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Permit #361

Thoughts from First Thessalonians ...

## ***Pithy Exhortations***

The saints need continual reminders about their attitudes and actions. More often than needing to learn something new, brethren simply need to have things they already know and to which they are already committed brought to the forefront of their minds. Hence it is that the Lord has given memorials such as the Passover for the Israelites, and the Lord's Supper for Christians to keep important things at a high level of consciousness. "Do this," said Jesus of the breaking of bread, "in remembrance of Me!" What could be more important than remembering Jesus?

Reminders, remembrances, and occasional remonstrations focus the child of God and help keep him on task and heaven bound.

- ▲ **Rejoice** — God wants His kids to be happy campers. They are on a pilgrimage, strangers and aliens in a foreign world. As such, they really don't belong here, and are then regarding as camping rather than thinking of earth as a permanent home. On camping trips, challenges arise: the weather turns bad, unexpected difficulties arise, all the money gets lost, and people in the campground often get hostile. "If you were of the world, the world would love its own," noted Jesus, using the term "the world" as His description of the campground. "But because you are not of the world," He continued, "but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you" (John 15:19). So what is a saint to do in the midst of difficulties and even persecutions on this camping trip? "Rejoice always!" says Paul (1 Thessalonians 5:16). The fact that rejoicing is commanded means that the brethren can make the

decision to rejoice no matter what the earthly circumstances.

- ▲ **Pray** — The saint is not alone on his pilgrimage. Indwelt by the Spirit and thus comforted by the presence of Christ within, he continues to take his steps forward in faith. But like the One whom he follows, he prays. Of Jesus, Dr. Luke recorded, "But He Himself would often slip away into the wilderness and pray" (Luke 5:16). Jesus was in constant communication with the Father, and serves as an example for His disciples. Paul likewise encourages brethren to be conscious of the Lord at all times, and be ready to slip into an attitude of prayer instantaneously. "Pray without ceasing" is the exordium. "In everything give thanks, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus" (1 Thessalonians 5:17,18). When brethren want to know what God's will is for them, the answer is simple: pray without ceasing and be thankful. Everything else must be very secondary!

- ▲ **Prophetic utterance** — In the first century church, gifts of the Spirit were extant, and certain men would deliver the prophetic messages by direct inspiration to the congregations. In modern times, the completed New Testament writings serve as a superior replacement. But as the brethren were exhorted then, so it is now: "Do not quench the Spirit; do not despise prophetic utterances," avers the apostle (1 Thessalonians 5:19,20). Messages delivering God's doctrinal truths and encouragements are not to be sneered at or discounted. "But examine everything carefully," Paul cautioned; "hold fast to that which is good" (1 Thessalonians 5:21). Not everyone is honorable in their purported proclamation of God's truths. The scriptures warn about false teachers and false prophets, and saints are exhorted to "test the spirits to see whether they are from God" (1 John 4:1). But that which is good and consistent with the teaching and tenor of the new covenant is to be grasped, honored, and implemented, in contrast to the injunction, "abstain from every form of evil" (1 Thessalonians 5:22).

This series of punchy, pithy, and powerful reminders bring the saint to the continued recognition that he needs to keep moving forward with a great attitude. He needs to be in a state of continual prayer, thankful and honoring the precepts of the word of God. He needs to turn away from evil and do good. Certainly the words of Paul to the Colossian brethren fit here as well: "And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus" (Colossians 3:17).

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