



**Pastoral Guidance from Paul and Silas
Hints on How to Do Church and Life
1 Thessalonians 5:12-28**

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Since we wrapped up our study of one of the doctrines of the church, the rapture, last time, we pick back up in 1 Thessalonians with Paul and Silas having completed answering the questions, giving pastoral guidance to the church in Thessalonica.



How they conclude the letter is not with a shotgun approach either, but once again, they are relying on the observations of Timothy. The order and placement of these pastoral exhortations are deliberate and speak to us today as well.

Their first concern is how the church responds to those who are in leadership there in this fellowship.

This is a fellowship that has been under some rather severe stress recently due to the persecution they have been under. Some members of the church have died as a result and others have lost jobs or homes as well. We forget about the cost of becoming a Christian in the culture of our day.

That is beginning to change here in this nation. It used to be that folks would think you were simply becoming religious, but now, in some corners of the US, we are becoming enemies of the state.

For those in Thessalonica, they were not simply coming to Christ, but by doing so also rejecting what the entire community lived for and took pride in, and this was the case in most communities of the day. Every town had its own acropolis there in Macedonia. That is where all the gods would be worshipped. There were those gods observed by the community at large, and then there were those gods that the various trades observed and worshipped as well.

Coming to faith in Jesus was not only life giving for those who became believers but was also considered by many in the community to be a repudiation of their way of life. This became a source of persecution for many churches of the time. Still is today too.

Now in that environment, you would think that the church would have it all together and be working together in love as they struggle to make it through each day. What we are going to learn is they had much the same type of issues in the church then, as we have today.

As believers, we all have a choice of how to do life. Either Spirit filled and Spirit led, or in the flesh. Most in Thessalonica were Spirit filled, so Paul's encouragement is simply that, encouragement.

He still has three things that he wants to discuss with them. By the time Paul is done, he will get down to the nitty gritty of doing church and step on all our toes somewhere along the line.

1 Thessalonians 5:12–13

“But we ask you, brothers and sisters, to recognize those who diligently labor among you and are in leadership over you in the Lord, and give you instruction, and that you regard them very highly in love because of their work. Live in peace with one another.” (NASB 2020)

Their first concern deals with the treatment of those who are in leadership in Thessalonica. There are those whom the Holy Spirit gifted and were serving their brothers and sisters as leaders in the church. They had none of the resources and tools we have today. They may have had access to a scroll from the local synagogue, probably not though.

Even though they were there for only a few weeks, Paul and Silas made sure that elders were appointed and prayed over before they had to leave suddenly. Here the church is being encouraged to recognize those who are serving them in this role. As leaders, they are uniquely thrust forward into the limelight of the church for all to see, including those who are persecuting the church.

Most times, persecution begins with the attempt to silence or eliminate leadership. The idea being that sheep without a shepherd will be easier to silence or mislead. This still is a model followed today in China.



Also, here, we find out some of the duties of the elder who is shepherding the fellowship. Paul goes into detail on that with Timothy and Titus in his letters to them, but here he is talking to the congregation in Thessalonica. Sheep tend to stray and do their own thing and at times, forget all about the shepherd, until things go badly, like persecution. But the persecution began in Thessalonica with Paul and Silas being forced to leave, and then probably continued with those in leadership left behind.

It is only reasonable then for Paul and Silas to ask the body in Thessalonica to recognize those who are ministering to them.

When Paul says, “diligently labor,” he is talking about those who do ministry. I have discovered over the years that doing ministry is hard work. I have also discovered that when doing ministry, and when you do so for the most part as a volunteer, you get treated like a servant and usually are ignored. Now I am okay with that, but it is something the Lord teaches us about as we go about following Him.

Paul knows that as well. Those men and women who were serving the flock in Thessalonica were subjected to beatings, loss of homes and jobs, as well as imprisonment. That is on top of the ministry. That is simply one of the perks of it.

It is imperative for us as a church to always remember everyone who helps to make church happen. Ministry is not just standing up here and talking. It is making certain there is coffee and cookies to munch on. It is the set up and tear down that we get to do every weekend. It is the running of the sound equipment and video equipment so we can livestream. It is the team doing music for us on Sundays and those who are picking up and dropping off bread for us, as well as for others.

