

Commandments for Christians part 1

I Thessalonians 5:12-18

Introduction:

- I Thessalonians unfolds many great doctrines, but it ends on a very practical note.
- Again, doctrine is not just abstract but it is concrete and must be lived out!

I. **TESTIMONY TOWARDS CHRISTIAN LEADERS-** v. 12-13

a. Paul urges them to do two things in regard to their leaders

b. Know them- Recognize those who labor among you

i. Those who labor among you. Leaders are recognized not by their title but by their service. A title is fine only if the title describes what that person is really doing. Many call themselves pastors but they are really fleecing the flock!
Deacon, minister means servant!

ii. And are over you in the Lord. Leaders are recognized as being “over” the congregation in the sense of ruling and providing headship, as a shepherd is over the sheep. This describes a clear and legitimate order of authority.
Somebody has to be in charge! Illustr- too many cooks spoil the broth!

iii. Hebrews 13:17- Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.

iv. And admonish you. Leaders admonish the congregation. To admonish means “to caution or to reprove gently; to warn.”

c. Esteem them in love

d. To esteem- Recognize that God is using someone. It is ultimately a recognition of God and His gifts not of the person himself.

i. It was an unusual request because this was an infant church with basically all of the members being new converts. But, God clearly called out leaders and so they must be respected. It wasn't a matter of who was better than the others- we are all on the same level. But we do not all have the same gifts and callings

ii. Christians are to respect their leaders, and to esteem them very highly in love.

1. If members understood the work that goes into spiritual oversight they would appreciate the leader more
2. Leaders must be laborers, there is no place for a lazy pastor/deacon/etc.. “they labor”
- iii. Christian ministers, who preach the whole truth, and labour in the word and doctrine, are entitled respect; but the apostle emphasizes to do so “very highly” which means superabundantly! The words in Greek carry an emphasis that is hard to express in English, importing esteem and love to a hyperbole/exaggeration.
- e. There is a direct correlation between recognizing leadership and maintaining peace in the church

II. **TESTIMONY TOWARDS OTHERS- v. 14-15**

- a. Paul exhorts them in how to deal with difficult people.
- b. V. 14 Paul told the all of the Thessalonians –not only the pastor and leaders – to minister in a variety of ways, depending on the state of the person who needs the ministry. So if someone is unruly, the duty of the Christian is to warn them. Others need comfort, others need to be upheld.
- c. Guzik- The unruly are those who are out of order, using a military word that describes the soldier who breaks ranks or marches out of step. This is the self-willed person who simply demands to have their way and not submit. These must be warned. We all have a role to fill- i.e. in the home (husband, wife, children).
- d. Comfort the feeble-minded- The fainthearted are those who, literally, are small-souled. They tend to lack courage and easily discouraged.
 - i. Comfort the weak-spirited- some are anxious, and easily worried and fearful, and struggle under the weight of life’s problems and need someone strong to come assist them and encourage them.
 - ii. We have to be careful not to kick a man when he’s down so to speak
 - iii. The Holy Spirit is called the Comforter! He often uses us to assist others
 - iv. The ministry of encouragement is such a blessing! Illustr- helping a stalled car with jumper cables- a transfer of power!
 - v. Overflow- John 7:38-39
- e. Weak- they have not yet learned to lean on Christ

- f. The weak must be upheld, and assisted. However, the goal should be to build their own strength instead of perpetuating their weakness.
- g. Though different approaches must be taken with different people, Christians must **be patient with all**. We must be willing to love and help difficult people, just like Jesus did. We do not look for only perfect people to minister to and to minister with.
- h. Patience- illustr sowing seed and reaping a harvest!
- i. V. 15 render evil for evil: the pagan standard, the cultured standa- but it is hard to follow the biblical standard- overcome evil with good. Blessed are the peacemakers!
 - i. The Christian not should seek revenge or vengeance, but let God take care of it (See Romans 12:17-21). Instead, we must always pursue what is good both for ourselves and for all- peace. When we have a forgiving heart towards others, not only is it good for them, it is good for ourselves. This is a universal principle not only in our church relationships, but in our family and marriage relationships too! Vocalize this at times!
 - ii. Revenge, and bitterness can be like a cancer that harms ourselves more than the other person (illustr- bitterness is like drinking poison and hoping the other person drops dead)

III. **TESTIMONY TOWARDS THE LORD** – v. 16-18

- a. Before these spiritual or religious matters comes teaching about right relationships. Jesus made it plain that we should get things right with men before we come to worship God (Matthew 5:23-24, “Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.”)
- b. V. 16-Rejoice evermore; always: Not only rejoicing in happy things, but in sorrows also. The Christian can rejoice always because their joy isn’t based in circumstances, but in God. Circumstances change, but God doesn’t.
- c. “Turn this book over and see if there be any precept that the Lord has given you in which he has said, ‘Groan in the Lord always, and again I say groan.’ You may groan if you like. You have Christian liberty for that; but, at the same time, do believe that you have larger liberty to rejoice, for so it is put before you.” (Spurgeon)

- d. V. 17- Pray without ceasing- It is important to have a quiet time with God where we shut out all other distractions in our prayer closet (Matthew 6:6). But there is also room – and great value – in every-moment-of-the-day fellowship with God.
 - i. Do we make time for prayer? – Daniel 6:10
 - ii. Jesus took time to “come apart”- come apart so we don’t fall apart!
- e. V. 18- In everything give thanks: We don’t give thanks for everything, but in everything. We recognize God’s sovereign hand is in charge, and not blind fate or chance. Rom. 8:28
 - i. “When joy and prayer are married their first born child is gratitude.” (Spurgeon)
- f. Rejoice, pray, and give thanks are viewed as one unit- God’s will. See I Thess 4:3
- g. The opposite of giving thanks is murmuring and complaining
- h. Illustr- Matthew Henry robbed on his way home, later wrote in his journal
 - i. Thank you that in all my years this is only the first time
 - ii. Thank God it was just my wallet taken and not my life
 - iii. Thank God that I was the one who was robbed and not the robber!

Conclusion:

- The world can see our outer life, but God knows all about us. Our hearts, attitude, and spiritual life need to be in tune with Him.