

I Thessalonians 5:12-22 The Consideration of Leaders

Alright, today we take I Thessalonians chapter 5 verses 12 through 22. I Thessalonians 5, the title of the chapter is The Testimony of Believers. The testimony believers are to have while waiting for the coming day of the Lord. Remember in chapter 4 verses 13 through 18 Paul answered the question concerning how the Lord is going to come and how those who have died in Christ will be raised.

But in chapter 5 verses 1 through 11 Paul addresses the issue of when it is going to happen and what we are to do in light of when it is going to happen. The coming of Christ is going to happen like a thief in the night, and though that will not affect true believers it will affect those who do not know Christ. We are to be watching, that is, to be alert in the heart. We are to be sober in our thoughts and to approach this life soberly, sober thinking, and have our hearts in a watchful condition.

Now, what is interesting is verses 12 to 22 tells us how to be sober in our thinking and how to be watchful. It gives us a series of commands.

Verses 12-13 we have the consideration of leaders, a very important subject in the last days and waiting for the Lord. Verse 12 says, **Now brothers we request you to know** - the English translations say *to recognize* but it is literally, **we would request you to know - the ones laboring among you**, first of all. Second of all, **in taking the lead of you in the Lord**, and third of all, **and warning you**. The word *admonish* is the word *warn*. These are leaders, know them, recognize them, who are laboring amongst you. *Laboring* is a participle that shows *working to the point of exhaustion*. Recognize those who are working to the point of exhaustion. **Who are taking the lead of you in the Lord**, is the second thing. *Leading* is a word that means *to stand in front*. So, leaders who stand in front and who lead the people. And thirdly, **Warning you**. The traditional translations use the word *admonish*, **who admonish you**, and the word literally means *to place in the mind*, so it means *warning*.

It is the same word used by Paul in Ephesians chapter 6 verse 4 when he says, **And you fathers do not provoke your children to wrath but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord**. The training and warning of the Lord. Place in their mind the warning that comes in being disobedient to Christ.

Verse 13, **And to esteem them above, out, and beyond in love on account of their work. Be at peace among yourselves**. The second thing - first thing to do is to recognize those who perform those three functions - but the second thing in verse 13 is **Esteem them**. The word *esteem* has to do with the governing thought of the mind, to esteem them. Here are three words I want to give you literally. I left it literal in the literal text. The English translation usually says *abundant* or *highly favored*, but it says, **Esteem them above, out, and beyond**. Three words that all depict where your thoughts are to go: **above, out, beyond in love, on account of their work**. *On account of their work*, now that is the key to verses 12 and 13.

People are not to be put on pedestals, nor are they to be treated any different as people compared to other people. The point of the text is to take high regard for them because of the work that they have to do. In other words, they have a commission that God has chosen them and called them to do something, take that into consideration.

So this whole text is saying, "If somebody is laboring, leading, admonishing, put in your thought process as the leading thought of your mind, esteem these people above, out, and beyond all of your considerations for the Lord's work, mainly because of their work." We have parents and family. We have kids growing up challenging the parents. *Who do you think you are* is the general attitude amongst people who were rebelling against authority and leadership. The parents are in a responsible position and children are to be trained, and disciplined, and warned, the consequences of such disorderliness. We are to respect the function and position that they are in, honor that position. So the Lord is saying this for their work sake, because of what they have to do, because of their responsibility.

We are told in Hebrews chapter 13 verse 17, **Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive: for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give an account, let them do so with joy, and not with grief: for that would be unprofitable for you.** What he is saying here is be under God's persuasion under God's ministry through those who are leading you and be in submission because these leaders are watching on behalf of your soul as those who give an account. So those in leadership are going to have to give an account for how they led the people under them.

As we will see in a minute, Paul was always ministering to people thinking of the day that they are going to stand before the Lord. That is what he wanted. Now he says the reason why you want to submit is this is profitable for you, so that they can do their job with joy and not with grief.

Paul says that he had care over all the churches. In II Corinthians chapter 11 verses 24 through 28 he says one of the things that he had to suffer through was sleepless nights, nights when he did not sleep because the Lord had burdened him to pray for certain churches because they were not being obedient to the Lord. How leaders are affected depends on the people's obedience, and response, and submission to the Word of the Lord.

And then he says at the end of verse 13, **Be at peace among yourselves.** That is the whole point. Instead of rebellion, be at peace among yourselves.

