

Paul's First Letter to the Thessalonians

1 Thessalonians 5:12-28

Introduction

Turn in your copy of God's Word to 1 Thessalonians (page 927 in the Pew Bible).

We are in Week 10 of our sermon series through Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians.

- We are going to be in 1 Thessalonians 5:12-28, where we will see a **main idea** that: **Godly instruction matters.**

With this in mind, let's read our main passage.

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:12-28.

Foundation

Outline:

- (1) 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13
- (2) 1 Thessalonians 5:14-22
- ~~(3) 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24~~
- ~~(4) 1 Thessalonians 5:25-28~~

As we have journeyed through Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians, we have seen that Paul has written this letter to encourage and instruct the church.

- When he initially founded this church, he was not able to stay with them as long as he wanted and provide all the instruction he wanted because he was run out of town.
- Because of Paul's love and care for this church, he is writing to instruct them in ways he was not able to before, and also to encourage them in what they have been doing and what they need to continue to do.
- As we have journeyed through this letter for the last 10 weeks or so, I have noticed a common word within the main idea each week is "matters," and that the main idea put forth each week has centered around something that God wanted Paul to tell the church that "matters."

- **Matters:**

- Christian character and actions.
 - The gospel and our efforts within it.
 - Christian's work.
 - The word of God.
 - Christian encouragement.
 - Christian lifestyles.
 - Brotherly love.
 - Jesus' second coming.
- As Paul concludes this letter, along with the normal conclusion of a letter, Paul provides one more thing that the church needs to know that matters:
 - Godly instruction matters.

Godly instruction matters.

- The world will try to instruct us in one direction, our feelings may try to instruct us in another direction, and still yet Satan and his minions will try to instruct us in yet another direction.
- We have so many ideas and thoughts and opinions that vie for our time and attention, vie for our affection and worship, and each have their own agenda and will lead us in a certain way toward a certain destination.
 - This is true not only outside of us, but inside of us as well.
 - Not only are their outside forces like the world and Satan, but also inside forces like our thoughts and feelings and emotions.
- And we live in very much a feely society, don't we?
 - I have strong feelings about this, so that must be what I am supposed to do.
 - This makes me feel good so it must therefore be good for me.
 - Feelings become truths, and feelings become instructions we live by.
 - "What are you going to do today?"
 - Whatever I feel like.
 - "How are you going to handle that situation?"
 - Just waiting to see what feels right.
- Here the point and main application:

- Main application—Godly instructions matters because it leads us to God and His truth.
- God is a God of feelings, and He created us to have feelings as well.
 - The feelings you have are real and they are not bad in and of themselves.
- BUT, God did not create us to following our feelings to find truth and to find who we are supposed to be and what we are supposed to do.
 - God created us to follow Him and His instructions to find these things.
 - And since this was true before the Fall in Genesis 3, it is exponentially more true afterwards because now we are born with our feelings infected by sin.
 - Our feelings are redeemed by Jesus through His salvation as we repent and put our faith and trust in Him, but they are still not meant to lead us, even as they were not meant to lead Adam and Eve within the perfection of creation in Genesis 1-2.
 - God is our leader . . . God is our Sovereign.
 - Therefore, God is the one who provides instruction, and our responsibility is to follow God and His instructions PERIOD.
 - III—Hymn, “Trust and Obey,” End of verse 4.
 - “What He says we will do . . . Where He sends, we will go . . . Never fear, only trust and obey.”
- In this final section of 1 Thessalonians, Paul provided the church with Godly instructions, instructions not based on their feelings but based upon God.
 - And Paul provides Godly instructions in three areas specific to the church: church leaders, church members, and church practices.

(1) Church Leaders—1 Thessalonians 5:12-13.

- Paul provided the church with Godly instructions about church leaders.
- (a) Church members relationship with church leaders.
 - Clarity—While there are several types of leaders within a church, Paul is referencing here those who have spiritual leadership and authority (office of overseer/elder/pastor; cf. 1 Tim 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9).
 - Paul uses the following two words: respect and esteem.
 - **Respect**—know, appreciate, value.
 - Paul wants the church to understand that the spiritual leaders of the church that labors among them, oversees them, and admonishes them, the members are to know, appreciate, value, and respect them.
 - Laboring—working tirelessly for God and the good of the church.
 - Overseeing—authority and leadership given by God and confirmed by the church.
 - Admonishing—instruction that deals with wrongdoings and provides warnings about the dangers of what lies ahead.
 - We need to respect/know the spiritual leaders to be able to answer:
 - Are they laboring, overseeing, admonishing well?
 - Are they laboring, overseeing, admonishing biblically?
 - Are there labors, overseings, and admonishings pleasing to God and good for the church?
 - Spiritual leaders within the church are given authority by God and the church, and this is to not be a blind authority and blind allegiance to someone you don't know but are hoping is good and godly.

