

Sunday School Lesson for the Month of April 2012

A Submissive Church (Part 2)

(1 Thessalonians 5:14-15)

(Sunday, April 1, 2012)

We said on last Sunday that the Thessalonian church was a submissive church. We said that in our time, the word submission is a bad word, especially to women, because it has been defined so badly.

But submission is a biblical concept. Jesus submitted Himself to the will of the Father, so we know right off that submission has nothing to do with inferiority. Jesus is equal to God the Father. So submission doesn't have to do with the wife being less than the husband. Submission has to do with accomplishing a divine agenda. Jesus submitted to the Father in order to accomplish the divine plan in our salvation.

So this church was submissive to the word of God that was presented to them through Pastor Paul. So here, Paul is dealing with discipline in the church. In these two verses, he gives six timeless principles for discipline in the Christian community. We really don't like the word discipline either. But we need to have an understanding of what discipline really means. Discipline in the Greek has reference to saving the mind. It means an admonishing or calling to soundness of mind: to be of good mind. You know the mind comprises the faculties of perception and understanding, and those of feeling, judging and determining. Our mind controls the way we act – the way we conduct ourselves.

There are two kinds of minds:

The Carnal Mind – that is an undisciplined mind.

The Spiritual Mind – that is a disciplined mind.

(The mind of the flesh and the mind of the spirit.)

When you are submissive to the Word of God, it disciplines your mind. It gives you a spiritual mind and the result is you will conduct yourself in a spiritual manner. You will have spiritual behavior.

So Paul here is giving exhortations that tell the believers how to behave toward the whole church family.

I. Paul first of all says here: warn them that are unruly!

The word, warn is the same word translated admonish in verse 12. The word, unruly occurs only here in the New Testament. It is a military term that referred to the soldier who broke rank and did not stand in his place. It was also used to describe disorderly behavior: a soldier who insisted on marching his own way. In other words, he wanted to do it his way. The problem with Christians right now is everybody wants to do things their own way.

Listen, there must be rules and by-laws. There must be standards. If we do not have rules and standards, we will have chaos. You can't just rebel against rules and abandon all of the traditions and standards. That kind of attitude in the church causes arguments and splits. Too many believers are not where they belong. They belong in the ranks of the Lord and of the church: fellowshiping with the Lord and fellow believers, serving the Lord and ministering to believers; helping to reach the lost and ministering to the poor and needy. But you cannot do that wanting to do your own thing and fulfill your own desires.

(Sunday, April 8, 2012)

II. The Second thing Paul says here is Comfort the feeble minded.

This term has nothing to do with mentality – The literal translation of the Greek word is “little-souled, fainthearted.” These are the quitters in the church family. They always look on the dark side of things and give up when the going is tough. Every church family has its share of quitters too: The faint-hearted, timid, reserved, dispirited; those who lack courage and are cowardly; those who are easily discouraged and disappointed; those who fear difficult situations. The picture is that of a person who hesitates to serve or witness; a person who fails to live for Christ because of being faint-hearted. We must not rebuke or despise them, but instead comfort, encourage, and assure them.

(Sunday, April 15, 2012)

III. The Third thing Paul says is Support the weak.

Don't let them fall: Paul did not mean people who were weak physically. He was referring to those who were “weak in the faith” and had not grown strong in the Lord. We have the weak in our church family today - those who haven't matured as Christians; those who yield so easily to temptation; those who are so easily burdened, discouraged, defeated and led astray – These need to be supported. The weak need for us to hold them up and support them.

(Sunday, April 22, 2012)

IV. The Fourth thing Paul says is Be patient toward all men.

Church discipline must always be tempered with patience. Too often, discipline is exercised as a means of getting even. Patience does not retaliate. Patience is willing to go the extra distance with the goal of restoration and reconciliation. We must bear and forbear; we must suffer a long, long time with persons, no matter the situation. We cannot give up on people. The Lord didn't give up on you!!!

(Sunday, April 29, 2012)

V. Paul then says, see that none render evil for evil unto any man.

Watch your motives!! This verse clearly states that we are responsible for each other and responsible for how we respond to evil. We are to be looking after each other: see to it that none of us retaliates or mistreats those who mistreat us. If we mistreat another believer, we lose all chance of reaching him and growing him in Christ. When we mistreat a person, our testimony with that person is ruined. We lose our opportunity to minister to that person.

VI. Lastly, Paul says, but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men.

This is about as close to a disjunction of Agape love, as you'll ever find. Paul says do good in spite of: Don't worry about how people have treated you, treat them right anyway. Be a do-gooder!! Just be found doing good. Always try to be kind to everyone.