

APOSTOLIC EXHORTATIONS BY THE DOZEN 1TH.5:14-22

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The superior character of Christianity is no less apparent in the purity and loftiness of the morality it impresses upon the mind than in the superiority of the truth it reveals in its holy admonitions and precepts.
2. It is intensely practical in its teaching and aim. It is not like a glow of light that illuminates the external character for a time; it is an inward radiance that cannot help making itself visible in the outer life.
3. It is not mere sentiment; it is a principle, a fundamental truth or doctrine, a settled rule or law of action or conduct.
4. The fundamental truths and moral precepts of Christianity can be appreciated and obeyed only by the soul that has become thoroughly possessed by the true spirit of Christ and Christianity revealed in the N.T.
5. Each precept and or apostolic exhortation urged or enjoined upon these brethren, and in turn upon you and me, in our text, which we have chosen as our subject and entitled "Apostolic Exhortations By The Dozen," will be considered separately, one by one, as we study the twelve, from vv.14-22.
6. These twelve exhortations have to do with mutual duties of Christians, members of the body of Christ, the church, and emphasize individual responsibility, as servants of the Lord and fellow-laborers in Christ.
7. Why so many exhortations in one group or cluster? Do you suppose it was because it was needed? Then? Now?
8. Let us study each one enjoined by apostolic authority. A study which of necessity includes a word study, and a highly profitable study of twelve different duties of the Christian then and the Christian now!

II. DISCUSSION

A. "WARN THEM THAT ARE UNRULY," V.14a.

1. Definition of terms.
 - a. "Warn" – NOUTHETEO --
 - (1) W.E.Vine,I,30, IV,198, "to put in mind, admonish,"He says
 - (a) "It is used (a) of instruction, (b) of warning.
 - (b) "It is thus distinguished from PAIDEUO -- -- or *chastening*, meaning to correct by discipline, to train by act," as in Heb.12:6,7,10; Cf. Eph.6:4, "nurture", KJV.

- b. “Unruly” – ATAKTOS -- -- KJV: “unruly”; ASV: “disorderly”.
- (1) W.E.Vine, I.,320; IV,174: “signifies not keeping order (a, negative, tasso, to put in order, arrange); it was especially a military term, denoting not keeping rank, insubordinate; it is used in 1Th.5:14, describing certain members who manifested an insubordinate spirit...”
 - (2) “Deviating from the prescribed order or rule” of faith.
2. Who are the unruly who are to be warned or admonished?
- a. According to 1st and 2nd Thess. It included those who, like disorderly soldiers, break their ranks, and become idle, dissolute, indifferent, apathetic and worthless in their practice of the faith.
 - (1) So it was not limited to the immoral or to false teachers among brethren. Cf. Rev.3:14-19.
 - (2) This kind of disorderliness became a problem among the brethren at Thessalonica because of a false idea about the nearness of the 2nd Coming of Christ, for which they had to be warned, 2Th.3:11,12; 1Th.4:11-18.
 - (3) The proverb says: “An idle brain is the devil’s worship,” and when one is not diligently employed in some healthy and vigorous occupation, he is apt, notwithstanding his profession of faith, to become an instrument of evil and a disturber of the church, the peace of which he is pledged to maintain.
 - (4) It’s these who often say “they down there ought to do this” or “they are not doing this or that”. It is hardly ever, if ever, “We” with this group!
 - (a) These are the “AWOL” members and restless gypsies of the churches, often moving about here and there, the mischief-makers and busybodies in other people’s matters. Cf. 1Tim.5:12-13.
 - b. The unruly, by definition, are those, any and all of those, who are “deviating from the prescribed order or rule” of faith.
 - (1) Thus it includes more than “busy bodies”
 - (2) More than those who “will not work”
 - (3) This disorderliness could have been of various kinds and no doubt was.
 - c. In pursuing peace among themselves as V.13 urges, fidelity was not to be sacrificed; and one of the methods by which this peace was to be promoted was the faithful and tender rebuke, warning or

- admonishing of those who might be disturbing that peace by a quarrelsome temper or a wayward, conduct. Cf. Psa.141:5.
3. How are the unruly to be warned or admonished or put in mind of their error and of their need? In what manner?
 - a. Do it as Paul did it and instructed others to do it. Cf. 1Th.2:1-8; Ac.20:28-35; 1Th.2:10-12; 1Cor.1:10-13; 3:1-3; 4:14,21; 11:17-34; 2Cor.12:19-21; 13:10-12; Gal.1:6; 4:8-20; Cf. Gal.6:1; 2Tim.4:1-5.
 - b. At first, admonish gently, putting them in mind of their duty. Don't be guilty of limiting admonitions to gross and grievous sins; for in that case warning often comes too late.
 - (1) Heed the old adage: "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure."
 - c. If admonition in the earlier stage is not effectual, then proceed to sharper reproof. If that is unavailing, hesitate not to take more severe steps, even withholding fellowship, Mt.18:15-17; Rom.16:17,18; 1Cor.5:4,5,11,13; 2Th.3:6; Tit.3:10.
 4. What Paul exhorted brethren to do, he practiced, Ac.20:31; 1Cor.20:31; 1Cor.4:14; Col.1:28. Cf. Ac.1:1; 1Cor.11:1; Phil.4:9.
 5. Brethren were to be "filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another," Rom.15:14; Col.3:16; 1Th.5:14; 2Th.3:15.
 6. Warnings are given to all of us in a variety of ways by the Lord through his agents.
 - a. Given in love by word, 1Cor.4:14.
 - b. Given by the example:
 - (1) Of the unfaithful Israelites being destroyed after being saved out of Egyptian bondage, Jude 5; Heb.3:8-19.
 - (2) Of the angels that kept not their first estate, Jude 6; 2Pet.2:4.
 - (3) Of ungodly, immoral men, Jude 7.
 - (4) Of untrue professors, Jude 17-19.
 - c. He has given us warning in the word:
 - (1) That life is short and uncertain, Jas.4:13,14; Cf. Job 14:1,2.
 - (2) That it is an evil thing to offend God, Rom.1:18; 2:4-6,8,9; Gal.6:7,8.
 - (a) "hold the truth in or with unrighteousness; contradicting their profession by their conduct. Cf. Rom.2:15
 - (3) That it is a foolish thing to forsake Jesus Christ, Heb.2:1-3; Ac.4:12.
 - (4) That the experiences of sin are bitter, Rom.6:20-23; 7:24.
 7. If warnings are to do us any good they must:

- a. Be heard, 2Tim.4:3,4.
 - b. Be believed, Gen.19:14; Exo.5:1,2.
 - c. Be obeyed, Mt.7:21-23; 21:28-32.
 - d. Cf. Prov.29:1.
8. W.E.Vine,I,31: “The difference between ‘admonish’ and ‘teach’ seems to be that whereas the former has mainly in view the things that are wrong and call for warning, the latter has to do chiefly with the impartation of positive truth. Cf. Col.3:16; they were to let the word of Christ dwell richly in them, so that they might be able (1) to teach and admonish one another and (2) to abound in the praises of God. Cf. Heb.3:13a; 10:24.

CONCLUSION to exhortation #1: “Warn Them That Are Unruly,” v.14a.

1. This obviously implies and requires a closeness of fellowship between brethren, members of the local church!
2. Unfortunately, perhaps, a closeness that is too often lacking among professed believers in the local church!
3. Brethren, these things ought not so to be!
4. We should work at having a closer union; a closer relationship in the local church; if we can’t have that among brethren; we can’t have it with the Father and the Son!

APOSTOLIC EXHORTATIONS BY THE DOZEN

Exhortation #2

B. “COMFORT THE FEEBLEMINDED,” V.14b.

1. Definition of terms
 - a. “Comfort” – PARAMUTHEOMAI –
 - (1) W.E.Vine,I,208: “soothe, console, encourage,” Jno.11:19,31 1Th.2:11; 5:14 – in the ASV ‘encourage; as the sense there is that of stimulating to the earnest discharge of duties...to offer words to anyone, specially for the purpose of tranquillizing and soothing; have a word for; a comforting word for”
 - (2) Thayer,485: “to speak to, address one, whether by way of admonition and incentive (inciting, encouraging), or to calm and console; hence, i.q. to encourage, console, Jno.11:19,31; 1Th.2:11; 5:14.”
 - b. “Feeble-minded” – OLIGOPSUCHOS –
 - (1) ASV: “faint-hearted”
 - (2) W.E.Vine,II,70: “lit. small-souled (oligos, small, psuche, the soul), denotes despondent; then, ‘fainthearted...”
 - (3) Thayer, 443: “faint-hearted”: 1Th.5:14; then cites (Prov.14:29; 18:14; Isa.57:15).
2. Just who are these brethren and how were they to be treated and why?
 - a. This is not referring to brethren who were intellectually feeble or weak-minded physically or intellectually. They are not lacking in intelligence.
 - b. They are “faint-hearted” or despondent brethren for some reason.
 - c. This perhaps has primary reference to some brethren of that day who were overburdened with sorrow on account of the influence of some error taught and their misunderstanding respecting the safety or salvation of their brethren who had died prior to the 2nd Coming of Jesus.
 - d. Thus they had become dispirited and despondent through their failure to realize the truth of the hope of the resurrection of those who had died in Jesus. See 1Cor.15:12; 2Th.2:1-17; 1Th.4:13-18.
 - e. Or, perhaps, these “small-souled” members were those among them who had small courage to face the afflictions that were caused by hostile outsiders or the “troublers” of 2Th.1:5-10.

- f. Or, perhaps, some who were so oppressed with the strong pull of sin that they despaired of gaining the victory and were in danger of giving up all endeavor, Gal.6:9; Cf. 1Cor.15:58.
- g. Or were being influenced by false teachers and were in danger of turning away from Christ or even turning back to the law, Gal.1:6-9; Heb.2:1-3.
- h. They were to be comforted, not rebuked or admonished for wrongdoing; but exhorted lovingly in the truth due to faint-heartedness.
- i. It is the Lord's way "to raise them that are bowed down," and to "comfort them which are in trouble," 2Cor.1:3-7.
- j. These needed, and all who fall into this classification today, need encouraging with reminders of the promises of God, and with the lessons and examples furnished by experience – both the experience of those recorded in the Bible and present-day examples.
- k. Heart-courage is what the faint-hearted require, both then and now!
- l. Thus the firmer-hearted brethren are exhorted to seek to soothe and cheer them amidst the struggles of the faith and the adversities of service in the faith.
- m. Not all the members of the family of God are of the same height and strength spiritually speaking from the standpoint of knowledge and experience; some, as it were, are old men and fathers in the faith; while others are young, but strong; yet, some are little children, even babes in Christ; some can go alone, or with a little help; while others must be carried in arms, and will require much love and patience to overcome their childishness and grow in the faith and strength in the Lord.
- n. Often times the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak; this we must recognize and deal with it accordingly.

CONCLUSION TO EXHORTATION #2: "COMFORT THE FEEBLEMINDED,"

1. Again, this obviously involves a closeness among brethren in the local church.
2. This closeness must be cultivated; it doesn't happen by accident; it takes effort, unfeigned faith, the mind and the love of Christ, and much dedication to God and one another to produce it and maintain it.
3. Does it exist here? If so, great! If not, we can't please God, nor help each other as this exhortation requires.

APOSTOLIC EXHORTATIONS BY THE DOZEN, 1TH.5:14-22
EXHORTATION #3

C. “SUPPORT THE WEAK,” V.14c.

1. Definition of terms
 - a. “Support” – ANTECHO –
 - (1) W.E.Vine,II,224: “to support,” 1Th.5:14.
 - (2) Thayer,49: in N.T....”to keep one’s self directly opposite to anyone, hold to him firmly, cleave to, paying heed to him...to aid them, care for them, 1Th.5:14; to hold to, hold it fast, Tit.1:19 (‘the faithful word as he hath been taught’).”
 - b. “Weak” – ASTHENES –
 - (1) W.E.Vine,IV,204: lit. strengthless...is translated ‘weak’..(c) morally or ethically, 1Cor.8:7,10; 9:22.”
 - (2) Thayer,80: “Weak, infirm, feeble...b. spec...wanting in decision about things lawful and unlawful (see ASTHENEIO -- p.80), 1Cor.8:7,9,10; 9:22; 1Th.5:14.”
 - (3) Thayer,80 –ASTHENEIO -- “to be weak, feeble...to be doubtful about things lawful and unlawful to a Christian, Rom. 14: 1,2,21; 1Cor.8:9,11 (i.e., v.11, who is weak in his feelings and convictions about things lawful).”
 - (4) Cf. Rom.15:1,2.
2. Again, who are these brethren who are said to be “weak”, and the others are exhorted to “support”?
 - a. By the definition given and the scriptures cited where the same word with the same meaning is found and the same kind of exhortation given, we are led to understand that the brethren referred to must be (or at least it must include) those with a deficiency in knowledge and understanding which results in doubts and erroneous convictions and conscientious scruples about things lawful within themselves, and which, in turn, causes them to bind upon themselves by their own conscience what is not bound by divine law. Cf. Rom.14:1-3,10,14,18,20,21; 1Cor.8:7,9-11.
 - b. Such “weak” brethren:
 - (1) According to 1Th.5:14c are to be “supported, aided, cared for, held on to”; “not to be let go of or abandoned as persons who amount to little”.
 - (2) According to the passages cited in Rom.14 and 1Cor.8:
 - (a) Must be received.

