

## 1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians Ch 5 Vs 12-28

“Some Last Minute Reminders”

Paul has so far under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit carefully crafted the 1<sup>st</sup> 4-½ ch's of this letter to the Thessalonian believers. He's reminded them of their past, spoke to them concerning their present, and encouraged them regarding their future. and It's not that this last ½ of ch 5 isn't carefully crafted, or beautifully inspired, in fact there's an incredible amount of information packed in nice and tight right here in these last 17 vs. But you almost get this sense of Paul beginning to wind down, he knows he's getting ready to sign off, and then all of the sudden this flood of this “*necessary news*” begins to inundate and saturate his heart and his mind and he can't not share it. and Instead of taking the time to articulate the details and expound on each point that he wants to remind them of and encourage them in, he just sort of rapid fires these last minute reminders, and urgent exhortations and admonishments for them, and for us to take heed to over these next 11 vs, and then he signs off with a benediction in vs 23 and following.

Now vs 11 rounded out the last little section of this letter that we studied last week with the fact and assured expectation of the rapture of the church and that even if we're not alive when the rapture happens that whether we live in these tents, or move out of them one day to occupy a home which has foundations who's builder and maker is God, that we're going to be with the Lord. Whether we live or die, doesn't matter, we live together with Him, that is with Christ and He says there in vs 11 (read).

### Vs12-13

You know in all the bible, these have to be my favorite vs (Just kidding).

But as believers, we're to *recognize* our leaders, and this word “recognize” here means “to know” or “to consider and understand”, it means “to pay attention to, to observe, to inspect,” or “to examine.” The point being that we're to heed and pay attention to our leaders, you might say that Paul is initiating the biblical sense of what we've come to know as a game today called “Follow the leader.” He's saying, “Pay attention to their lives, watch them and mark them, do as they do” even as he himself said, “*Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.*” 1 Cor 11:1 Heb 13:7 tells us, “*Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith follow, considering the outcome of their conduct.*” and That word, “considering” finds it's roots, and/or is connected very closely with this word that's been translated as “recognize” or “to know” here in vs 12, we're to consider their ways with the intention of following them knowing the outcome of their conduct, which is a life led (by the grace of God) to the glory of God. A life that will be used of God and that will honor God, Paul is saying, “You see someone whose life God is using, whom God has placed in authority in His body, watch that guy and do likewise.” and Again in Heb 13:17 we read, “*Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.*”

Now, so that we don't just go around following every self-proclaimed leader, or someone who has taken it upon themselves to promote themselves in the body, Paul gives us some measure of discernment to use in order to identify who these guys truly are. If you take notes you'll want to write this down. Who are those who are the leaders in the body, those whom we're to recognize and get behind, that we're to consider and inspect? 3 Things to take note of, they're #1 "Those who labor among you" #2 "Those who are over you in the Lord, and #3 "Those who admonish you." So why is it that we recognize these individuals? Well, 1<sup>st</sup> of all because they're those who labor among us.

We don't recognize men because of their titles, but rather because of their service, and it's not that titles are bad as long as people are really what their titles indicate, but a title in and of itself doesn't warrant my recognition of someone. But their service, and their labors in the Lord are something to take note of and pay attention to, why? Because laborers in the kingdom are a rare breed, and that's unfortunate, you'd think that every Christian would be a laborer, because in fact God has called us to good works, or "labors" to His glory. But not everyone will respond to God's call on their lives, it doesn't mean they're not saved, it just means they've contented themselves with personal salvation and aren't too concerned for the salvation of others. Now that sounds harsh to say, but I don't really know how else to say it, I'm not saying that they don't pray occasionally for someone, or come to church on Sunday, but we all know that the Christian life goes way beyond an occasional prayer and church on Sunday. God has a plan for our lives (and granted not everyone is called to be a pastor, or an elder, or a deacon but Christianity isn't a spectator sport, it's to be a "co-laboring" experience, ministry isn't an exclusive thing, it's all inclusive, everyone is to take part in someway or in some fashion in Kingdom business.

Jesus said, "*The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.*" Matt 9:37-38 and Those who are laboring we're to recognize, we're to study their lives.

Why else do we recognize these men? Because they're #2 "Over you in the Lord" God has invested authority into their lives, and we're to respect that. They're over us, in the sense that a shepherd is over the sheep, leading them, guiding them, giving them direction and if need be, correction (which we'll talk about in a minute.)

