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### Personal Study through the Bible-27 (1 Thessalonians 5:13-14)

In the last lesson, I noted the importance of reading your Bible daily so that your soul will be exposed to all of its truths on a consistent basis. Daily reading of the Word of God, even for a few minutes every day, is one of the greatest things you can do for yourself to get yourself oriented to the true nature of the Christian virtues that fill God's Word. I have also mentioned that there are three levels to Scripture: the basic conceptual, which everyone (even unbeliever and carnal believer) can understand; the exegetical, which requires training in the original languages; and the metaphysical, which requires a level of grasping ultimate reality in 'Ehyeh.

Consider the benefits of the Word of God on just a basic conceptual level through this illustration. After a long hard day at work, you have likely faced a barrage of all types of testing: e.g., people testing, system testing, thought testing, and circumstance testing. How you respond to these influences will be influenced, to some degree, by your background, feelings of vulnerabilities, your view of yourself, your wishes and goals, fellowship status, and your norms and standards. If you have not been reading your Bible on a regular basis, what do you think your norms and standards will look like? If, day after day, you spend all of your free time watching TV or being entertained by the kosmos *without* exposing your soul to the truths of the Word of God what standards are forming in your soul day by day? Don't misunderstand me, I am not against entertainment. As a matter of fact, I think it is unhealthy and unnatural for a human being to shun all entertainment and just study all of the time (yes, I really do believe this). There is nothing wrong with entertainment *except* when it prevents you from being in the Word of God on a regular basis. The problem is that apart from daily study of the Word, you will continue to be molded by the standards of the world.

Back to my point. Say after a long day, you choose to spend your evening on Facebook or texting your friends rather than with God's Word. Say you faced a lot of people tests that day. Say someone gossiped about you; someone who you thought was your friend. What do you think your attitude is going to be in regard to that person? Will you not be tempted to strike back? In your pain, will you not tend to become angry and bitter? Maybe you will catch yourself and confess the sin of bitterness. Maybe you will remember Bible classes you have had in the past about how bad anger and bitterness can make you. Maybe!

However, consider the difference if, after a long day of people testing, you decided to end the day with the Lord in prayer and by opening and reading His Word. Say you opened up today's verse of 1 Thessalonians 5:13b-15 and noticed God's will for your life (which is totally different from TV, etc.) to 'live in peace . . . encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone, do not repay evil for evil, but always seek after that which is good for one another and *all* people.' Surely there would be a difference between your mental and spiritual health whether you read this verse or not. Surely you cannot say that you cannot understand the Bible on this basic conceptual level. To be sure, there is a great deal of exegesis, metaphysics, and explanation of spiritual mechanics to unpack those injunctions. However, these spiritual/ethical

commands do fill the pages of Scripture, and simply by reading them you will have a great opportunity to make an adjustment before and to the Lord. Furthermore, you will also seek to understand how in the world can someone do this superhuman tasks. But had you not read this section, you likely would not have made an adjustment, or at least not an adjustment that would be the same as if your read this passage. This illustrates the importance of daily reading the Word. It provides the opportunity to reorient to God's standards, even if you do not understand them fully. Everyone can understand what it means not to repay evil for evil on a basic level.

After Paul addresses the command to respect and love the pastor-teacher (which is but a result of loving God's Word), Paul notes five virtues to be directed to five categories of people. I would like for you to reflect on these virtues and their objects after reading 1 Thess. 5:13b-15.

1. *Live in peace with one another.* The "one another" refers to fellow believers. Christ mandates that, as much as possible, we are to live in peace with all men, but especially with fellow believers. There is an incredible standard of love that believers are to have for every fellow Christian. Read John 13:34-35. This love is something that the world has never seen before. Christ called it "new" in kind (*kainos*) kind of love. There is to be absolutely no animosity toward any other believer, period! Failure will result in perpetual carnality and divine discipline.
2. *Admonish the unruly/idle.* This is the group back in 1 Thess. 4:11-12: those who are lazy busybodies. I am not sure how one would go about this today except just to tell them to mind their own business—in love of course. Most would find this command easier than the others. However, they all require the filling of the Holy Spirit to be done in love.
3. *Encourage the fainthearted.* This refers to the grieving Christians who have lost their loved ones noted back in 1 Thess. 4:13-18. They should be encouraged that they will once again see their loved ones who have gone on to be with the Lord.
4. *Help the weak.* This refers to those who are weak in the faith. Every believer should be more than willing to help any baby believer who needs help understanding doctrine.
5. *Be patient with everyone.* This speaks for itself. Yes, everyone means everyone. I will cover more on this in our Bible class on Sunday when we move into Romans 13 and government. Let me just say this: regardless of what anyone does to you, you are to treat him with patience whether you think he deserves it or not is not the issue. God says everyone deserves patience. If you cannot be motivated by God, do it for yourself—you will find that you will enjoy your short life a bit more if you treat everyone with patience. Everyone! Do yourself a favor and try turning the test over to the Lord.

*In 'Ehyeh,  
Pastor Don Hargrove*