

## **THE THESSALONIAN EPISTLES: DIRECTION FOR THE LAST DAYS**

### **VII. Godly Living While Anticipating The Rapture**

**(1 Thessalonians 5:12-28)**

#### **I. Introduction**

- A. Paul's epistles to the believers at Thessalonica addressed new converts out of raw paganism who faced persecution and false teaching, a recipe for spiritual defeat if they failed to get adequate spiritual insight.
- B. After clarifying the future events of the pretribulation rapture and the start of the "day of the Lord" with the Great Tribulation, Paul directed his readers on godly living while anticipating the rapture in 1 Thessalonians 5:12-28. We view this passage for our insight, application, and edification (as follows):

#### **II. Godly Living While Anticipating The Rapture, 1 Thessalonians 5:12-28.**

- A. In hope of the rapture, we should relate well to our church leaders, 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13:
  - 1. Paul directed the congregation to "respect" (*oida*, Arndt & Gingrich, A Grk.-Eng. Lex. of the N. T., 1967, p. 558-559) those who labored among them and who were over them in the Lord, those who "admonished" (*noutheteo*, Ibid., p. 546) them and to esteem them highly in love, 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13a ESV.
  - 2. Such honor for these leaders was fitting in view of their work for the body's welfare, 1 Thess. 5:13b.
  - 3. Paul's call that the people be at peace among themselves is the result of obeying these instructions, for the right functioning of both leaders and subordinates produces peace, 1 Thess. 5:13c. (B. K. C., N. T., p. 708)
- B. In hope of the rapture, we should relate well to spiritually dysfunctional believers, 1 Thessalonians 5:14-15:
  - a. Paul urged the congregation to admonish the idle to be productive, 1 Thessalonians 5:14a ESV, NIV.
  - b. He urged the congregation to encourage the fainthearted, the timid, 1 Thessalonians 5:14b ESV, NIV.
  - c. Paul urged the congregation to help the weak, 1 Thessalonians 5:14c ESV, NIV.
  - d. He urged the congregation to be patient with all such dysfunctional believers, 1 Thess. 5:14d ESV, NIV.
- C. In hope of the rapture, we should watch that those in the body who are mistreated avoid any dysfunctional reaction to evil by not repaying evil with evil, but by always doing good to others, 1 Thessalonians 5:15.
- D. In hope of the rapture, we should watch over our own personal spiritual walk, 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18:
  - 1. Paul's call to rejoice always, to pray without ceasing and to give thanks to God in all circumstances is a directive of watching over one's own outlook and personal behavior, 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18a.
  - 2. Believers must realize that these directives are God's will for them in the Lord, 1 Thessalonians 5:18b.
- E. In hope of the rapture, we should watch over the truthfulness of the teaching in the church, 1 Thess. 5:19-22:
  - 1. The 1 Thessalonians 5:19 command not to quench the Holy Spirit indicates that the Spirit's work in the body could be opposed by believers if they underrated the value of the prophetic utterances by those who were gifted by the Holy Spirit in the Early Church to be prophets. (Ibid., p. 709)
  - 2. To avoid this problem, Paul charged that prophetic utterances not be treated with contempt but tested against Scripture truth that the church might hold to good utterances and reject the bad, 1 Thess. 5:20-22.
  - 3. To apply this call today when we no longer have the genuine gift of prophecy, we should evaluate every teaching and preaching message in light of the truth of the closed canon of Scripture. (2 Timothy 3:13-17)
- F. In hope of the rapture, we should trust God to continue to disciple us effectively, 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24:
  - 1. Paul encouraged his readers to trust that the God of peace would Himself sanctify them completely, separating their whole spirit, soul, and body to be kept blameless at the coming of Christ, 1 Thess. 5:23.
  - 2. God who called the believer to salvation by the Gospel is faithful, so He will surely do this, 1 Thess. 5:24.
- G. In hope of the rapture, we should focus on the spiritual welfare of the whole church body, 1 Thess. 5:25-28:
  - 1. Paul urged his readers to pray for his ministry team (1 Thess. 5:25), to greet all fellow believers with a holy kiss typical of the Ancient Near Eastern custom, what today applies to shaking hands in greeting one another (1 Thess. 5:26) and to have this epistle read to all the believers (1 Thess. 5:27) before he ended his epistle with the call that the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ might be with them (1 Thess. 5:28).
  - 2. Thus, Paul urged his readers to keep their focus on the spiritual welfare of the entire body of Christ.

***Lesson:*** *In anticipation of the rapture, God wants us to relate well to our church leaders, to relate well to spiritually dysfunctional believers, to avoid dysfunctional reactions to being mistreated, to watch over our own spiritual walk, to watch over the truthfulness of the teaching in the church, to trust God to continue to disciple us effectively and to focus on the spiritual welfare of the whole church body.*

***Application:*** *In anticipation of the rapture, may we heed Paul's directives in 1 Thessalonians 5:12-28.*