Now we're all co-equals in Christ. But God has placed some men, (by His sovereign choice, not by any works of their own) in positions of authority. and As such they function under an umbrella that brings them under a greater degree of accountability; Luke 12:48, "*For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more.*" and Because they're in such a position, a position of greater accountability and responsibility in the Lord, we're to respect and honor that, we're not to be burdensome through being difficult, or rebellious, but rather we should be a blessing to them. They're there for our benefit, to give us direction and again if need be, correction, which brings us to this 3<sup>rd</sup> point.

Why do we recognize them? #3 Because they “admonish” or that word means to “warn” or “gently reprove” you, or me. In other words, these are the confrontational guys, and no body likes confrontation, but when something gets out of synch and someone has to deal with it, these are the guys that have to take care of whatever it is that’s out of synch. and Nobody wants to be that guy, or looks forward to having to inflict that occasional faithful wound. But as you’ve all heard before, “Along with privilege comes responsibility” and so along with the privilege of shepherding the flock comes the responsibility of tending to the needs of the flock, or soothing a disgruntled sheep, or encouraging those who are out of line, to fall back in line. One commentator writes, “It is a part of the duty of a minister to put his people in mind of the truth; to warn them of danger; to exhort them to perform their duty; to admonish them if they go astray.” (From Barnes' Notes, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1997 by BibleSoft)

Now often times because church leaders are faithful to their duty, they become objects of attack, people lash out at them, accuse them of trying to Lord over them, or not being loving, when in reality it’s love that causes them to minister to us faithfully, and honestly. But according to scripture we’re not to attack our leaders, we’re to esteem them very highly in love. Why, because they’re so cool, and they deserve it, or because they have great personalities or are often times smooth articulators and eloquent communicators of the gospel?

No, for their works sake, because they’re out their busting up fallow ground, tilling up the soil of the human heart, sowing the seed of the word of God into the hearts of the people that God’s Kingdom might increase, and that we might lead lives that are pleasing to Him, bringing Him honor and glory. David Guzik makes this comment, “If a Christian can’t esteem and love their pastor, they should either get on their knees and ask the Holy Spirit to change their heart, or put themselves under a pastor they do esteem and love.” Why? Because if you don’t love the guy that God has placed before you, or respect the position and platform that God has him in your life, then you won’t be able to receive from him. and It’s critical that you be able to receive the Word of God, and that you submit yourself to the authority of the Word in your life. and If you can’t receive it from your pastor, you either need to pray that God would change your heart, or find a pastor you can receive from because if you don’t, then you’re only going to weaken and ultimately damage yourself.

Now obviously the primary hope would be that you would work out whatever it is that keeps you from being able to receive. Whatever that may be, if you need to forgive, or clarify an issue or whatever, because if you harbor a root of bitterness, the bible says that ultimately it’ll defile you, so even if you have to find another place, it’s so important that you go with a clean conscience, having resolved any issues.

Well, what's one way that we can esteem or respect those whom God has placed in spiritual authority over us? Be at peace among yourselves; don't be stirring up contentions or divisions that bring all kinds of attention to the flesh, but no glory to Jesus Christ I don't know about you, but I for one want God to use this body to do a great work to His glory, but for that to happen, we're going to have to be together, (now praise God that we are) but believe me it's not that way everywhere you go. and I'm not saying we never have things that come up, or situations that need worked out, but overall, God has (I believe) woven our hearts together as a family, as His children, and (you guys) this is such a key. Turn to Ps 133 (read) I have a question for you, what does anointing oil represent in the scriptures? The Holy Spirit, and what this is saying to you, what this is saying to me, is that there's an anointing that takes place when a people come together and their hearts are woven together in unity. God just honors that, it's like the precious oil upon the head, Running down on the beard, the beard of Aaron. In other words the Spirit moves in a unified body, there's an anointing there, God honors that, there's an anointing in unity.

Do you realize that our relationship to one another-has a direct relationship to our usefulness by God? Our usefulness to God correlates directly in some proportion with the fact of us having peace amongst ourselves, being a unified body. Listen to what Jesus said in Mark 9:49-50 He said, "*For everyone will be seasoned with fire, and every sacrifice will be seasoned with salt. Salt is good, but if the salt loses its flavor, how will you season it? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace with one another.*" You see if there's *backstabbing* and *division*, *biting* and *devouring*, then how is God going to use our lives? You see every work that God will work through us will spill out of a life that's in submission to Him, and if we're in submission to God, we'll be in harmony with each other, or have peace amongst ourselves. Did you know that the bible describes a walk that's worthy of God as a walk that's simply unified with your brothers and sisters in Christ?