- (b) Must not be despised.
 - (c) Must not be judged or condemned.
 - (d) Must not be set at naught or rejected or counted not as a brother in Christ.
 - (e) Must not have a stumbling-block or an occasion to fall put in their way causing them to offend.
 - (f) Are received of and acceptable to God in their practice; for God receives both – the one who eats meat with a clear conscience, and the one who refrains from eating with a clear conscience.
 - (g) Are those who have deficiency in knowledge and understanding of such things, and thus bind upon themselves by their own conscience what is not bound by divine law, things that are right or clean within themselves, but things, which for conscience sake, they consider to be unclean or wrong!
- c. For emphasis note again the instructions Paul gave regarding the treatment of such “weak” brethren:
- (1) Rom.14:15,19,20a.
 - (2) 1Cor.8:9,11-13.
 - (3) 1Cor.9:22,23.
3. No doubt this type of weakness needing the support of the strong could be traced to other things.
- a. But to whatever source this type of weakness might be traceable, one “whom Christ has received,” and for “whom Christ died,” was not to be despised by his stronger brethren.
 - b. He is not to be let go of and to be abandoned as one who amounts to little, but one to be held to and to be supported to prevent his loss.

CONCLUSION TO EXHORTATION #3

1. Oh, the tenderness of God toward his weak children! And Christians are to be “imitators of God and Christ”.
2. It seems always the strong has found it difficult to sympathize with and support the weak. A disposition to despise weakness seems to be a law of nature which humanity prevails against with effort.

3. Rescue the perishing. Be on watch for despairing minds; if no other good comes from it, you will, at least, be more grateful for your own cheerfulness; and thankful that you tried.
 - a. But good will come of it in unexpected instances.
 - b. And it will be heaven's music in your ears to hear sighs turned into songs.
4. Still there are the "weak" among us today who need the same type of support and care they needed then. In which case we too are to "bear the infirmities of the weak". They must be sustained today, just as then – not despised because of their weakness!
5. "Be eyes to the spiritually blind; be feet to the spiritually lame." Thus "we fulfill the law of Christ."
6. We must "lift up the hands that hang down, and the feeble ways," Heb.12:12,13 (Our own and others that need our help!)
7. Again, this is going to require a very close relationship and fellowship among members of the body to be able to see this need today, practice this duty, even accept this kind of support!
8. Such closeness doesn't just happen; we have to want it and work at it!

APOSTOLIC EXHORTATIONS BY THE DOZEN
EXHORTATION #4

D. “BE PATIENT TOWARD ALL MEN,” V.14d

1. Definition of terms
 - a. “Patient” – MAKROTHUMEO –
 - (1) KJV: “patient”; ASV: “be longsuffering”
 - (2) W.E.Vine,III,168: means, “to be longsuffering; long-tempered; to have patience; to bear with”
 - (3) Thayer, 387: “to be of long spirit, not to lose heart; hence...2. to be patient in bearing the offences and injuries of others; to be mild and slow in avenging; to be longsuffering, slow to anger, slow to punish (to defer anger, Prov.19:11): absolutely, 1Cor.13:4; 1Th.5:14. Cf. Jas.1:19.
 - (4) Hold out long before taking action.
 - b. W.E.Vine,III,12:
 - (1) “Longsuffering is that quality of self-restraint in the face of provocation which does not hastily retaliate or promptly punish; it is the opposite of anger, and is associated with mercy, and is used of God, Exo.34:6; Rom.2:4; 1Pet.3:20.”
 - (2) “Patience is the quality that does not surrender to circumstances or succumb under trial; it is the opposite of despondency and is associated with hope, 1Th.1:3; it is not used of God.”
 - (3) Frank Puckett’s story of the woman who said of another, “Now isn’t she the most patient mother!”
2. Not only toward the weak, the faint-hearted, and the disorderly, but toward all; i.e., toward all brethren in particular in this context.
 - a. “Men” is in italics.
 - b. But considering other passages and the broad scope of Bible teaching on patience, I think we can properly conclude that patience is to be exercised toward all men, including those outside Christ.
3. This exhortation to be longsuffering points us to a temper not easily moved or offended, and to a disposition to bear and to forbear after the example of our Father in heaven who, according to 2Pet.3:9, “is longsuffering to us ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.”
4. By this exhortation they were, and we are, called upon to guard against being led by any means, whether of self or by the influence of others, to resort to hasty, unkind actions toward, to bitter and upbraiding words against others, or to cease from efforts to do the individual good.
5. Consider the nature and sources of the patience enjoined.

- a. In respect to personal trial patience is to be exercised in what we might call its lower form.
 - (1) That is, patience in labor, fatigue, pain, etc., which is not always easy. But it is the easiest kind of patience.
- b. When, however, we are called upon to have or exercise patience with others, we enter a higher and more difficult sphere of duty.
 - (1) Men may endure their own trials from pride of the proper kind, hope, native firmness, duty, etc.
 - (2) But when we are required to be patient toward the bad dispositions and even evil conduct, etc. of others; this is a nobler achievement and proceeds from nobler motives and a very strong faith in the Lord and his word.
- c. Patience with does not imply approval of any man's improper conduct or evil or base character, not any indifference to them.
 - (1) On the contrary, we must see things as they are before God and view them as God does.
 - (2) God himself sees, never overlooks, sin, and improper conduct; but is longsuffering toward the sinner.
 - (3) We must consider the longsuffering of God and imitate it!
- 6. Now consider some of the conditions of the exercise of patience and its objects.
 - a. It must be exercised toward all, especially toward all brethren in Christ as per the context of our study.
 - b. To be patient with those we love and with those who love us is natural and for the most part rather easy; but we must not stop there; nor with our own set; nor with the good even when they stumble; nor with those who hold our opinions.
 - c. We must also be patient with:
 - (1) Even the foolish who are very trying, who may make our tasks troublesome.
 - (2) The conceited and the arrogant; no doubt, it is a very difficult work indeed to be patient with the haughty looks and the arrogant conduct of the conceited person.
 - (3) The selfish and cunning. Difficult? Yes! Because they place the patient person at a great disadvantage.
 - (4) The rude.
 - d. Do you find this too hard to do? Impossible? Then consider: --
- 7. Its motives
 - a. It is only by having patience with men, especially brethren, that we can retain any hold upon them, and "to hold to," "to hold to them firmly,"

cleave to,” which is part of the meaning of “support” in the previous exhortation “support the weak” in v.14c.

- (1) The person who is outside of or without such feelings and attitude toward him on our part is outside our sphere of influence or help spiritually.
 - (2) There is little or nothing you can do for the person you dislike. And one of the worst things that can befall a benevolent nature is to be incapacitated to do good, or deprived of the capacity or power to do good.
- b. Only in this way can we imitate the Father and the Son, which should always be the motivating factor in everything we do. Cf. Mt.5:43-48.
 - c. It is by this very longsuffering on God’s part that we ourselves are saved, or ever have the opportunity to be saved, from past sins and have the hope of eternal life. 2Pet.3:9,15.

CONCLUSION TO EXHORTATION #4

1. Properly considering God’s longsuffering and kindness toward us, even in time past when we refused or rejected the call of the gospel, despised his admonitions, and were “alienated and enemies in our minds by wicked works (evil deeds),” will make it easy for us to imitate him in our own lives. Cf. Col.1:21; Rom.5:8; Eph.2:1-5; Mt.5:43-48.
2. Even if you say you have tried time after time and yet failed; lack of present success is no excuse. The triumphs of genius in the field of Art, Science, Literature, Music, etc., are triumphs of patience! And, yes, in the practice of Christianity, are triumphs of patience!
3. Remember, it is to hold out long under trial, or to suffer long before taking action; this is what God has done, is doing, promises to do!
4. Think about where you and I would be or what hope we would have if God had not been and were not now longsuffering toward us!!

EXHORTATION #5

E. “RENDER NOT EVIL FOR EVIL UNTO ANYONE; BUT EVER FOLLOW THAT WHICH IS GOOD, BOTH AMONG YOURSELVES, AND TO ALL MEN,” V.15.

1. Definition of terms
 - a. “Render” – APODIDOMI –
 - (1) W.E.Vine,III,277,278: “to give up or back, is translated to render...(b) of unrighteous acts, Rom.12:17; 1Th.5:15; 1Pet.3:9.
 - (2) Thayer, 60,61: “4. to requite, recompense, in a good or a bad sense”...badd sense, Rom.12:17; 1Th.5:15; 1Pet.3:9.
 - b. “Evil” – KAKOS –
 - (1) W.E.Vine,II,50: “stands for whatever is evil in character, base..The use of KAKOS (evil) may be broadly divided as follows: (a) of what is morally or ethically evil, whether of persons...or qualities, emotions, passions, deeds (as in) 1Th.5:15...(b) of what is injurious, destructive, baneful, pernicious...” See Rom.12:17-21.
 - (2) Thayer,320: “3. [morally, i.e.] of a mode of thinking, feeling, acting; base, wrong, wicked:...specifically of wrongs inflicted: Rom.12:21...[to work ill to one], Rom.13:10; 2Tim.4:14; Ac.9:13; Rom.12:17; 1Th.5:15; 1Pet.3:9.
 - c. “Good” – AGATHOS –
 - (1) W.E.Vine,II,162,164: “describes that which, being good in its character or constitution, is beneficial in its effect; it is used (a) of things physical, e.g., a tree, Mt.7:17; ground, Lk.8:8; (b) in a moral sense, frequently of persons and things...that which is good, lit., ‘the good,’ as being morally honorable, pleasing to God, and therefore beneficial...”
 - (2) Thayer,3: “what is upright, honorable, and acceptable to God,” Romm.12:2; 2:10; Eph.4:28; Rom.m9:10; 12:9; 2Cor.5:10; 1Th.5:15; 3Jno.11.
2. Thus we have a dual exhortation in 1Th.5:15, one is negative: don’t do it; the other is positive: do it; and the force is: ever keep on doing it!
3. First, the negative; this is a warning against retaliation: “See that none render evil for evil unto any man,” v.15a.
 - a. Abstinence from revenge is here emphasized.
 - (1) “Render not evil for evil”

- (2) “Evil” – meanness, baseness. The absence of the article means “anything bad in exchange for anything bad,” tit for tat!
 - (3) This exhortation was very much in order here, because to a people freshly converted out of Paganism, this counsel was still most appropriate; for the Greeks were remarkable for their undying feuds.
 - (4) There was danger that the old feeling to pay back some persecutor when the opportunity arose could easily be a great temptation for these young Christians in view of their pagan background.
 - (5) The whole congregation was to see to it that none of its members resorted to revengeful actions. It was everyone’s business to see to it!!
- b. Retaliation
- (1) Is condemned in both the O.T. and the N.T., Lev.19:18; Rom.12:19..
 - (2) Is condemned by Jesus’ beautiful example of forbearance in 1Pet.2:22,23.
 - (3) Is expressly rebuked by Jesus in the case of the disciples James and John, Lk.9:51-56.
 - (4) Springs from a spiteful heart, Ezek.25:12-15.
 - (5) Indicates a want or lack of trust in God, Prov.20:22.
- c. Retaliation betrays a weak, mean character, and a cruel disposition just the opposite to that of Jesus Christ and the very tenor, spirit, meaning or essence of Christianity.
- (1) It is true N.T. Christianity alone that teaches men to bear personal injuries without retaliation.
 - (2) Christ and Christianity each “turn the other cheek” in the case of personal injury, rather than seek personal vengeance, Mt.5:38-42; 1Pet.2:19-23; Rom.12:17-21.
 - (a) He is below himself who is not above a personal injury!
 - (3) Pagan morality went so far as to forbid only the unprovoked injuring of others
 - (4) Moreover, the hypocritical Pharisees of Jesus’ day perverted and prostituted God’s law of an “eye for an eye” of Lev.24:20 (which was ordained for the just and lawful punishment of criminal acts) for their own selfish purposes to justify private revenge or vengeance, a vengeance that belongs only to God, Mt.5:38; Deut.32:35; Psa.94:1; Rom.12:17-19; Heb.10:30.