We are asked by Paul to recognize them. I want to make sure we do that, always. Thank you to all who make Calvary Chapel happen.

I cannot make Thursdays or Sundays happen, but the Lord does so through His church and those who hear His voice and step out to serve the Lord in answer to that call. Thank you.

For the church there in Thessalonica, we are not talking about paid staff. That was not yet a thing. In most cases, folks worked regular jobs and then did ministry as well. I did that as a Lay Pastor for over 10 years. Yes, you get treated like a servant. Yes, people ignore you. Yes, paid staff ignore you as well. Did I get paid, not at all. I was doing this because Jesus asked, and I said yes.

Here, Paul uses strong language in the Greek. “Regard them very highly,” “this should be a continuing attitude. Some church leaders do not command as much personal respect as others, but Paul taught that all should be held in esteem because of the nature of their responsibilities before God. Not just some respect, but the highest respect is due these leaders, and it is to come from an attitude of affection (in love) for them, again, because of their work, if for no personal reason.” (Constable 1985, 707-708)

Here is the thing we must remember, when we say yes to the Lord and step out to serve, no matter what it is, even making coffee, we are doing so as unto the Lord. We are accountable to Him for our service.

Those of us who have been called to teach, counsel, or be a Pastor, well for us, we are responsible to God for your care. The Lord is the one who has brought you to Calvary Chapel Martin County and I am accountable to Him for your care and feeding of spiritual things. So, some milk, but meat as well.

Is it normal for someone who is serving to be misused? Unfortunately, yes. We should probably expect, but Paul tells us otherwise.



Do we subject ourselves to negative comments from others for stepping out in faith? Yes, we do. Are those in the church who will question our motivation for what we do? Yes. Are there those in the church who will be jealous about what it is we are doing, simply because we have been faithful for a long period of time and are in ministry that they believe they should have? Yes, that too.

I was an intern in a church in Central Los Angeles, and I had folks walk right up to me and tell me they could do a better job than I could. They may have been right too. I was young, and easily discouraged at the time, so after hearing that every single week for three months, I quit.

Do I hear things today that are similar, yes, I do. But I intend to remain faithful to what it is the Lord has called me to do. I have learned a lot over the years, and I have seen those who are the naysayers, crash and burn horribly over the years. I now pray for them when they show up, and they will.

Paul is addressing that in what he says here.

Just take another look at what he says here in verses 12 and 13.

Recognize – understand and be aware of the work of those who are serving and doing. And keep on remembering what it is they do and who they are serving as they do so. Simply accept them for who they are and what they are doing and pray for them.

Regard them very highly – the Greek word used here can mean to regard or think but it can also mean to lead. I look at this call from Paul to regard others who serve as a call to take the lead and recognize them for what it is they are doing on behalf of the Lord. In other words, to bless them, to thank them, to deem them very highly.

Or as the Greek word points to, to an extreme degree, superabundantly quite beyond all measure love on them. When we thank someone for holding the door and welcoming us to church, how do we do that? This is a brother or sister who has taken a step of faith, perhaps the first ever, and this is important for them. It should be for us as well and literally Paul is telling us to lavish the recognition, love and regard, we have for them.

I saw this in action recently at Calvary Chapel Merritt Island. All who were serving wore distinctive orange shirts. And they were constantly being thanked from the pulpit and everywhere else as well.

As church, we always have those around us who have taken that first step of faith and decided to serve. Some for the first time, others for the first time in a long time. Church hurt is a real thing and for some, simply stepping out again is hard to do since they had their head handed to them by some staff member elsewhere the last time. I have seen Senior Pastor's intentionally stop ministry and then kick those who were doing it out of the church. The Pastor who did that was eventually fired, but not before also saddling the church with crushing debt.

It has been almost 15 years now. Some, not all of those who were part of that fellowship are just now starting to come back and serve. And it is hard and painful for them to do so especially in the same church that had, under different leadership, kicked you out. As we interact with those who serve around us here at Calvary we need to remember, it is Jesus they are serving. We must never forget that and simply love on them for being willing to do so.

