

## 1 Thessalonians 5:4-28

### Verses 4-8:

--(4) ***But you, brethren.*** . . . Places these believers in contrast to the unsaved world that will be taken by surprise by the day of the Lord and not escape.

--(5) ***You are all sons of light and sons of the day.*** We are sons of whatever “father” determines and controls our character. See: **Judges 19:22 (sons of Belial); Mk. 3:17 (sons of thunder); Acts 4:36 (son of encouragement); Jn. 8:44 (you are of your father the devil).**

--***We are not of the night nor of darkness.*** There should be an obvious contrast between those of light and dark, day or night. The picture here is inward spiritual and moral light or darkness, which then determines outer actions in accordance.

**\*John 12:35-36: *Then Jesus said to them, “A little while longer the light is with you. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you; he who walks in darkness does not know where he is going. While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light.”\****

--As sons of light, we live in a realm of daylight and see things clearly. See God, life, meaning, morals, truth, humanity, origins, destiny, and eternity clearly. Why? Because we follow the Light of the world.

--(6) ***Therefore.*** . . . because we already are sons and daughters of light, and walk in the day, our lives should reflect our position.

--***let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober.*** The Greek word for ***sleep*** here is different from the one Paul uses in **4:13-15** relating to a believer’s body in death. This sleep is a matter of choice—where our death is not.

--Paul calls believers to ***watch***. This was a common NT exhortation. (**Mt. 24:42; 25:13; Mk. 13:35-37; Acts 20:31; 1 Cor. 16:13; Col. 4:2; 1 Peter 5:8; Rev. 3:2-3; 16:15.**)

--And to be ***sober***. Both have the idea of alertness. The watchful and sober person lives conscious and aware of both life and consequences. They are free from intoxicating or slumbering influences.

--(7) ***For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night.*** In contrast with the sober believer, those of the dark and night are drunk. They seek to escape reality and live unaware or numbed to life and consequences.

--As sleep is the natural act of the night, so is drunkenness the natural act of those in spiritual darkness. Jesus regularly pictures drunkenness as one of the main states of an evil servant living in wrong relation to the return of their Master: **Mt. 24:48-51; Lk. 12:45-47; 21:34-36.**

--(8) Instead, believers are to be armored in the godly character that will protect them in their dark and evil age. When Paul speaks of the armor a believer wears, he changes the piece of armor to fit the godly character necessary for faithfulness (**Rom. 13:12; 2 Cor. 6:7; Eph. 6**).

--Faithful watchfulness and sobriety will require faith, love, and hope—not necessarily breastplates and helmets.

### Verses 9-11:

--(9) **For God did not appoint us to wrath.** . . Paul clearly distinguishes **us** (believers) from those who will face the wrath of God (unbelievers) on the day of the Lord.

--Our end goal is very simple and wonderful—salvation. Salvation of body, soul, and spirit.

--(10) How has this salvation been obtained? **Who died for us.** . . Jesus Christ died on our behalf. My salvation is secured by the worthiness of His sacrifice.

--**that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him.** . . Now, is Paul speaking about **sleep** here as in living and dying or of the moral and spiritual light and dark?

--I would tend to see this as one of those both-and's in Scripture rather than an either-or situation. He made our life-and-death situation clear earlier. Here, the Greek word for **sleep** is the same he used for the light and dark context.

--This means everyone Christ died for, believers of various spiritual conditions (Abraham's and Lot's), will still obtain salvation and deliverance in Christ. \*No partial-rapture.\*

--(11) If that wasn't so, how could we comfort one another?

### Verses 12-13:

--(12) Here, Paul addresses the church in relation to their church leadership. These are most likely elders as we know Paul established elders as leaders in all the churches (**Acts 14:23**), and the language and job description echo that of **1 Tim. 5:17**.

--That said, maybe Paul does not directly call them elders because he was only in Thessalonica a short time, and it is possible that they were elders-in-training. All elders and deacons need to show a pattern of faithfulness.

--Paul urges them **to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord.** . .

The spiritual leadership of a fellowship should be acknowledged. We know from **2 Thessalonians** there was a disorderly element in the fellowship—maybe this related to them.

