

1 THESSALONIANS 5:11-28

Encouraging Words

Paul's letter to the Thessalonians is coming to an end. Paul is giving the people his final thoughts and encouragement.

We need to remember that Paul, Silas and Timothy spent 3 weeks here. They invested time and energy in the new believers at this church plant.

These were difficult times for this ministry team. They were dealing not only with new believers learning to understand the truth of the gospel and the new life they now have in Jesus, but persecution from people that rejected this teaching.

I would imagine there were many hours of questions and answers. Yet Paul and his team endured this time because of 2 things.

- Their call in life from the Lord to share the Gospel
- Their love for people, the people of Thessalonica

We must always keep in mind why we do what we do for the Lord.

- As believers
- As a husband or wife
- As parents
- As employer or employee

Paul will now give his final thoughts, encouraging the church in how to live for the Lord. Something Paul practiced and as we read, I pray the Lord will speak to our hearts to motivate us to keep moving forward in Jesus.

1 Thessalonians 5:11

Therefore, comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing.

How amazing is it to know that you have people that will love you, encourage you and comfort you? We all appreciate that in our friends.

But I want to encourage you to make that part of your life as well. Loving, encouraging and comforting others.

In **1 Samuel 18**, David has just defeated Goliath and Saul is seeing the hand of the Lord on his life. Saul's son Jonathan has noticed as well.

1 Samuel 18:3-4

Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul. And Jonathan took off the robe that was on him and gave it to David, with his armor, even to his sword and his bow and his belt.

There is a special relationship between Jonathan and David. Jonathan could see the call of God on David's life and wanted to help in any way he could.

Hopefully you have had at one time in your life. someone that invested in you, believed in you and supported you. That person that was a "breathe of fresh air" so to speak when it came to dealing with life and getting a proper perspective.

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I have had a few of those people in my life. (Bob Houston-Premier Marketing)

I remember when I went to work for a brokerage firm, a job that really changed my life and my perspective. There were a few people there that influenced me, believed in me. They helped a young kid refine his skills and encouraged growth in my life personally and professionally.

But one guy there, at first appearance was a grumpy, mean old man that came down on everyone. You didn't cross him and you did what he told you to do, no questions asked.

For some reason, he liked me. I learned so much from him. He was always honest about my performance yet he encouraged me and helped me improve.

Hopefully, you have been that for someone.

Maybe you have never had that person in your life? Either way.

I want to encourage you to not only be the receiver but the giver as well.

We all need help at times and there will never be a shortage of people in need.

And as we will explore Paul's instruction, I know God will speak to us today as to how we can move forward in our lives as believers in Christ.

Read **verses 12-22** (also **1 Corinthians 12**)

1 Thessalonians 5:12-13

And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. Be at peace among yourselves.

I have heard and read a few comments on these verses. Some take the position of the church today and how the body of Christ should respect the leadership and pastors of their church. This is correct, but I think that there is a bit more application here.

We must remember that Paul was in Thessalonica 3 weeks. He established this church plant and left it in the hands of fairly new believers with 2 categories.

1. People that serve-**those who labor among you**

Often there are 3 types of people in the church:

- Those that serve
- Those that receive
- Those that complain

1 Corinthians 12:12-14

For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ.

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For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. For in fact the body is not one member but many.

Isn't it a wonderful thing how the body of Christ functions? No matter who you are, where you come from, your status in life and may I add the color of your skin. We ***being many, are one body, so also is Christ!***

And how is this body (the church) supposed to function?

1 Corinthians 12:15-19

If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body," is it therefore not of the body?

And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body," is it therefore not of the body?

If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling?

But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased. And if they were all one member, where would the body be?

The body cannot function properly when the individual members are not working together.

A few years ago, celebrating our 30th anniversary, Missy and I were hiking in Kauai on Sleeping Giant.

Almost half way to the top, I slipped and snapped my ankle. It hurt, it started swelling, but I thought that I could continue on.

But my ankle was saying no!

I tried to go further. We were so looking forward to being at the top and the amazing view we would get to experience. But with every step, my ankle was getting worse. My ankle needed attention, it needed to be cared for and mended. So we headed back down and made it back to the hotel.

RICE was the answer: Rest, Ice, Compression, Elevation.