Verses 14 through 22 is a list of thirteen commands. These all are in present tense verbs. In other words whatever these commands are, we are to be doing them presently and continuously. There are thirteen of them. We have translated the literal translation to depict the present tense imperative *to be doing something*. Verse 14 The Commands of Orderliness. **Now we encourage you, brothers, be warning the disorderly, be comforting the fainthearted, be sustaining the weak, be long-suffering toward all.**

- 1) The first command is, **Be warning.** There is your present tense: be continuously and presently warning. **Be warning the disorderly.** The disorderly ones are ones who

rebel against order. We just got through talking about leadership, those who rebel against leadership they are to be admonished or warned, now this is our word again. It means to warn them, to place in the mind, continue to warn those who are disorderly.

2) The second command, **Be comforting the fainthearted**. The Greek word for *fainthearted* is literally *small-souled*. Two Greek words make up the compound word, it means small and then soul. **Comfort the small-souled ones**. Comfort those who have a small soul capacity would be the literal translation. Those who souls do not have much capacity. They are weak. So we are to comfort them who have small-souled capacity.

3) Thirdly, **Be sustaining the weak**. Sustain means to come up underneath, and to hold them up from underneath. To be a support. Sustain them. It does not say, "Baby them." It does not say, "Nurse them." Be beneath them. Be a support for them. They still have to walk with the Lord, but they might need to have to walk with a little support. But they still have to walk themselves. It is giving support, sustaining those who are weak, rather than telling them, "Well, get with it, be a little stronger, do not be so weak." We are told in the Scriptures the weak you always have with you.

4) Fourthly, **Be long-suffering towards all**. *Long-suffering* is the literal translation. It is one of two words in the Scriptures that is used for the word *patience*. The word *patience* in dealing with circumstances is the Greek word ὑπομένω (hupomenō), *to remain under*. Patience with people is called *longsuffering*, μακροθυμία (makrothumia), it means *to be slow in human reaction towards everybody*. Be slow in the human reaction towards everybody.

5) Verse 15, **See that anyone should not return evil for evil to anyone, but always be pursuing the good, both towards one another and towards all**. Evil for evil. The word *evil* in the text is not the word πονηρός (ponēros) for *sin* or *Satan*. It is the evil for *human adversity, to cause harm, to cause hurt*. Adversity to give people a hard time would be this type of evil. In the Old Testament it is translated *adversity*. Do not render adversity back to people who are causing adversity to you. Do not get caught up in this destructive cycle just because someone is giving you a bad time. No payback, but rather always be pursuing that which is good.

Now the word *good* here is the Greek word ἀγαθός (agathos). It is not good, humanitarian speaking, it is ἀγαθός (agathos), that is the good quality of God's nature and God's Spirit.

A young ruler came up to Jesus and said, "Teacher what must I do to inherit eternal life?" And Jesus said, "Why did you call Me good? There is only one good and that's God." And He used the word ἀγαθός (agathos). ἀγαθός (agathos) describes God when the text says that Jesus went about doing good. It was ἀγαθός (agathos). He was not being a good humanitarian. He was not doing humanly speaking good things, but rather it was the Spirit of God reaching out and doing the good.

So it is this type of good, **pursue that which is good**, when it comes to people who are treating you adversely. You are to pursue it, pursue the good. Do not chase after adversity or payback or human reaction in that way, but rather pursue the good of God for the people who are causing adversity for you. Then it says, **both towards one another and towards all**. *Towards one another* is the body of Christ, then *towards everyone* including nonbelievers. So the priority is the body of Christ.

6) Verse 16, **Be rejoicing always**. And again, the translation reflects the present tense - continuous action, and present condition action. **Be rejoicing always**. The word *rejoice* comes from an old Chaldean word which means *to flow*. It also has to do with the adrenaline flow from the athletes in the Colosseum games. Anything that has a free flow to it. And what it meant in Greek was *satisfaction*. The satisfaction one feels in competing in the athletic games. They love the satisfaction of doing something physically athletic. So those words for the believer, meant *be satisfied at all times continuously*.

