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Seeking God's Will In Christ

1 Thessalonians 5:12-18

Introduction

1. God has given us the opportunity to make a difference in our community.
2. That difference starts with who we are — how do we treat one another.
3. In the passage before us this morning, the apostle Paul concludes his first letter to the Christians in the city of Thessalonica with instructions about how we are to . . .
 - a. Treat one another within our church body.
 - b. Treat those outside of the body of Christ.
 - c. Live out our faith.
4. All of this is at the heart of what it means to be the hands of Jesus here in Waverly and beyond.
5. As we think these things this morning let's take these words of Paul to heart and strive to be the kind of people whose lamp shines ever brighter as we point others to our Savior.

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I. Paul's Request

A. Respect Your Leaders

“But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction, and that you esteem them very highly in love because of their work.” (1 Thessalonians 5:12–13a, NASB95)

1. Paul says that we are to “appreciate” certain ones among us.

- a. Other translations say we are to “respect” them.
 - b. The NKJV says “recognize” them.
 - c. The old KJV translates it as “know” them — this is the literal translation, but what does it mean.
 - d. It means that we are to “honor” them, “recognize” them.
2. We “honor” or “recognize” them because they . . .
 - a. “diligently labor among [us]”
 - b. “have charge over [us] in the Lord”
 - c. “give [us] instruction”
 3. Paul calls upon us to “esteem them very highly in love because of their work” (v. 13).
 4. These people are our elders, those to whom God has given the responsibility of shepherding the church which Christ purchased with His own blood (Acts 20:28).
 5. These men have been working diligently these last four weeks, caring not only for this congregation, but also those in our community.
 6. I ask you to pray for them because the task which they have undertaken is great, and they need God’s guidance and support if they are to be successful.

Slide 3**B. Live At Peace**

“Live in peace with one another.” (1 Thessalonians 5:13b, NASB95)

1. Our God is “the God of peace” (Romans 15:33; 16:20).
2. Paul called the gospel which you and I proclaim “the gospel of peace” (Ephesians 6:15).
3. In Romans 12:18, Paul said that, “if possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.”

4. In Romans 14:19, he wrote that we are people who “pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another.”
5. If we are constantly at odds with each other, we defeat the very cause we are called to proclaim.
6. Let's strive to be people who “live in peace with one another.”

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II. Paul's Exhortation

A. Fulfill Your Responsibilities Toward One Another

“We urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone.” (1 Thessalonians 5:14, NASB95)

1. “Admonish the unruly (v. 14a).
 - a. “Warn those who are unruly (idle)” (NKJV, NIV84)
 - b. This word was used in two different ways in Paul's time:
 - 1) It described the soldier who had left the ranks or was out of step with others in his line.
 - 2) It was also used of the person who was lazy or idle.
 - a) Thus, it speaks to the Christian who is no longer busy in the work of the Lord.
 - b) That person who spends more of their time grumbling and chatting with others about their discontentments.
 - c. We have a responsibility to admonish or warn such a person to stop such behavior and busy themselves in the work of the Lord.
2. “Encourage the fainthearted” (v. 14b).
 - a. “Comfort the fainthearted” (NKJV)
 - b. “Encourage the timid” (NIV84)
 - c. Many, if not all of us, know a brother or sister in Christ who is discouraged, perhaps even depressed.

- d. It may be because of difficult circumstances in their lives.
- e. Such individuals do not need to be warned or admonished.
- f. They need us to come alongside of them and say, "You can do it."
 - 1. Is there anyone who you need to encourage? If so, please don't hesitate to do it. Satan may use our delay to destroy that person.
- 3. "Help the weak" (14c).
 - a. These are the spiritually weak.
 - b. They may lack knowledge or experience.
 - c. They may struggle with certain sins which continually defeat them.
 - d. They may lack courage or find it difficult to trust God.
 - e. They need to be helped along the way.
- 4. "Be patient with everyone" (14d).
 - a. Paul said that "Love is patient" (1 Corinthians 13:4).
 - b. All of us are different — we have different personalities, different likes and dislikes, different habits, we come from different backgrounds.
 - c. Just as we need patience from others because of our own selfish tendencies, so we need to be patient with others.
 - b. Remember, God is "patient" or "longsuffering" (2 Peter 3:9) toward us, so we should be toward others.

