage, help and be patient. We'll deal with each in turn. **We urge you brethren, admonish the unruly.** Here we have a believer, an evil believer, the unruly, and this believer is causing harm all over the place. They are a dangerous, pernicious believer, and it's not just accidental, the original language indicates these people have evil intent, they mean to do harm, and Paul says, **admonish** them, same word as verse 12, the word "instruction." We said it means to steer them away from the evil back to the proper course. We can't have these kinds of believers running around, they upset everybody, so the command is to steer them back on course.

The next imperative, **encourage the fainthearted.** The **fainthearted** is literally the "many-souled" and these are the people who are facing a whole

lot of problems at the same time; what I call Job families and we have a couple of those around here, always three or four things wrong and that weighs very heavy on your soul and that can be discouraging. And the command is to **encourage** them, it's the word for cheer them up, console them, do something, say something that cheers them up. Don't just let them sit over there and rot like dead wood. Encourage them!

Then another imperative, **help the weak**. Weak could be physical or spiritual weakness. Both apply. If anyone is physically or spiritually weak, help them, do what you can, it means be devoted to them, you can easily forget about these people. I do, it's convicting; I have a hard time devoting myself to people who need help and here I'm commanded to have a strong interest in them.

Finally, **be patient with everyone**. And this is one of my favorite Greek words, **patience**, *makrothumia*, and it means "long fuse," have a long fuse with people. This is what God does with us. He puts up with us for a long time and we ought to put up with one another for a long time. Maybe you're just waiting for this person to grow up spiritually, to get with the program, or maybe it's something else. It doesn't mean you don't have integrity and keep deadlines, it just means don't be a person that blows up at every little thing, relax, God has a plan, adjust to Him. Some of you have got your days all planned out. And Monday you're going to accomplish x, y and z and it's all laid out and then you go to do x and this gets in the way and you go to do y and that gets in the way and it's just one obstacle after another and you can't get anything done so you get frustrated and you lose it. Relax, adjust, remember, a man plans his ways, but the Lord directs his steps. The Lord is just saying, hey look, I call the shots in history and are you going to respond to Me or are you going to fight Me. And if you fight Him I guarantee you're going to be a sour person and nobody is going to want to be around you. But if you'll stop and say, alright Lord, you have something else for me today, I can't get through x, y and z but what have You got for me. If you do that you'll be surprised. You could never plan a single day of your life better than He can, so just be patient each day, relax with people. So far that's five imperatives; Verse 13, live in peace, verse 14, admonish the problem believers, encourage the many-souled, help the weak, be patient with people.

Verse 15 imperatives six and seven; six, **see that no one repays another with evil for evil**; in other words, some believers think the best way to handle their problem is vengeance and they're going to get you back. It's your duty as a fellow believer to be alert to this possibility and to stop it if you see it happening. I know it takes confrontation and we live in a non-confrontational culture but this is what a Christian looks like. If you want to think of the commands of Scripture as painting a picture of what a Christian should look like I think that's fine. All of our lives ought to look like this and following this command will stop people from getting hurt. The seventh command is the alternative, the other side of the coin, **But rather, always seek after that which is good for one another and for all people**. So always, continually, at all times, **seek**, that's the command, it means pursue that which is good **for one another**, that's believers, but also **for all people**, that's unbelievers. And what is the good? That which God says is good. How do I know that? Know the word. God's word defines what good is.

Now in v 16 we come to the shortest verse in the Greek NT, and I'll even read it for you just so you can say you heard the shortest verse, *pantote chairete*, it means "always rejoice" or "at all times rejoice," the shortest verse but not the shortest sentence and sentences are what matters. The shortest sentence is John 11:35, "Jesus wept," *edakrusen o Iesous*, which is three words in the Greek text. So some people are interested in these trivia, it's trivia because verse divisions aren't inspired anyway. Sentences are however. And verse 16 is the beginning of a sentence that doesn't end until verse 18. And we come to imperatives eight, nine and ten. And here we get into some heavy theology. Verse 16, **Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus**. Now, if you will just follow these three things then you pretty much have the Christian life. I really don't see how you can go wrong if you'll just do these three things. But there's some theology involved that makes it hard for people to do these three things. And it's the theology of God's sovereignty over history. God controls whatsoever comes to pass. God controls the circumstances that surround your life. How can you rejoice always and pray without ceasing and give thanks for everything in your life if you don't believe that? You've got to believe in the sovereignty of God over all if you're going to be able to give thanks for all. How can you give thanks to God for something that He wasn't sovereign over? The whole underlying theology is that God has a plan for your life and that plan involves suffering, that plan involves turmoil, that plan involves

tribulation, that's not all it involves of course, it also involves blessing. But whether suffering or blessing we are to rejoice and give thanks.