Live in peace with one another- Paul has this there because in Thessalonica as well as in churches ever since, when you have those who are faithful in the little things and stepped out to serve, they begin to be given bigger things to serve in.



As an intern at a small church in Sepulveda, I thought that as a Bible school student I would be treated like royalty and given a premier class to teach, like High School or College. I was asked to teach 5th graders. I learned to be faithful, even though I was positive I could do more. The Lord though was teaching me about my pride problem.

The church met in a Quonset hut left over from WWII that smelled like clothes had been stored in it the whole time. But the Lord was there, and people were coming to know Jesus as their savior and Lord.

Why am I saying this, because there were those in the congregation who thought they could do a better job than the pastor. They were not living in peace; in fact, they were at war with the pastor and the elders. That church fired the pastor, went through a couple more, then ceased to exist.

Thessalonica is a church under stress. But here is Paul, telling them to live in peace with each other. Why? Because Satan does not want to see us do so. He wants us to be jealous and desiring more. He wants us to be gaslighting others in the church to improve our own position.

We are in a spiritual war with Satan wanting us to live in the flesh and operate there as well. Then he can call the shots. But if we live in the Spirit, then we are closely following our Lord and being obedient to Him. Jesus wants us to live in peace. To love each other. Paul goes on to explain how to deal with those allowing the flesh to control how they interact in the fellowship.

1 Thessalonians 5:14–15

“We urge you, brothers and sisters, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone. See that no one repays another with evil for evil, but always seek what is good for one another and for all people.” (NASB 2020)

Paul is talking to the entire fellowship here; he is also talking to those who are in leadership. The first thing he says is hard to do, but necessary. He says to admonish the unruly. “Put sense into the unruly mob who break ranks... This is a challenging task for any leader. (Robertson 1933, 1 Th 5:14)

The second challenge is dealing with those in the body who are fainthearted. These are those who are still growing in the Lord and where they are at currently in their walk, it is easy for them to be discouraged. If we make it our habit to encourage each other, then we will also be encouraging those who may need it more than we even realize.

I will never forget an Air Force awards ceremony, folks were receiving awards and medals for the jobs they had done, you would think that was encouraging for them but sometimes what they did was step up when others were killed, and someone had to do something.

But I noticed this, a chaplain and a young NCO were off to the side of the stage personally talking to and encouraging every person. Receiving the award was nice, but having someone grab you by the arm, put their arm around you and then thank you, there is no price tag for that. It meant more than the award.

We need to make it our habit as a body to encourage each other.

And with that encouragement, we need to be ready to also help our brothers and sisters who may be having a harder time of it than others. This is why it is important to do church in person.

Those who are weak are those that simple encouragement may not be enough. “These have not yet learned to lean on the Lord as much as they should for their spiritual needs. Until they do, they need strong support from other believers. Of course all Christians are weak and need the strength that comes from Christian fellowship, but the spiritually weak need it more than most.” (Constable 1985, 708)



Our fourth responsibility as a body, per Paul, simply be patient with everyone in the body. In a group of believers, you have folks who are at different places in their walk with Christ. They may be struggling with something that you never had to battle with, or the Lord gave you victory over decades ago. But they need your loving encouragement, maybe an extra kick in the pants every now and then too, and our patience as they grow in Christ.

In verse 15 though, we are shown by Paul the other side of the coin, for many in the church who have reached the end of patience, they turn to retaliation.

1 Thessalonians 5:15

“See that no one repays another with evil for evil, but always seek what is good for one another and for all people.” (NASB 2020)

As believers and followers of Jesus Christ, we must remember this. No matter what anyone does to us, whatever wrong they have committed and yes, there are those who make a habit of it, retaliation is not an option, ever.

Thinking again of the situation I spoke of earlier, most simply left the church rather than deal with an out-of-control bully of a Senior Pastor. There was no retaliation. But the elders soon found themselves with a Matthew 18:16, 1 Timothy 5:19 situation.

Multiple witnesses all attesting to the same or similar acts forced the board to act. That was not retaliation, that was accountability. Biblically, they needed to evaluate what it was they were told and then take the appropriate actions based on the witnesses. And they did. It has taken over a decade for that church to recover.

