



1



2

1 Thessalonians

chapter #1

- **Respect** for the Word & Way of the Cross.

chapter #2

- **Respond** to life's circumstances.

chapter #3

- **Receive** from a spiritual community.

chapter #4

- **Resist** carnal & cultural temptations.

3

John 15:18

"If the world hates you, you know that **it has hated Me before it hated you.**"

Like Jesus, we should expect to receive the treatment he did.

Philippines 2:5-6

"Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, **did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped,**"

Like Jesus, we are called to respond to circumstances as he did.

4

1 Thessalonians 4

"1 Finally then, brethren, we request and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that, as you received from us instruction as to how you ought to walk and please God (just as you actually do walk), that you may excel still more. 2 For you know what commandments we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus. 3 **For this is the will of God, your sanctification;** that is, that you **abstain from sexual immorality;** 4 that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, 5 **not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God;** 6 and that no man transgress and defraud his brother in the matter because the Lord is the avenger in all these things, just as we also told you before and solemnly warned you. 7 **For God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification.** 8 Consequently, he who rejects this is not rejecting man but the God who gives His Holy Spirit to you. 9 Now as to the love of the brethren, you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another; 10 for indeed you do practice it toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia. But we urge you, brethren, to excel still more, 11 and to **make it your ambition to lead a quiet life and attend to your own business and work with your hands,** just as we commanded you; 12 so that you may **behave properly toward outsiders and not be in any need.**"

5

1 Thessalonians 4 (interpretive paraphrase)

"I want to encourage you to keep it up the teaching I have given you. Understand that you are to be aliens to the worldly culture around you. Follow my example in putting off the lustful passions of the flesh. Don't forget that God will discipline you if you fail to respect the Body of Christ. God has called you to a sanctified life where you offer your body as a living sacrifice (Rom.12:1-2). This is not an insult to your humanity but a reflection of Christ's Spirit in you. You have been a good example of brotherly love to those in Macedonia, but don't forget that it is always better to give than to receive, therefore follow my example (1Thess.2:9) and attend to your own business without putting demands on others."

In short: Follow my example in both the Word & Way of the Cross

- 1) resisting fleshly temptations &
- 2) not being a burden to others.

6

Jeremiah 2:13

"For My people have committed two evils. They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, to hew for themselves cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water."



7

1 John 2:16

"For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, **is not from the Father, but is from the world.**"

Matthew 4

The lust of the flesh - bodily enticement

"3... "If You are the Son of God, **command that these stones become bread.**"

The lust of the eye - social entitlement

"6 ... "If You are the Son of God throw Yourself down; for it is written, 'He will give His angels charge concerning You'; and 'On their hands they will bear You up, Lest You strike Your foot against a stone.'"

The pride of life - cultural empowerment

"9 ... "All these things will I give You, if You **fall down and worship me.**"

8

John 1:4

"**In Him was life**, and the life was the Light of mankind"

John 10:10

"The thief comes only to steal, and kill, and destroy; **I came that they might have life, and might have it abundantly.**"

John 17:3

"**this is eternal life, that they may know You**, the only true God, and Jesus Christ who You have sent."

Psalms 37:4

"**Delight yourself in the Lord**; and He will give you the **desires of your heart.**"

Romans 12

"1 I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to **present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice**, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. 2 And do **not be conformed to this world**, but be **transformed by the renewing of your mind**, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect."

9

Three empty cisterns that don't hold water:

1. False hope in Pharisaic Law

(NOTE: This was the Judaizer's challenge.)

John 1:17

"For the **Law was given through Moses**; **grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ.**"

John 5

"39 You search the Scriptures, because you think **that in them you have eternal life**; and it is these that bear witness of Me; 40 and **you are unwilling to come to Me, that you may have life.**"

Matthew 9:17

"**Nor do men put new wine into old wineskins**; otherwise the wineskins burst, and the wine pours out, and the wineskins are ruined;"

10

Three empty cisterns that don't hold water:

1. False hope in Pharisaic Law

Romans 8:15

"1 There is therefore now **no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus**. 2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has **set you free from the law of sin and of death**. ... 15 For **you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again**, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, 'Abba! Father!'"

Galatians 5:1

"It is for freedom that **Christ has set us free**. Stand firm, then, and **do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.**"

Galatians 2:4

"But it was because of the false brethren who had sneaked in to spy out **our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, in order to bring us into bondage.**"

11

Grace is not freedom if the fine print is law.

Old Covenant

God's Spirit is
WITH us!



We seek a
word or sign
from without.

New Covenant

God's Spirit is
IN us!



We seek wisdom
from within our
renewed mind and
a Godly counsel.

