

“FINAL REMARKS”

First Thessalonians 5.25-28

Dr. John S. Waldrup

Look back on First Thessalonians and the people the Apostle Paul wrote to, and the situation they found themselves in. Gentile Christians, for the most part, only weeks old in their newfound faith, with their mentor and teacher recently run out of town under the threat of death.

But what was their concern? For themselves? Only secondarily. Their primary concern, if you will recall, was the welfare of brothers and sisters in Christ who had recently died. They wondered. Would they miss out on anything by their advanced exit to eternity, or not?

However, their primary concern was not Paul's. His primary concern was to rehearse to them the simplicity of the Christian life and practice, their work of faith, their labor of love, and their patience of hope.

Throughout this brief letter, Paul applies these three essentials of the Christian life with practical examples. The work of faith is getting the Gospel out to the nameless and faceless multitudes. The labor of love is bringing that now-known person to Christ and helping them go on in their new life for Christ. And the patience of hope is the steadfast determination against whatever odds must be faced to live for Christ until He comes for you or until you go to Him.

These three facets of the Christian life having been applied by Paul, in this way and that way and the other ways, he now draws his brief letter to a close. Four remarks as Paul's way of saying “Farewell” and bidding them Godspeed in their service and ministry.

Let's look at those remarks one at a time and learn from them.

First, PAUL'S FINAL REMARKS WERE RELATED TO PRAYER (5.25)

“Brethren, pray for us.”

Succinct. Direct. Humble.

Paul spoke to those who could pray ... “Brethren.” This, of course, refers to those who were Paul's brothers and sisters in Christ. And how appropriate. After all, who has access to the throne of grace but those who are washed in the sin-cleansing blood of the Lamb? And who has standing before God to make pleas but those who stand before Him clothed in the righteousness of Christ? It is better for sinners to pray than not to pray. But it must always be understood that no one without standing before God, no one who has not availed themselves of the access to God that comes only in Jesus Christ, has any right to be heard, has any guarantee of being heard, and has any ground for being heard by God the Father when praying.

Paul also spoke of those who needed prayer ... “Us.” Paul, Silvanus, and Timotheus needed the prayers of those baby Christians. Why? To answer, take note of the importance of prayer that can be seen in Paul's Christian life from the following passages in this letter alone:

- 1.2-4: ² We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers;
- ³ Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father;
- ⁴ Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God.

2.13: “For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received *it* not *as* the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.”

3.9-10: ⁹ For what thanks can we render to God again for you, for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God;
¹⁰ Night and day praying exceedingly that we might see your face, and might perfect that which is lacking in your faith?

5.6, 17-18, 23, 25: ⁶ Therefore let us not sleep, as *do* others; but let us watch and be sober.

¹⁷ Pray without ceasing.

¹⁸ In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.

²³ And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and *I pray God* your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

²⁵ Brethren, pray for us.

How important ought prayer to be in the life of every Christian? What concern is it to God whether the child who beseeches Him is young or old in the faith, mature or immature, knowledgeable or ignorant? After all, the basis upon which prayers are prayed, and prayers are heard, and prayers are answered, are the merits of Jesus Christ. Amen? So, as these new Christians had beneficial access to God that Paul wanted to make use of for his benefit and his friends, I want to make use of your access to Christ, as well. For if Paul and Silvanus and Timotheus needed the prayers of the Thessalonians, think of how desperately Pam and I need your prayers.

Second, PAUL’S FINAL REMARKS WERE RELATED TO POSITION (5.26)

“Greet all the brethren with an holy kiss.”

First, there was the display. Look at your map, and you will see that Thessalonica is in what is today termed Eastern Europe. And in Eastern Europe, and as far West as Italy, and even France for that matter, it is not at all effeminate behavior for men to greet men with a kiss. Also, it was, and is, a custom among Jewish people in the Middle East and Eastern Europe to greet one another with a kiss.

What the kiss meant in Paul’s day is what is nowadays meant by a warm, affectionate handshake and a back-slapping hug among most Americans. So, rather than a wet and sloppy, Paul was urging the Christians in Thessalonica to greet one another warmly and affectionately when they saw each other. And such should be the manner in which we greet each other during the week and at Church. Let us be warm. Let us be affectionate. Let us greet each other heartily and with enthusiasm. Let us not be so busy or so aloof that we intentionally avoid another Church member because we can’t stand the sight of them or have an unresolved issue with them. Shame on you husbands who are too frightened to address this problem with your wife, and who are no help to your husband, who lets such happen with your man without a well-thought-out appeal.