\*Don't we thankfully recognize those who work on our behalf as a doctor, nurse, teacher, construction, parent, etc.??\*

--Their leadership is **in the Lord.** . . not in every aspect of life. Biblical church leaders do not determine all aspects of your life—cult leaders do.

--Part of their leadership is also evident in. . . **and admonish you.** The Greek word for **admonish** (*noutheteo*) is translated **warn** four times in Scripture and **admonish** four times. In fact, it is translated **warn** in **14**.

--The word means *to put in mind, caution, reprove*. One commentator put it: *The tone is brotherly, but big-brotherly*. One of the main jobs of spiritual leadership in a church is to keep everyone on track biblically—to herd sheep, themselves included. No one is perfect in this, but some are called to lead in the process.

--You are not a spiritual leader if you refuse to **admonish**. No one likes these discussions, but you must love God and others enough to have them. \***2 Timothy 2:24-26**\*

**\*2 Timothy 4:2: Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.\***

--If you refuse to exhort and warn others as you should because you are afraid they will respond negatively, won't like you, will stop giving money, stop serving, or leave the church, then you are not fit for spiritual leadership.

--**(13)** Paul encourages them to esteem and love their spiritual leadership *for their work's sake*. Not their position, personality, wealth, or spiritual power.

--For the labor of organizing, directing, leading, and admonishing as willing examples of spiritual life. It is the labor of keeping and tending a healthy spiritual environment or community. \*Is often a lot of repetitive faithful acts like keeping up a farm!\*

--**Be at peace among yourselves.** Why does Paul end with this? Because all faithful leadership and admonition will cause conflict. Any exercising of authority will stir up resentment, bitterness, and pride. \*Just think of Moses or Paul!\*

--It is so sad when there is conflict between spiritual leaders and the people they are seeking to minister to. Wrongs can be on both sides, but that said, spiritual leaders should also be leaders in maturity with immaturity; humility with pride; forgiveness with bitterness; and patience with impatience. \*What a joy it is when those who are upset come back or ask for forgiveness!\*

#### **Verses 14-15:**

--**(14)** Paul references three categories of people present in any group of believers: *the unruly, the fainthearted, the weak*. \*The first two Greek words are only used here in NT, and the third is common.\*

--This is spoken to all *brethren* but, of course, leaders should take the lead in these things.

--**warn/admonish those who are unruly**. . . *Unruly* has the idea of being disorderly, a soldier out of rank, or a loafer. He could have been referring to those refusing to work, but I think it has a wider application.

--Godly warnings are a blessing to those who are truly seeking to follow Him!

**\*Proverbs 25:12: Like an earring of gold and an ornament of fine gold is a wise rebuker to an obedient ear.\***

--This type of ministry of correction doesn't go on forever. **\*Mt. 18:15-17; Titus 3:10\***

--**comfort the fainthearted**. . . *the fainthearted* could literally be translated *small-souled*.

**\*Isaiah 35:4: Say to those who are fearful-hearted, Be strong, do not fear! Behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God; He will come to save you.\***

--Some are prone to lose heart quickly when it comes to God's promises, God's presence, or God's pleasure. Most of us will move in and out of this category at different times. \*Moses, Elijah, Paul, etc.\*

--We need someone to remind us of God's Word!

--**uphold the weak**. . . The word for *weak* is used all through the Bible in reference to both physical and spiritual weakness.

--The weak are to be helped. **Uphold** has the idea of holding one's self over against. It is support by coming alongside and lending strength to weakness. No one is strong all the time in every area of life. We are all weak at various seasons and in certain areas: public speaking, worship, organization, evangelism, prayer, etc.

--We are not to abandon anyone in the church who is weak and looking for spiritual help. We are called to encourage such.

--**Be patient with all.** Our attitude toward all in the church is to be patient, even in the face of evil!

--**(15) See that no one renders evil for evil to anyone, but always pursue what is good both for yourselves and for all.** Some Christians are surprised when they are called to have this type of attitude toward those in the church. **(Mt. 5:38-48; Rom. 12:17-21; 1 Pet. 3:9.)**

--We will all face the temptation to give up the pursuit of good when faced with evil in the church. We cannot allow evil things to keep us from pursuing or doing good.

