**Exhortations to Proper Conduct in the Church**

*1 Thessalonians 5:12-22*

**Introduction**

1. As members of the Lord’s body there are ways in which we must conduct ourselves.
   1. ***“I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Timothy 3:15).***
   2. This regards, not our conduct in a building, but in the body of Christ which is comprised of saved people – how we act as a group, and interact with each other.
2. These are seen throughout the Bible, and we must continually examine ourselves to find whether we are acting accordingly.
3. To ensure the brethren in Thessalonica were properly conducting themselves in the church, Paul wrote them a few exhortations at the end of his first epistle to them **(cf. 1 Thessalonians 5:12-22)**.
4. We would do well to heed these exhortations.
5. Proper Conduct Toward Others **(vv. 12-15)**
6. Toward Elders **(vv. 12-13)**
   1. Elders are needed.
      1. **Titus 1:5** – Paul left Titus in Crete to set things in order.
         1. When a church is without elders they are ***“lacking”*** according to the Divine pattern.
         2. While in Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, Luke records that Paul ***“had appointed elders in every church” (Acts 14:23).***
         3. Every church NEEDS elders, and is ***“lacking”*** without them.
      2. **However, it is not right to appoint men to this office contrary to the Divine pattern.**
         1. **Scripturally unorganized** – when elders are not present because there are no qualified men.
         2. Qualifications must be met (or prerequisites) – **Titus 1:6-9; 1 Timothy 3:1-7**
      3. For those churches who are scripturally unorganized, there should be the goal of such Divine organization, and until that time arrives, ***there should be diligence in study to know the matters concerning the office, and the responsibility a church has before their elders.*** 🡪
   2. We must know them. (And their work – Helps us to appreciate them.)
      1. ***“And we beseech you, brethren, to know them”*** (KJV)
      2. **Know** – *oida*; to have seen, and by extension, to know: — to know, understand.
      3. In order to ***“esteem them very highly,”*** and to act properly in relation to them, the members must KNOW them – **get to know the men personally, and get to know the office they hold.** (*Knowing them to the extent of knowing their proven character, and the sincerity they have in their care for the church.*)
         1. They labor among us.
            1. **Labor** – *kopiaō*; **to feel fatigue**; by implication, to work hard: — (bestow) labour, **toil, be wearied**.
            2. **The work of an elder is toilsome, and is a work that must be appreciated by the members.**
            3. We can only grow in our appreciation if we recognize their task.
            4. **1 Peter 5:1-4** – Elders, or shepherds, guide, protect, and nourish the sheep spiritually.

**Shepherd** – *poimainō*; to tend as a shepherd of (figuratively, superviser): — feed (cattle), rule.

***“they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account” (Hebrews 13:17).***

Their task is stressful, and wearisome. **The souls of the congregation are in their care!**

* + - * 1. **Hebrews 13:7** – As they labor among the flock, the flock must give attention to their actions, and follow their example.
      1. They are ***“over you in the Lord.”***
         1. It must be recognized that their authority comes from the Lord.
         2. **To be insubordinate to the elders is to be insubordinate to Jesus.**
         3. Jesus is the ***“Chief Shepherd” (1 Peter 5:4),*** and He has given authority to the shepherds of local congregations.
         4. *This should cause members to rethink their actions when the elders approach them 🡪*
      2. They admonish us.
         1. **Titus 1:9-14** – Elders are to hold fast the word, and when members are contrary to the word, to admonish them – correcting them, and pointing them toward righteousness.
         2. **They warn us of danger because they care for our souls.**
         3. This is often not an easy task.
  1. We must esteem them highly.
     1. Members must have great respect for the elders. They must value them.
     2. ***“in love for their work’s sake”*** – This relationship is a response of love.
        1. Requirement for elders – ***“serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly” (1 Peter 5:2).***
        2. Same for members in submission – **WILLINGLY, AND OUT OF LOVE.**
        3. ***“their work’s sake”*** – recognize the importance and difficulty of their work, and esteem them highly because of it. **(cf. 1 Timothy 5:17-18** – **monetary consideration – worthy of double wages**.)
  2. Elders and the congregation are to be at peace.
     1. **Elders and members are to work together in peace** – it should be a very positive, and frictionless relationship.
     2. **Cf. Hebrews 13:17** – This verse implies that the congregation addressed was not submitting to the elders.
        1. They were showing them the way to heaven, but the members were turning back to Judaism.
        2. **Submit, do not give them grief!**
     3. Also an instruction for elders as well – ***“nor as being lords…but being examples” (1 Peter 5:3)***.
  3. *Paul continued to instruct concerning the relationships between members in general. 🡪*