(I know this because I have broken my ankle before)

Hopefully you are understanding the point I am trying to make. We as members of the body of Christ, in our church, must care for the other members of the body. We must tend to their needs, we must respect and honor them.

We will always take for granted members of our physical body until that member is wounded.

Because my ankle was broken, I couldn't walk anywhere without pain, and now I am very careful going on walks or hikes.

My ankle needed attention to heal and to work properly.

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I learned to **serve** and take care of that ankle. For so many years I just **received** the benefit of my ankle functioning properly.

2. People in leadership-**and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake.**

Now we are talking about some form of leadership.

Remember, the church is 3 weeks old and people are probably in positions that they have never had any experience in.

They are not only new believers but new pastors, elders, deacons (servers).

The 3 types of people in the church:

- Those that serve
- Those that receive
- Those that complain

Most people will **receive** from leadership, or certain leadership. I thank the Lord for the leadership in my life over the years. Submitting to them was a huge blessing in my life even though like you, sometimes I didn't like it.

So what should someone that is **over you in the Lord** look and act like?

Well Paul tells us here that they should **admonish you**.

The Greek word for **admonish** means to teach, exhort or warn.

We are ok with the teaching, exhorting or building-up part.

The warning, or correction is a bit more difficult.

This is when we get into the 3rd category of people in the church.

The ones that complain.

We all know how critical people can be sometimes. If you have ever served in any kind of leadership role, there is always someone ready to give you their kind advice and assistance. More often than not, it is someone that criticizes everything you do. Complainers

Most of the time, complainers don't serve.

They receive very little, because they are more concerned about things going their way instead of how the Lord is leading and directing.

It's like heading to the top of Sleeping Giant. I wanted to see that view, forcing my ankle to do something that it was no longer be able to do.

ANY leadership in the church should be **admonishing** the people.

Teaching, exhorting and warning.

Paul's instruction here is not only to the body of believers but to the leadership as well.

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Christians are to esteem their leaders, and to esteem them very highly in love. They should do this for their work's sake. They don't deserve esteem because of their title, or because of their personality, but because of their labor on behalf of God's people. Guzik

And the end of verse 13

Be at peace among yourselves.

There should be peace! How do we have peace among the body of Christ?

1 Corinthians 12:20-25

But now indeed there are many members, yet one body.

And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you"; nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you."

No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary.

And those members of the body which we think to be less honorable, on these we bestow greater honor; and our unpresentable parts have greater modesty, but our presentable parts have no need. But God composed the body, having given greater honor to that part which lacks it, that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another.

Schism means to split or gap, division. We cannot have it in the church!

Do we all think the same? No we do not!

Our disagreements **should never** cause us to think less of one another or treat each other differently.

So after I snapped my ankle, it would be like deciding to cut it off because it wasn't working properly. No one in their right mind would do that.

1 Corinthians 12:26

And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.

The unity of the body of Christ! I did everything I could to get down the mountain without injuring my ankle worse than it already was. Believe me, coming down was painful and it took a lot longer than climbing up.

1 Thessalonians 5:14

Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all.

Remember the definition of **exhort**-to build up. Paul is telling us how to be built up. This is not just a leadership role; this is instruction for all of us in day to day relationships.

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warn those who are unruly

Paul clarifies this in his 2nd letter. The same word for unruly is used.

2 Thessalonians 3:14-15

And if anyone does not obey our word in this epistle, note that person and do not keep company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet do not count him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.

Your behavior is not acceptable. We are not hanging out anymore if you continue down this path. I love you and you are my brother in Christ.

comfort the fainthearted

Comfort from the Lord is an amazing gift. God will often use you to give that gift of comfort to others. God desires to comfort His people.

Isaiah 57:15

For thus says the High and Lofty One Who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: "I dwell in the high and holy place, with him who has a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.

uphold the weak

The word here for **weak** is translated as sick or feeble. We get an interesting perspective from Jesus about the weak, sick or feeble.

Matthew 25:43-44

'I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.'

"Then they also will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?'

"Then He will answer them, saying, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.'

be patient with all.

We all saw this coming. PATIENCE!

Why is learning to be patient such a tough thing for us as believers.

We are all very appreciative when people are patient with us.

We are especially grateful when the Lord is patient with us.

