

Instructed in Worship

1 Thessalonians 5:16–22 ¹⁶ Rejoice always, ¹⁷ pray without ceasing, ¹⁸ give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. ¹⁹ Do not quench the Spirit. ²⁰ Do not despise prophecies, ²¹ but test everything; hold fast what is good. ²² Abstain from every form of evil.

Intro: Paul is teaching the young church how they are to conduct themselves in this world now that they have been called out of the world and into the kingdom of God. How they are to work, how they are to minister to each other, how they are to correct those who are not doing right, how they are to respect their leaders, how they are to strive to develop the love that God has shown them by loving others more and more, and how they are to conduct themselves as they worship.

In this section of scripture Paul uses the plural, meaning he is definitely talking to the church not just the individual, later he even says make sure this letter is read to everyone.

Our western culture teaches us to focus on the individual, the Bible teaches us to focus on the church.

So, as we come to worship, we are being instructed on what we do as we come together as the body.

Rejoice always-

This sets the mood for when God's people gather as a body.

Even a church that is being persecuted comes together to rejoice.

The reason for this is that the subject of worship is God. So, no matter the circumstances God is bigger and what He is doing for us is better than whatever the world throws at us.

Neh. 8:10And do not be grieved, for the joy of the LORD is your strength."

There are solemn seasons in the church when we need to be broken over sin in our lives.

Sin is a right reason to come before God in brokenness, but other than that we are to rejoice before our God.

And once sin has been dealt with, we have all the more reason to rejoice.

pray without ceasing-

Prayer should be foundational to the life of the church.

Ephesians 6:18 praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints,

Philippians 4:6 do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

The Bible is rich with thousands of years of history of God's people crying out to him in all circumstances and His faithfulness to take care of His people.

It is obvious from these scriptures that prayer is a constant activity for the Christian.

There is always an endless list of needs, but we worship the Lord of Glory who has endless power to meet those needs.

It is as James says, we have not because we ask not, or we ask for the wrong reason, to fulfill our own selfish desires.

give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you-

Hopefully you see the flow of the attitude of the Church, always rejoicing, praying instead of fretting, and always filled with gratitude, offering thanksgiving to our God.

Worship is a God centered, Spirit led, experience that all in the body gather to share as we conduct ourselves with these attitudes.

Giving thanks in all circumstances shows our faith in God.

It is not a light thing in scripture to not believe God.

This is one of the reasons why it is God's will that in Christ Jesus we give thanks in all circumstances.

This is putting real faith in what we say we believe about the Son of God.

This brings so much life and reality to our worship.

Do not quench the Spirit-

The Spirit of God is in every believer, gifting each one individually for the good of the body.

The Spirit of God is bearing beautiful fruit that enriches the life of the Church.

And the Spirit of God leads us in worship. He is the one who leads us in prayer, and gives us joy, and fills us with thanksgiving so that we can worship God in spirit and truth.

The Spirit is actively leading the Church to magnify Jesus Christ.

We should never quench the Spirit, by having a sour attitude, being ungrateful, griping and complaining, not being obedient to pray in all circumstances, not receiving the word of God, not testing the what the speaker says, or not abstaining from what is evil.

Our worship services may not be what God intended if we turn off the spout of blessing with our own hand.

Do not despise prophecies, but test everything; -

The completed canon of scripture we have is God's final and complete authority over all of life and the Church.

We must be careful about anybody who says they have a word from the Lord because there is no one who can now speak with the authority of the apostles.

But in the right context someone may have insight by the Spirit of God about the scriptures that we now have.

We should not despise that illumination that comes from the Spirit of God, but we should always be careful to test what is being said.

We should always collectively as a group examine what someone is saying about the scripture with the scripture.

Hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil-

This is a good place for a word to make sure we are balanced about last week's lesson. Scripture is always balanced on this subject, but men tend to take certain truths and corrupt them. This corruption has Satan as its author, and he does it by what scripture calls perversion. To pervert something means to twist it. Rather than attacking the truth up front Satan had rather enter the church with deception and twist the teaching so that it is palatable but perverted from its original intent.

Jude 4 For certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.

Loving people is not leaving people in sin. The litmus test of real preaching always comes down to how the church deals with sin. Loving people is not tolerating sin. We are to hate the bad and love the good. Allowing sinful living to come into the church is a perversion of the grace of God.

God's people are to love more and more but that is always in balance with the truth that we are to abstain from every form of evil.

Question: I often hear all sins are the same. There are no big and little sins. Often this is in the context of all the sexual sin in our culture. Is this biblical, is all sin the same?

James 2:8–13 ⁸ If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself,” you are doing well. ⁹ But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors. ¹⁰ For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become guilty of all of it. ¹¹ For he who said, “Do not commit adultery,” also said, “Do not murder.” If you do not commit adultery but do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. ¹² So speak and so act as those who are to be judged under the law of liberty. ¹³ For judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.

Matthew 5:27–28 “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’” ²⁸ But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

John 19:11 Jesus answered him, “You would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above. Therefore he who delivered me over to you has the greater sin.”

Matthew 11:20–24 Then he began to denounce the cities where most of his mighty works had been done, because they did not repent. ²¹ “Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. ²² But I tell you, it will be more bearable on the day of judgment for Tyre and Sidon than for you. ²³ And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? You will be brought down to Hades. For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. ²⁴ But I tell you that it will be more tolerable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom than for you.”

Luke 12:47–48 ⁴⁷ And that servant who knew his master’s will but did not get ready or act according to his will, will receive a severe beating. ⁴⁸ But the one who did not know, and did what deserved a beating, will receive a light beating. Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more.

2 Peter 2:20–21 For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first. ²¹ For it would have been better for them never to have known the way

of righteousness than after knowing it to turn back from the holy commandment delivered to them.

Cain and Able Scripture

In the OT we learn that not all actions are regarded as needing the same penalty. An eye for an eye and tooth for a tooth is usually only seen in a negative connotation; however, the point is more of a positive one. The punishment is equal to the crime.

In the OT different sins required different sacrifices to atone for the sin. All sin is sin, all sin makes you a lawbreaker, but all sin is not the same.

It is without question that some deeds are more evil, more violent, more hurtful, and come with more severe penalties.

Consider the death penalty. Sin in this life is categorized by God as things that are more perverse, more evil, more destructive and judged accordingly.

All just law courts recognize this, the punishment is in order with the crime.

Even in our court of law it is the same. Someone who goes to jail is a felon, they have a record, they are guilty of breaking the law, no matter the crime they are lawbreakers; however, their crimes are judged based on the heinousness of the offense committed. One does 6 months for theft and another life in prison for killing a woman and her children.

There are certain things that individuals and nations do that are more severe and bring swifter and more severe judgment.

The issue is sifting the standard, where more serious sins are regarded as less serious because all sin makes you a lawbreaker; however, this ignores that the bible is full of judgments about the nature of different kinds of sins. Stealing bubble gum and molesting a child are not the same. Both will absolutely make you a law breaker and therefore

unrighteous before God but that does not mean the bible sees them as the same when it comes to evil and how they will be judged.

There is massive perversion in our land today in the areas of sex and violence. These are not minor issues where we can just say well all sin is the same. Check your Bible when sin gets to this level God always bring the judgment on a nation.