The elders were doing the second part of verse 15, seeking what is good for one another. Sometimes the good is tough to do. But that is the charge Paul gives us. The hard part is when someone wrongs you, you want to retaliate, but instead, the Lord calls us to peace and do what is good for that one who wronged you.

Yes, there are times what is good is having them leave the fellowship, but the goal, is to see repentance and restoration, always. As far as I know, the bully has not yet repented and asked for forgiveness of those he offended.

Moving away from the fellowship, Paul now turns to pastoral encouragement. As one of their founding pastors, he is interested in seeing each person in the fellowship in Thessalonica grow to be more like Jesus. So, he moves from the how to of congregational life to be downright meddling.

Now it is personal, and these are all attitudes. You have good tudes and you have bad tudes. The tudes Paul discusses are ones he believes assist us all becoming more like Jesus. Oh, and they will also spill over into congregational life as well.

1 Thessalonians 5:16–22

“Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus. Do not quench the Spirit, do not utterly reject prophecies, but examine everything; hold firmly to that which is good, abstain from every form of evil.” (NASB 2020)

To a church undergoing persecution, one that has asked the kinds of questions this one has, Paul's first word for them all individually is to rejoice always. What does that mean?



For believers, no matter what our circumstances, no matter what is going on and what the pressures are that are being applied to us.

We understand that life as a believer means a life of joy. Even when you get a really bad haircut. We know who is really in control. We know where we are going to spend eternity. We know what the Lord has in store for those who love Him, and we know we are going to live forever. “Thus a good case can be made that joy is one of the distinguishing characteristics of Christianity, contrasting sharply with the hopelessness and pessimism of first-century paganism.” (Weima 2014, 399)

Isaiah 26:3

“You, LORD, give perfect peace to those who keep their purpose firm and put their trust in you.” (GNB)
As we live a Spirit filled life, what are those things the the Holy Spirit organically produces in each of us?

Paul gave us a list.

Galatians 5:22–24

“But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things! Those who belong to Christ Jesus have nailed the passions and desires of their sinful nature to his cross and crucified them there.” (NLT)

1 Thessalonians 5:17

“pray without ceasing,” (NASB 2020)

Paul is not saying pray without ever taking a break. So, rest easy, sleep is a required thing, so is eating, working, and so on. The word used in the Greek here does not mean “without ever taking a break.” It does denote a craving for “prayer that is so persistent in its ready availability that it does not shirk a situation of need or an opportunity of blessing. It is prayer keeping on the alert and snatching up occasions, prayer that is a pervasive flavoring touching the facets of life.” (Rosscup 2008, 2375)

When someone tells you what is going on in their life, do you stop and pray with them right there? When someone asks you to pray for them, do you? I have found it important in my life that when someone tells me a need, I want to pray with them right then and there. That is what Paul is saying. Prayer should be our first resort, not our last.

And as we pray, we should be thankful for everything. You mean the bad too? He says in everything. Thank you, Lord, for the good and the bad. Thank you, Lord, even for the bad haircut. Help me to learn the lessons I need to from the bad and apply them in the good.

It's easy to thank the Lord when we get that bonus at work we were not expecting. But how about when we are told our position has been eliminated because the company has decided to go another direction and you are no longer part of that. Trust me, I know firsthand how hard that is to hear and do. I have been on both sides. But once again, in Christ, we are to have His view and perspective on things in this world, they are all temporal and we are, in Christ, eternal. He has a plan, and He has promised to take care of us. We need to trust Him.

It is all perspective. How big is our God?

Matthew 6:31–34

“So then, don't worry saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear?’ For the unconverted pursue these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But above all pursue his kingdom and righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. So then, do not



worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Today has enough trouble of its own.” (NET 2nd ed.)

Giving thanks in everything is the will of God for us as followers of Jesus Christ. Doing that is harder than it looks, but it is what Paul is telling us, a requirement for followers.

1 Thessalonians 5:19–22

“Do not quench the Spirit, do not utterly reject prophecies, but examine everything; hold firmly to that which is good, abstain from every form of evil.” (NASB 2020)

Do we quench the Holy Spirit? What is it we do that stops the work of the Holy Spirit in our life? The picture here is of someone taking a bucket of water and throwing it onto a flame. I have stated several times that our choice is day is to live our walk with Christ in the Spirit or in the flesh. One is in coordination with the Holy Spirit, the other, well it is the same as dousing a fire.