So many times we pray that God would help us to walk worthy of Him, and the calling that He's placed on our lives, but what is that worthy walk? We might think it's a walk that leads thousands to Christ, or that raises people from the dead, or that does strategic and effective battle with our enemy.

Though there's value in all of those things, (don't get me wrong) but the bible doesn't stress any of them as what constitutes a worthy walk. We read in Eph 4:1-3 "*I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*" In other words the walk that's worthy before God is one that by His grace and the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives, is simply lived out in humility, whereby we get along with our brothers and sisters.

Why, because if we're not together on essentials of the scriptures, nothing else is going to be effective, Jesus said a house divided against itself can't stand, it's that whole "united we stand, divided we fall principle." So if we're to walk worthy of God, and esteem those who labor among us, than we need to get along, Heb 12:14 says, "*Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord.*" Be at peace amongst yourselves.

#### Vs14

Now bear in mind here that Paul is speaking to the body of believers at Thessalonica, this isn't a word only for Pastors. 4 Things here that he points out to us that we're to facilitate as a body, this is the functioning of body life. #1 "Warn the unruly", #2 "Comfort the fainthearted" #3 "Uphold the weak", and #4 "Be patient with all."

These are a few of the keys to maintaining a healthy spiritual body; we're to *warn the unruly*. Now understand that this isn't certifying you or me to be the official Holy Spirit police patrol so that we go on patrol looking to bust people that are blowing life. This word "warn" means to "reprove gently" it carries with it the idea of the exhortation we receive from Gal 6:1 "*Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.*" So we're not going on the speck lookout in our brother's eye with the log sticking out of our own. But if God makes you aware of something pray for that person, let them know you're praying for them, and encourage them to really be careful that they not begin to drift from the narrow path, but that they would fall in line with where God would have them be.

You see this word "unruly" means "disorderly", it's a military term that's used to describe the soldier who fails to remain in the ranks, and they need to be encouraged to fall in line. So some people need to be warned, others need to be comforted, those who are fainthearted, or maybe your bible says, "feble-minded". Sometimes people are just at the end of their rope, and they're fighting hard just to stay afloat, and we need to comfort them, encourage them, weep with them if need be, rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Offer comfort to the hurting, sometimes all people need is a shoulder to cry on, we're to comfort the faint hearted. and Uphold the weak, now I'm certain that if any of us here ever saw someone physically weak and in need of physical attention we'd do our best to give it to them. But how often we neglect the spiritually weak. But we're to come along side and help hold them up or establish them, even as Moses needed a couple of guys to help establish him when his arms were weak during the battle, we're to help hold one another up in times of weakness. But no matter what the situation may be, or which of these categories the fall into, we're to be patient with all. Why, because that reflects the heart of God, it was the patience and the love of God that led you to repentance and even so we're to love and be patient with others, because love suffers long and is kind.

#### Vs15

Prov 24:29 says, "Do not say, *"I will do to him just as he has done to me; I will render to the man according to his work."*

Don't return evil for evil, look quickly at 1<sup>st</sup> Pet ch 3 Vs8-12 (Read)

Vengeance in the Lord's place, not ours, just let Him take care of you, in His way, and in His time. As for you, you pursue what is good, not only for you, but for all. 3 John 11 says this, "*Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good. He who does good is of God, but he who does evil has not seen God.*" So love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you.

#### Vs16-18

Now there's seems to be a natural sense of curiosity amongst believers as to what is God's will for their lives. Well, here's 3 things right here, that you would rejoice always, not in your circumstances, they vacillate, but in the Lord. Circumstances vary, the Lord remains the same, we're to joy in the Lord, and to have the communication lines open all the time. We obviously can't be on our knees 24/7, but prayer is an attitude as well as an activity. and It's important that we be bringing the details of our lives to God, that we're open to Him interrupting our day, I think the thrust here is, "Hey, keep the communication lines open 24/7, be in touch with the Lord and be open to the Lord being in touch with you." and In everything give thanks, now notice it doesn't say, "For everything give thanks" there are some things I just can't be thankful for, but even though I may not be able to give thanks for my problems, I can give thanks in them. How, because I know that God's in control of my life, and that He loves me, and that He's working out His plan in my life and He knows better than me. He's sees the long term, and I see the short term, so in everything that happens to me, because God is governing my life, and in control of my life I give thanks in everything because He's working it all out to my eternal good and His glory.