- d. Yes, God has a present-day means of taking vengeance on law breakers. He has ordained public law – civil authorities – as his avengers of public wrongs, Rom.13:1-6; 1Pet.2:13,14; Cf. Ac.25:6-12.
 - e. And the final recompense for all wrong, both private and public, must be left to the infallible Judge of all – to God himself, through Jesus Christ, his Son; for vengeance is his and his alone, Rom.12:19; Heb.10:30.
4. Secondly, the positive, the exhortation of the pursuit of “the good”: “but ever follow that which is good (“the good”), both among yourselves, and to all men,” v.15b.
- a. Believers are not to “render (or return) evil for evil,” but to return good for evil – to overcome evil with good, Rom.12:17-21.
 - b. Our text says, lit. “but” (alla) “on the contrary always pursue *the* good.”
 - (1) Now we have the article, not just something that is good, but *the* thing, that which is good and beneficial to others, to brother, non-brother, friend or foe – “both among yourselves and to all men” See 2Pet.1:7: both “brotherly kindness” and “charity” or love for all.
 - (2) It is to be universal in spirit and practice.
 - (3) Persevere in following the good, ever guarding against even the desire to return evil for evil or to retaliate in any form.
 - c. The noblest retaliation is that of good for evil.
 - (1) Our beneficence should be as large or larger than an enemies’ malice, Mt.5:10-12,43,44.
 - (2) That which is good is not always that which is pleasing to the objects of our benevolence, nor is it always easy for us.
 - (3) Goodness should always be sought for its own sake, and sought with increasing earnestness and perseverance, as the hunter seeks his prey.
 - (4) Goodness is to be the great aim and business of life; it is to be undeterred by provocation; it can conquer the most virulent, bitter or malignant opposition.
 - (5) Let your motive be your unfeigned faith in and love for the Lord and his holy word and well as for brethren in the Lord and for mankind. Cf. 1Cor.13:1-7.
 - d. In the matter of pursuing good, Christians:
 - (1) Are to prove it, Rom.12:2.
 - (2) Are to cleave to it, Rom.12:9.
 - (3) Are to do it, Rom.13:3; Gal.6:10; 1Pet.3:11; Jno.5:29 (which they do in virtue of union with Christ, Jno.15:1-8; Phil.1:1).

- (4) Are to work it, Rom.2:10; Eph.4:28; 6:8.
- (5) Are to always follow after it, 1Th.5:15.
- (6) Are to be zealous of it, 1Pet.3:13.
- (7) Are to hold fast to it, 1Th.5:21.
- (8) Are to imitate it, 3Jno.11.
- (9) Are to overcome evil with it, Rom.12:21.
- (10) Are to provoke each other to it, Heb.10:24.
- (11) Are to earnestly pursue it because:
 - (a) It is the pre-ordained pathway of God's children, Eph.2:10.
 - (b) Through it men are brought to glorify God, Mt.5:13-16.
 - (c) God remembers it, Heb.6:9,10.
 - (d) It is evidence of faith, Jas.2:14-20.
 - (e) It shall be brought into the Judgment, Eccl.12:13,14; 2Cor.5:10..
 - (f) If we keep following the good, our works will follow us, Rev.14:13; Mt.5:13-16.

CONCLUSION

1. These are the astonishing ethics of Jesus which are constantly taught by the apostles, which are quiet a contrast to the world's ethics!
2. Yet how sensible; for when I receive a slap and slap in return I only provoke a second slap to my own hurt and thus slap after slap, hurt after hurt to my self.
3. But when I reward a slap with a turned cheek, or a favor, or "overcome evil with good," I make it difficult for the other person to slap me again; then he will soon cease and I gain less harm to my self and may possibly win the other person as my friend, and maybe even to Christ, or, at least, cease to be my enemy.
4. Yet we often persist in being resentful and vengeful.
5. Remember Gal.6:9.
 - a. Don't despair. Never say or even think: "Unless I have definite signs of good fruit from my labor, I will give up."
 - b. The test of success in the Lord's service is not necessarily in numbers.
Examples:
 - (1) Noah and numbers – only 8 souls; but he saved his whole family, 1Pet.3:20. Have we done as well? Doing as well?

- (2) Jesus by the time of his crucifixion had few disciples; most had deserted him.
 - c. Let us keep on with our work and keep at it. Persevere!
- 6. What others in time past have said:
 - a. Bacon said: “He that studieth revenge keepeth his own wounds green.”
 - b. Philip the Good, of Burgundy, said: “It is a fine thing to have revenge in one’s power, but it is a finer thing not to use it.” (No doubt, to some extent at least, all of us have such power within ourselves or at our disposal; but let us make sure we don’t ever use it!)
 - c. Another king of France said of his foes: “I will weigh down the lead of their wickedness with the gold of my kindness.”
- 7. The following truth is often spoken: “People don’t **CARE** how much you **KNOW**, until they **KNOW** how much you **CARE!**”
- 8. What need do we have for such a dual exhortation in the church today?
 - a. **The same danger exists today!**
 - b. We, unlike them, have not been converted from paganism with its proneness to retaliation.
 - c. But we have been converted from the world of our day with its proneness of retaliation!
- 9. The whole congregation is to see to it that none of its members resort to revengeful action: “See that none render evil for evil...”

APOSTOLIC EXHORTATION #6

F. “REJOICE EVERMORE,” V.16

1. Definition of terms
 - a. “Rejoice” – CHAIRO –
 - (1) Thayer, 663: “to rejoice, be glad,” 1Th.5:16.
 - b. “Evermore” – PANTOTE –
 - (1) W.E.Vine,II,46: “at all times (on all occasions; as, e.g., in 1Th.1:2; 3:6; 5:15; 2Th.1:3,11; 2:13.
2. First, an introductory thought on the matter of rejoicing.
 - a. Christianity, the faith of Jesus Christ, unlocks the whole of man’s nature, and makes a claim upon his *affections* and *emotions* as well as upon his *external conduct*. Thus he rejoices in manifestation of the effects of his faith on his whole being, both the inward man and the outward man.
 - b. The joy or the rejoicing of the Christian cannot merely be another word for high spirits. These we cannot command.
 - c. A Christian is no stoic, no hero carved out of marble or stone. No! His Master’s broken heart and bitter cry of sorrow over man’s sins find a counterpart in him.
 - d. A Christian is not one who has no sorrow for sin; nor one who has never sinned; nor one who no longer has any danger of sinning; he is one in whom sin does not rule (Rom.6:11-14); he is one who has joy in sin forgiven, in redemption from sin, in the hope of heaven for an eternity.
 - e. Thus it is no wonder that our text say, “rejoice evermore”.
 - f. In Psa.149:5 it is said, “Let the saints be joyful (glad) in glory;” not, Let the wicked be glad; in Isa.40:1, God said, “Comfort ye, comfort ye my people;” Not, comfort mine enemies.
 - g. He who would have us holy as he is holy (1Pet.1:16), would have us joyful as he is joyful; he who would have us do his will on earth as angels do his will in heaven, would have us rejoice on earth as angels rejoice in heaven (Lk.15:7,10).
3. Note the position of this exhortation with reference to the others.
 - a. It is set in the midst of several precepts which are to be done as occasion requires, but rejoicing is to be done evermore, always.
 - b. It comes just after a flavoring or a possible suggestion of trouble and bitterness, v.15.
 - (1) Christians are apt to have evil rendered to them; but still they are exhorted to rejoice, and that for good reason:
 - (a) “Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you...,” Mt.5:10-12.
 - (b) 1Pet.2:19-20.

4. The quality of the Christian's rejoicing must not be overlooked.
 - a. It is neither a carnal nor a fleeting rejoicing.
 - (1) There is a joy of wealth and material possession, but where is it when these fleeting things are gone?
 - (2) There is joy which springs from earthly fountains, but where is it when those fountains are dried up?
 - (3) The true Christian's joy is neither based on material possessions, nor does it spring from earthly fountains. Thus it is not fleeting nor subject to drought; it springs eternal.
 - (4) Earthly joys fade after a brief moment; one's joy over salvation and true spiritual blessings never fades; in fact, as long as our unfeigned faith remains strong and healthy and the closer to its ultimate realization we come, the brighter it shines; the more healthy it glows.
 - b. It is not presumptuous, arrogant, willful or rash.
 - (1) Some in time past have been guilty of and were condemned for so rejoicing: "Rejoice not, O Israel...for thou hast gone a whoring from thy God," Hos.9:1.
 - (2) It would be well for the joy of many to be turned to sorrow, Jas.4:16; Ac.7:41-43.
 - c. It is not fanatical or wildly extravagant or visionary or impractical.
 - (1) It is based on and produced by knowledge and true understanding of God's revealed will and the hope of eternal life promised to the faithful, which produces a peace that passeth understanding.
 - d. It is distinguished from levity or sinful mirth, and does not -- never does -- render us insensible to affliction. Cf. 1Pet.1:3-8.
5. Consider now the objects, grounds, occasions and reasons for the Christian's rejoicing evermore.

(Some duties are to be performed at particular times – but this one, always. Of course, there are times, occasions and things, which more especially call for joy. Yet there is no time in which rejoicing would be unsuitable in our service to the Lord or as a recipient of his blessings.)

- a. The Lord commands, Psa.32:11; Phil.3:1; 4:4; 1Th.5:16.
- b. He prayed for it, Jno.17:13.
- c. Rejoice in "God my exceeding joy," Psa.43:4.
 - (1) In his infinite wisdom, illimitable power and transcending glory.
 - (2) In his infinite, sacrificing love and in being his child in his spiritual family.
- d. Rejoice in the Lord Jesus Christ, God the Son, Emmanuel (Phil.3:1; 4:4), a joy which must flow from a sense of our spiritual relationship to him as

our Savior, as our Redeemer, as our “heart-searcher,” and mediator, and as our hope of eternal life.

- e. Over even one sinner who repents and returns to the fold, Lk.15:3-32; Ac.11:19-21.
 - f. Rejoice because your names are written in heaven, Lk.10:20; Phil.4:3; Heb.12:23.
 - g. There is occasion to rejoice even in diverse temptations, trials, persecutions for righteousness’ sake, being spoken evil of, and being reproached for the name of Christ, Mt.5:10-12; Jas.1:2-4; 1Pet.5:12-16; Cf. Ac.5:40-42.
 - h. The saved have always found it an occasion to rejoice at their conversion to Christ both then and now, Ac.2:41,46,47; 8:39; 16:34; 13:48; 1Tim.1:12-15.
 - i. Christians rejoice in hope of the glory of God, Rom.5:2; 12:12; 8:16-18; 2Th.2:13,14.
 - j. The rejoicing of other brethren is an occasion for our own rejoicing, Rom.12:15; 2Cor.7:13.
 - k. The faithful rejoice over the obedience and godly conduct of fellow-believers, Rom.16:19; 2Cor.7:7,9; Phil.2:14-17; Col.2:5; 1Th.2:19; 2Jno.4; 3Jn.3; Cf.1Cor.13:6.
 - l. When one member of the body is honored all the members rejoice with it, 1:Cor.12:26.
 - m. There is occasion of rejoicing in proving one’s own work, Gal.6:4; 1Th.5:21.
 - n. Rejoice when and where Christ is preached, Phil.1:18.
 - o. For fellowship in preaching the gospel, Phil.1:3-5; 4:10.
 - p. Paul said, he rejoiced in his sufferings for the Colossian Christians, Col.1:24.
 - q. One should rejoice that he is exalted, another that he is made low, Jas.1:9,10.
 - r. Being a partaker of Christ’s sufferings is an occasion and reason for rejoicing, 1Pet.4:13.
6. Why do some professed believers fail to rejoice?
- a. Because of shallowness or lack of thorough earnestness.
 - b. Because of insincerity or the mingling of selfish and worldly motives. Cf. Jas.4:1ff.
 - c. Because of a lack of faith or a want of hearty confidence in God’s love and faithfulness.
 - d. Because of slothfulness, which neglects or refuses to make the requisite effort for growth in the grace of God.

