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<http://www.fbcweb.org/doctrines.html>

Personal Study of the Bible-64
1 Thessalonians 5- Spiritual Application:
Christ's Second Advent and Spiritual Virtue

After Paul deals with the Rapture in 1 Thessalonians 4, he moves to the Second Advent in chapter five. Read chapter 5, paying special attention to the virtues that should be in believers in light of the future coming of Christ. The "Day of the Lord" (verse 2) refers to the extended period of time, beginning with the Tribulation and including the events of the Second Advent of Christ and the Millennium Kingdom. The emphasis of chapter five is on the fact that as believers we should always be oriented to the future with the Lord. We are, in fact, aliens and strangers in this world; read 1 Peter 1:1; 2:11; Hebrews 11:3. We are not to live like unbelievers who have absolutely no clue about the coming of the Lord and His judgments; read Luke 17:26-30.

Think about your life in light of the fact that 100 years ago you did not exist and 100 years from now you will not exist (not as a physical being doing what you regularly do now). Life is short and only the fools put all of their time, energy, anxiety, and hope in this life and world; read Mark 8:36; Luke 12:15-31.

Note the various spiritual virtues in chapter five that are expected of believers who truly are growing spiritually as they live unto the Lord (instead of kosmos diabolicus): Believers are not to s_____ as others do, but be a_____ and s_____ (vs. 6); they are to be growing in f_____, h_____, and l_____ (8); they should appreciate and love their pastor who works hard at giving them i_____ (12-13); they are to a_____ the unruly, e_____ the fainthearted, h_____ the weak, and be p_____ with everyone (14); they should never repay e_____ for e_____, but also seek after that which is good for one another and for all p_____ (15); they should r_____ always (16); they should p_____ without ceasing (17); they should be giving t_____ in everything (18); they should avoid q_____ the Holy Spirit (19); they should not look down on the teaching concerning p_____ (20); they should have the capacity to be able to e_____ everything carefully (21); they are to h_____ fast to that which is good (21); and they should abstain from every appearance of e_____ (22).

Consider the emphasis on application in the above passages. Knowing doctrine does not in and of itself produce spiritual virtue. For example, just because a believer knows what is just (experientially) does not mean that he is automatically just (experientially). It is a form of Platonism to think that knowledge alone will make one righteous. Plato believed that the only problem with man is that he is ignorant and if he knows better, he will not act unjustly. It is not hard to see how false that thinking is. Consider gossiping: Is a believer living a sanctified acceptable life before God in regard to gossip simply because he listens to Bible doctrine and knows the doctrine of gossip, especially in light of the fact that he knows how God detests it? Of course not! A believer who gossips is living an unsanctified life in that area no matter how much doctrine he takes in daily. So how does he become experientially righteous with regard to gossip? By application—there is no other way: he must stop gossiping long enough for his

character to change with regard to his desire to gossip. As long as he continues to gossip, he will continue to habituate his character in that evil/vice. By the way, there is a vast difference between a believer who is careless and gossips (out of character) versus one who has become a gossip in character, by habituation. There is no breaking of this character flaw apart from application, which means it must be stopped before a change can take place. The same principle applies to all of the spiritual injunctions in the Bible. Take complaining, the only way to stop growing in the vice of being a grouse, is to stop complaining and starting thanking God in all things and for all things (1 Thess. 5:18; Eph. 5:20). The only way to gain these spiritual virtues is by doing them, which means applying the various doctrines under the filling of the Holy Spirit.

When Paul lists all of these spiritual virtues, he is inviting all Christians to do them and thus become virtuous in all of these areas, in other words, by nature be the kind of people who truly live for God and look forward to being with Him. No believer is ever going to gain and grow in these supernatural virtues unless he first of all gives himself totally and without reserve to the Lord (Rom. 12:1). Only then will the believer's thoughts and *habits* be cultivated by God. There is no cultivation apart from application. There is no becoming (experientially) sons of l_____ and sons of d_____ (5) apart from the execution of the spiritual life, and there is no true execution of the spiritual life if it is not done as unto the Lord by the power of the filling of the Holy Spirit. But then again there is no capacity to even stay in fellowship very long to do this as long as the character is one of continued growth in the darkness of vice instead of turning to and growing in God's blessed virtues that fill the pages of our bibles.

James 1:21 Therefore putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls. 22 But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. 23 For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; 24 for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. 25 But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man shall be blessed in what he does.

*In 'Ehyeh,
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