12

Three empty cisterns that don't hold water:

2. False hope in passional license

(NOTE: This was the Greek's challenge.)

Romans 6

"1 What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace might increase? 2 **May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it?**"

Galatians 5:13

"For you were **called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh**, but through love serve one another."

13

2. False hope in passional license

Hugh Hefner's "sexual revolution" through "Playboy" philosophy was to free humanity (women) from "Puritan" social standards that were keeping society from an "abundant life".

But family stability, lasting personal happiness and relationship satisfaction decreased with the "sexual revolution".

It replaced

"What should I want" with "What does the world offer"

"How should I use freedom" with "What am I free to do"

"What is a good life" with "What gives me pleasure now"

14

2. False hope in passional license

John 17

"15 **I do not ask Thee to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one.** 16 They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. 17 Sanctify them in the truth; Thy word is truth. 18 As Thou didst send Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world."

- **Christian laws** will not reform the human heart.
- **Political power** will not bring in God's kingdom.
- **Military strength** will not give us assured security.
- **Sexual freedom** will not secure long term happiness.
- **Christian nationalism** will not build the Body of Christ.
- **Material prosperity** will not bring social peace / justice.
- **An educated world** will not bring humanity to its senses.

15

3. False hope in political liberty

(NOTE: This was the Roman's challenge.)

Preamble to the Constitution of the United States

"We the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, **promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty** to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America."

Benjamin Franklin (paraphrase)

"Democracy is a great system if we can keep it."

16

3. False hope in political liberty



John Adams

"We have no government armed with power capable of contending with human passions unbridled by morality and religion. Our constitution was made only for a moral and a religious people. It is wholly inadequate for the government of any other."

"America is a nation with the soul of a church."

G.K. Chesterton



17

Without a Biblical ethical spirit:

Capitalism

becomes the exploitation of the "have nots" by the "have lots"

Democracy

becomes an endless litigation of rights or the marginalization of the minority by the majority.

Pluralism

dignifies every divergence as an individual right.

Competition

ignores compassion, cooperation, and community.

18

*All Scripture is written **FOR** us but not necessarily **TO** us or **ABOUT** us.*

The O.T. model of church / state is
"Theocracy" - church and state are intertwined.

- Biblical Israel was not a democracy. When Israel demanded to choose its own kings it was seen as rebellious. (1 Sam.8:1-22; 12:17)
- Every seventh year the land was to be left for the poor by law. (Ex.23:10-11; Deut.15:1-11)
- Gleaning rights were required by Law. (Lev.19:9-10)
- The Promised Land was a (stewardship) gift from God to Jews so long as they were faithful. (Deut.30:1-5)

19

American culture?
"It's all about the economy, stupid!"



having false hope,
 in money we don't have,
 to buy things we don't need,
 to impress people we don't like,
 while expecting peace we don't get,
 and blaming politicians we don't trust.

20

Jesus
"Chaplain of the American dream"

Our culture loves Jesus as a means to the "good life" not as the model of that life.



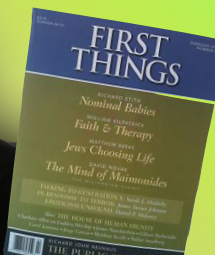
21

Matthew 22:21

"Render to **Caesar** the things that are Caesar's, and to **God** the things that are God's."

"Idolatry is trying to bring in God's Kingdom before its time and without its King."

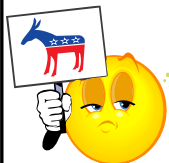
Richard John Neuhaus



It is popular with both the political left and right.

22

Both political sides share some things in common:



- They are **preoccupied** with the temporal / material. "It's all about this life and now."
- They are **convinced** that the solutions are political. "It's all about social systems."



- They **associate** their politics with their theology. "God is on our side, not their's."
- They are more **committed** to being "understood by" rather than "trying to understand" each other. "We don't need, want, or care to hear about your ideas."
- They **demonize** the other side. "We are the only ones addressing the real issues with the right motives, and realistic solutions."

23

Once we understand the Cross three things become clearer.

1. *What stands between us and peace with God is not our moral discipline so much as our faith in Jesus.*
2. *What stands between us and social peace is not political control so much as our witness in response to circumstances.*
3. *What stands between us and personal happiness is not repressed passions so much as "agape love".*

24

How can we learn to walk
in the Way of the Cross?

1. **Take our baptism seriously** by **CHOOSING DAILY** to die to “fleshly” passions.
2. Accept **our alien status** by **TREATING** worldly life’s false hopes as a mockery of the Cross.
3. **Find the deepest desire of the heart** **IN** the peace and power of the Cross of Christ.
4. **Make disciples** by **BEING** one, a day at a time.

25

I Thessalonians



26