You know you can lose a lot in this world but did you ever stop to think that when you came into this world you didn't have anything, you were a naked little kid, you didn't have anything but an umbilical cord and that got cut off from you. So there you are. That's where you started, that's ground zero. Everything after that is accumulation and so if you lose something remember where you started way back at ground zero because I bet you anything you still have more than you had then. That's why Job said, "The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away, blessed be the name of the Lord." That's the real litmus test for how you're doing in the Christian life. Can you say that when you just lost ten kids, all your servants but one and all your wealth? Can you say, Blessed be the name of the Lord?

Go ahead and put yourself in the darkest hour of your life and ask yourself if you were saying blessed be the name of the Lord. If you can't do that you still don't understand the sovereignty of God, you still don't understand how God works.

People ask, now wait a minute, it says rejoice always, it says in everything give thanks, are you telling me that always means always and everything mean everything? Well, let's think through what the Bible teaches. And we'll do so by illustration.

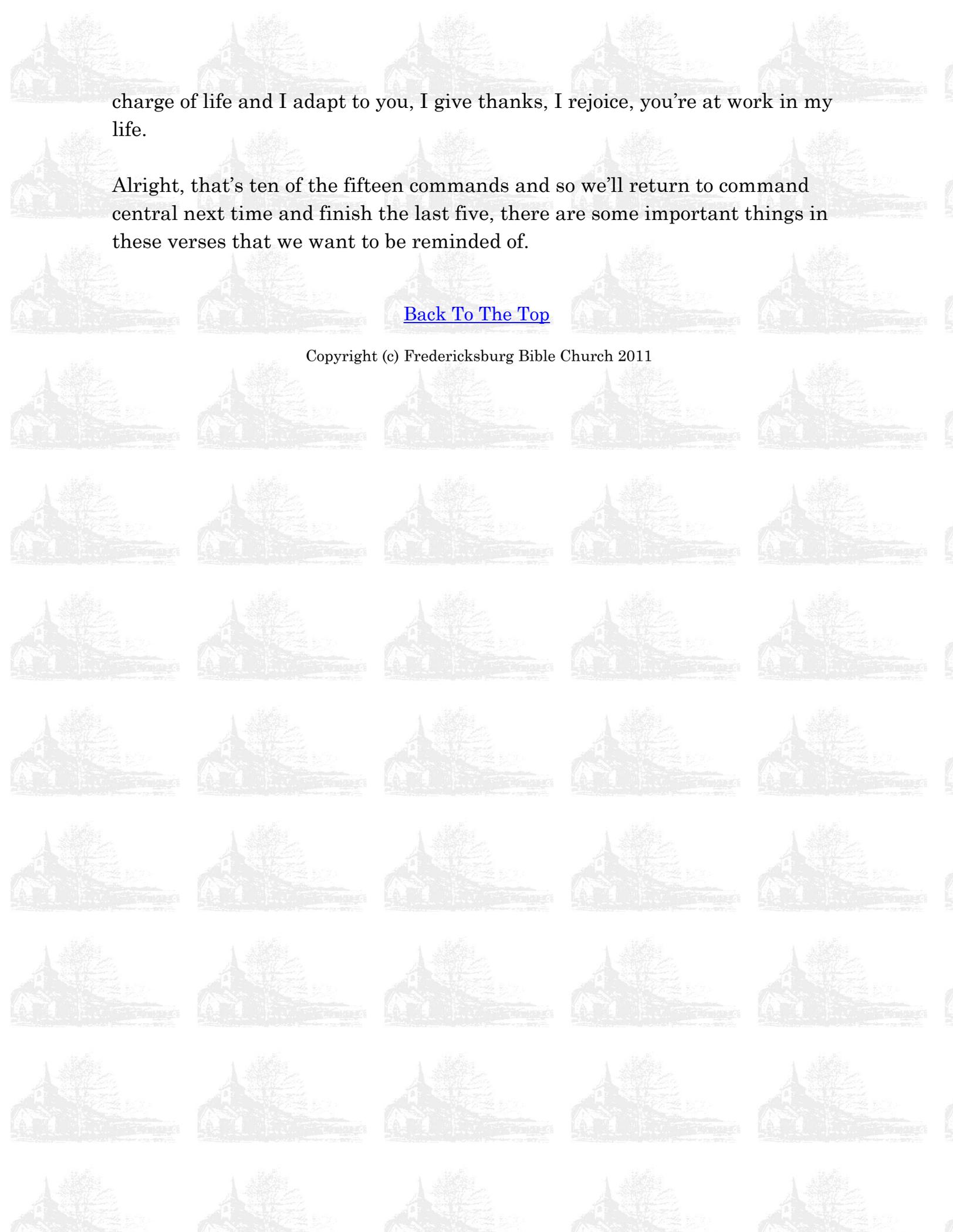
Take Joseph in the Book of Genesis. Joseph was a kiss up, he was daddy's favorite and all his brothers were jealous of him so what did they do? They beat him up and threw him in a ditch. That'll teach him a lesson. Then they saw some slave traders walking by so they say, hey, we ought to at least make a buck off of old Joe so they pull him out of the ditch and sell him. They carry him to Egypt and sell him to Potiphar, one of the top soldiers of Pharaoh. He rises in stature in that house until Potiphar's wife says, have sex with me, and she won't leave him alone but Joe keeps refusing and so finally she gets so frustrated with him that she yells and says he tried to rape me. So Potiphar has him thrown in prison. He's in the prison for more than 2 years, that's over 700 days, night and day, night and day, how can this be any good, what a wreck, I gotta get out of here, what am I doing in here, I didn't even do anything wrong. Then Pharaoh's cupbearer and baker get thrown in