Slide 5**B. Guard Your Responses**

"See that no one repays another with evil for evil, but always seek after that which is good for one another and for all people." (1 Thessalonians 5:15, NASB95)

- 1. All of us know what it means to pay someone back or get even with them for a wrong done to us.
- 2. Many of us have even used the phrase, in joking of course, that "payback is double."
- 3. Paul, however, said that you and I must not seek revenge, we must not seek

to repay evil with evil.

4. In Romans 12:19, he said, "Never take your own revenge . . ."
5. Instead, he said, "If your enemy is hungry, feed him. If he is thirsty, give him something to drink" (Romans 12:20, HCSB).
6. In verse 21, he added, "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."
7. Here, Paul said that you and I should "always seek after that which is good for one another and for all people" (1 Thessalonians 5:15).
8. Stop and ask yourself, "am I a person who always seeks after that which is good for others?"

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III. What Are The Marks Of Your Faith

A. Do You Constantly Rejoice?

"Rejoice always . . ." (1 Thessalonians 5:16, NASB95)

1. True Christianity should be an exhilarating, not a depressing thing.

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2. Many of you are familiar with the hymn, "There Is Sunshine In My Soul" by Eliza Hewitt:

There is sunshine in my soul today,
 More glorious and bright
 Than glows in any earthly sky,
 For Jesus is my light.

There is gladness in my soul today,
 And hope and praise and love,
 For blessings which He gives me now,
 For joys laid up above.

Chorus

O there's sunshine, blessed sunshine,

While the peaceful, happy moments roll;
 When Jesus shows His smiling face,
 There is sunshine in my soul.

3. Can others tell that we are a rejoicing church? They can if Christ exists in our hearts.

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B. Do You Pray Continually?

“Pray without ceasing . . .” (1 Thessalonians 5:17, NASB95)

1. When Paul said, “pray without ceasing,” he did not mean pray 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
2. Instead, he meant that our lives were to be marked by prayer — we are to be known as a praying people.

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3. There is another hymn, written in 1875 by Mary Kidder, titled “Did You Think To Pray,” with these words:

1st Stanza: “Ere you left your room this morning, did you think to pray?”

2nd Stanza: “When you met with great temptation, did you think to pray?”

3rd Stanza: “When your heart was filled with anger, did you think to pray?”

4th Stanza: “When sore trials came upon you, did you think to pray?”

Chorus:

O how praying rests the weary!

Prayer will change the night to day;

So when life seems dark and dreary,

Don't forget to pray.

4. James said that “the effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much” (James 5:16) — it is very strong.
5. Imagine what happens when a whole church prays.
 2. If ever we needed to pray for ourselves and our community, now is that time.

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C. Do You Have A Thankful Spirit?

“In everything give thanks” (1 Thessalonians 5:18, NASB95).

1. A thankful spirit does not come naturally.
2. When difficult or painful circumstances invade our lives, we are not typically thankful.
3. Our ability to remain thankful, no matter what happens in our lives, is possible only by God's grace.
4. Only when we truly believe that God “causes all things to work together for good” (Romans 8:28) to those of us who love Him and who are called according to His purpose can we give thanks.
5. Have you stopped to thank God for all the good which He has brought about during and after this flood? If not, let me encourage you to do so today.

Conclusion

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1. The last thing which Paul says to us in this section of Scripture are these words, “for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.”
2. God's will is that we are joyful, prayerful, thankful people.
3. He calls us to be a people who esteem our leaders and who live at peace with one another.
4. While He expects us to admonish those who are not living as they should, He also expects us to care for the discouraged and weak among us.
5. We are to be people who “always seek to do good to one another and to everyone” (v. 15, ESV).
6. It is a high standard, but it is one which God will help us reach if we ask Him.
7. Are you someone who needs God's help today? Can we pray for you?
8. Are you a soul who needs the salvation which only God can provide?
9. If so, won't you come to Christ today?