- e. Let these hindrances – each and every one of them – be removed that we might rejoice always!
7. How we may always rejoice.
- a. Live above the world, 2Cor.4:18; How do that? 1Jno.5:1-5; 2:15-17.
 - b. Walk after the spirit, not after the flesh, Rom.7:25; 8:1ff.
 - c. Avoid such things as are wont to grieve and trouble you. Such as:
 - (1) Sin, Psa.51:8; Mt.26:75; 2Cor.1:12.
 - (2) Needless questions about God’s decrees, or why God decreed this or that, did this or that!
 - d. Whatever happens still put or maintain your trust in God, Isa.49:13,14; 50:10; 55:7; Heb.13:6.
 - e. Constantly hold and act on your faith in Christ, Jno.14:1; Rom.8:33-39; Heb.3:6.

CONCLUSION TO EXHORTATION #6

1. Rejoicing is as much a part of the Christian’s life as is believing.
2. But because of so many little adversities that can serve to lessen and even darken our joyfulness, we need to be and often are reminded to rejoice in our blessings now and in the hope of eternal blessings.
3. Rejoice in spite of meanness and persecution.
4. Today it might seem a mockery to exhort Christian to rejoice in the midst of a world of sin, sorrow, death, and in a time when the church is sorely tried with so many false doctrines and immoral practices; and yet such was the condition of things when the words of our text were written.
5. The joy of the Christian, all true Christians, is the product of the whole gospel and of the salvation that is theirs in Christ, a fruit of the Spirit (Gal.5:22).
6. It’s no wonder the Christian is able to rejoice continually, when we call to mind the inexhaustible source of joy he possesses in the spiritual relationship of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and in the promises of the written word of God.
7. Christianity is never recommended or promoted by sour looks, sepulchral hollow tones, and by suppressing every manifestation of gladness.
8. By becoming a Christian, a person does not lose his or her joys, but exchanges them – transitory, fading, earthly joys – for joy unspeakable, glorious, and that fadeth not away, 1Pet.1:3-8.
9. Real Christians are rare (Mt.7:13,14); joyful ones, more so! This ought not so to be!
10. In this verse we have the exhortation to rejoice and in the ones that follow through verse 22, we have revealed to us the secret, the true means of a happy life.

APOSTOLIC EXHORTATION #7

G. “PRAY WITHOUT CEASING,” 1TH.5:17

1. Definition of terms

a. “Pray” – PROSEUCHOMAI –

(1) W.E.Vine,III,199, the word here translated meaning “to pray”, is always used of prayer to God, and is the most frequent word in this respect, especially in the Synoptists and Acts, once in Ro.8:26; in Eph.6:18; in Phil.1:9; 1Tim.2:8; Heb.13:18; Jude 20. For the injunction in 1Th.5:17, see “Cease”, “C”, Vol.I,177.

(2) Thayer,545: “to offer prayers, to pray to God...1Th.5:17”

b. “Without ceasing” (adverb): ADIALEIPTOS –

(1) W.E.Vine,I,177: “unceasingly,” without ceasing, is used with the same significance as the adjective, not of what is not interrupted, but of that which is *constantly recurring*...in 1Th.5:17, of prayer.”

(2) Thayer,11: “without intermission, incessantly, assiduously,” (sustained), Rom.1:9; 1Th.1:2,3; 2:13; 5:17.

c. Here “without ceasing” implies habitual inclination, a spirit of supplication (Zech.12:10); a vigilant attendance upon prayer as a main purpose of life; embracing all fit opportunities for prayer; never abandon prayer for any cause; even appointing certain times for prayer, and carefully keeping them – like “the continual sacrifice”. Cf. Dan.8:11; Neh.10:53; Heb.13:15.

d. Examples of its use

(1) Ac.6:4: The apostles were to give themselves “continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word,” rather than to the benevolent work of the church.

(2) Rom.1:9: Paul said, “...without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers”

(3) 1Th.1:2,3: Here Paul uses the term of his remembrance of their work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope. Cf. 2Th.2:13; 2Tim.1:3.

(4) Then in Rom.9:2 he uses the adjective “continual” of heart pain.

(5) Eph.6:18: “Praying always”, i.e., in “every season”; “at every season”

(6) However, the meaning in each place is not that of unbroken continuity, but without the omission of an occasion.

(7) There is not a day but what we want and need the mercy of God, so take all occasions and every day to lift up holy hands and yearning hearts to God in prayer.

- e. There is nothing in the exhortation “pray without ceasing” that would justify the neglect of or interference with other on-going duties to God.
 - (1) Paul who exhorted us to do, and who always practiced what he preached, also traveled widely, preached extensively, and, at times, labored with his own hands to support himself and others as well as prayed always for the saints.
 - (2) It is not true, therefore, as some have claimed, that this duty can be fulfilled only in idea.
- 2. Take note of the position of v.17 and this exhortation to “pray without ceasing” in this series of exhortations, which may be suggestive, even significant.
 - a. It comes after “rejoice evermore” (v.16), and before “in everything give thanks” (v.18).
 - b. If the exhortation to “rejoice evermore,” which immediately follows “see that none render evil for evil unto any man, but every follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men,” should in any way stagger the reader, Paul in this verse tells him how to do it: “always pray”
 - c. When joy and prayer are married their firstborn is gratitude, which is next enjoined as the obvious follow-up: **“In everything give thanks”**.
 - d. Surely we can here see a mutual affinity (relationship, kinship, connection) between joy (v.16), prayer (v.17), and thanksgiving (v.18), as we also see by other passages of Scripture, such as: Phil.4:4-6; Col.4:2
- 3. To whom are we to pray? Or, who is the object of our prayers?
 - a. God, not saints or angels, as appears:
 - (1) From various scriptures, Mt.6:9; Lk.11:1,2; Ac.10:25,26; Rev.19:10; 22:8,9.
 - (2) From reason.
 - (a) For saints, no matter who they are, can’t hear and answer our prayers.
 - (b) Saints can’t answer our prayers, which is obvious when you consider all things involved in prayer, what we can pray for, etc.
 - (c) For prayer is a part of Divine worship, Mt.4:10; Ac.2:41,42.
 - b. The word for prayer in our text (1Th.5:17) is never used with reference to prayer to men or angels; it is used always and only in the full sacred sense of turning to God in worshipful forms.
 - c. To God in prayer we offer our adoration, our confession, our petitions, and our thanksgiving.
- 4. Through whom are we to pray to God?

- a. Through the man Jesus Christ, the Son of God, our Mediator and Great High Priest, 1Tim.2:5; Rom.8:27,34; Heb.7:24,25; Col.3:17; Jno.14:13,14; 15:16;16:23.
 - b. Never through some mere man, or woman, or so-called saint (living or dead), or angel, which rules out Mary, the mother of Jesus, and flies in the face of Catholic theology.
5. Prayer is the duty, the privilege, the fervent interest, the life-line of all true believers.
- a. Unfeigned faith thinks of it in terms of a privilege more so than that of a duty.
 - b. As we are at all times in need of God, so should we at all times seek help from and draw near to God in prayer; for it is our spiritual life-line, Jno.15:7; Mt.7:7,8; 1Jno.5:14-16.
 - c. Though God knows our needs before we ask, he still requires that we ask, seeking with unwearied importunity, Mt.6:8; Lk.18:1-8; 1Th.5:17; Eph.6:18.
 - d. The prayer of faith surrounds the soul of the true believer with a golden atmosphere or halo, through which is sifted the sunbeams of heavenly joy
 - e. It is a duty and a privilege to be fulfilled not by set hours of prayer, much less by adherence to a monastic rigor (stiffness or severity) of devotion, such as that pertaining to the practice and rules of the Monks in their monasteries.
 - (1) Yet it is not inconsistent with set hours, Psa.55:17; 119:164; Dan.6:10.
 - (2) We are exhorted to pray without ceasing in view of our constant dependence on the Lord for life and sustenance.
 - (3) Prayer should intersperse all our works.
6. Why should we always obey this precept to “pray without ceasing”?
- a. Because it is of Divine authority, a command of God, 1Th.5:17.
 - b. Because God always deserves to be worshipped, and by this we give to him reverence and glory
 - (1) For his sovereignty over us.
 - (2) For his immensity and omnipresence, Mt.6:6; Psa.139:1-12.
 - (3) For his all sufficiency.
 - (4) For his mercy.
 - (5) For his faithfulness to his promises to hear the prayer of faith.
 - c. Because we always need and are completely dependent upon God for blessings that only he can give, which he calls upon us to ask for in prayer and which can come to us in no other way or by no other means.

- d. To help us avoid the ever-present danger of temptation to sin, because prayer helps us draw nigh to God and to resist Satan and sin.
 - e. Because of the very nature of the act, which involves man in intercourse with God – man talking to God, conversing with God, the Creator – the Being in whom man – the creature – lives and moves and has his very being.
 - (1) God speaks to us through his written word; we speak to God in prayer.
 - (2) To stop praying therefore, is to break the connection; to cut the life-line between us and God.
 - (3) A man must breathe without ceasing because thereby his whole physical system is kept in right relation with the atmosphere and the continuation of physical life.
 - (4) It is as certainly true that spiritual life and spiritual well-being depend upon communication with God, both through his written word and through prayer.
 - (5) Prayer is the only mode or means by which man can hold intercourse with God, his Creator and life-sustainer.
 - f. Because of the fact that God is continually the hearer of prayer. He does not hear his people today and turn a deaf ear tomorrow.
7. What is the proper posture of the body in prayer?
- a. No one certain posture of the body is bound.
 - b. The posture is not of great importance.
 - c. Kneeling is a beautiful sign, but who could be always kneeling when it is time to pray?
 - d. Besides that, good men have stood, sat, etc. What about Jonah in the belly of the fish?
8. Neither is there one certain place for all prayer bound as essential.
- a. If it were, our meeting houses, which are recognized as proper places for all forms of scriptural worship, including prayer, would have to be large enough for us all to live in them and in which to carry on all facets of our lives and business in them.
 - b. But this is ridiculous.
 - c. Besides, “God dwelleth not in temples made with hands”; he is not confined to such, Ac.17:24.
9. Since we must pray in faith, what does that mean, and for whom and for what can we pray in faith?
- a. What does it mean to pray in faith? Three passages explain.
 - (1) Rom.10:17, by a faith that comes from or is produced by the word of God, his written word.

- (2) Heb.11:6, a faith that comes believing that God is, and is the rewarder of them who diligently seek him.
 - (3) Jas.1:5-8, it's to ask in faith, nothing wavering or doubting; to ask with confidence of receiving. Cf. Heb.4:15; 1Jno.5:14,15.
- b. Therefore, in faith, we may and should pray:
- (1) For our enemies, even those who hate us, curse us, despitefully use and persecute us, Lk.6:27,28.
 - (2) For all men, kings, rulers and all who are in authority, 1Tim.2:1-4.
 - (3) For the forgiveness and salvation of others, Lk.23:34; Ac.7:59,60; Ac.8:24; Rom.10:1-3; Jas.5:16; 1Jno.5:16.
 - (4) For brotherly love to abound, more and more, Phil.1:9-11.
 - (5) For brethren to increase in knowledge of God's will, spiritual understanding, and walk worthy of the Lord, Col.1:9-11.
 - (6) For boldness and courage in preaching the gospel, Eph.6:19.
 - (7) For God to open unto us doors of utterance and that the word may have free course in our preaching, Col.4:2-4; 2Th.3:1.
 - (8) For brethren that they do no evil, 2Cor.13:7.
 - (9) That they Lord keep faithful brethren from evil men, 2Th.3:2; Lk.11;1-4; Mt.6:13; Rom.15:31.
 - (10) For out temporal needs, Mt.6:11; Lk.11:1-3.
 - (11) For mercy and forgiveness, Ac.8:22; Mt.6:12,14,15; Heb.4:16.
 - (12) For the Lord to send forth laborers into the harvest, Mt.9:38.
 - (13) For the Lord to increase our faith, Lk.17:5; Cf. Rom.10:17.
 - (14) For wisdom and knowledge in spiritual things, Jas.1:5; Col.1:9-11.
 - (15) That God's will may done on earth as it is in heaven, Mt.6:10.
10. Whose prayer will not be heard and why, Ps.66:18; Prov.15:29; 28:9; Lk.18:9-14; Jno.9:31; Jas.1:5-7; 4:3; 1Pet.3:12.

