

1Thessalonians, Chapter Five, Lesson Three

GOD'S GIFT OF EXCELLENCE 1Thessalonians 5:12-18

STIMULATE

** From our study together last week, "When life gets difficult, when we feel like failures because of our battles with sin, what encouragement could there be to lift our hearts to the rejoicing attitude which we have been called to live out each day?"

1Thessalonians 5:9

- 1) We are not destined for wrath! Praise the Lord!
- 2) We are destined to obtain salvation!

** Do we have this kind of encouraging impact upon our brothers and sisters in Christ? How can we grow in this area of our life, to excel still more, for the building up of the body of Christ?

We learned two effective steps: Remember - Ephesians 5:7-10

- 1) Walk as children of the light.
- 2) Try to learn what is pleasing to the Lord.

Did any of you have an occasion to encourage and build up a brother or sister in the Lord this past week? Were you able to apply what we had learned?

MOTIVATE

** Over the next two weeks we will observe the apostle Paul as he gives the Thessalonians (and us as well) twenty rapid fire exhortations. These exhortations prove to be "**God's Gift of Excellence**" which enables us to walk in a manner worthy of our Lord. Jesus set the standard in Matthew 5:48 when He said, "Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." And Paul supported that statement in his first letter to the Corinthians by saying, "Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." (1Corinthians 10:31)

These exhortations provide for us the practical instruction we need if we hope to employ "**God's Gift of Excellence**" to our lives. This week we will learn the first twelve of those exhortations. Let's read our passage together as we tune our hearts to the authority of God's precious word.

Read passage (V.12-14) (V.15-18)

Opening Prayer

God's Gift of Excellence

INVESTIGATE

V.12 ** Paul has just finished an intense theological teaching portion of his letter from chapter 4, verse 9 to chapter five, verse 11. What were some of the events contained in that teaching?

The Rapture of Christ's church
The Day of the Lord
The 70th week of Daniel, Ch.9 (The Tribulation)

** The apostle now turns from theology to everyday practical exhortation as to how we can live within "**God's Gift of Excellence**". To put that in other terms, how can we live an excellent lifestyle which truly brings glory to God? As he begins to address this extremely important subject, how do you suppose he feels about the Christians there in Thessalonica?

Paul has a great love for them! He says, "we request of you, brethren..." - He would continue to use that term of endearment throughout his second letter to them.
cf. 2Thessalonians 1:3, 2:1, 3:1 and 3:13

** Alright then, what is the first thing Paul wants these Christians in Thessalonica to do?

1) "...that you appreciate those who..."

** Let's stop here, before going on to the description of those we are to appreciate. What does it mean to "appreciate" someone?

oida - lit. means "to have seen or perceived, hence to know". Paul is saying that we must be close to these individuals whom God has placed in positions of spiritual leadership.

** So who are these people, what is Paul's three-fold description of them?

They are:

"...those who diligently labor among you..."
cf. Colossians 1:28-29 and 1Peter 5:2

...those who "have charge over you in the Lord"
cf. 1Peter 5:3, Hebrews 13:17 and Matthew 20:25-28

...those who "give you instruction."
lit. admonition, cf. 1Corinthians 4:14, 2Timothy 2:1-2

V.13 ** As we get to know more and more about the lives of such men among us, how are we to view them? What is the second exhortation given to us by Paul?

2) We are to "...esteem them very highly in love..."

This is speaking of the close knit family of Christ, being in subjection to itself and caring for one another in the spirit of the love of God.

** What is the reason given by Paul for us to "esteem" our leaders in love?

Because of their work! All that Paul said they were doing back in verse twelve.

** Still here in verse thirteen, Paul gives us the third exhortation for today. What is it and how is it different from the first two we have already seen?

3) "Live in peace with one another". The first two exhortations were in the form of a "request", but this one is a direct command and is given to both the leaders and the people who make up the body of Christ. It is imperative that Christians all live together in harmony, no matter what position they may hold in their service to the Lord. cf. John 13:34-35

V.14 ** Paul now shifts gears again, back to the affectionate exhortation mode to introduce the next four requests. Let's look at them one at a time. What does he urge us as Christian brothers and sisters to do?

