

Practical Principles of Last Days Living

1 Thessalonians 5

INTRODUCTION:

- How would you live this upcoming week, if you knew that at the end of next Saturday you would step into eternity and meet God? What would you do differently? *Allow for discussion...*
- Reality check: This may actually be the last week you have. There are two realities we must always keep in mind. (1) Life is fragile and we never know when it may end. (2) Jesus's return is imminent.
- AW Tozer once wrote: "What we need very badly these days is a company of Christians who are prepared to trust God as completely now as they know they must do at the last day."
- The theme of 1 Thessalonians is the Second Coming of Christ. In this last chapter, Paul presents three practical principles for us to apply as we wait on the Lord's return.

BIBLE STUDY:

1. **Principle 1:** Godly **Living** Until Jesus Comes (vs. 1-11). For Paul, doctrine is non-negotiable. But he also understood that the doctrine we believe determines how we ultimately live. Belief and behavior go hand in hand.
 - a. Paul begins with **doctrine** (vs. 1-5). In regards to the doctrine of Christ's return, we can have a general sense of the timing of this event. Paul presents two images to illustrate this point:
 - i. An unexpected thief (vs. 4). What thief would offer details about the timing of their planned vandalism?
 - ii. An unspecified birth (vs. 3). Doctors give a specific date when an expectant mother will give birth. The problem is that only 5% of babies are born on their due date! Again, we can the birth is close but we can't be specific of the exact date and time.
 - b. Paul moves from doctrine to our **duty** (vs. 6-11). In light of the doctrine of Christ's return, how should this truth impact our daily lives?
 - i. Christian admonitions (vs. 6-8). Paul tells us not to sleep! We are to be awake, and not to yield to sloth and sin. We must remain on watch since the Lord is coming soon.
 - ii. Christian's appointment (vs. 9-10). As believers, we have an appointment with God, and we will not be late! How should we prepare?
2. **Principle 2:** Godly **Leading** Until Jesus Comes (vs. 12-15). In the last days, there is a tremendous need for Godly leadership in the church.
 - a. Paul discusses those that **lead** (vs. 12-13) and offers a two-fold word of encouragement.
 - i. We must appreciate our leaders (vs. 12). We must know them. A pastor has been assigned the spiritual welfare of his flock. What a tremendous responsibility!
 - ii. We must esteem our leaders (vs. 13). Leaders must receive our strongest affection. Do you love your pastor? When was the last time you told him?
 - b. Paul discusses those that are **led** (vs. 14-15). Paul outlines certain responsibilities every follower possesses:
 - i. The follower is patient (vs. 14). Paul points out three groups of people that require our patience:

1. The unruly. These are those who are out of step with the flow of things. These are often the critics in the crowd.
 2. The feeble-minded. These are the folks who are easily discouraged. They need our constant comfort.
 3. The weak. This is a reference to the morally and spiritually weak. We must be willing to come alongside our brothers and sisters and walk with them through their struggles.
 - ii. The follower is passive (vs. 15a). Paul is referring to the teaching that we are not to be revengeful. God has given us the formula for dealing with offences when they occur.
 - iii. The follower is persistent (vs. 15b). Believers pursue what is good, for others and well as themselves.
3. **Principle 3:** God **Learning** Until Jesus Comes (vs. 16-28). Every believer individually and corporately must develop learning strategies until Jesus returns.
- a. Paul offers personal counsel to each **Christian** (vs. 16-18). Three injunctions:
 - i. Be joyful (vs. 16). Glum, grouchy Christians are a poor testimony to the faith.
 - ii. Be prayerful (vs. 17). Christians should be characterized by a spirit of prayer. Prayer should be our first response and not our last resort!
 - iii. Be thankful (vs. 18). Notice that this is the will of God that is rooted in an understanding of the sovereignty of God.
 - b. Paul offers corporate counsel to every **congregation** (vs. 19-28). Four considerations:
 - i. The congregation must be sensitive (vs. 19). Are we sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit or more dedicated to our own ideas and preferences?
 - ii. The congregation must be receptive (vs. 20). Do we cherish the preaching of God's Word, or is it something we endure?
 - iii. The congregation must be selective (vs. 21). Are we discerning regarding spiritual truth in an age dominated by lies?
 - iv. The congregation must be prohibitive (vs. 22). The question is not do we abstain from evil – that's a given! The question is do we stay far enough away to avoid even the association.

APPLICATION/CONCLUSION:

- If we (as individuals and as a church) must take seriously Paul's divine counsel if we are to flourish in these perilous last days. We must always be on guard and diligent.
- Areas to discuss from today's outline.
 - Principle 1: Do you understand the connection between doctrine and duty?
 - Someone once said, "We may not believe everything we profess, but we will live out everything that we believe." What we truly believe we will actually live.
 - Principle 2, point B: How well do you carry out these responsibilities as outlined by Paul?
 - Principle 3, point A: The three injunctions that Paul gives to individual Christians. How would you rate yourself in each of these areas? What makes it difficult?