**\*Romans 12:21: Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.\***

#### **Verses 16-18:**

--Paul's reference to **the will of God in Christ Jesus for you** includes all three commands. Each command is in the present tense, which makes them continual duties: *Always rejoice.*

*Continually pray. In everything give thanks.*

--**(16)** Paul was confident that this church knew where to find their joy. This was not a trite command to those living in safety and luxury, but an exhortation to people who knew that trials and joy are not incompatible in Christ Jesus.

**\*1:6: And you became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the Word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit.\***

**\*2:14: For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God which are in Judea in Christ Jesus. For you also suffered the same things from your own countrymen, just as they did from the Judeans, who killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us.\***

**\*3:3-4: That no one should be shaken by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we are appointed to this. For, in fact, we told you before when we were with you that we would suffer tribulation, just as it happened, and you know.\***

--The Thessalonian believers possessed joy that wasn't sourced in their immediate circumstances. Heavenly joy! If we don't have joy, maybe we need to ask ourselves why the truths of the Scripture don't bring joy to our souls?

--**(17) pray without ceasing.** . . There are numerous places where Paul encourages or displays a life of prayer **(Rom. 12:12; Eph. 1:16; 3:14; 6:18; Col. 4:2; 2 Thess. 1:11; 3:1)**. The word here for **pray** is a comprehensive term that covers all forms of prayer. **\*Can't use every form every time; so each type of prayer must find its proper place in my prayer life.\***

--The Greek word for **without ceasing** was used in the day for a hacking cough. We all know what that is like! **\*What does this look like? Jesus!\***

--Communion with Him who never leaves us must be realized more and more. Limited or awkward conversation makes for limited or awkward relationships! \*Weather/football vs. talk about anything or nothing\*

--Our minds should turn quickly to Jesus. The only way to establish a life of prayer without ceasing is to incorporate communion with Christ into every area of life. \*Share everything with Him—isn't that the beauty of a marriage?\*

--We all pray without ceasing. If you are not praying to Him, you are to someone or something else. Our prayer is the master passion of our lives. What/Who are you sharing your life with?

--Rejoice with Him. Lay all your cares before Him. Be thankful to Him. That type of interaction will begin a life of ceaseless prayer.

--**(18)** This type of thanksgiving is a distinctly Christian commodity. There are very few notes of thanks and praise in the heathen temples around the world, but the Christian, should never be miserable. We should be full of gratitude because we can always give thanks *in Christ Jesus*.

**\*Romans 8:28** + This life is a close to hell as we will ever get!\*

#### **Verses 19-22:**

--**(19-20) Do not quench the Spirit.** . . I think it is worth noting how Paul assumes their individual familiarity with the Holy Spirit. He can therefore easily exhort them to never put out the Holy Spirit's fire! \*By commission or omission—saying *No* to His *Yes*, or *Yes* to His *No*.\*

--**Do not despise prophecies.** . . Another part of quenching the Spirit seems to be in relation to the operation of the prophetic gift at the church. \*Seems from the next epistle there was a false prophet or prophets disturbing them.\*

--Very often, we try to correct the abuse of something by tossing out the whole thing. If spiritual gifts are being abused, get rid of them all. The opposite side lets it all run without any condition. Both are wrong! \*This exhortation should be balanced with **1 Cor. 12-14**\*

--A prophet is someone who speaks the mind of God by either forth-telling or fore-telling. They have God's Word for a specific individual, group, or moment of time. \*This very epistle was prophetic—**5:27!**\*

**\*1 Corinthians 14:3: But he who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men.\***

--Satan will always sow tares where there is real wheat. He wants reality abused so that we abandon it: spiritual gifts, the Holy Spirit, church leadership, church, male headship, the faith, etc.

--If we despise prophecies, we will miss out on so much! Those who recognized a prophet for who he was in the Old and New Testaments were blessed: Elijah, Elisha, John the Baptist, or Agabus.