We have already touched on Galatians 5, but we are going to take another look because Paul provides for us, a rather serious list of things which we can do to quench the Holy Spirit. It is not an exhaustive list either.

He also lets us know what living by the flesh look like and it is not something he wants for any believer.

Galatians 5:16–26

“I say, then, walk by the Spirit and you will certainly not carry out the desire of the flesh. For the flesh desires what is against the Spirit, and the Spirit desires what is against the flesh; these are opposed to each other, so that you don’t do what you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, moral impurity, promiscuity, idolatry, sorcery, hatreds, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambitions, dissensions, factions, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and anything similar. I am warning you about these things—as I warned you before—that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. The law is not against such things. Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.” (CSB)

We are not to quench, or hinder the Holy Spirit in our life, or in that of any other believer. This includes our doubt, our indifference, our rejection of Him or our being distracted by others. In our current culture of celebrity pastor’s this is something to consider.

We can all be easily distracted. Almost like a dog seeing a squirrel. When we start drawing attention from how the Lord is using us as we serve Him, to instead, draw attention to ourselves, then we are quenching the Spirit. Let’s go for some low hanging fruit here.

The purpose of worship is to bring us into the throne room of the universe and sing praises to our King. I love to sing and worship the Lord, but I have noticed a trend today. Celebrity worship. Yes, we want worship to be with excellence as we give our best to the Lord. But when it becomes all about performance, we are moving towards quenching the Spirit.

Trust me, I am against worship wars in any form and fashion. I have friends and family who are Christian artists and sing or play to the glory of God. They too struggle to do their best and not turn it into a performance. In some places though, that line has been crossed and it truly is all about performance and drawing an audience.



Another place we can quench the spirit is being discouraging to those who serve rather than encouraging, yep that will quench the Spirit. Telling others to tone it down in their zeal for the Lord, that too.

Creating false narratives about capability and motivations of others as a means of discouraging, in other words, gaslighting, that too.

Paul gives an example where quenching is taking place and must cease.

Despite the fact that the ministries of the Spirit can be abused in the Christian community, Paul's own deep appreciation for the central role of the Spirit in individual and corporate life will not allow for correcting abuse by commanding disuse. Rather, the antidote for abuse is proper use. (Fee 2009, 219-220)

Thus, do not quench the Spirit and do not reject prophecies.

One more thing, there are those today who are all about quenching the work of the Holy Spirit. They teach that the Holy Spirit no longer works as He did in the book of Acts and that some of the gifts are no longer in operation today. That is called cessationism. We do not believe that. We firmly believe all the gifts are for today. That means we as a charismatic fellowship. But cessationism will indeed quench the Holy Spirit.

Back to NT prophecy. Paul moves to an issue that could also cause the same impact, quenching, and that is to reject all prophecies out of hand. This may have happened because some were possibly prophesying an end to the persecution, and that was not happening.

We are not to despise prophecies and reject them out right, but we are called to test them. There was some confusion in Thessalonica over events involving the end times, and we know that there will be allegations of the rapture already having taken place, so I can see why there is some push back about prophecy. But we are not to reject them out right, simply test them. The New Testament prophet is someone who is speaking under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

As we give those who are providing a prophecy the grace to listen to them, we are also to test what it is they are saying.

The "inspired utterance" came by revelation and announced judgment (usually) or salvation. Often the word spoken had a futuristic element, so in that sense they also came to be seen as "predictors"; but that was only one element, and not necessarily the crucial one. (Fee 2009, 220)

Paul says test everything, not just a prophecy. That holds today too. There are so many 'teachers' today who have no problem sounding very Biblical, but upon careful examination, they aren't.

Prophecy is a place where the one who has received the word or vision from God may indeed have a word from the Lord, but there is always the possibility of misinterpreting what it means. Because they are coming through a brother or sister in Christ, they must be tested. But they are to do so without quenching the Holy Spirit.