1. Toward Brethren in General **(vv. 14-15)**
   1. Members are to work with each other.
      1. **Romans 12:4-5** – We are members of the same body, thus members of ONE ANOTHER.
      2. **We are to care for each other, and serve each other – we depend upon each other.**
      3. ***“there should be no schism in the body, but the members should have the same care for one another” (1 Corinthians 12:25)***.
      4. ***There are certain things we are required to do as members of one another***. 🡪
   2. We must care for each other.
      1. Warn the unruly.
         1. **Those who are not “toeing the line” Jesus has drawn must be warned!**
         2. Warn of what?
            1. The disaster to which insubordination leads – **cf. Matthew 7:21-23**. (We will not make it to heaven through unruliness.)
            2. **If we have a care for our brethren, we will warn them when they are headed down the path to destruction.**
      2. Comfort the fainthearted.
         1. **When there are discouraged brethren (for any reason) we have the responsibility to comfort and encourage them!**
         2. **Cf. 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18** – Some in Thessalonica had a misunderstanding about those who died before the 2nd coming of Christ.
            1. Is hope lost for them because they perished before Christ’s coming? Will they receive the reward?
            2. Yes, they would, and they should comfort each other with the fact.
      3. Uphold the weak.
         1. **There are always weak brethren (in several capacities). Those who have more strength should help the weak.**
         2. Physically – **Matthew 25:37-40** (Judgment scene)
         3. Conscientious scruples – **Romans 15:1** (indifferent matters)
         4. Spiritually – **Galatians 6:1-2**
      4. Be patient with all.
         1. **When we try to warn the unruly, comfort the fainthearted, and uphold the weak we must be patient!**
         2. ***“Love suffers long” (1 Corinthians 13:4)***.
         3. This is a fruit of the Spirit we must possess (**cf. Galatians 5:22**).
      5. Do not render evil for evil, but pursue good for all. (**1 Thessalonians 5:15**)
         1. **Our first thought when wronged sometimes is pay back. This should not be the case for brethren, or those in the world around us.**
         2. **Romans 12:17-21** – We must not be provoked to wrath, but must maintain the character of Christ.
            1. ***“heap coals of fire on his head”*** – this is not an effort to cause him harm by doing good to him.
            2. **It causes shame, and remorse to the one so as to possibly bring him to repentance.**
2. **This concludes the proper conduct toward others.**

**PART 2 – P.M.**

1. Proper Conduct Before God **(vv. 16-22)**

*These exhortations are appropriate and needful in any situation and at any time in a Christian’s life. Members of the Lord’s body must learn to always possess these characteristics before God as they carry on the work of the church, and live daily for Christ.*