CONCLUSION TO EXHORTATION #7

To “pray without ceasing” let us do as David in Ps.16:7,8 said he had done: “I have set the Lord always before me.”

APOSTOLIC EXHORTATION #8

H. “IN EVERYTHING GIVE THANKS,” 1TH.5:18

1. It is our duty to be grateful, to ever be thankful: “In everything give thanks”
 - a. Ingratitude is a most hateful, despised guilt.
 - (1) It means the absence of gratitude or appreciation for favors received; an absence of thankfulness.
 - (2) It means insensibility to kindness.
 - (3) An ingrate is an unlovable person.
 - (4) We readily recognize and despise in others, but seldom, if ever, recognize it in self, and never confess it!
 - (5) The ten lepers of Lk.17:11-19 illustrate it.
 - b. The two previous exhortations of 1Th.5 were “rejoice evermore” and “pray without ceasing”; the present one is “in everything give thanks”; the three go together; they accompany each other; one can hardly do one from the heart without the other.
 - c. Giving thanks is the natural fruit of joy as it is the natural accompaniment of prayer.
 - d. What we may pray for in faith, for that we must also give thanks; and whatever is unfit for prayer is also unfit for thanksgiving.
 - e. The Christian can meet with nothing pertaining to duty in service to the Lord that is not a cause for thankfulness, whatever suffering may be entailed. Cf. 1Pet.2:13-23; 1Pet.4:16.
 - f. When we focus our attention on the ceaseless stream of God’s mercies, blessings, and his unspeakable gift, we shall have ample reasons for the giving of thanks, Jas.1:17; 2Cor.9:15.
2. Thanksgiving is the exercise of a joyful and a praying heart.
 - a. It is a mark of the wicked that they have no thankfulness, Rom.1:21.
 - (1) Even when wicked men do offer thanks and pray to God, it is not acceptable, Psa.66:18; Prov.28:9; Mt.15:7-9; Lk.16:19-31; 18:9-14; Jno.9:31; 1Pet.3:12.
 - (2) It is the sign of the antichristian apostasy that men “shall be unthankful,” 2Tim.3:1,2-5.
 - (3) Since “every good gift and every perfect gift” comes from God, the guilt of such ingratitude is great and despicable, Jas.1:17.
 - b. It is the mark of the true and faithful saints on earth that they abound in faith with thanksgiving, Col.2:5-7; Rom.1:8; 1Th.5:18.

- c. Even Jesus, the Son of God, was thankful and gave thanks to God, Jno.11:41.
3. Thanksgiving must be universal in its sphere: “In everything give thanks,” i.e., “in connection with everything”.
- a. This is naturally qualified by context, both immediate and remote, to all things that are in harmony with God’s will in Christ Jesus, and full explanation of this is found in the “all things” of Rom.8:28-32; 2Pet.1:3,4; Rev.21:7; 1Cor.2:9-13; Eph.3:11.
 - b. We should always be found giving thanks:
 - (1) For the supply of our physical, bodily, earthly needs, as this plan is carried out, 1Tim.4:1-4; Jno.6:11,23; Mk.8:6; Ac.27:33-35; Rom.14:6.
 - (2) For spiritual things in Christ, 2Cor.9:15; Phil.4:19.
 - (3) For the victory through Jesus Christ, or to be able to triumph in Christ, which God gives us, 1Cor.15:57; 2Cor.2:14; Rom.8:37.
 - (4) For sinners converted to Christ, Rom..6:17,18.
 - (5) For the strong, active faith, works, fellowship in the faith, care and concern of brethren in Christ, those of like precious faith, Ac.28:12-15; Rom.1:8; 1Cor.1:4-7; 2Cor.8:16; Phil.1:3-6; 1Th.2:13,14; 2Tim.1:3-5; Phlm.4,5.
 - (6) For the goodness and mercy of God, Psa.106:1.
 - (7) In all circumstances of prosperity and adversity, joy and sorrow, health and sickness. Job could say in the depth of adversity and affliction, “Blessed be the name of the Lord,” Job 1:8,20,21.
 - c. Universal thanksgiving is possible through the perception that under all circumstances blessings outnumber and outweigh troubles here on earth. Cf. Rom.8:16-18.
 - (1) Let us not be guilty of fixing our thoughts on our troubles to the neglect of our abundant blessings.
 - d. Universal thanksgiving is possible by means of faith that holds that troubles may serve as blessings in disguise, 2Cor.12:7-10; Jas.1:2-4.
4. The ground or reason of this duty: “For this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.”
- a. The will of God supplies constant material for gratitude and praise in and through Jesus Christ, his Son.
 - b. Or, it is in and through Christ Jesus that his will for us is revealed and made effectual; for all of God’s mercies in the spiritual sense reach us through the channel of the mediation of Jesus Christ.

- c. Therefore, we are to “give thanks to God and the Father by him”; “by him” we are to “offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name,” Col.3:17; Heb.13:15; Cf. Rom.1:9; 7:25; Eph.5:20.

CONCLUSION TO APOSTOLIC EXHORTATION #8

1. In these last three exhortations: “Rejoice evermore,” (v.16); “Pray without ceasing,” (v.17); “In everything give thanks,” (v.18), we are reminded of and have enjoined upon us three unquestionable marks of the one of genuine faith, of a true servant of God, of a true N.T. Christian, the duty or the mark of:
 - a. Rejoicing in the mercy of God.
 - b. Being fervent in prayer to God continually.
 - c. Thankfulness or of being grateful to God in all things.
2. We need to learn this secret of the happy or blessed life of the true Christian – thankfulness.
3. If everything in God’s plan, his eternal purpose, in all things that pertain to life and godliness, actually conspire to do us good, and it does; how can we do otherwise than always rejoice and always be thankful?
4. And as a result we have the “peace of God, which passeth all understanding,” Phil.4:4-9.
5. All of this is God’s will in Christ, the Anointed One.
6. Consider to what a new, high, exalted, blessed plane these injunctions of 1Th.5 lift us!

APOSTOLIC EXHORTATION #9

I. “QUENCH NOT THE SPIRIT,” 1TH.5:19

Note this: In 1Th.5:19-22 we have a separate, united group of four final apostolic exhortations within the whole group of twelve apostolic exhortations of 1Th.5:14-22.

Introduction to the study of these four verses of this separate, united group of four

1. In vv.19-22 we have a unit of four verses containing a series of apostolic exhortations or positive duties, each one of which is inseparably related to the other.
 - a. The first duty: “Quench not the Spirit,” v.19.
 - b. The second duty: “Despise not prophesyings,” v.20.
 - c. The third duty: “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good,” v.21.
 - d. The fourth duty: “Abstain from all appearance of evil,” v.22.
2. Thus we have what we choose to designate “a separate, united group of four final apostolic exhortations within the whole group of twelve apostolic exhortations.” -- Let me further explain why this is true:--
3. The “For” (“gar”) clause of v.18b, “for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you,” separates the eight preceding imperatives (or the eight exhortations of vv.14-18a) from the new group which follow in v.19-22.
 - (a) This “for” clause of v.18b applies to all the preceding exhortations, or imperatives or duties in vv.14-18a.
 - (b) Then “hold fast that which is good” and “abstain from all appearance of evil” of vv.21b,22, apply to the exhortations of vv.19,20,21a.
4. Formally, the first two exhortations of vv.19,20 are negative, with “not” or “do not” (); the others of vv.21,22 are positive; although the last, that of v.22, “abstain from all appearance of evil,” is negative in thought.
5. In fact, in these four verses (vv.19-22), we have but three admonitions, exhortations, imperatives or duties in this group of verses, those of vv.19,20,21a; for the third about proving or testing all things in v.21a, is only expounded on by the last two, those of vv.21b,22: i.e., “hold fast that which is good. Abstain from all appearance of evil.”

6. Thus we can understand how these four verses are inseparably related in content, and are also a part of the whole group of twelve apostolic exhortations beginning with v.14 continuing through v.22.
7. Scholars seem to be about equally divided over the meaning and application of vv.19,20. That is, as to whether they apply to the miraculous works of the Holy Spirit through believers by miraculous gifts of the Spirit in force in the early church, or apply to the work and influence of the Holy Spirit through the revealed word in the sanctification of believers, or perhaps to be applied both, even at that time.
8. Of course, we know the extraordinary gifts, or the miraculous gifts, of the Spirit existed, were in force, were possessed and used by members of the early church, no doubt including the church at Thessalonica, just as it did at Rome and Corinth, et al; such as, the gift of healing, the gift of tongues, the gift of prophesying, etc., Mk.16:17,18; Ac.2:38,39; 8:14-17; Rom.1:11; 12:6-8; 1Cor.1:7; 1Cor.12,13,14; and perhaps 1Th.5:19,20.
9. We also know that in the early church they had problems over the proper use of spiritual gifts, especially over the gift of tongues in their attitude toward and use of it, and the gift of prophecy, with the gift of prophecy being held in low esteem compared to the gift of tongues. See 1Cor.14.
10. We also know that miracles through men and the extraordinary, miraculous gifts of the Spirit to men have ceased, 1Cor.13:8-13.
11. In view of this, and in order for us to properly apply the text of 1Th.5:19,20, or to see how it applies to us today, think with me!
12. Since those miraculous gifts of the Spirit of that day have ceased, being no longer available to or needed by men; and since the Holy Spirit still operates today through the revealed, written word in conviction, conversion, and sanctification; and since the exhortation, admonition or duty of vv.19,20 stands in the midst of several other precepts which precede it in vv.14-18, and follow it in vv.20-22, all of which are of lasting and universal obligation; how can we fail to see that, both before and after vv.19,20, every precept mentioned belongs to and to be enforced both during the period of miraculous gifts and during the period following the cessation of miraculous gifts, the period in which we now live, and operate under the influence of the Holy Spirit through the written word?

- a. Which one of the twelve exhortations was not to be enforced or obeyed during the period of miraculous spiritual gifts?
 - b. Which one, after the cessation of spiritual gifts?
13. Therefore, the way, and the only way, the text of 1Th.5:19,20 can and does apply to us today is under the influence of the Holy Spirit through the written word. – BUT THE TEXT DOES APPLY TO US TODAY!

I. “QUENCH NOT THE SPIRIT,” 1TH.5:19

1. Definition of terms
 - a. “Quench not” – SBENNUMI –
 - (1) W.E.Vine, III,240: “is used...(b) metaphorically, of quenching the Spirit, by binding His operations in oral testimony...”
 - (2) Thayer,572: “to extinguish; metaphorically, to quench, i.e., to suppress, stifle...divine influence.”
 - (3) “Extinguish”
 - b. Wherever the Spirit is, he burns (as it were); therefore, he is not to be quenched. The Spirit does excite or stir up; but he does not compel; therefore, we can quench or suppress or resist or reject the Spirit. Cf. Ac.6:9; 7:1,51,54-59; Eph.4:30; Isa.63:10.
2. “Quench not the Spirit” necessarily implies that the Spirit operates in the spiritual realm. For emphasis consider the scriptural proof of how he works to convict of sin, or righteousness, and of judgment.
 - a. At first, beginning on Pentecost, through the miraculously revealed word, which he confirmed by a variety of miracles, and extraordinary, or miraculous, spiritual gifts to believers to enable them to carry on their work in the absence of the presence of an apostle during the period of progressive revelation or while the complete will of God was in the process of being revealed orally and committed to written form as we now have it, Jno.14:26; 15:26,27; 16:7-15; Mk.16:19,20; Heb.2:4; Lk.24:44-49; Ac.1:1-8; 2:1-41; 1Cor.2:1-13; Gal.1:6-12; Eph.3:1-5; 1Cor.12,13,14.
 - b. Now, since the age of miracles and spiritual gifts operating through men on earth has ceased, he operates only through the revealed, written word of God, Mt.28:18-20; Mk.16:15,16; Ac.2:36-41; Jno.8:31,32; Eph.3:1-5; 1Th.2:13; 2Th.2:13,14; 1Cor.15:1,2; Rom.1:16,17; Heb.4:12; 5:8,9; Cf. Psa.19:7; 119:11,104,105,130.