In Philippians chapter 4 verse 4 Paul is using the same terminology when he says, **Rejoice in the Lord always and again I will say rejoice**. It is the same word. So find your satisfaction in the Lord he is saying, at all times, and I will continue to repeat it, be satisfied in the Lord. He was making this applicable in Philippians chapter 4 to the two women Euodias and Syntyche who were not getting along in the church, and Paul says the first thing you have to do is be satisfied with what the Lord wants. Be satisfied with Him not with what you want.

7) Verse 17, **Be praying unceasingly**. Now this does not mean that you are driving down the freeway with your eyes closed all the time, praying. This reflects an attitude of "I am not going to leave off from prayer." Prayer is talking with the Lord. And when we get upset about things one of the first things that happens is we stop praying. We stop talking to the Lord because we are angry with Him, and so **Be praying unceasingly**. Do not let anything interfere with the prayer life, with communication with the Lord.

8) Verse 18, **In everything be giving thanks, for this will of God in Christ Jesus toward you**. Notice how I read that, because it literally does not read *for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you*, but **in everything be giving thanks for this will of God in Christ Jesus toward you**. In other words, everything that is happening is God's will. I am in the will of God. For this will that I am in of God I am to be thankful in everything and receive it as being God's will. We are to be thankful because it is God's will whatever it might be.

Now the word *giving thanks* is a very interesting word. It is a word of reflection. In other words, it means *to respond with thanks, respond with grace*. The word *thanksgiving* comes from two words, the word **εὖ** (eu) which is a prefix that means *good* or *well*, and the word **χάρις** (charis), grace. **εὐχαριστέω** (eucharisteo) is the word for *thanks*. And what this means is *have a good response to grace*. We do not practice giving thanks. We do not make it a practice to give thanks to God. We respond to God's grace by giving thanks. Much like John said in I John chapter 4 that, **We love God**

because He first loved us. Love is a response. Giving thanks is a response. We thank him because of his grace. **We are giving thanks in everything for this will of God in Christ Jesus toward you.**

9) Verse 19, **Do not be quenching the Spirit.** To quench means *to snuff out, to make dull*. In other words, stop continually hindering and quenching the Holy Spirit from ministering.

10) Verse 20, **Do not be rejecting prophecies.** Literally, **Stop rejecting prophecies.** We have prophets in our day. We are encouraged to prophesy. So what exactly does it mean? God does not speak through prophets anymore. Jesus Christ is the last spokesperson, according to Hebrews chapter 1 verses 1 and 2 where it says, **God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, He has in these last days spoken to us by his Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds.** So in old time He spoke by the prophets, but now in these last days He has spoken to us in His Son.

And then John in the book of Revelation indicated both what he and Peter had emphasized in their letters that Scripture is now prophecy. John in the book of Revelation chapter 22 verses 18 and 19. Remember that John says, **For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book, if any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: and if any man takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the book of life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.** So prophecy is now Scripture. And a person that gets up and gives prophecies is a person who shares the Scriptures. The word *prophet* in the Greek means to be a *spokesperson*. A prophet today is somebody who takes the word of God because Scripture is now prophecy, and he ministers it. **So do not be rejecting prophecies** people who minister the Scriptures, do not be rejecting it.

11 / 12) Verse 21, **Be testing all things; be holding firm the good.** There are two commands there. To *test* means *to give approval after putting it to the test*. Put something to the test in order to give it the approval. Coming right after prophecies, you can see how he is saying to test all things. **Do not reject prophecies but test all things, be holding firm the good. Be holding firm the good.** This word for good is word **καλός** (kalos) not the word **ἀγαθός** (agathos) that we just studied. This word **καλός** (kalos) means *right*. Hold firm to what is right.

13) In verse 22, **Be abstaining from every form of evil.** To *abstain*, literally *hold yourself away* from every form of evil. The word evil is the word **πονηρός** (poneros). It is the word for Satan. He is the evil one. The word *form* is actually the word for a *system*. It literally means do not participate in any system of evil. When the system of evil is present do not participate in it, evil is a lifestyle. It is a system. It is a habit of life and I am to abstain from that. Get away from it as far as possible.

Now in conclusion, all of these commands that we have studied are all present imperatives. Present tense commands, which means these are things that we are to be continually and presently doing. This is what we are to be doing while we are waiting for the coming of the Lord. This is what it means to *be watchful* and *thinking soberly* and not allowing the world's philosophy and its activities to pull us away as we wait for the Lord's return.

Next week we finish out this chapter and finish out the book of I Thessalonians. Next week. Let's close with prayer.