

WATCHING, WORKING, PRAYING

TEXT: I THESSALONIANS 5:1-28

INTRODUCTION:

1. The apostle Paul's first epistle to the Thessalonians is the earliest of his letters.
2. In many ways, the church in Thessalonica was a model church. Paul said in I Thessalonians 1:7, "So that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia."
 - A. It was a saved church -- "delivered from the wrath to come" (1:10b).
 - B. It was a sound church -- "having received the Word" (1:6).
 - C. It was a suffering church -- "in much affliction" (1:6b; cf. 2:2; 3:4).
 - D. It was a soulwinning church (1:8).
 - E. It was a separated church -- "ye turned to God from idols" (1:9b).
 - F. It was a servicing church -- "to serve the living and true God" (1:9c).
 - G. It was a second-coming church (1:10a).
3. Oftentimes we get discouraged and disheartened by the wickedness here in NYC. Let us remember that the cities evangelized by the apostolic churches -- Thessalonica, Athens, Corinth, Ephesus, Rome and the others, were just as wicked. Yet many souls were saved, churches were established, and the Gospel was proclaimed all over the Roman Empire.
4. This is the first Sunday of 2013, and as we plan ahead for this new year I would like for us to consider I Thessalonians 5.
5. I have entitled my message: Watching (5:6), working (5:11, 12, etc.), and praying (5:17, 25).

I. WATCHING (5:1-6)

1. The second coming of Christ is emphasized in I & II Thessalonians (5:1, 2; cf. 4:13-18).
2. D.L. Moody was a great evangelist. Many souls were saved under his preaching. His friend F. B. Meyer once asked him, "What is the secret of your success?" Moody replied, "For many years I have never preached a message without the consciousness that the Lord may come before I have finished."
3. The worldly crowd is not looking for our Lord's return. They are in darkness, but the apostle Paul told the church in Thessalonica, "But

- ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief..." (I Thess. 5:4).
4. The Lord could return any day now. Let us be watchful (5:6).
 5. Our Lord said in Matthew 24:42, "Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come."
 6. Our Lord said in Mark 13:33, "Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is."
 7. Our Lord said in Luke 21:36, "Watch ye therefore, and pray always."
 8. Paul said in Colossians 4:2, "Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving."
 9. First Peter 4:7 says, "But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer."
 10. First Thessalonians 5:6 says, "Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober (temperate, circumspect)..."
 11. As we watch and pray, let us "be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation" (I Thess. 5:8).
 12. "For God hath not appointed us to wrath..." (5:9). Those who are not saved must face the wrath of God. It is our responsibility to warn them.
 13. I read an interesting statement by Spurgeon the other day. He said, "A man says to me, 'Can you explain the seven trumpets of the Revelation?' No, but I can blow one in your ear and warn you to escape from the wrath to come!" ("Enquiring the Way to Zion").
 14. John 3:36 says, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."
 15. The Bible has much to say about the wrath of God. Deuteronomy 29:23 refers to the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah, "which the LORD overthrew in his anger, and in his wrath."
 16. John the Baptist said to the Pharisees and Sadducees, "O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" (Matt. 3:7).
 17. Just as men accumulate money and worldly treasures, sinners treasure up unto themselves wrath (cf. Romans 2:5).
 18. William Newell refers to this principle of treasuring up wrath as "the cumulative character of continued impenitence."
 19. A mocker once asked an elderly Christian lady if she believed in a literal lake of fire and brimstone. She said she did, based upon the clear teachings of Revelation 19--21.

20. The mocker teased her about this, and said, "No such amount of brimstone could be found in one place." To this, the lady wisely said, "Sinners bring their own brimstone with them" (cf. Rom. 2:5).
21. Doctors warn their patients about the hardening of the arteries, but hardening of the heart is far more dangerous (Rom. 2:5)!
22. Sinners need to repent before it is too late. Romans 5:9 says, "Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him."