- God has supreme authority, and even though we can't know Him fully and completely, He has given us His Son, His Holy Spirit, and His word so that we can know Him.
- If this is true of God who has supreme, why would we not want this same to be true of the human leaders who have been delegated authority by God and us?
- If spiritual leaders every demand your blind allegiance without providing the opportunity to get to know them, run far, far away.
 - There is a reason they don't want you to get to know them, and it ain't good.
- The more you get to know someone and see them in various arenas and seasons of life, the more it reinforces who they truly are and what they truly do, and allows you to gain a level of respect and knowledge you can't get otherwise.
- Because of who they are and what they do and have been given by God and the church, those under the leadership of spiritual leaders need to respect, know, appreciate, and value them.
- Esteem—consider, think.
 - Paul wants the church to esteem, consider, think of its spiritual leaders very highly in love because of the work these spiritual leaders do (labor, oversight, admonishment).
 - Esteeming the spiritual leaders, especially in love, is important because of what and how the leaders might have to lead at times.
 - They will not always lead in a way that members might like . . . the truth of admonishing hurts when it is directed

at us . . . people don't always like to be led but would rather lead themselves.

- In some moments, members may become bitter or angry or jealous, not loving, because of the decisions and choices the spiritual leaders have to make.
- Spiritual leaders work is not always easy or understood or pleasing to certain people, but the ultimate responsibility of the spiritual leaders at the end of the day is not to people but to God.
- However, the more respect and knowing of the spiritual leaders that church members have, the more they can come to understand why certain decisions and choices and actions may have to be done, and they come to know the hearts and reasonings, which can lead to love and not bitterness or another harmful feeling/emotion.
 - We may not always like everything that is done and the way it is done, but we can love the person and the biblical work they are doing.
- Because of who they are and what they do and have been given by God and the church, those under the leadership of spiritual leaders need to esteem, consider, and think of them very highly in love.
- **(b) Church leaders relationship with church members.**
 - Church leaders need to lead and live to glorify/please God and to be worthy of this respect and esteem.
 - give respect and esteem easier.
 - Given vs Earned Leadership.
 - In the leadership realm, there is what is known as given leadership and earned leadership.

- Given—given leadership is based on the title.
 - Given based on position not person.
- Earned—earned leadership is based on trust.
 - Earned based on person not position.
- When spiritual leaders are put into a role, they get a certain amount of given leadership based on their title and position.
- Spiritual leaders must work to get earned leadership because trust is not easily given, but trust is necessary for strong and healthy leadership and a strong and healthy relationship with those under their leadership.
- People may be in charge, BUT it doesn't mean they are leading.
- True spiritual leaders not only have a title but a trust.
- Church leaders need to lead and live to glorify/please God and to be worthy of this respect and esteem.
- Paul provides Godly instruction about church leaders, and that we need to have respect and esteem for them.

(2) Church Members—1 Thessalonians 5:14-18.

- Paul provides the church with Godly instructions about church members.
- (a) Church members relationship with other church members.
 - Paul provides Godly instruction toward church members who are struggling.
 - The “church smile” we all put on come Sundays does not always reveal what is actually going on inside of us.
 - Some are truly in a good place, happy and content, and the smile is genuine.

- For others, they are not in such a good place, they are struggling and trying, and the smile might be covering up what is really going on.
- We get instructions concerning three type of church members that might be struggling and what we need to do.
- (1) idle—unruly.
 - They are disobedient and are in dangerous waters, and we need to admonish them, instruct them about their wrongs and warn them.
 - They are swimming in shark infested waters and we need to cry out, “Shark. Get out of the water.”
- (2) fainthearted—discouraged.
 - They are discouraged and are moving toward worry and doubt, and we need to encourage them, lift their spirits, and help them move back toward faith.
 - They are drifting away from the boat and we need to throw them a lifeguard reserve tube and cry out, “Grab on before you drift too far.”
- (3) weak—strenghtless.
 - They are lacking strength and are feeble and could easily be overcome, and we need to help them and be there to support them.
 - They are a foundation about to collapse and we need to add jacks for strength and support.
- Paul also provides Godly instruction toward all church members, and all people in general.
 - (1) always seek to do good.
 - We live in a world full of evil where we will experience evil from others.
 - Before Jesus, our innate response would have been to

- To give thanks in all circumstances—to be able to thank God no matter what we are going through.
- These are not easy things to do, and they are impossible outside of God, but praise God, the Bible says that God is the God of the impossible.
 - Therefore, these things are not only possible, but they are actual for Christians and things we are able to do because, as Paul writes at the end of 5:19, “for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.”
 - These things are possible and actual because God provides them for us, and He does so through Christ Jesus.
 - How?
 - What is necessary for all three of these is found in God and His presence, and God makes Himself and His presence available by and through Jesus.
 - Through Jesus’ death on the cross and resurrection from the dead, He provides us the ability to not only be redeemed by God, but also be reconnected to God.
 - Through Jesus’ ascension back to Heaven after His resurrection, Jesus provides every Christian the Holy Spirit that now indwells within them, providing the presence of God with them constantly.
 - We can have joy always and give thanks to God in all we may go through because our joy and thanksgiving are not based upon circumstances that

come and go, but upon Christ that is constant.