The verb is dokimazete, calling for the examination of a thing to determine whether it is authentic or a fake. In trial passages, biblical authors use it of God's turning a trial into a test to prove the genuine faith of his people (Jas 1:3; 1 Pet 1:7). Here it is "all" those claiming to be prophets and "all" that they say that must be tested. It is both the person and the message that are tested for whether God has truly sent them and the Spirit truly inspired them. (Osborne 2018, 142-143)



How? Common tactics we need to look for and test includes eisegesis of the word. Taking a verse out of context or specifically excluding the context to use the verse as a proof for something it was never intended to be used for. I have heard several 'teachers' argue very connivingly that what they are teaching is Biblical but doing so with verses never intended for the purpose. Unfortunately, gas lighting is alive and well in the church and we are so desperate for a word from God, that we overlook the departure from orthodoxy as we observe non-Biblical things such as laughing in the Spirit, or being slain in the Spirit, and decide that their allegation this is normative is true. Acts 17:11 must be applied.

If it passes the test, it is good, and we hold firmly to it. But if it fails, we abstain from it. If this is common with the one who is giving the prophecy, then that may mean staying away from certain "name teachers" that are popular but have a history of making misleading statements or prophecies.

Does the utterance fit with what the Bible teaches? Is the theological or doctrinal content in line with the scriptures? Then there is the purpose for what has been said. "On the other hand, the person who prophesies speaks to people for their strengthening, encouragement, and consolation." (1 Corinthians 14:3, CSB)

So, is the prophetic word okay Biblically? Yes. Then is the word given for encouragement, edification, exhortation or comfort? Is the content helpful for the community of believers? As followers of Christ, we should be able to discern this in reliance on the Holy Spirit.

If the prophetic utterance fails the test, it is evil and intended to distort and mislead. Are there those who do this intentionally, yes.

They have ministries and they want you to be on their mailing list. That way they can, exactly as Peter warned about, turn you and me into someone to exploit their greed on.

Many today "seem to prefer the spoken word over the written Word, and they seek to show the power of the rhema over the logos. The ministry of the prophet or exhorter is preferred above that of the teacher. The anointing of the Spirit is preferred above that of the teacher. The anointing of the Spirit is recognized not so much by the truth that is unfolded as by the fervency and excitement displayed by the speaker. If the voice is loud and pitched high, and the speech very forceful and rapid, this is the sign of true anointing, especially if he sucks a lot of air between phrases and throws in amens and hallelujahs between thoughts! Some of the more adept evangelists have developed great skills in whipping the people into a high state of excitement bordering upon hysteria by just repeating a single phrase, such as "Praise the Lord," using different voice intonations. (Smith 2000, Kindle Location 1323-1326)

I witnessed this take place in a crowd of men in Kuwait and trust me, it was not the Holy Spirit who was doing the work. They were praying to Allah and facing Mecca while exhibiting many of these same signs which yes, Satan regularly counterfeits.

Paul finishes up by encouraging the church to abstain from "every form of evil." Is this to mean that those in the church in Thessalonica "must avoid not merely things that are actually evil but even things that appear to be evil. This understanding turns the command into a more general one and infuses it with an ethical understanding." (Weima 2014, 410)

Possibly, but the context is about prophecies.

The good should be accepted; every kind of evil (without any exception; hence, whether it be evil advice—given by a false prophet—or any other form of evil) must be avoided. (Hendriksen and Kistemaker 1953-2001, 140-141)



In other words, once a prophet has been tested and it is shown that what they have been sharing is not of the Lord, then they are to be avoided since anything that is not of the Lord is intended to mislead and is as such, evil.

Paul in this passage is both encouraging and offering a proper response to spontaneous prophetic words in the gathered community in Thessalonica. Because some were apparently prophesying in ways that were less than helpful, Paul urges that all such speech be “tested” so that the good might truly edify God’s people. (Fee 2009, 224)

But do we do this with all who represent that they have a word from the Lord. Not everyone who alleges this, is in Calvary Chapel.

They have stand-alone ministries, You Tube channels, books and videos. When you listen, watch or read, do you test what is being said? Years ago, I would have folks talk to me about books they wanted to teach from for a growth group. Most of the time, it was books that were popular in the Christian press, but totally and completely bogus.