1. In Joy, Prayer, and Thanksgiving **(vv. 16-18)**
   1. Rejoice always.
      1. This characteristic is independent from outer circumstances – **it is a Christian paradox** – ***“ALWAYS!”***
      2. Paul said concerning himself in his ministry that he was sometimes, ***“sorrowful, yet always rejoicing” (2 Corinthians 6:10a)***.
      3. This can further be understood by what he said next, ***“as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things” (2 Corinthians 6:10b).***
      4. The constant rejoicing is made possible with Christ:
         1. ***“Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice” (Philippians 4:4)!***
         2. This does not mean Christians are to have no sorrow:
            1. ***“Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep” (Romans 12:15).***
            2. Some in Thessalonica had sorrow due to the death of some (**1 Thessalonians 4:13** – there will be sorrow, but not ***“as others WHO HAVE NO HOPE.”).***
            3. **When negative circumstances come upon a Christian, they must, and are able to rejoice IN THE LORD.**
      5. **James 1:2-3, 12** – The trials are counted as joy, not because of the pain and heartache they might bring, but because of the spiritual advantage gained through them!
      6. **We rejoice knowing the hope we have of eternity! This is ALWAYS present with the Christian who is faithful.**
   2. Pray without ceasing.
      1. As we read scripture we come to understand the importance of prayer:
         1. ***“continuing steadfastly in prayer” (Romans 12:12).***
         2. In company with the armor of God, ***“praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit” (Ephesians 6:18).***
         3. ***“Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it” (Colossians 4:2).***
      2. Paul was a man of prayer as is noted in many places in his epistles:
         1. ***“without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers” (Romans 1:9).***
         2. He has many prayers worded in his epistles.
      3. ***“Without ceasing”*** – calls for a consistency in prayer. **WE NEED TO BE IN CONTACT WITH OUR GOD! – command, not merely a suggestion.**
      4. *Like rejoicing, our prayers should be constant no matter the situation – good or bad.*
      5. In fact, **just like prayer is coupled with rejoicing in 1 Thessalonians 5:16, 17**, it is as well in **Philippians 4:4-7**:
         1. ***“in EVERYTHING”***
         2. **(v. 7)** – Peace comes to those who are constant in prayer.
      6. **We must understand our need to address God in prayer! It is GREAT!**
   3. In everything give thanks.
      1. **Just as rejoicing and prayer are interrelated, so are prayer and thanksgiving – we thank God through prayer.**
      2. **Colossians 3:17** – In all that we do we are to give thanks to God.
      3. ***“in everything”*** – sometimes we tend to only give thanks to God for the “big things,” **but really were are to give thanks to Him for EVERYTHING**.
      4. **James 1:17-18** – He is the giver of all good things, and we should be moved to thanksgiving.
         1. **(v. 18)** – Especially with regard to spiritual blessings.
         2. God deserves thanks for what He has done.
      5. **Gentiles were not thankful (cf. Romans 1) and became futile in their thoughts. The Israelites were not thankful and decided to serve other gods who did not provide them with what they had.**
      6. Giving thanks to God allows us to maintain perspective, and it is ***“the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.”***
   4. **NOTE: The amounts concerning these topics should impress us – always, without ceasing, in everything. (OUTWARD CIRCUMSTANCES DO NOT AFFECT THESE THINGS. WE SHOULD ALWAYS REJOICE, PRAY, AND GIVE THANKS.)**
2. In Relation to the Word **(vv. 19-22)**
   1. Do not quench the Spirit, or despise prophecies.
      1. ***“The Spirit,”*** and ***“prophecies”*** are related – **basically refer to the same concept**.
         1. ***“The Spirit”*** – reveals the word of God (**cf. Ephesians 3:3-5**) 🡪
         2. ***“Prophecies”*** – inspired utterances (Prophets and Apostles mentioned in the same breath) (Prophets are mouthpieces of God.)
         3. This is instruction regarding the Christian’s relationship, and response to God’s instructions. 🡪
      2. DO NOT:
         1. **Quench** – *sbennymi*; a prolonged form of an apparently primary verb; to extinguish (literally or figuratively): — go out, quench.
         2. **Despise** – *exoutheneō*; a variation of 1847 and meaning the same: — contemptible, despise, least esteemed, set at nought.
         3. **The HS is God** – we cannot possibly extinguish, or put out God!
         4. Further understood by the concept of despising prophecies – **suppressing the Spirit’s revelation in some way**.
         5. **WE CANNOT STOP THE SPIRIT’S WORK, BUT WE CAN DISREGARD IT.**
      3. **1 Timothy 4:13; 2 Timothy 2:15** – We must be diligent in study in order to know God’s will, and do it – to neglect study is to ***“quench the Spirit.”***
      4. **2 Timothy 4:3-4** – To turn away from the truth because you don’t like what you hear is to ***“despise prophecies”*** – you prefer something else.
      5. **We must desire God’s word, and do as it says**!
      6. ***INSTEAD OF QUENCHING THE SPIRIT, AND DESPISING PROPHECIES, CHRISTIANS ARE TO****…🡪*
   2. Test all things:
      1. Specifically testing concerning words spoken that have the claim as being from God – **cf. Acts 17:11** – Bereans did not ***“quench the Spirit”*** or ***“despise prophecies,”*** but gave a fair hearing, and tested those things spoken.
         1. NOTE – ***“more fair-minded than those in THESSALONICA.”***
         2. However, the Thessalonians who received the message expressed the same disposition (**cf. 1 Thessalonians 2:13**).
      2. ***“Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God” (1 John 4:1)***.
      3. Hold fast to the good.
         1. Upon testing, when something is seen as good **– according to God’s word, and thus necessary and beneficial** – we must ***“hold fast”*** to it!
         2. **DO NOT COMPROMISE; DO NOT QUENCHE; DO NOT DESPISE.**
         3. FOLLOW, AND DO WHAT IT SAYS.
         4. **2 Timothy 3:14, 16-17** – CONTINUE IN THEM, and thus be thoroughly equipped.
      4. Abstain from the evil.
         1. EVERY **FORM** – not merely an appearance (it appears to be evil, but may not be evil), but everything that IS EVIL in whatever form.
         2. **Some refrain from one portion of the flesh, but engage in others – If it is evil, ABSTAIN FROM IT!**
         3. **Revelation 21:7-8** – All of these, from liars and cowardly, to murderers and sexually immoral, are FORMS OF EVIL.
         4. ABSTAIN FROM ALL OF THEM!
      5. **NOTE:** This specific text directly has to do with the word of God, but this is true with ALL THINGS – ***“TEST ALL THINGS.”*** (If good, hold fast. If evil, abstain from it.)
      6. **Hebrews 5:14** – We must press on to maturity ***(“full age”)*** – This is accomplished by doing as Paul said in our text – t**est, hold fast, abstain – reason of use, senses exercised.**

**Conclusion**

1. God has given us instruction as to proper conduct in the church.
2. We must examine ourselves to see whether we are doing those things which God requires.
3. **Our relationship with our brethren in the church should be founded on these things, and our relationship with God should be continuously characterized as such.**