

Study 10 – Book of First Thessalonians

Topic: Be at Peace!

Study text: 1 Thessalonians 5:12-15

Discussion Questions

- Why should we show appreciation to Christian workers among us?
- In what ways could we show appreciation to them?
- What can we learn about how to treat others (friends, family, etc.) from this verse? Vs 14-15
- What does it mean to admonish?
- How can you encourage those who feel weak?
- When is it hard for you to be patient with others? What does “no one renders evil for evil to anyone” mean?
- How do we naturally react when others are unkind to us? How should we react? How can we take control of our reactions?

Introduction: In this last part of Chapter 5, Paul gives several reminders to the Thessalonians about what is expected of a well-rounded and growing Christian. These are very practical areas that are important for every believer to focus on. Note that Paul is not giving a deep theological dissertation on each of these areas. He does not delve too intensely into the various doctrines about these issues. Instead, he is giving almost like an overview about what a mature believer's life should look like.

We can use the topics Paul discusses to evaluate our own walk with the Lord. A mature believer is not a Christian who goes to church every Sunday, memorizes lots of Scripture, or can talk in-depth about the most difficult doctrines. A mature believer is a believer who faithfully practices these and other principles from the Word in his daily life. As we go through the following reminders, think about your own life and which area or areas you need to grow.

Verse by Verse Study

Verse 12-13

1. Show appreciation toward Christian workers and your spiritual leaders: Very few Bible teachers would ever choose a passage like this to teach. It is kind of embarrassing to talk about. But the verse-by-verse approach guarantees that teachers cannot pick and choose what they talk about. Every important topic from the Bible will be covered sooner or later. This passage is in here because it is imperative for us to remember our spiritual leaders. God wants us to do it.

Every single one of us has people who have dedicated their own time and energy to teach us the Word and serve us in Christ. It might be our parents, teachers, missionaries, Bible study leaders, pastors, etc. I can tell you that even Bible teachers and pastors also have other teachers/pastors/mentors who have helped them, so this passage applies to every one of us.

What this does NOT mean:

It does not mean Christian workers should do things in order to get recognized. They should not seek out this recognition.

Matthew 6:4 – So that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

Why should we show appreciation?

These are people who diligently give of themselves to us. They make many sacrifices to help us in our walks with the Lord. It is only right to show appreciation.

So then, how can we show appreciation?

A. We can pray for them.

1 Timothy 2:1-2 – I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people— for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness.

B. We can follow them in such a way that does not bring them grief or heartache.

Hebrews 13:17 – Have confidence in your leaders and submit to their authority, because they keep watch over you as those who must give an account. **Do this so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no benefit to you.**

It is already not easy to teach others the things of God. **Think about what Paul and his team gave up to help the Thessalonians and the other churches.** Paul was a well-educated Pharisee and a Roman citizen. He could have had a great career in any number of fields. But he gave up all of that to become probably the most despised person in all of Judea. Paul had enough difficulties already without adding to it complaining and malcontent churches. **While spiritual leaders should not be working for the reward of appreciation, complaining/division/slandering can suck a lot of their energy and even cause some to give up altogether.**

We need to show appreciation to one another as believers and Christian workers in the

We would do well to show grace instead of judgment. And most of the time, the people complaining and giving grief to the leaders are not doing anything themselves! If you really see something in the church that needs to be done, volunteer to help do it!

C. We should express words of affirmation – This is one of the five love languages. It is completely appropriate to show love toward Christian workers. Paul even commands it. He says to “esteem them very highly in love.” My parents taught me to always say “thank you” when someone did something nice for me. When we received gifts for our birthday parties, we were required to stop after each gift and say “thank you” to the person who gave it to us, and it was even better if we could think of something nice to say about the present.

What words of affirmation can you share with the pastor, your leader or fellow workers? How many people in the congregation go up and shake the pastor’s hand and give him a positive comment about something in his sermon? It doesn’t happen often.

Since this passage tells us to show love to those who work among us, are there any other five languages which are appropriate to express our love and appreciation to each other?

D. Acts of service – Is there a way you could serve your pastor/teacher/leader/fellow Brethren?

E. Gifts – Is there a gift which could give to express your appreciation?

2. Live in peace with one another –

Romans 12:18 – If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, **live at peace with everyone.**

This verse in Romans is one of my favourites in the Bible about how we should maintain peace with others. You can only control what you do, not the other side. You are not required to control their behaviour and are not

responsible for it. Our job is to do what we are supposed to do. Proverbs has a lot of practical advice on this matter as well. (**Proverbs 17:14, 26:17.**)

3. Verse 14 – Who is this verse directed toward? It is for the brethren. In other words, it is for all believers, everyone. These jobs are not only for the leaders of the church. Every member of the body has their part, and we are to be helping and building up each other regularly.

