

PRACTICAL EXHORTATIONS PART 1

TEXT: I THESS. 5:12-28

INTRODUCTION:

The final section of I Thessalonians 5 (5:12—28) consists largely of exhortations. The common thread is sanctification in light of the imminent return of Christ (cf. 5:23).

I. CHRISTIANS ARE TO RESPECT THE LEADERSHIP OF THE CHURCH (5:12, 13).

1. This was a problem back in Paul's day, and it is a problem in our day too (cf. Hebrews 13:7, 17, 24). Before I served as a pastor, I served as a trustee in a Baptist church in my old neighborhood. I was appalled at the way a certain trustee treated the pastor. He was disrespectful and almost contemptuous toward him.
2. Another pastor friend told me a church member stood up and cursed at him at a church business meeting. Unfortunately, carnality often rears its ugly head at church business meetings.
3. Referring to pastors, Paul says we are to "know them" (5:12). "Admonish" (5:12) means to warn, entreat, and exhort. It is a part of the duty of a pastor to warn and admonish church members lest they go astray.
4. "And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake" (5:13). I am glad our members organize an annual "Pastors' Appreciation Day" luncheon. I think it is a wonderful idea – and it is Scriptural (I Thess. 5:12, 13).
5. Albert Barnes said, "There is no benefactor who should be treated with more affectionate regard than he who endeavours to save us from ruin; to impart to us the consolations of the gospel in affliction; and to bring us and our families to heaven."
6. God wants us to "be at peace" among ourselves" (5:13b). This will not happen if members are not treating the pastor right.
7. If Christians treat the pastor right, they will treat other Christians right. Our Lord said in Mark 9:50, "Have peace one with another."
8. The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law (Gal. 5:22, 23).

II. WARN THE UNRULY IN THE CHURCH (5:14a).

1. "Unruly" (5:14) here means "out of line." In the context this refers to church members who do not respect pastoral authority (5:12, 13).
2. Some Christians mistakenly believe it is their job to straighten out the pastor. They try to circumvent the pastor. They try to run things in the church behind the pastor's back.
3. Oftentimes they make the pastor's life (and his family) miserable. Sometimes they succeed in running the pastor off. I have seen this happen many times.
4. Paul says to "warn" them because if this kind of carnal behaviour is not checked it could destroy the church.
5. Again I will quote Barnes -- "It is the duty of every church member, as well as of the ministers of the gospel, affectionately to admonish those whom they know to be living contrary to the requirements of the gospel. One reason why there is so little piety in the church, and why so many professors of religion go astray, is, that the great mass of church members feel no responsibility on this subject. They suppose that it is the duty *only* of the officers of the church to admonish an erring brother, and hence many become careless and cold and worldly, and no one utters a kind word to them to recall them to a holy walk with God."
6. "Unruly" (5:14) means, "disorderly, like a soldier out of ranks." Sadly, many Christians are out of line, unruly, disorderly, and undependable.

III. COMFORT THE FEEBLE-MINDED (faint-hearted) and SUPPORT THE WEAK (5:14b).

1. "Feeble-minded" means "fainthearted and discouraged."
2. Some Christians are "weak" in the faith.
3. Paul says in Romans 14:1, "Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations."
4. Romans 15:1 says, "We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves."
5. We are to comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, and be patient toward all men.. They need our prayers and our encouragement.

IV. BE PATIENT TOWARD ALL MEN (5:14c).

Ephesians 4:2 says, "With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love."

V. WE ARE NOT TO RENDER EVIL FOR EVIL (5:15).

1. The Christians in Thessalonica were being persecuted (cf. II Thess. 1:4), but they were not to retaliate.
2. Romans 12:17, 19 says, “Recompense to no man evil for evil... avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.”
3. First Peter 3:9 says, “Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing.”
4. Our Lord said in Matthew 5:44, “But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.”
5. It has been said that there are basically three ways of dealing with people:
 - (1) The wicked heathen way – do evil to those who have been good to you.
 - (2) The polite heathen way – do good to those who have been good to you. Our Lord said, “For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect” (Matt. 5:46-48). “Perfection” is the idea behind being “sanctified wholly” (I Thess. 5:23).
 - (3) The Christian way (Matt. 5:44-48). This is contrary to the world’s way of doing things. I was preaching along these lines one evening, and I referred to the bumper sticker, “I DON’T GET MAD – I GET EVEN.” I had no idea at the time, but a first-time visitor told me had that sticker on his car. (He never came back to our church.)
6. Girolamo Savonarola (1452—1498) was a Roman Catholic priest who got saved and preached courageously against the errors of the corrupt RCC. He said, “A Christian’s life consists in doing good and suffering evil.”

VI. REJOICE EVERMORE (5:16).

1. Worldly people chase after happiness, but they know nothing about the joy of the Lord.
2. Nehemiah 8:10 says, “For the joy of the LORD is your strength.”

3. Philippians 4:4 says, “Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice.”
4. Paul and Silas were in jail and yet they were praying and singing.

VII. PRAY WITHOUT CEASING (5:17, 18).

1. Praying and giving thanks to God is the will of God (5:17, 18).
2. Romans 12:12 says, "continuing instant in prayer."
3. “The Christian who prays without ceasing is not always praying audibly and yet prayer is always the attitude of his heart and life” (Charles Ryrie, *First and Second Thessalonians*).
4. “Pray without ceasing.” – Andrew Murray wrote, "Who can do this? How can one do it who is surrounded by the cares of daily life? How can a mother love her child without ceasing? How can the eyelid without ceasing hold itself ready to protect the eye? How can I breathe and feel and hear without ceasing? Because all these are the functions of a healthy, natural life. And so, if the spiritual life be healthy, under the full power of the Holy Spirit, praying without ceasing will be natural. 'Pray without ceasing.' – Does it refer to continual acts of prayer, in which we are to persevere till we obtain, or to the spirit of prayerfulness that should animate us all the day? It includes both. The example of our Lord Jesus shows us this. We have to enter our closet for special seasons of prayer; we are at times to persevere there in importunate prayer. We are also all the day to walk in God’s presence, with the whole heart set upon heavenly things. Without set times of prayer, the spirit of prayer will be dull and feeble. Without the continual prayerfulness, the set times will not avail” (*Helps to Intercession*).
5. SD Gordon spoke of “a praying bent of mind.” "Then while the daily habit continues prayer may become an attitude, a bent of mind. Whatever comes up suggests prayer to you. The bent of your mind is to pray as things come up in the daily round. You can't stop your work, but you think prayers. Your heart prays while your hands are busy....But as I went about my round of service I found myself praying constantly. I was much wearied, and things sometimes seemed desperate. I realized how everything depended on

God's touch. And without any planning a habit of continual praying formed itself. I could be engaged in conversation, thinking intently into something needing great care, and yet there was an undercurrent of prayer constantly. I shall never cease to be grateful for that trying experience, because in it this new habit of a praying bent of mind formed itself...This is part of the meaning of 'Pray without ceasing'" (*Quiet Talks with World Winners*).

6. "In every thing give thanks" (5:18).
7. Ephesians 5:20 says, "Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."

CONCLUSION:

1. "In every thing give thanks." "In every thing give thanks." "Giving thanks always for all things..."
2. I heard about a preacher who was preaching in a public square and he quoted these verses. As soon as he said, "In every thing give thanks," a big bird dropped something very messy on his shoulder. Some people started laughing, but the preacher didn't hesitate. He quoted the Scripture again, and said, "I am thankful horses don't fly!"