So hey, be patient with others.

1 Thessalonians 5:15

See that no one renders evil for evil to anyone, but always pursue what is good both for yourselves and for all.

What an amazing principle here. If people were following this teaching in our world today, most of our spiritual, emotional and political problems would be eliminated.

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Matthew 5:43-44

"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy. But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you,"

Everything inside of us want to retaliate when any kind of attack comes in our lives.

These reactions are things that God is wanting to change in us!

God is changing you! God is changing me!

but always pursue what is good both for yourselves and for all.

The challenge for us is to define, what is good?

Who gets to decide what is good, you or me? NEITHER!

The prophet Micah was speaking to Israel. The Lord tells us ***what is good***.

Micah 6:8

***He has shown you, O man, what is good;
And what does the LORD require of you
But to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?***

Paul will not leave us hanging, he will tell us ***what is good***.

Good is clearly defined in the following verses and Paul tells us to ***always pursue what is good!***

But there are times when we do not want to pursue what is good.

We want to pursue whatever we want.

And sometimes we want to sin!

So how do we handle this dilemma? Are we capable of discipline?

Are we capable of telling ourselves no?

Of course we are!

One of the biggest lies from the enemy is him telling us that we cannot say no.

Satan is very good at tempting us.

He knows our precise weak points and that is where he attacks.

"You owe it to yourself! Just this once! No one will find out!"

We often come to the false conclusion that we are not in control.

But you are in control! You need to stand!

Ephesians 6:10-11

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

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The enemy has convinced us that we do not need to spend time with God and in His word. He has told us that WE can be strong without our time with Jesus. We must understand, that we cannot. So **what is good?**

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

**Rejoice always,
pray without ceasing,
in everything give thanks;
for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.**

Earlier in chapter 4:3, Paul used this same statement.

1 Thessalonians 4:3

For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality;

He continues to encourage us by sharing with us **the will of God.**

We need to **rejoice always** or be happy!

Try it sometime, choose to be happy!

- Choose to smile!
- Choose to trust the Lord!
- Choose to let the Spirit of God shine thru you!
In your words, in your deeds, in your smile, in your eyes!

No one wants to hang around an Eeyore!

Our blessing that we quote every Sunday after service from **Numbers 6:24-26.**

Numbers 6:24-26

**"The LORD bless you and keep you;
The LORD make His face shine upon you,
And be gracious to you;
The LORD lift up His countenance upon you,
And give you peace."**

pray without ceasing

How do you do this? It's really pretty simple!

- Anytime you are in need, ask Jesus for help.
- Anytime someone around you shares a need or a problem, pray for them.
- When the Holy Spirit brings someone to mind, pray for them.

There is never a lack of us needing something in our lives, right?

in everything give thanks;

Please notice, this verse says IN everything not FOR everything.

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If you have a car accident, you are not thankful that it will cost you 1000 pounds to fix the car, but you can be thankful that you are safe, no one was hurt and you made a new friend with the tow truck driver.

We can know God's will for our lives!

- Sexual purity!
- Be happy!
- Pray all the time!
- Be thankful **IN** everything!

And Paul continues with more great insight to our walk with the Lord.

1 Thessalonians 5:19-22

Do not quench the Spirit.

Do not despise prophecies.

Test all things; hold fast what is good.

Abstain from every form of evil.

Do not quench the Spirit

How do we quench the Spirit of God?

Often answering this question becomes some super spiritual monologue.

Fire in scripture is often related to the Holy Spirit.

Quenching a fire is an act of trying to put it out.

One commentator wrote:

We can quench the fire of the Spirit by our doubt, our indifference, our rejection of Him, or by the distraction of others.

When people start to draw attention to themselves, it is a sure quench to the Spirit.

God is ALWAYS moving and working!

Yet, we can quench the Holy Spirit by:

- **Doubt**-Is this really the Lord? How do we discern this?
- **Indifference**-we often don't care. We don't care about the things of God. So when He moves in our lives or in our church, we don't really care. Which leads to rejection.
- **Rejection of Him**-have we so consumed ourselves with the mechanics of our faith that we are actually rejecting God Spirit working in our lives?
- **Distraction of Others**-We are too busy watching what other believers, pastors or evangelist are doing that we miss what the Lord has for our lives.