3. Question: How can we quench or extinguish the Holy Spirit since he is deity as is the Father and the Son? How can we extinguish deity?
 - a. The influence of the Spirit is represented here or implied here under the emblem of fire – fire that can be quenched or extinguished.
 - b. When it says “quench not the Spirit”, it not the Holy Spirit Himself who is quenched, or extinguished, but his influence in our lives we are exhorted to quench not.
 - c. Remember the definition of terms: “Quench”: “is used metaphorically, of quenching the Spirit, by binding His operations in oral testimony; i.e. to suppress, stifle, or resist divine influence.”

4. Some Bible examples of the Spirit being quenched, resisted, stifled, suppressed, or extinguished.
 - a. The antediluvians quenched the Spirit. God strove with them to go good; they strove against him to their destruction, and flood swept them away, Gen.6-8.
 - b. In Heb.9 and 2Chr.36:14-21 see how God strove with the Jews, and how they quenched the Spirit and were left to perish in the wilderness, then in the Babylonian Captivity.
 - (1) The same law is in operation still. God gives his Spirit to instruct men.
 - (2) They refuse to hear and God leaves them to their worst enemies to be destroyed – their sins, 2Th.2:9-12; 1:6-10; Jno.8:24.
 - c. The unbelieving Jews who crucified Jesus.
 - d. The unbelieving Jews of Ac.7.
 - e. The unbelieving Jews of Ac.13.
 - f. The unbelieving Jews of Rom.10:1-3.
 - g. The warning to the Hebrew Christians in Heb.2:1-3; 10:23-31.
 - h. The church of the Laodiceans, Rev.3:14-22.

5. Since we exhorted to “quench not (i.e., “do not quench”) the Spirit,” we obviously possess the power to do so, which raises the question: How can the Spirit be quenched by us today? Or, what are some of the ways in which or by which we can quench, stifle, suppress, or extinguish the influence of the Spirit today? (I will suggest some 22 different ways)
 - a. By indulging the lusts of the flesh; by indulging fleshly appetites and passions; by walking after the flesh; by being carnally minded, Rom.8:5-8.
 - b. By choosing darkness rather than light; loving the world rather than the word, Jno.3:19-21; 1Jno.1:5-7; 2Tim.4:10; 1Jno.2:15-17; Jas.4:4.

- (1) Such worldliness doesn't happen and take its toll over night.
 - (2) Normally, it's a process which is a slow and partially unconscious one in the life of the believer.
 - (3) But it's one that is real, sure and deadly.
 - (4) Even work with some becomes a "respectful" form of worldliness which quenches the influence of the Spirit.
- c. By simple neglect of duty; by slighting, neglecting and resisting the Spirit's operation, Heb.2:1-3; 3:19; 10:23-25.
 - d. By the improper use of strong drink. For the influence of the Spirit is quenched as a man quenches his reason, which he does with strong drink. For "when the wine is in, the wit is out."
 - e. By diverting the mind from spiritual concerns and engaging in even wholesome recreation to the neglect of service to and worship of God. For the love of pleasure will extinguish the love of God. Cf. 2Tim.3:1-5.
 - f. By inordinate affection toward any earthly object. For the life and power of godliness are seldom, if ever, found among those who are eager in the pursuit of worldly gain, Mt.19:16-22.
 - g. By sins of omission and commission. These are opposite to his nature, any course of iniquity will extinguish the influence of the Spirit.
 - h. Floods of ungodliness swamps the soul and quench the influence of the Spirit.
 - i. A want of spiritual food deprives the soul of the influence of the Spirit; which is brought about by a lack of private Bible study; a failure to support and participate in the edification work of the local church of which you are a member.
 - j. Failing to hear and heed the word. We may hear and make no effort; or if we make an effort, it may be feeble and fleeting – soon abandoned.
 - k. By self-deception or by allowing ourselves to be deceived by others.
 - l. By failing to put on the whole armor of God in order to stand against the wiles of the devil; thus being unprepared for the spiritual battle with the devil; thus by failing to resist the devil.
 - m. By failing to draw nigh to God.
 - n. By resisting the truth presented to the mind.
 - o. By believing, supporting and fellowshiping error, Heb.10:28ff; 2Jn.9ff.
 - p. By bad temper, harsh and vituperative, abusive language.
 - q. By indulging in prejudice. When the mind is made up on any Bible subject before it has examined and become acquainted with all the facts, that mind is shut against the truth and the Spirit is quenched. For prejudice is "prejudgment without due examination."

- r. By dishonest and underhanded, deceptive practices in business, whether the owner or the employee.
 - s. By indolence and procrastination.
 - t. By conformity to the world, rather than being transformed by the renewing of your mind.
 - u. By allowing worldly affairs to absorb the affections.
 - v. By continuing in sin, known or unknown. For sin in the life of a believer quenches the influence of the Spirit in that believer's life just as water quenches a house fire.
6. The consequences of quenching the Spirit.
- a. Great darkness of mind; for it is the Spirit that enlightens through the word.
 - b. The acceptance of error which damns the soul. Just as nature abhors a vacuum, so does the spiritual realm. If one rids the heart and soul of truth and its influence for good, it will replace it with error and its damnable results.
 - c. Great hardness of heart. Only the truth of God's word can soften and keep the heart loving and compassionate to the proper objects of love and compassion.
 - d. Great delusion with regard to one's spiritual state. Cf. Rev.3:14-19.

CONCLUSION TO APOSTOLIC EXHORTATION #9

In this lesson we have considered:

1. The first of the four final apostolic exhortations of the separate, united group of four in 1Th.5:19-22 among the whole group of twelve in vv.14-22.
2. The definition of the term "Quench"
3. The exhortation "Quench not the Spirit"
4. How the Spirit operates today.
5. What it means to quench the Spirit and it is done or ways in which we may do it today, and offered some Bible examples of some who were guilty of doing it in time past.
6. The consequences of quenching the Spirit.

APOSTOLIC EXHORTATION #10

J. “DESPISE NOT PROPHESYINGS,” 1TH.5:20

1. Introduction

- a. To properly appreciate and profit from our study of the precept or the exhortation: “Despise not prophesyings,” we must:
 - (1) Come to know something about a prophet of God; such as, the meaning of the term, his work, his position in the N.T. church, etc.
 - (2) Come to know the full, meaningful definition of the word “prophesy,” “prophecy” and “prophesyings,” what they are, what we are talking about.
 - (3) Get a complete working definition of the word “despise”.
 - (4) Be able to ascertain to some degree from the context, both in 1st and 2nd Thessalonians as well as other N.T. epistles, why it would be necessary to enjoin such a precept upon them.
 - (5) Come to realize how we may be guilty of despising prophesyings.
 - (6) Become aware of why we must not despise prophesyings, or what the consequences are if we do.
- b. Keep in mind also how we introduced the text of 1Th.5:19-22 proving that the way, and the only way, this text, including our present v.20, can and does apply to us today.

2. For a proper understanding of the exhortation of vv.20, we must first have a proper understanding of the definition and use of the term “despise,” “prophesyings,” and “prophet”.

- a. “Despise” – EXOUTHENEIO –
 - (1) W.E.Vine,I,300: “to make of no account...to regard as nothing, to despise utterly, to treat with contempt. This is usually translated to set at naught, despise,” 1Th.5:20; See Lk.18:9; Rom.14:3,12; Lk.23:11; Ac.4:11; 1Cor.1:28; 6:4 (RV); 16:11; 2Cor.10:10; Gal.4:14.
- b. “Prophesyings” – PROPHETEIA –
 - (1) W.E.Vine,III,221: “signifies the speaking forth of the mind and counsel of God (‘pro’, forth, ‘phemi,’ to speak); in the N.T. it is used (a) of the gift, e.g.: Rom.12:6; 1Cor.12:10; 13:2; (b) either of the exercise of the gift or of that which is prophesied, e.g., Mt.13:14; 1Cor.13:8; 14:6,22 and 1Th.5:20.”

- (2) Thayer,552: “discourse emanating from divine inspiration and declaring the purposes of God, whether by reproof and admonishing the wicked, or comforting the afflicted, or revealing things hidden; esp. by foretelling future events...In the N.T....of the endowment and speech of the teachers called prophets...plur. The gifts and utterances of these prophets, 1Cor.13:8; 1Th.5:20.
- (3) To understand and appreciate the full effect of this we must understand that prophesyings are the utterings of the N.T. prophets.
- c. “Prophet” – PROPHETES –
- (1) W.E.Vine,III,222: “one who speaks forth or openly...a proclaimer of a divine message...
 “In the N.T. the word is used (a) of the O.T. prophets, e.g., Mt. 5:12; Mk.6:15; Lk.4:27; Jno.8:52; Rom.11:3; (b) of prophets in general, e.g., Mt.10:41; 21:46; Mk.6:4; (c) of John the Baptist, Mt. 21:26; Lk.1:76; (d) of prophets in the (N.T. ejd) churches, e.g., Ac.13:1; 15:32; 21:10; 1Co.12:28,29; 14:29,32,37; Eph.2:20; 3:5; 4:11; (e) of Christ...”
- (2) Thayer,553: “to speak forth, speak out; hence prop. ‘one who speaks forth’...II. In the N.T. 1. One who, moved by the Spirit of God and hence his organ or spokesman, solemnly declares to men what he has received by inspiration, esp. future events, and in particular such as relate to the cause and kingdom of God and to human salvation. The title is applied to...f. The prophets that appeared in the apostolic age among the Christians: ...Ac.15:32; 1Cor.14:29,37; Rev.22:6,9; they are associated with apostles in Lk.11:49; 1Cor.11:28,29; Eph.2:20; 3:5; 4:11; Rev.18:20; they discerned and did what was best for the ...cause, Ac.13:1f; foretold certain future events, Ac.11:27f; 21:10f; and in the religious assemblies of the Christians, being suddenly seized by the Spirit (whose promptings, however, did not impair their self government 1Cor.14:32), give utterance in glowing and exalted but intelligible language to those things which the Holy Spirit teaches them, and which have power to instruct, comfort, encourage, rebuke, convict, stimulate their hearers, 1Corr.14:3,24.”
- d. The word “prophet” is from a compound word meaning “forth” and to “speak”. Thus a prophet is “a person who speaks forth.” He is a “forth-teller,” and not necessarily (though sometimes also) a “fore-teller”.
- e. That is, this is what a prophet of God was and did in N.T. times.
- f. Remember “prophesyings” of our text are the utterings of the N.T. prophets. And since we do not live in the age of inspired prophets, and

since all their utterings have been committed to written form which we can read and understand (Eph.3:1-5; 5:17), we then are governed by the written word and must not despise any part of it.

- g. This is how and why v.20 applies to us today!
3. For the sake of emphasis Berry's Literal Translation of Vv.19,20 places the objects first:
- a. V.19: "The Spirit do not quench"
 - b. V.20: "Prophesyings do not despise"
 - c. It is as if Paul were saying, "By making light of despising or setting at naught prophesyings among you, you are belittling the work of no One less than the Holy Spirit. That's how serious it is!
 - d. This negative command, "Despise not," i.e., "Do not despise," like many a negative in the Bible, is equivalent to an emphatic positive; it means a very decided positive in the opposite direction: "Don't despise prophesyings; rather, delight in them."
 - e. Obviously, v.20 is closely related to what is taught in v.19: "Quench not the Spirit". Both verses refer to restraining the work of the Holy Spirit through the influence of the word, which is the "sword of the Spirit," Eph.6:17.
4. Moreover, we can be guilty of violating 1Th.5:20 today. But, how?
- a. By regarding the written word, which is the sword of the Spirit, as being worth little or nothing.
 - b. By thinking of men above that which is written, or going beyond that which written, or by teaching for doctrines the commandments of men, Mt.15:9; 1Cor.4:6; 2Jno.9.
 - c. By supposing that we are already wise enough; that we have no need of continual instruction in the word of God.
 - (1) For without it we can't grow in grace and in knowledge, nor go on to perfection.
 - (2) Without it we will remain babes in Christ, a condition which is without divine approval, dangerous and even destructive.
 - (3) Those who slight or neglect the means of grace and knowledge are generally vain, empty, self-conceited, self-deceived people, and exceedingly superficial in knowledge and piety, supposing they have need of nothing, when in reality they have nothing!
 - d. By exalting reason above revelation.
 - e. By counting it foolishness.