--**(21-22) Test all things; hold fast to what is good.** . . We are not to be gullible or irrational. We don't just assume every minister is a prophet or every ministry is in the Spirit. We are to test all things by God's Word! **\*Deut. 18:21-22; Ps. 119:104, 128; Isa. 8:20; 1 Cor. 12:20; 14:29;**

**\*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.\***

--Obviously, these are wider spiritual principles that the work of the Spirit falls under. Paul doesn't see *testing* the work of the Spirit as *quenching* the work of the Spirit. Which is important because too many Christians want the Spirit without testing!

--If ministries or ministers cannot be tested by Scripture then they cannot be trusted! The fashion of our day is to tolerate anything because we fear gaining a reputation for being Pharisaical, bigoted, judgmental, or simply not understanding. So timidity masquerades as love and uncleanness festers in the church and deteriorates personal lives.

--Both men and ministries who begin with a true work of God's Spirit can wither and crumble because no one has the courage to stand up against the abuses and worldliness that enter in and eventually pollute them. No true work of the Holy Spirit will ever be hindered by a genuine examination of the Scripture inspired by the Holy Spirit. Hence the exhortation!

--Testing is a command for *all* Christians. How many people in our church came from something wonderful that was corrupted? Pray for CCPhilly and Calvary Chapel as a fellowship of churches!

--**Abstain from every form of evil.** . . . When this is done correctly—not as some so-called discernment ministry—the individual will find something worth holding and something worth fleeing! The Greek word for **abstain** is the same for **abstain** or flee from fornication (**4:3**).

--Hold fast to what is good. Hold off from all that is evil.

#### **Verses 23-24:**

--(**23**) Paul commends them to the Lord. His prayer is that God Himself, the God of peace, would sanctify them **completely**—which is a Greek word (*holoteles*) used only here in the NT and has the idea of *through and through, or the whole of every part of us*.

--God desires that the whole of us would be sanctified—set apart for His purposes.

--**spirit, soul, and body.** . . . Paul moves from the deepest, most important, inward part to our outer part. \*We cannot stop our body from sinning but allow our mind to keep lusting—or our soul to conform to Christ, but our bodily habits remain committed to fleshly ends.\*

--(It is clear that Paul sees a distinction between soul and spirit, even though what that distinction is remains unclear—**1 Cor. 2:14-18; 15:44; Heb. 4:12.**)

**\*John 17:17-19: Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth. As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by truth.\***

--**be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.** . . . Our spirit, soul, and body have an eternal purpose and will one day come before the One who has designed and established that purpose. May we be found blameless then!

--Blamelessness is not perfection: **Luke 1:6** (Zacharias & Elizabeth); **Phil 2:15** (Believers before the world); **1 Tim. 3:2** (Elders in the church).

--(24) ***He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it.*** . . . This sure seems like a supernatural goal, but it is one of God's goals! Thankfully we have a supernatural Savior who is seeking to do this in us. He is more willing to give than we are desiring to receive.

--This is so encouraging if you love Christ and don't want to fail Him but still do—like Peter! We will all fail Him, but He never fails us. You will not be the first person He has failed.

--If He calls us to something, if He begins a work in us, He will be faithful to finish it! Our feeble hold on Him has nothing to do with His strong hold on us.

***\*Numbers 23:19: God is not a man, that He should lie, nor a son of man that He should repent. Has He said, and will He not do? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?\****

#### **Verses 25-28:**

--(25) ***Brethren, pray for us.*** Paul knew prayer and requested prayer often (**Rom. 15:30; Eph. 6:19; Col. 4:3; 2 Thess. 3:1**). Even the strongest saint can be strengthened by the prayers of the weakest.

--(26) ***Greet all the brethren with a holy kiss.*** In their culture, the absence of this kiss was worthy of a rebuke—**Lk. 7:45**. We don't have to kiss, but acknowledging other believers and saying *Hello* is a must.

--For them, this was Christian love crossing societal and cultural boundaries—Jew + Gentile; slave + free; etc.

--(27) Paul knew that he was writing the Word of God. The whole letter was to be read to the whole assembly. It is not the preacher's job to pick and choose which verses or books should be read and which verses or books should be skipped. We need a whole Bible to be whole Christians.

--(28) Paul could never forget the blessing of God's grace extended to each and every life.