II. WORKING (5:11-24)

1. There are twenty-two commandments from verse 11 to the end of the chapter. Our Lord said in John 14:15, "If ye love me, keep my commandments."
2. First John 5:3 says, "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous."
3. These exhortations are very practical. Verse 11 says we are to "comfort" one another, and we are to "edify (build up) one another."
4. Verse 12 says we are to "know" (recognize, respect) the pastor.
5. J. Vernon McGee said, "If you can't support the pastor, leave the church." He was right about that!
6. Church members should "esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake" (5:13).
7. "And be at peace" (5:13) there should be peace among believers. Out in the world, there is much fussing and fighting, but there should always be peace in God's church.
8. Verse 14 says to "warn them that are unruly" (those who are disorderly and rebellious). We recently had to deal with a fellow like that around here. After he ignored several warnings we had to tell him to move on.
9. "Comfort the feebleminded" (5:14). J. Vernon McGee says we are to "help them to get in step."
10. Matthew Henry says this means to encourage and comfort the faint-hearted, or those that are dejected and of a sorrowful spirit.
11. "Support the weak" (5:14). Romans 15:1 says, "We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves."
12. "Be patient toward all men" (5:14). Some men vex us, and annoy us, and try our patience, but we must not lose our temper.
13. Verse 15 says, "See that none render evil for evil unto any man." We are not to retaliate. Girolamo Savonarola was a preacher in Florence,

- Italy. In 1498, rich and powerful politicians, working together with the corrupt Roman Catholic Church, had him burned at the stake. Savonarola said, "A Christian's life consists in doing good and suffering evil."
14. Hebrews 11:38 says, "Of whom the world was not worthy..."
 15. "But ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men" (5:15b). We must always endeavor to please God, in all circumstances. Whatever men may do to us, we must always do good to others.
 16. Psalm 97:12 says, "Rejoice in the LORD, ye righteous; and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness."
 17. Verse 16 says, "Rejoice evermore." Psalm 33:1 says, "Rejoice in the LORD, O ye righteous: for praise is comely for the upright."
 18. Isaiah 61:10 says, "I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God."

III. PRAYING (5:17-28)

1. Prayer is very important, and it is mentioned twice in this chapter (5:17, 25).
2. "Pray without ceasing." Some say this refers to an attitude of prayer, but it is more than just an attitude. I believe that 2012 was a wonderful year for our church because in the fall of 2011 Carl and I agreed to meet every day for prayer.
3. Praying is asking. Our Lord said in Luke 11:9 and 10, "And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened."
4. James 4:2 says, "Ye have not, because ye ask not."
5. And while we are praying and asking, let us also give thanks to God! Verse 18 says, "In every thing give thanks..."
6. People sometimes struggle with the will of God. Here is a suggestion: go through the Bible and take note of all the Scriptures which talk about the will of God.
 - It is the will of God for us to be thankful (5:18).
 - It is the will of God to "abstain from fornication" (I Thess. 4:3).
 - It is the will of God to be submissive to those in authority (I Peter 2:13-15).

- Our Lord said in Matthew 18:14, "It is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish."
 - Second Peter 3:9 says God "is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."
 - Galatians 1:4 says our Lord Jesus Christ "gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father."
 - Romans 12:2 says, "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."
7. It is in Christ that men are given the dynamic that enables them to carry out God's will (Leon Morris, *The Epistles of Paul to the Thessalonians*). It is the power of the indwelling Spirit of God.
 8. Verse 19 says, "Quench not the Spirit." The Holy Spirit is like a fire.
 9. He is called "the spirit of burning" in Isaiah 4:4. Speaking of Christ, John the Baptist said, "He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire" (Matthew 3:11).
 10. Sadly, some Christians are guilty of quenching the Holy Spirit!
 11. To quench the Spirit means to refuse to do the will of God, to refuse to let the Holy Spirit have His way. Some Christians let the fire go out by carelessness, worldliness, and stubbornness.
 12. You do not have to commit a terrible sin to be a backslider. You can be a backslider by just doing nothing.

CONCLUSION:

1. This passage of Scripture is very practical. I am particularly impressed with verse 19 -- "Quench not the Spirit."
2. In the days of the apostles, many of the churches were on fire, and the Holy Spirit was not quenched.
3. It was in Thessalonica, around the same time this epistle was written, that the enemies of the Gospel accused the apostles of turning the world upside down (Acts 17:6).
4. But through carelessness, lukewarmness, and carnality, the fire started going out and the churches started getting cold. And when we come to the book of Revelation we read these strong words of warning:

"Repent...or else I... will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent" (Revelation 2:5).

5. But the churches in Asia Minor did not repent. And the fire was quenched. The candlestick was removed.
6. Today that area is called Turkey, and there are no more churches in that part of the world today. Turkey is almost entirely Muslim.
7. They quenched the Spirit.
8. It didn't just happen in Asia Minor. It happened in Europe, and it is happening all over the USA.
9. Pray for revival. We need it.