#### Vs19

Don't extinguish the flame of the Holy Spirit, Eph tells us not to grieve the Spirit, in another place, don't resist the Spirit. The Holy Spirit has an active and ongoing work in our lives and we need to be careful not to quench the Spirit's work in our lives. Be it through a lack of love, or engaging in sinful scenarios and activities, or by doubt or indifference, we can quench what the Holy Spirit is doing when we begin to do something in a service that draws attention to ourselves and distracts people's attention from Jesus or the Word of God. Another way we can quench the Spirit is to neglect the gifts of the Spirit, Paul says,

#### Vs20

What is prophecy, 1 Cor 14:3 tells us that "*he who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men.*" Don't despise prophecy, don't resist what the Holy Spirit wants to do in your life, now we're not just to clutch onto something and receive it just because what someone says sounds real spiritual or stamps it with a "Thus says the Lord." The bible's clear regarding God's attitude towards those who say, "Thus says the Lord" when the Lord hasn't spoken, and trust me it isn't a good one. So though we're not to despise prophecy, we need to exercise discernment at the same time.

## Vs21

1 John 4:1 *“Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.”* So whatever doesn't bear witness with God's Word, we discard, but we hold fast to what is good, that which is godly and scripturally correct.

## Vs22

I really believe, that this is an area, that we as the body of Christ have grossly erred in. We may not engage in evil, but we don't shun even the appearance of it. “Well, she was over till 4 in the morning but we were just praying” I don't care what you were doing, she shouldn't have been there in the 1<sup>st</sup> place, it just doesn't look right. Don't let yourself be subject to compromising innuendos

Or maybe we don't partake physically we just endorse those who do.

You know, “I don't commit adultery - I just watch it all day (you know) on soap operas.” “Oh, I don't use the name of Jesus as a curse word - I just pay to see movies that do” “Oh, I don't delight in homosexuality - it's just my favorite sitcom that does.” What does the bible say, Eph 5:11-12 *“have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret.”* How many of us are guilty of breaking this command under the guise of entertainment? We're to abstain from even the appearance of evil, anything that even seems questionable, we're to be blameless, and above reproach.

## Vs23

This was Paul's prayer, his benediction concerning them, that God might sanctify them completely, wholly, and perfectly, the entire trichotomy of their make up, their whole, spirit, their whole soul, (or mind), and body, that they would be preserved blameless at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ Man what an incredible request, but you know, with God nothing will be impossible.

Of course this word “sanctify” carries with it the idea of being “set apart” for something unique and distinct, for instance a dress is a dress, but a *wedding* dressing we might say is “sanctified,” it's set apart for a specific and distinct purpose, for a grand and glorious purpose. and God would have us be set apart for Him, completely. That you, that I would be completely free from the carnal nature that so often seeks to ail us. Now the human nature, the sin nature that's in us will be there until the day we die, and we realize that sanctification is an on going ever pressing work that the Holy Spirit is doing in our lives. and We just don't have time to get into the “positional” side of sanctification which you have, vs the “practical” side of sanctification that is being worked in you as you're being transformed in the image of Jesus Christ from glory to glory just as by the Spirit of the Lord.

But I would have you notice that the work of Sanctification is a work of God, it's God Himself who sanctifies you. You say how does that happen? Well, this much I know, any aspect of sanctification is the result of the grace of God being exuded in your life, and as for our part we can do nothing.

When I was pondering this, the Lord put it to me like this, “To the extent you die, I’ll sanctify” it’s not about *trying*, it’s about *dying*, dying to self, taking up your cross and following Christ.

Vs24

Or to understand this another way, you can be confident that, “*He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ*” Phil 1:6 And, “*that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.*” 1 John 3:2

Vs25-26

Lets keep this in the modern vernacular, greet the brethren with a holy handshake.

Vs27

and Praise God I’ve done that.

Vs28

If you’re here and you’ve never given your heart to the Lord, you’re not sanctified by God, God is beckoning you today, to come out from among them, out from among the world and be separate. and God wants to do that work in your life, but it only comes through you placing your trust in Jesus Christ Receiving the work that He’s done for you on the cross, through the shedding of His blood for the remission of your sin, and being raised from the dead, that you might stand justified before God. Are you willing receive that work today?