A. Admonish the unruly – Admonish is something like a rebuke, but maybe not quite as strong. We are to admonish those whose behaviour is not appropriate, specifically those who are a bit out of control. The Greek word for unruly is “ataktos,” which means disorderly and might be said of a soldier who is out of rank. Sometimes believers are also out of line. What should we do? Well, we don’t kick them out of the church. Neither should we ignore them. We should come to them and remind them about the relevant Scriptures that can help them in the area they are struggling with. This is not an easy thing to do, nor is it enjoyable. But it is necessary. If the church doesn’t correct its own, who is going to?

B. Encourage the fainthearted – Encouragement is one of the central themes of the book of 1 Thessalonians. Paul has given us a great example of how to focus on encouraging others. **I hope that after we finish this book, each one of us will make a great effort to make encouraging others a routine part of our communication.** Many people may rebuke/mock/discourage/ignore/avoid/judge the fainthearted. But all of these are fleshly and sinful reactions. Instead of haughtily looking down on those who struggle in various areas, we should come alongside them to help them. This is what Christian fellowship is for.

C. Help the weak – Can you think of any examples in the Bible of people who were weak and who received help? Any examples of people who were weak or fainthearted and did not receive the help they needed? In Ecclesiastes, Solomon did not write, “Two are better than one, for when one falls, the other will go to his friends and talk about him behind his back.” What should we do when someone falls? We help them. This is how God has designed the church and Christian fellowship. We, too, are often weak. What you hope others will do for you when you are weak and struggling is what you should do for them.

D. Be patient with everyone – Notice that word “everyone.” Who is the most difficult person in your life to be patient with? Do not say it out, but think about it for a minute. That is the person that God calls you to be patient with today. Some people are very easy to be patient with, but some are not. Perhaps God has brought those problematic people into our lives to help us grow in the area of patience. And perhaps God will keep challenging you in this area until you have learned the lesson! What tips can you think of that can help us when we struggle to show others patience?

Here are just a few things some of us may do when we are NOT being patient with others:

- a. Roll our eyes.
- b. Sigh.
- c. Complain to others about so and so.
- d. Raise our voice.
- e. Interrupt.
- f. Yell.
- g. Stop listening.
- h. Look at our watch or the time repeatedly.

All of these are rude behaviors. If you notice anything you do on the list, it is likely a sign that you need to grow in patience. Next time when you struggle with this, remember how patient God is with you, come to Him in prayer to ask for His strength, and make up your mind to show real patience from the heart.

Verse 15

4. See that no one repays another with evil for evil – This idea is prevalent throughout the Bible.

Study on the Book of 1 & 2 Thessalonians

1 Peter 3:9 – *Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing.*

Luke 23:34 – *And Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." And they cast lots to divide his garments.*

Why are we to treat others like this? From a worldly perspective, it makes no sense. Most people would, at best, ignore those who treat them badly or, at worst, seek to get revenge. But this is not what Jesus did. For another example of someone who didn't return evil for evil, see 2 Samuel 16 for the story of David's response to the man who cursed him.

It is not enough to NOT respond sinfully toward those who insult or harm us. Paul says that we must always seek after that which is good for them. This word "always" tells us that we cannot pick and choose when or to whom we will do this. It doesn't depend on who did evil to you. It doesn't depend on how many times they did it. It doesn't depend on how much it hurt. No matter who they are or what they did, God requires you to seek after their good each and every time. That is not easy, but it has to be our goal.

Seek – Doing good toward those who mistreat us is not a natural thing. It is the farthest thing from natural or normal. We must make an active and conscious choice that we will do it. We then need to seek them out and find a way to show the love of Christ to them.

For one another and for all people – Unless you forget and think this is confined to our relationship with other believers, Paul makes it clear that this is not the case. We are to return good for evil to all people, believers or not.

To many, this is craziness. You are supposed to forgive and show good toward someone who murdered your family member? How do you answer this? It is exactly what God did toward us. We would do well to follow **Romans 12:21**, *"Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."*

In conclusion:

The kind of love shown in Romans 12 is so shocking, so out of this world, that it could drastically change people's lives when they experience it. I have heard of it happening. There was a couple whose daughter was killed. They travelled to the prison and told the culprit they had forgiven him. He was so touched by this incredible forgiveness that he eventually gave his life to Christ. This is the type of love and forgiveness that God is calling us to. Who do you need to show it to?