

Subject: *Simple Commands for Serious Christians*

Scripture: *1 Thessalonians 5:12-22*

1 John 5:3 *For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous (burdensome).*

This church was an ideal church, but it wasn't located in an ideal place. Thessalonica was a seaport town in Macedonia, so there was a lot of sin and temptation. There was plenty of pressure to compromise. There was persecution and testing, and yet this church stayed faithful to Christ and was a model church. In 1:3, we learn a lot about these believers.

1 Thessalonians 1:3 *Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father.*

They had faith, love, and hope. How did Paul know? He saw the proof. Their faith caused them to work. Their love caused them to labor. And their hope caused them to have patience (endurance). When real revival comes we return to our first love. We love Christ like we should. We love His commands as well as His promises. Jesus said: "If you love me, keep my commandments."

Are you really serious about your Christian life and your walk with Christ? God does business with people who mean business.

Paul gave some simple commands to these serious Christians. This text is unusual because the commands are given without any reasons or extra motivations. These commands deal with three major areas of our Christian life:

1. Commands about *spiritual leaders*
2. Commands about *relationships in and out of the church*
3. Commands about *spiritual responsibilities*

1. Commands about spiritual leaders (vs. 12-13)

This refers a believer's attitude toward the pastors and deacons in the church. In writing this Paul assumes that every Christian will be an active member of the local church.

- A. Know them personally – There should be a close relationship between the sheep and the shepherd. I have talked with people and they tell me they belong to such and such a church, and then I ask them who the pastor is, and they don't know. A believer needs to know more than the pastor's name.
- B. Understand their responsibilities (working, overseeing, warning) – All of these describe the work of a shepherd – working, overseeing, and warning.
- C. Respect and love them for their work's sake – this is not about the leader; it is about his work.
- D. Be at peace with one another

Romans 12:18 *If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.*

Ephesians 4:3 *Endeavoring (making every effort) to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*

2. Commands about spiritual relationships (vs. 14-15)

These commands speak of the responsibility every Christian has to others inside and outside the church family. The leaders have their assignment and all the members have an assignment, too. Six things are mentioned:

- A. Warn the unruly – (*ataktous* – refers to a soldier out of order or someone who breaks ranks) – We must warn someone who is out of line because this hurts the name of the Lord and the honor of the church. But what if someone gets offended? They probably will, but if we don't warn people who are out of line, the Lord will be offended.
- B. Comfort the feebleminded (fainthearted)
- C. Support the weak
- D. Be patient toward all
- E. Avoid retaliation
- F. Do good to all

3. Commands about spiritual duties (vs. 16-22)

- A. Be joyful
- B. Be prayerful
- C. Be thankful
- D. Be on fire (under the Spirit's control)
- E. Be teachable
- F. Be discerning (mature evaluation)
- G. Be cautious

All of these apply to believers and they are to be followed constantly. Each one is in the present tense (“keep on...”). This church was already doing these things. They just needed to keep on. Are you following these commands? Keep on keeping on. If not, now is the time to start and then don't quit. Revival is a call to obedience. The wonderful thing about the Christian life is that God not only tells us what to do, but He also gives us the desire and power to do it.

Philippians 2:12-13 ¹² *Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. ¹³ For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure. God makes us willing to do His will. Would you pray like this...”Lord, give me a willing heart, an obedient heart.”*