Another commentator wrote that the better translation would be:

"Stop putting out the Spirit's fire."

Do not despise prophecies.

God does speak to AND through His people, yes even today.

So, how do we know it is the Lord?

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Test all things; hold fast what is good.

If anyone ever speaks "thus says the Lord" and it is not in God's word, it is NOT God's word!
This is how we ***test all things!***

So we cannot despise or reject prophecies.

But I don't think for us today that the despising is the real problem.

The problem is the abuse of the gift. It was the same problem in Thessalonica.

There were idlers among the Thessalonians in ***1 Thessalonians 4:11-12***,
perhaps who spiritualized their idleness with prophecy. There were date-setters
and end-times speculators among the Thessalonians in ***2 Thessalonians 2:1-5***,
who perhaps backed up their speculations with supposed prophetic authority.
How do we determine what is good as we test all things?
God's word.

When we lived in Tulsa, Oklahoma, the Lord was doing some amazing things in our family. And one of those things was moving us on.

We loved living there. We had a good church, great friends, the schools our kids attended were amazing. BUT I had lost my job.

So we were praying about what to do.

The Lord was leading us to move.

We had peace in God's leading and many confirmations of that direction.

So one Sunday after church, a friend came up to me and told me that he had been praying for us and that the Lord showed him that we were supposed to stay in Tulsa. Now this guy loved the Lord and I don't think he had any selfish motives. But I had to tell him; "*bro, I'm sorry but that isn't the Lord.*"

In ***1 Corinthians 14***, Paul is addressing the function of a church service specifically concerning the gift of tongues.

He gives us some insight into knowing what is the Lord and what isn't.

1 Corinthians 14:32-33

And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets.

For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.

We must test everything by the Word of God!

Will you receive something from a prophet that is not in God's word because it sounds good? Does the Bible back the prophecy?

The spirit of the prophet is the same in all of God's prophets.

The prophets will never contradict God's word, because ***God is not the author of confusion.***

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Vs 22

Abstain from every form of evil.

When we have **tested all things**, anything that is not of God or a **form of evil** must be removed! This will include anything that has come to us and failed the test, even if it was with a spiritual reference.

My friend shared what he perceived was from the Lord. But it wasn't the Lord.
If I had dropped everything and moved in a different direction because I listened to him and didn't test his word, I would have been sinning against the Lord.

God is never going to tell someone something about you that He hasn't already shared with you. That is not how the Lord works.

Prophetic words will ALWAYS confirm what the Lord is already doing in your life.

Let's define prophecy from God's word.

1 Corinthians 14:3

But he who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men.

A prophetic word will teach you, build you up and bring peace.

If you are doing ANYTHING that may look bad or wrong, stop it.

Paul's instruction:

- Don't put out the fire of the Holy Spirit
- Be opened to the Lord speaking to you
- The litmus test for anything is God's word.
- Pursue the good things.
- Get rid of anything that isn't of the Lord.

God's will for our lives!

- Sexual purity!
- Be happy!
- Pray all the time!
- Be thankful **IN** everything!

Anything that leads us away from God's will for our life will cause us to sin.
It is a **form of evil**, so **abstain** from it.

1 Thessalonians 5:23-28

Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it.

Brethren, pray for us.

Greet all the brethren with a holy kiss.

I charge you by the Lord that this epistle be read to all the holy brethren.

1 THESSALONIANS 5:11-28

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The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.

We have discussed sanctification, being set apart.

We are to be different than the world.

And the focus here is that God Himself will ***sanctify you completely.***

How awesome is that?

Every part of you, ***spirit, soul and body.***

To stand before the Lord someday ***blameless!***

We cannot do it, but because ***He who calls you is faithful.***

God ***also will do it.***

Will we let Him is the bigger question!

Paul is asking for prayer. Not for supplies, not for money but for prayer!

Paul knew who his source was for ministry. Jesus!

Greet all the brethren with a holy kiss.

I will never forget meeting some of our friend's years ago for the first time.

They are Italian and she came up and gave me a big smooch!

I was not used to that, nor am I still.

So when we get back together, a hug will be just fine!

I charge you by the Lord that this epistle be read to all the holy brethren.

This was Paul's first epistle (letter).

The custom came about that these letters were passed around to all the churches.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.