Does that mean everything they write or teach is questionable. It Depends. Here the word is to abstain from the appearance of evil. In a fellowship, if they had another word or prophecy, it would be tested again and held to the same standard.

No one is doing that for many of the popular authors, speakers, and teachers who are writing today. Acts 17:11 must be used. There are so called discernment ministries out there supposedly doing that, but I wouldn’t rely on them either since several of them have also gone sideways.

I am part of a Calvary Chapel senior pastor’s group online and this is the number one question. Is (name your favorite author) okay? I do not have time to test them all, there are some I have tested in the past, they failed, and they failed subsequent tests as well. Some are heretics and would teach a different Jesus.

Others want you to believe that they have been given “special knowledge” on this topic because of their background. That is actually a form of Gnosticism but for another teaching and another time. I have learned why Dr. Michael Heiser always leaned towards peer reviewed work, that means others have tested what is being said.

Suffice it to say, if it is a new twist on the word, a so-called new interpretation of prophecy, or just doesn’t seem right, it might not be. Test it. If it is not from the Lord, it is from Satan.

This will be hard to hear, but it is true. To be able to discern what is true versus the false requires knowing the Bible. That means studying the Bible, frequently, in depth and regularly. Let me quote one of my teachers, Dr. J. Vernon McGee.

“Do not look down upon Bible study as something that is beneath you. Do not be indifferent to the Word of God. We have a lot of folk who are in Christian service, but they are ignorant of the Bible and they look down on Bible study. Occasionally I hear such a person saying, “You just spend all your time in Bible study and you don’t do anything. What you need to do is get out and get busy.” Well, what is needed is to get busy studying the Word of God, and after you do that you will see how to get busy and really be effective.

We had a Bible study downtown in Los Angeles, averaging fifteen hundred people every Thursday night over a period of twenty-one years—what a thrill that was! What a privilege that was! But sometimes folks would make a remark like, “You need to get out and do something, not just go to sit and listen to the



Bible.” The interesting thing is that those people who came to sit and listen to the Bible did go out and do something. There are several hundred of those people who are out on the mission field; there are several hundred who are witnessing for God; and there are several hundred in the ministry. I notice that the boys who do not study the Word of God run down like an eight-day clock. Their ministries don’t last too long. The sixteenth commandment which Paul gives the Thessalonians is “despise not prophesyings,” that is, the teaching of the Word of God. (McGee 1997, 404-405)

1 Thessalonians 5:23–28

“Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will do it. Brothers and sisters, pray for us. Greet all the brothers and sisters with a holy kiss. I put you under oath by the Lord to have this letter read to all the brothers and sisters. May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.” (NASB 2020)

If you haven’t figured out by now, peace is important to Paul. When we have peace with God because of Jesus, then we have peace with each other. Jesus said love for each other would be the characteristic of the church.

Once again, Paul, who believed Jesus would return in his lifetime, talks about the power of the Lord to keep those who are His own until that moment. As we wait, the desire is to be sanctified entirely. Is that even possible here on earth? Not really, but once we are with Him, then that becomes a reality for all believers. But it is a work of the Lord in us, we cannot make ourselves sanctified, more like Jesus, only He can do that in us as we follow.

Paul wants the body in Thessalonica to continue to follow the Lord in holiness while waiting for Jesus to return and take them home to Himself. Jesus is indeed faithful, and He will indeed return for us.

Paul talks about his understanding of the complete person who is kept by the Lord. Spirit, soul and body. “God designed the human to live after the order of spirit, soul, and body instead of body, soul, spirit. We are to sublimate the needs of the body to the soul, and the needs of both body and soul to the needs of the spirit.” (Guzik 2013, 1 Th 5:23-24)

I do not want to get hung upon the terms here. The Bible clearly teaches we are physical and spirit. The point here is to stress that as we are sanctified, it is not just the spirit or the physical, but the totality of who we are.

He wraps up with a request for prayer. A holy kiss from the team to them, and the charge to read this to everyone. Nothing in the letter is secret, it is for the entire body. One reason why we have this today.

And with that, we conclude 1 Thessalonians. Next time we will be looking at 2 Thessalonians.



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