Then, there was the disclosure. The kiss Paul urged upon them was to be a holy kiss. That is, it was to be a distinct, a set apart, a different kind of greeting than was appropriate for others they might have known and were fond of. There should be tenderness, a personal warmth, an affection that does not broach the boundaries of holiness, that is reserved only for us. You don’t greet other people in this way. You reserve something special for people who *are* special. Not family, but for people you will spend eternity with, and for people you labor alongside in the Lord’s vineyard.

Third, PAUL'S FINAL REMARKS WERE RELATED TO PREPARATION (5.27)

“I charge you by the Lord that this epistle be read unto all the holy brethren.”

Observe two things with me:

First, observe the duty of those Christians, and of us. There is good reason to believe that this letter, written by Paul, may very well have been the first New Testament Scripture written. Perhaps James preceded this letter, but this was indeed Paul's first letter that was Holy Ghost-inspired. That said, we understand why Paul wanted, why Paul commanded that this letter be read to all the holy brethren. God wants His Word widely disseminated. And throughout most of mankind, most people have been illiterate or have not had a copy of God's Word in their language. So, the responsibility to get the Word of God out lies squarely on those who already have it and know how to read it. Just so you will see, I don't think it's the Gideon's responsibility to put Bibles in every motel and hotel room in our city. That's really our responsibility. And I don't even care whether our name is on the Bible or not (so long as no one else's name is on it), so long as the Word of God is widely disseminated. And, of course, it is better to read it to someone than to rely on them to read it to themselves.

Then, observe the design of God. God's Word is a lamp unto people's feet and a light unto their pathway. Of His Own will begets He His people, with the Word of truth. And God's people are supposed to study to show ourselves workmen who needeth not to be ashamed. Finally, the Word of God is to be preached so that those who believe may be saved. Critical to God's designs for the redemption of lost sinners is the dissemination of His Word. And the most spiritually effective dissemination of God's Word is audibly. The printed Word is critical because you must have the written Word to be able to read it and preach it. But to vocally transmit God's Word and God's truth is really the most effective means at our disposal for seeing folks saved.

Finally, PAUL'S CONCLUDING REMARKS WERE RELATED TO PROVISION (5.28)

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

The grace of God is a theme Paul greatly expands upon in his first Corinthian letter, 1.3-9.

Everyone has needs, and the need Christians must have met in order to be saved and to be useful after we come to Christ is grace. Grace is undeserved favor, and Paul revealed that it comes through the relationship you have with the Lord Jesus Christ. For that, we must be thankful.

You see, because of our sinful nature, we have no standing before God, and we deserve nothing from God. But in His infinite grace, He reached down and pulled us from the pit, from the miry clay, and set us on a rock ... and that Rock is Jesus Christ.

That was God's grace when He saved those of us who are converted to Christ. But we also need His grace to make it through every day, since grace is not stored in any spiritual gas tank or battery. And as there is an abundant supply of saving grace available to the unsaved souls without Christ to repent of their sins and trust Him for salvation, so too there is grace for living this life, which is called Christian, after beginning to trust the Savior. And that life of accessing and availing ourselves of God's grace through Christ is most abundant and accessible through the body life of the Gospel preaching congregation God has placed you in.

And it all ties together in Paul's closing comments.

Pray for us, beloved. It is one way in which God supplies our grace in answer to your prayers for us.

Be sincere and loving with other Christians. It's one way God supplies grace to them, especially if they are your fellow Church members.

Study the Word of God. He will pour abundant grace into your life through His wonderful Word.

The Christian life is not very complicated. However, it is very challenging, a life given to you that is impossible to live apart from a daily walk with the Savior and involvement with the saints in your Church.

You do know the Savior, do you not? And you are settled in your Church, are you not? If not, reach out to Pastor Kim.

Before Brother Isenberger leads us in a verse of a congregational hymn, the time has come for me to announce what you have been expecting formally. I will present my letter of resignation to Pastor Kim and the deacons this afternoon, effective December 31, 2025.

We are not resigning our Church membership, but (God willing) seek to serve God as members of Calvary Road Baptist Church, helping our missionaries, Taki & April Korianitis, in Zakynthos, Greece. Pray for us.