- f. By identifying, equating, or associating the faith of Christ and true religion with the weaknesses, oddities, and eccentric notions of good but biblically ignorant men and their false religions.
- g. By denying the beneficent teachings, spurning the wise counsels, and neglecting the faithful warnings of the Spirit revealed word.
- h. By refusing to attend regularly and to hear the word preached and taught.
- i. By attending the services where it is preached and taught but with improper disposition of heart and mind, being focused on other things rather than the inspired instructions of the word.
 - (1) Some may spend much of their time in drowsiness or trifling inattention, or playing with the kids, grand kids, or observing all the people in the pews instead of the preacher in the pulpit or the teacher in the class room.
 - (2) Hence, when they leave they can tell more of what passed in the pew than what was preached in the pulpit!
- j. By seeking teachers to scratch their “itching ears” “after their own lusts”.
- k. Careless listening can be evidence of setting at naught prophesying. Example: (a) A father was ill and could not attend worship services. The son who regularly goes, upon returning home – the following conversation takes places: “Well, son, did you hear a good sermon this morning?” “Yes, I did, Father. I’ve never heard the preacher preach a better sermon.” “What was the subject? Do you remember it or some of the interesting ideas or points in the sermon,” the father asked. “No, father, but I remember a beautiful figure about a bird soaring in the air, Why, I could almost see it and hear its song!” the son said. “Well, what did he illustrate by the flight of the bird?” “Let me see. It was something about faith, or about going to heaven. I just can’t recall now what it was, but the figure surely was impressive.”
 - (b) or this one about the husband who returned from services where his wife unable to attend because of illness asked, “What was the preacher’s sermon about this morning?” He hesitated for a moment and finally said, Oh, yes, I remember, It was about sin.” “Well, what did he say about sin?” “He was against it!”

5. Why despise not prophesyings? Because:

- a. They are from God by means of the Spirit through God’s chosen human agents.
- b. They are the grand means of our great salvation by the blood of Christ.
- c. They are vital out guidance and salvation both here and hereafter.
- d. We grieve the Spirit of God thereby.

- e. It may very well lay a stumbling block in the way of others and bring about the destruction of one for whom Christ died.
 - f. It involves contempt for the authority of the Lord.
 - g. It involves contempt for an institution (that of prophecy) with which God has specifically identified himself.
6. The reason for this warning against disparagement of prophesyings can readily be surmised.
- a. Wherever God plants wheat, Satan sows tares.
 - b. Wherever God establishes a church, the devil erects a chapel, a synagogue or a mosque.
 - c. Wherever the miraculous works of the Holy Spirit were wrought to confirm the word, the devil distributed his “lying wonders” to confuse and deceive.
 - d. Wherever and whenever truth was taught to save souls, Satan sought to replace it with religious error and lies to damn and destroy.
 - e. Wherever there was a true prophet of God, the devil sent in his false prophets.
 - f. One way – but not the wisest way – of reacting to this state of affairs is to despise all prophesyings, which is what is implied that some had done at Thessalonica, and what many in our day have done and are doing!
 - g. One reason for this exhortation at Thessalonica might have been because of false teachers or false prophets among them who troubled them over the time of the Lord’s 2nd Coming, and “the mystery of iniquity” already at work among them, “even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan,” 2Th.2:1-17; cf. 1Th.4:13-5:11.

CONCLUSION TO APOSTOLIC EXHORTATION #10

1. More and more it seems that the Bible and true Christianity is falling into disfavor among the masses, even among many professed believers!!
2. When we despise we refuse to test which is the next exhortation to follow this one, which will be Apostolic Exhortation #11

APOSTOLIC EXHORTATION #11

K. “PROVE ALL THINGS; HOLD FAST THAT WHICH IS GOOD,” V.21

1. INTRODUCTION

- a. V.21 should be read, studied and interpreted in connection with the two preceding verses, which warn against quenching the Spirit and despising prophesyings.
 - (1) Here we have a warning in the opposite direction, that we may guard against accepting every thing taught by every teacher who claims to be speaking the truth or delivering divine oracles.
 - b. The design of the precepts of v.21 is to caution us against two pernicious extremes:
 - (1) One is accepting what is taught on trust without due examination;
 - (2) The other is, after due examination and wise choice not being willing to, or failing to, abide by it.
 - c. Credulity (ready or hasty belief) and unsteadiness are alike dangerous, and the only way to prevent them is to examine every doctrine presented to us by whatever teacher in order to make sure we accept only the truth, and then, having made that wise choice, to hold it firmly, no matter the cost, so as to reap the full benefit of it, both present and future benefits.
 - d. We must be as cautious, perhaps ever more so, in the selection of the principles by which we live, as we are in choosing our friends and associates; but once chosen we must never part with them, Prov.23:23; Jno.8:32; 1Cor.15:33; 2Th.2:10-12.
2. Consider the possible reasons, background or basis for the exhortation of v.21 to “Prove all things”
- a. There were prophets or teachers even at that time who professed to be of God, and yet were not; this we know because:
 - (1) Jesus warned about them, Mt.7:15-20.
 - (2) Paul warned about them, Ac.20:28-31; Rom.16:17,18; 2Cor.2:17; 4:1-4; 11:13-15; Gal.1:6-9; Col.2:8; 2Th.2:1-12; Tit.1:9-11.
 - (3) Peter warned about them, 2Pet.3:3-7,15,16.
 - (4) John warned about them, 1Jno.2:18,19,22-26; 4:1; 2Jno.9-11.
 - (5) Jude warned about them, Jude 3,4.
 - b. There is evidence everywhere we look that such false teachers and false teaching exist today, both without and within the body of Christ.
 - c. The deceitfulness and damnableness of error in its very nature is another reason for seriously heeding the exhortation of v.21.

- (1) Error is never so dangerous as when it is the alloy of truth (or mixed or combined with truth or as when you have an admixture of error and truth)
 - (2) Pure, glaring error normally is at a great disadvantage and more easily recognized for what it is by the masses and rejected, than is a mixture of truth and error.
 - (3) For error mixed with truth makes use of truth as a pioneer for it, to lead the way, to get introduction and acceptance where otherwise it would receive none – the closer to truth it is, the harder to detect.
 - (4) Just as poison is all the more dangerous when mixed with food, so error is never so likely to mischief as when it comes to us under the pretensions and patronage and guise of that which is true, especially when it is proclaimed or peddled by flannel-mouthed ministers of Satan who are parading as ministers of righteousness; especially is this the case when they are in the body of Christ.
 - (5) Hence, the importance of testing every pretender to spiritual illumination, even those within the church.
3. Consider the who, the how, and the extent of the duty enjoined by the text.
- a. The who: the persons addressed and assigned this duty.
 - (1) This duty is not directed to:
 - (a) Doctors of divinity or to some special group of authorized teachers of the word; such as, Clergy Vs Laity.
 - (2) Synods or religious counsels or conventions or committees.
 - (3) The Pope and the College of Cardinals.
 - (2) Nor is it limited to preachers and elders in the Lord's church; it is addressed to the whole church; all the saints who make up the local church. See Ch.1:1.
 - (3) Vain therefore is the Romish contention that the laity are excluded from judging for themselves in proving all things. See 1Jno.4:1; 1Pet.3:15.
 - (4) To those addressed, he says, "Prove all things"
 - (a) This word means "to test" and is one that was applicable to metals, referring to the act of the assayer by which the true nature and value of the metal is tested.
 - (b) Test them to see whether or not they are true or genuine as in metals.
 - (5) This duty would not have been enjoined unless they possessed the capacity or the ability to do what is required. Cf. 1Jno.4:1; 1Cor.10:12,13; Jno.7:17; Eph.5:6-11.

- (6) It is our duty, as well as our right, to have and jto hold personal convictions based upon our own investigation and searching of the scriptures. Cf. Jno.5:39,40; 6:44,45; Rom.10:17; Eph.3:4,5; 5:17; Jno.8:31,32; Mk.16:15,16; Rom.1:16,17; Heb.5:12-14.
 - (7) Not every religion, not even every segment of those who profess to be Bible believers and defenders of the faith, require this of all their professors.
 - (a) The clergy or the religious hierarchy of some say, “Do not inquire; rather, submit implicitly to (or trusting in the word or the authority of) the teaching of your church creed or discipline.”
 - (b) “Obey your priest and you will be saved. He will be held accountable, not you, if you do.”
 - (c) “Don’t question it; take my word for it; the Lord has told me this; the Lord laid this on my heart.”
 - (8) Don’t let anyone chain the Bible to the pulpit or control you mind; we must be left free to read, examine, search, study, test, Ac.17:11; Eph.3:4,5; 5:17; Col.3:16; 2Tim.2:15; Jas.2:21-25; Jno.12:48.
- b. The extent or the universality of the precept: “all things” – not “some things” – “all things”
- (1) Prove everything taught – no matter by whom held; by what counsels decreed; by what venerableness of antiquity sustained; or by what sacredness it may be vested.
 - (2) We must not receive anything simply because influential preachers or teachers or college professors say it is so!
 - (3) Receive nothing on mere blind trust; or take it on assertion; or believe it because it is uttered with great eloquence and for of speech.
 - (4) Take nothing for granted or simply at face value, Ac.17:11; 1Jno.4:1.
- c. The how or the rule of procedure in proving all things.
- (1) That of right reason, using the intelligence God has given us and expects us to use, recognizing and searching the scriptures as the infallible, authoritative standard, Jno.5:39,40; 6:44,45; 7:17; 8:31,32; Ac.17:11; 2Cor.13:5.
 - (2) To ignore the divine standard and to discard our powers of reason is to discard faith which is built upon it.
 - (3) Faith is not a blind leap in the dark; but is based upon solid, reliable, trustworthy evidence, which, by means of our ability to

reason, we have examined, found to be true, and have accepted, Jno.20:30,31; Rom.10:17; 1Cor.15:11; Heb.11:1.

- (4) We are to be able to give a reason (an answer, a reply, or make a verbal defense) for what we believe and the hope that is in us, 1Pet.3:15; Heb.10:22,23.
- (5) We believe a doctrine for one reason: because we find it taught in the Scriptures – because we can give book, chapter and verse for it; we believe the Scriptures because they speak the mind and the will of God to man as the Holy Spirit revealed it, 1Cor.2:9-13.
- (6) Reason and faith are not mutually exclusive, nor antagonistic one to the other, but assistant to each other.
- (7) The faith of Christ does not require people to disregard their powers of reason, or to be credulous or gullible; in fact, it demands just the opposite.
 - (a) It does not make it a duty to receive as undoubted truth all that synods and religious counsels have decreed; or all that is advanced by the ministers of religion.
 - (b) It is, more than any other form of religion, the friend of free inquiry, and would lead people everywhere to understand the scriptural reason for the convictions they hold.
- (8) Other religions require or teach their followers to receive everything in their creeds or disciplines upon blind trust; the faith of Christ asks us to personally examine everything ; to believe nothing without scriptural proof.
- (9) Error, superstition, bigotry, and fanaticism attempt to repress free inquiry and open discussion, by claiming there are certain things too sacred in their nature, or which have been too long held and cherished, or which are sanctioned by too many great and holy names, to permit their being subjected to the scrutiny of common eyes, or to be handled by common hands.
- (10) In opposition to all this, Christianity requires us to examine every thing. Subject everything to the inspired word which was received by the apostles of Christ through the Holy Spirit and handed down to men by the authority of Jesus Christ, 2Th.2:15; 3:6; Cf. Mt.16:18; 18:18; 2Cor.5:17-21; Jno.14:26; 15:26,27; 16:7,13-15; Mt.28:18-20.
 - (a) It is true that before the complete will of God was revealed and put into written form, believers had the spiritual gift of “the discerning of spirits” (1Cor.12:10; 1Jno.2:20,21,26,27) to test false teachers.

