

Chapter Thirteen

1 Thessalonians 5:12-28

Back to Basics

“gentlemen, this is a football.” Those are the words of Vince Lombardi. He was the legendary coach of the Green Bay Packers from 1957-67. During that time he led his team to several National Football League Championships, and to victory in the first two Super Bowls.

In those five words, “Gentlemen, this is a football” Lombardi made his point: if you want to be successful you need to master the basics. You can build on the basics, but you can never move away from them,

In his first letter to the Thessalonians the apostle Paul finished writing about two major future events, the return of Jesus Christ to resurrect and gather God's people. And the Day of the LORD when the wrath of God is poured out on a wicked world. Until then how shall we live? The answer is don't forget the basics of the Christian life—respect your church leaders, love and serve the family of God and trust and glorify God.

And we urge you, brethren,
to recognize those who labor
among you, and are over you
in the Lord and ^[d]admonish you,
13 and to esteem them very
highly in love for their work's
sake. Be at peace among
yourselves.
(1 Thessalonians 5:12, 13)

Paul says three things about those in pastoral leadership. Number 1, they labor, 2, they are over God's people, and 3, they admonish or instruct. First, they labor, it takes time and effort and energy and dedication to pray for the people you serve and to counsel and study and teach the Word of God.

In 2 Timothy 2:15 pastors are told “be diligent to present yourself approved of God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of truth.” The Greek word translated “diligent” means zealous persistence in accomplishing a goal. In other words a pastor is to put forth maximum effort to correctly understand the Bible to teach it truthfully and clearly.

There is a profound verse in the Old Testament. Ezra 7:10 reads, "For Ezra set his heart to study the Law of Yahweh and to do it and teach it." When the Bible is taught it is to be done with heart and precision and accuracy. We are handling the Word of God and so to be slip shod in our work is shameful.

Secondly, what does it mean to be over God's people? It may be tempting to read this as a statement of pastoral power and control. But Jesus taught that leadership starts and ends with service. In Mark 10 he said that whoever desires to be great must have a servant attitude, even as the Son of Man came to serve and not to be served. Christian ministers are called to protect the flock by teaching and by example. Here is what Peter wrote.

The elders who are among you
I exhort, I who am a fellow elder
and a witness of the sufferings of
Christ, and also a partaker of the
glory that will be revealed:
2 Shepherd the flock of God
which is among you, serving as
overseers, not by compulsion
but willingly, not for dishonest
gain but eagerly; 3 nor as
being [b]lords over those
entrusted to you, but being
examples to the flock; 4 and
when the Chief Shepherd
appears, you will receive the
crown of glory that does not
fade away.
(1 Peter 5:1-4)

Finally, in Thessalonians we read that pastors are to admonish or teach the Word of God. My jokes may or may not be funny. My stories may or may not illustrate a point. But they do not generate faith. Romans 1);17 declares that faith comes by the Word of God. Pastors need to learn and believe and preach the Word of God. What then is the response of the people to the pastor? Recognize them and esteem them.

And we urge you, brethren,
to recognize those who labor
among you, and are over you
in the Lord and admonish you, 1
3 and to esteem them very
highly in love for their work's sake.

Be at peace among yourselves.
(1 Thessalonians 5:12, 13)

To recognize does not mean simple face recognition as in, "Oh, there's the pastor. I know him." It means to really know your pastor. Understand his heart, understand his concerns and hopes and desires and needs. And in light of his work esteem him highly. In 1 Timothy 5:17 Scripture encourages us to give double honor to those who preach and teach. And how we treat our pastoral leaders should flow to how we treat one another.

Now we [e]xhort you, brethren,
warn those who are unruly, comfort
the fainthearted, uphold the weak,
be patient with all. 15 See that no
one renders evil for evil to anyone,
but always pursue what is good
both for yourselves and for all.
(1 Thessalonians 5:14, 15)

The unruly are those who disrupt the peace of the church. They are busybodies, gossips, trouble makes, people whose lives are not striving for holiness. We are to warn them to change. This does not a license to put on a sheriff's badge and become a holiness cop. But it does mean we should set the Word of God before the one who is unruly to help him or her do what is good and right.

We are also to comfort the faint hearted. We are to lovingly and patiently encourage those who are anxious or discouraged because of life's troubles. But the Greek word can also mean timid. These are people who think little of themselves and wonder how they can ever bless the church. The truth is all of us are gifted to contribute in some way. In 1 Corinthians 12, we read,

If the foot should say, "Because
I am not a hand, I am not of the b
ody," is it therefore not of the body?
16 And if the ear should say, "Because
I am not an eye, I am not of the body," i
s it therefore not of the body? 17 If the
whole body were an eye, where would
be the hearing? If the whole were
hearing, where would be the smelling? 1
8 But now God has set the members,
each one of them, in the body just as
He pleased. 19 And if they were all one

member, where would the body be?
(1 Corinthians 12:15-19)

All of us are needed and valuable and important in the church, the body of Christ.

Now we ¹⁴exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all. ¹⁵See that no one renders evil for evil to anyone, but always pursue what is good both for yourselves and for all. ¹⁶Rejoice always, ¹⁷pray without ceasing, ¹⁸in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. ¹⁹Do not quench the Spirit. ²⁰Do not despise prophecies. ²¹Test all things; hold fast what is good.
(1 Thessalonians 5:14-21)

We are to uphold the weak. People need a warm embrace at times, a shoulder to lean on, or to cry on. We need to be patient with everyone. Don't get easily frustrated or angry or offended. Have a long fuse and not a hair trigger.

Nehemiah 8:10 tells us that the joy of the Lord is our strength. Romans 15:13 tells us that there is joy and peace in believing God's Word. The prophet Jeremiah declared,

Your words were found, and I ate them,
And Your word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart;
For I am called by Your name,
O Lord God of hosts.
(15:16)

On top of all of this let gratitude be the crown of your heart. God is good all the time. He loves you and will meet your needs. And do not quench the Spirit. The Christian life is the Spirit empowered life. We are meant to live the Christian life not on our own power but by the power of God. And all of us are gifted by God's Spirit. And all of us can be inspired by God's Spirit in all that we do and say.

To prophecy is not to tell the future, but to speak inspired words from God to others that will encourage and edify and comfort. And then, let's take everything we think, do and say and test it against Scripture. If it lines up with the Word of God, good. If not, reject it.

Abstain from every form of evil.

23 Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify^[a] you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. **24** He who calls you *is* faithful, who also will do *it*.

(1 Thessalonians 5:22-24)

Let's not allow a sin polluted world to dictate how we think, feel and behave. Let's allow God's Word and Spirit to make us more and more like Christ. In Romans 12 we read, "do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." All of us desire to see God's good will in our lives. And therefore we need to saturate our hearts and minds with Scripture. WE are transformed not by focusing on what not to do, but by focusing on how to think and live godly lives.

Brethren, pray for us.

26 Greet all the brethren with a holy kiss.

27 I charge you by the Lord that this epistle be read to all the holy brethren.

28 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.

(1 Thessalonians 23-28)

Pray for your pastor. He needs it more than you think. Be kind, loving and welcoming to one another. Romans 15:7 says we are to receive one another just as Christ received us to the glory of God. Read your Bible—read it. And be certain that grace is always coming to you and going with you. Have confidence and faith in future grace.

We have in God's family, in Christ, in the church all that we need to live for God, be joyful and overcome the world. Let us strive to be people of faith, love and hope and build on the basics