prison and so they're all three in there and these two jokers have dreams and Joseph interprets the dreams and he tells the chief cupbearer he's going to be restored to Pharaoh's court in three days, but he says, when you get there, don't forget me, I wanna get out of here so put in a good word for me. But what did he do? He forgot him. Joseph was really scoring at this point. Then you know the story, finally the Pharaoh has a dream and nobody knows what it means but the chief cupbearer remembers that Joseph could interpret dreams, I wonder if he's still alive, and so they call Joseph forth, he reveals the dream and he gets out of jail and rises in the house of Pharaoh to be over all of Pharaoh's possessions. Then the famine is going and his brothers show up looking for grain and he knows who they are but they don't know who he is. It's been a long time. We're talking decades. He's been beaten and sold into slavery by his own brothers, he's been behind bars for over 2 years, for no reason at all, or so it seems, and here come my brothers, the very guys that got this whole ball rolling and I'm going to kill them, I'm a top guy in the administration of Egypt and I can tie TNT around their waist if I want to and get away with it. But what does he do? Does he tie TNT around their belly? No, he reveals himself to his brothers and they freak out, they think he's going to tie TNT around their belly but he doesn't. What did Joseph do after all those years of frustration, suffering and turmoil? Gen 50:20, "As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result..." How could Joseph say that? Because Joseph knew the secret to living life. Joseph understood what we should all understand. And that is that God is sovereign over all circumstances in our life and they have meaning, they have purpose, even if we can't see it at the moment, and finally God will work it together for good.

What's the NT corollary to Joseph? What verse did Paul write that is one of the greatest comforts in the Christian life? Rom 8:28, "And we know that God causes all things to work together for good..." He didn't say everything is good, he said He causes everything to work together for good. In other words the end product, when all is said and done is good. We don't interpret everything that happens in our life as good but we're in the process of being refined and finally when it's all said and done, it's good. I don't know what you've been through, I don't know what you're going through and I don't know what you'll face, but I do know what Joseph knew, God will cause it to work together for good. Somehow He is able to take what appears to us as impossible and do it. That's our God.

So **rejoice always**, just like James said, “Consider it all joy when you face trials,” Why, because God is working in your life, He’s carving you, He’s forming you, He’s shaping you, He is the potter, we are the clay and He’s making you more like Christ so rejoice. Second, **pray without ceasing**. What do you think Joseph was doing in that pit? What do you think he was doing in that slave caravan? What do you think he was doing in prison? What do you think he was doing when he was fact to face with his brothers? He was praying. Why was he praying? Because He believed God has a plan for history and if God has a plan for the greater thing, the whole history of the cosmos, then He has a plan for the lesser thing, my life. So you pray all kinds of prayers, all the time, not every second, it’s an iterative command, repetitively throughout the day, when it crosses your mind you stop and pray, in the car, at work, at play, don’t close your eyes if you’re driving. You may or may not have a special prayer time, Paul probably did, most Jews had three prayer times a day and I doubt Paul ever gave that up, but what he added was that moment by moment prayers for this and that when somebody popped into his mind. He had a massive prayer life. Think of the list he must have had being an itinerant evangelist and discipler; he had converts in Syrian Antioch, the isle of Cyprus, Pisidian Antioch, Derbe, Lystra, Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, Corinth, he had people all over Jerusalem and in his old stomping grounds around Tarsus. He had people all over the Mediterranean world. So he had a lot to pray for and he had a gargantuan prayer life. **Pray without ceasing**.

And number ten, verse 18, **in everything give thanks; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus**. People say, what’s God’s will for my life and they go on this big search, oh Lord tell me what to do next. They never think to open the Bible. Maybe, just maybe God has revealed His will for our lives in the Bible? And you know what? It is, here it is, there are other similar verses, this is God’s will for your life, not just v 18, but vv 16, 17 and 18, **Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks**. You know what that last one means? When you’re facing a disaster and you’re giving thanks then you’re really rocking, until then you’re not, you haven’t understood Joseph yet, you haven’t understood God yet. But if you can you got it. You have figured it out and you’re fulfilling God’s will for your life. This is what He wants. He wants you to admit, alright Lord, you are in



charge of life and I adapt to you, I give thanks, I rejoice, you're at work in my life.

Alright, that's ten of the fifteen commands and so we'll return to command central next time and finish the last five, there are some important things in these verses that we want to be reminded of.

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