- (b) Today the will of God is complete and in written form; therefore, such spiritual gifts have ceased, have been done away (1Cor.13:8-10), because no longer needed.
 - (c) Therefore, we today must prove “all things”, not by the use of miraculous spiritual gifts; not by outward appearance; not by what seems right to men (Prov.14:12); not by what is popular or accepted by society in general; not by apostate religious bodies; not by what is legal; not by the standard of our own private judgment; but by the written word of God.
 - (d) We must do it sincerely, thoroughly, diligently, and prayerfully.
4. What is required of us once we have proved all things: “hold fast that which is good,” v.21b.
- a. It would be useless to do the one if not done for the purpose of the latter.
 - b. The successful seeker of truth is then to be the practitioner, the guardian, the defender and the champion of truth.
 - c. “Hold fast” – KATECHO -- -- means to “keep secure, keep firm possession of”; or “firmness in retaining,” Thayer,340; Vine,II,223.
 - d. The “good” of v.21b is from KALOS -- -- denoting “that which is intrinsically good,” W.E.Vine,II,164; “excellent in its nature and characteristics, and therefore well-adapted to its ends, 1Tim.4:4...i.q. genuine, approved,” 1Th.5:21.
 - e. Therefore, hold fast that which is good:
 - (1) Against the assaults of faulty reason.
 - (2) Against the assaults of mad passions and the lusts of the flesh.
 - (3) Against the assaults of a menacing (threatening) world.
 - f. Hold fast:
 - (1) To your profession of faith. It is a lie of the devil that says, “It makes no difference what you believe.”
 - (2) To your integrity, as God “who is faithful”. To let go of one particle of it – to compromise in the least with wrong – endangers your soul, and is sure to forfeit your piece of mind.
 - (3) To your efforts on behalf of souls. “Be not weary in well doing.”
 - (4) To prayer. “Pray without ceasing”
 - (5) “Be sure you are right and then hold on though the heavens fall.”
 - (6) The double-minded or wavering-minded man is unstable in all his way, and one who shall receive nothing from the Lord.
 - (7) If we part with the good, we shall retain the evil!
5. What are the good things that we are to hold fast?
- a. The gospel and the way of salvation in Christ.

- b. That truth, in particular, which relates to the person and work of Jesus Christ, and God as the rewarder of them that seek him in faith, Jno.8:24; Heb.11:6.
 - c. The life and conduct consistent with the calling wherewith we are called.
 - d. Holiness, as opposed to sin, which the faith of Christ demands.
 - e. Godliness, as opposed to selfishness. Cf. the priest and the Levite to the good Samaritan (Lk.10:25-37). Selfishness passes by suffering and the need of others and avoids the inconvenience of sympathy and helpfulness
 - f. Hope and joy as opposed to despair.
6. Some hindrances to obeying the precepts of v.21.
- a. Either the absence of faith or a weak faith.
 - b. A love of the world, 2Tim.4:10; 1Jno.2:15-17; Jas.4:4.
 - c. Dislike for the trouble it may cause and becoming weary in well doing.
 - d. Fear of the opposition – the opposition of evil men.
 - e. Fear of the demands which the result may make or the consequences it may bring.

CONCLUSION TO APOSTOLIC EXHORTATION #11

We have considered:

1. The fact that v.21 should be read, studied and interpreted in connection with the two preceding verses (vv.19,20), which were against quenching the Spirit and despising prophesyings.
2. The fact that v.21 is designed to caution us against two pernicious extremes:
 - a. One is, accepting what is taught on trust without due examination.
 - b. The other is, after due examination and wise choice being unwilling to or failing to abide by it.
3. The who, the how, and the extent of the duty enjoined by v.21.
4. The importance of what is required of us once we have proved all things.
5. What the good things are that we are to hold fast.
6. Some hindrances to obeying the precepts of v.21.

For emphasis note the following verses: Prov.23:23; Gal.6:7-9; Rev.21:8; Rev.2:7; 2:11; 2:17; 3:12; 3:21,22; 1Jno.5:4,5.

APOSTOLIC EXHORTATION #12

L. “ABSTAIN FROM ALL APPEARANCE OF EVIL,” 1TH.5:22.

1. INTRODUCTION TO V.22.

- a. V.22 is the final verse of the separate, united group of four final apostolic exhortations found in 1Th.5:19-22, within the whole group of twelve apostolic exhortations set forth in 1Th.5:14-22.
- b. In vv.19-22 we have a separate unit of four verses containing a series of positive duties each one inseparably related to the other.
 - (1) The first duty: “Quench not the Spirit”
 - (2) The second duty: “Despise not prophesyings”
 - (3) The third duty: “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good”
 - (4) The fourth duty: “Abstain from all appearance of evil”
- c. Thus we have what we choose to designate “a separate united group of four final apostolic exhortations within the whole group of twelve, which we have titled: “Apostolic Exhortations By The Dozen”.
- d. The fact that vv.19-22 is a separate, united group of duties within the twelve exhortations, is evident when you note that the “for” (“gar,”) clause of V.18b (“for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you”) separates the eight preceding imperatives (or the eight exhortations of vv.14-18a) from the final group of four which follow in vv.19-22.
 - (1) This “for” clause of v.18b applies to all eight of the preceding exhortations or imperative or duties in vv.14-18a.
 - (2) Then “hold fast that which is good” of v.21b, and “abstain from all appearance of evil” of v.22 apply to the exhortations of vv.19,20,21a.
- e. Formally, the first two exhortations, those of vv.19,20, are negative, with “not” or “do not” (); the others of vv.21,22 are positive, although the last, the one of v.22, “abstain from all appearance of evil”, is negative in thought.
- f. In fact, in the four verses of 19-22, we have but three admonitions, exhortations, imperatives or duties, those of vv.19,20,21a; for the third about proving “all things” or testing “all things” in v.21a, is, in reality, only expounded on by the last two, those of vv.21b,22.

- g. Thus we can understand how these four verses are inseparably related in content, and are also a part of the whole group of twelve apostolic exhortations beginning with v.14 continuing through v.22.

2. Definition and application of terms

- a. “Abstain from” – APECHO -- -- means: “to hold oneself off or from; to keep oneself from; abstain from a thing; in the N.T. it invariably refers to evil practices. See Ac.15:20,29; 1Th.4:3; 5:22; 1Pet.2:11; Cf. Job 1:1; 2:3; See Vine,I,16; Thayer,57
- b. “Appearance” -- EIDOS --
- (1) W.E.Vine,I,66
 - (a) “Properly, that which strikes the eye, that which is exposed to view, signifies the external appearance, form or shape...
 - (b) “It has a somewhat different significance in 1Th.5:22, in the exhortation ‘abstain from every form’ (ASV) of evil, i.e., every sort of evil, or wrong.”
 - (2) Thayer,172: “form, kind, i.e., from every kind of evil,” 1Th.5:22.
 - (3) Therefore, in the N.T. it means, abstain not from this or that sin, but absolutely and universally from all sin”; “from all sort, or the whole kind of evil,” whether practical, doctrinal or moral.
- c. “Evil” – PONEROS --
- (1) Thayer,530,531: “That which is wicked”; “wickedness”
 - (2) W.E.Vine,II,50, “PONEROS is essentially antithetic to CHRESTOS, kind, gracious serviceable; hence it denotes what is destructive, injurious, evil. As evidence that PONEROS and KAKOS (v.15) have much in common, though still not interchangeable, each is used of thought. Cp. Mt.15:19 with Mk.7:21; of speech, Mt.5:11 with 1Pet.3:10; of actions, 2Tim.4:18 with 1Th.5:15; of man, Mt.18:32 with 24:48.”
 - (3) Is always to be understood in the active sense as denoting something malignant, working mischief, hurting all with whom it comes into contact.
- d. The two commands “hold fast that which is good” and “abstain from all forms or kinds of evil” complete the order of v.21 to “prove or test all things” or everything.
- (1) Note the verbal correspondence in “hold fast” and “abstain from”
 - (2) Both of them mean “to hold”. But the one means “to hold fast or firmly to the good thing”; the other means “to hold oneself away from every form of the wicked thing.”
- e. We must not restrict this command to the field of morals.

- (1) For the worst forms of wickedness consist of perversions of the truth, of spiritual lies. Cf. Gen.3.
 - (2) This is true, even if many today do look upon these forms of evil with indifference and regard them as rather harmless.
 - (3) Even though Satan couldn't get the Lord to compromise in his temptation of him in Mt.41-10; he has convinced today's world of religious thinking that the Lord will compromise with us and tolerate sin and false teaching to a degree!
- f. Without a doubt "abstain from all appearance of evil" doesn't mean mere appearance, or what seems to be, or what might look like evil, as a popular theory claims.
- a. Rather, it means actual evil; that which is evil, no matter the form or the kind.
 - b. However, it is true, the Bible teaches us to shun anything that is doubtful or that might possibly be wrong. But that is not the meaning of v.22.
 - c. An old Chinese proverb says, "Do not stop in a cucumber field to tie the shoe." The meaning: Some one will likely think you are stealing fruit.
 - d. Another: Do not stop under the saloon porch to rest yourself, however shady the trees may be, or however inviting the chairs. Some one may fancy you are a common lounge there, so your name be tarnished.
 - e. Take warning: If you are careless about the appearance of evil, you will soon grow equally careless about the evil itself, or that which is evil.
3. We need to be warned against evil for many reasons
- a. Because the pull or influence of evil is so prevalent and strong.
 - b. Because it is so injurious to both body and soul, especially to the soul. It not only denies; it destroys.
 - c. Because wickedness has many forms, and we must keep away from every form that it may assume.
 - d. Because its forms or kinds are of such great variety and so numerous they are not always easily detected.
 - (1) Satan can disguise error and evil under forms difficult to detect. He is adept at making evil appear to be good (Gen.3). He can even disguise himself as an angel of light, 2Cor.11:14; his ministers can transform themselves into the apostles of Christ, 2Cor.11:13.

- (2) To always determine what is evil is not always easy, but it is possible.
- (3) See Eph.6:10-16; Heb.5:12-14; Jas.4:7; 1Pet.5:8,9.

4. The way to fulfill this divine exhortation

- a. Abstain from all forms or kinds, or the whole kind of evil; from all that is evil, be it ever so small. The least sin is dangerous.
 - (1) Total abstinence from what is actually evil is the meaning.
 - (2) The least spark may consume the greatest house or even a forest.
 - (3) The tiniest leak may sink the noblest vessel.
 - (4) The “smallest” sin, if we can call any sin small, is enough to undo or condemn the soul.
- b. Therefore, shun all the occasions that lead to it.
 - (1) Job made a covenant with his eyes, Job 31:1.
 - (2) Joseph would not tarry in the room, even the house, where his mistress was after her evil appeal to him, Gen.39:10.
 - (3) David, when himself, would not sit with vain persons, Psa.26:3-7.
- c. As long as there is fuel in our hearts for a temptation we cannot be secure; he that hath gunpowder about him hath need to keep away from sparks.
- d. In the law of Moses, God commanded his people not only that they should worship no idol, but that they should demolish all the monuments of them and that they should make no covenant nor affinity with those who worshipped them, and all of this lest they should be drawn by those occasions to commit idolatry with them.
- e. He that would not taste of forbidden fruit must not so much as gaze on it; cf. Mother Eve; Achan; David; also, Prov.20:1; 23:31.
- f. If you play with fire you run the risk of being burned.
- g. Avoid even the possibility of using one’s liberty so as to become a stumbling block to them that are weak and causing a brother to offend.
 - (1) Any transgression of the law of God is sin whether commission or omission, including placing a stumbling block before a weak brother, or causing a weak brother to offend, 1Jno.3:4; Rom.14; 1Cor.8.
 - (2) A stumbling block is not simply something a brother doesn’t like, and says, “that offends me” or “you offend me”.
 - (3) It is something that causes him to stumble, to commit sin, in the act of doing what he believes to be wrong; he violates his conscience in doing it; he “acts not of faith” and thus sins in the act.

CONCLUSION TO APOSTOLIC EXHORTATION #12

1. Once a true verdict has been reached, when the proper test has been applied, the practical rule must apply: “to the good hold on; from every form or kind of evil hold off.”
2. When vv.19-22 are studied together, as a unit, it becomes apparent immediately that the rule “test all things” cannot mean “try everything once,” or “enter every place of wickedness and find out for yourselves what it is.”
3. In the given context, it simply means that, instead of despising any prophetic utterance, one should test whatever presents itself as such; test it by the divine standard, the inspired word of God.
4. The good should be accepted; every kind of evil (without any exception; hence, whether it be evil advice – given by a false prophet – or any other form of evil) must be avoided.
5. Ye are called to be holy as he is holy, 1Pet.1:16.
6. What follows in vv.23,24 is an encouraging reference to the hope and divine assurance of all who heed the exhortation and obey the precepts of vv.14-22.