- We can trust that no matter what we may face and go through, what may be happening in our lives, that what God reveals in the Bible to His people is true, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.”
- God knows what you are going through, and God is beside you encouraging you, God is behind you pushing you, God is underneath you supporting you, and God is above you watching out and protecting you, and God is before you making a way.
- We can have constant communication with God because He is always available and we are never separated from Him.
 - God is available and we are never separated from Him because of the indwelling Holy Spirit.
 - God is available and we are never separated from Him because of prayer, where we now have direct access to God at any and all times and the ability to communicate with Him at any and all times because of the groaning made on our behalf by the Holy Spirit and the intercession made on our behalf by Jesus our great high priest.
- What a Savior Jesus is, and what provision He has made for us!
- Paul provides Godly instructions about church members, and that we need to be there for those struggling, we need

to seek to do good for all, and we need Jesus' presence in our own lives.

(3) Church Practices—1 Thessalonians 5:19-22.

- Paul provides the church with Godly instructions about church practices.
- As it comes to church practices, Paul instructs them that they are not to quench the Spirit or despise prophecies.
 - Paul says first, “Don’t quench the Spirit.”
 - If the Holy Spirit is moving and working in the church, don’t quench the Spirit, but rather fuel the Spirit.
 - Ill—Fire.
 - When I hear this, I think about a fire.
 - Chris Wardrip was a firefighter for his career, so I called and checked him with and here is what I found out:
 - The quickest way to quench a fire is with lots and lots of water, while the quickest way to fuel a fire is with lots and lots air.
 - As it comes to a fire then, what you want to do with it determines how you proceed next.
 - Do you need to quench it, or do you need to allow it to continue, because you can’t quench it by adding air, but you can’t fuel it by adding water.
 - If the Spirit is moving and working, let’s not quench Him by getting in His way, trying to stop Him, or trying to take over for Him, but let’s fuel Him by staying out of His way and by partnering with Him in the movement and work He is doing.
 - Then Paul says next, “Don’t despise prophecies.”
 - Prophecy in the Bible can mean both a “fore-telling” (proclamation about the future) or a “forth-telling” (proclaim about the present).

- For us in our context today as it comes to what Paul is writing here, we need to view prophecy as a forth-telling, where God’s messengers proclaim God’s word from the Bible in the present.
 - When the Bible is read and the messenger of God proclaims a message about these words, we need to take seriously what is read and said because the words from the Bible are God’s word and the words the messenger should be proclaiming are to also be God’s words spoken through the messenger.
 - Don’t automatically discount the words read because some may say, “Those are written by human authors so they can’t be from God” and don’t automatically discount the words spoken because some may say, “A human is speaking these words so they can’t be from God.”
- As it comes to church practices, Paul instructs this church that they are not to quench the Spirit or despise prophecies, but rather they are to, as Paul continues, test everything that is done.
 - Just because something happens within a church context or a church worship service that we like and agree with DOES NOT mean that it must automatically be good and Godly.
 - Also, just because something happens within a church context or a church worship service that we don’t like or don’t agree with DOES NOT mean that it must automatically be bad and ungodly.
 - Once again, our feelings are not the barometer and the authority, but God’s instruction from His word is.
 - That is why we need to test everything that happens within a church to make sure it lines up with what God has revealed about His church and its practices within His word.
 - Things can be fabricated and manipulated.
 - “A movement of the Holy Spirit” can be fabricated by the setup and mood and

environment, and this can be manipulated by the way things are presented that play upon and prey upon the emotions and feelings of people.

- “A message from God” can be fabricated by half-truths and God “trump” cards that false messengers use that they think can’t be overridden, and this can be manipulated by smooth talking charlatans and silver tongued wolves and domineering dictators who tell you what they think you want to hear or guilt and force you into believing what they want to tell you.
- As it comes to church practices, Paul instructs this church that they are not to quench the Spirit or despise prophecies, but rather they are to test everything that is done so they can hold fast to what is good and abstain from what is evil.
 - The movement of the Spirit, the prophecies spoken, and everything else that happens within a church, are to be tested to see if they are truly from God or not, so that the church does not miss out on what God is doing and they are able to hold on to what is good and Godly and abstain from what is evil and bad, OR the church does not mess up what God wants to do by abstaining from what is good and Godly and holding on to what is evil and bad.
 - Put it to the test: if it is of God, we won’t mess it up but will see it and rejoice . . . if it is not of God, we will mess it up and see it for what it truly is, and we can rejoice as we cleanse it from among us.
- Paul provides Godly instruction about church practices, and how we don’t need to quench or despise what God is doing and who God is using, but test everything to hold on to what is good and let go off what is evil.

Challenge/Conclusion

Friends, Godly instruction matters because it leads us to God and His truth, especially as it involves the church and its leaders, members, and practices.

As we conclude this morning, during our invitation time and your quiet time this week with God, I want us to pray and ponder this reflection question:

- Main Reflection—Whose and what instructions are leading you, and are they leading you closer to God or further from Him?