4) "...admonish the unruly..." These were the "roof toppers" who lived an undisciplined lifestyle because they anticipated the immediate return of Jesus Christ.
cf. 1Thessalonians 4:11-12, 2Thessalonians 3:10-11

5) "...encourage the fainthearted..." Paul is telling them to strengthen those in their midst who were worried about the future. He himself had done so back in chapter 4, verse 13.

6) "...help the weak..." antecho - lit. "to hold firmly" Paul was saying that they needed to support those who were spiritually weak. cf. Romans 14:1 and 15:1

7) "...be patient with all men." makrothumeo which means "to persevere", and like makrothumia which literally means "long suffering", it carries the idea of being patient with everyone we meet. That means Christians are to live their lives for the betterment of others, not looking out for themselves. cf. Philippians 2:3-5

V.15 ** For exhortation number eight, Paul now turns to the negative form of instruction. What does he tell us not to do?

8) We are not to "repay another with evil for evil"
Jesus addressed this issue in His Sermon on the Mount. cf. Matthew 5:43-45 with Paul's instruction in Romans 12:17 and Peter's in 1Peter 3:8-9

** For number nine in our list, what alternative does Paul give us for repaying evil for evil?

9) We are to "...seek after that which is good for one another and for all men."

** What are the four areas of life in which we can seek after good things for each other?

Physical needs - Provision, cf. James 2:14-17

Emotional needs - Friendship, cf. Proverbs 17:17, 18:24

Behavioral needs - Admonition, cf. Romans 15:14

Spiritual needs - Teaching/Feeding cf. Colossians 3:16

V.16 ** Paul now finishes with the last three exhortations for today in rapid succession. What is number ten in our list?

10) "Rejoice always...!"

** What is it about that exhortation, which makes it so very challenging for our hearts?

The "always" part! cf. Philippians 2:18, 3:1 and 4:4

V.17 ** What is number eleven in our list?

11) "...pray without ceasing..."

** Is Paul suggesting that we never leave a "kneeling" position, with our eyes closed?

No - He is referring to a constant awareness of the believer for their Lord and Master, Jesus Christ. We should take every event and issue to our Lord, so that His Spirit might guide us throughout each day of our life. cf. Ephesians 6:18-20

V.18 ** If we are faithful in applying the first eleven of Paul's exhortations, then this twelfth one will become easy to do. What is it?

12) "...in everything give thanks..." Even when the life of a believer becomes very difficult, our gracious God is deserving of our thanksgiving. cf. Job 1:20-22 and Job 2:7-10

** These last three commands to rejoice, pray and give thanks would not be so difficult if they weren't so demanding in the area of consistency. What motivation does Paul give to us to inspire us to fulfill these commands?

"...for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus"

Because of our great love for the Lord, these three become easier as we joyfully desire to fulfill His expressed will in our lives. cf. John 4:34

** Before we conclude our study for today, we must make note of the fact that Paul felt comfortable challenging these Thessalonian believers with twelve rapid-fire exhortations. What does that say about the nature of their walk with the Lord.

These are truly submissive, Christ honoring saints who wish to glorify God by being immediately obedient to His written word. cf. Luke 11:28

EXTRICATE

** How has the Lord touched your heart today? Which of these twelve exhortations did He use to prompt you to live your life using "**God's Gift of Excellence**"?

Let's review the list:

1) appreciate 2) esteem 3) live in peace 4) admonish the unruly 5) encourage the faint 6) help the weak 7) patient with all 8) don't repay evil with evil 9) seek good for all men 10) rejoice 11) pray 12) give thanks to God!

DELINEATE

** Last week we learned about encouraging and building up one another. Today we have seen twelve great areas in which we should build up one another. Can you think of someone who needs to hear about one of these exhortations?

EVALUATE

** As our study began, we saw the lifestyle standard set down by Jesus Himself in Matthew 5:48 when He said, "Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." And remember that Paul supported that statement in his first letter to the Corinthians by saying, "Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." (1Corinthians 10:31)

The Lord has given us "**God's Gift of Excellence**" that we might truly live each day for His glory.

ACTIVATE

** We should take time this week reviewing all that we have learned today, so that we are more likely to apply it to our lives. Let's pray to that end.

Father, help us to be excellent in all of these areas of our walk with you for your glory's sake. May we use "**God's Gift of Excellence**" so that the world will know we belong to You.

Closing prayer