

Living as a child of light (Isaiah 42:5-7 & 1 Thessalonians 5:12-28)

31-Mar-19

This is the final part of our 9-part series on the Apostle Paul's letter to the church of Thessalonica

[PowerPoint 1-Letter]

There are Bibles in front of you and a sermon outline in the bulletin if you want to take notes.

Please have your Bibles turned to 1 Thessalonians chapter 5 - starting at verse 12

Let me pray for God's help before we begin. Let's pray...

Recap/Intro

[PowerPoint 2-Recap/Intro]

Last week the Apostle Paul told us that as Christians we are children of the light - living our lives in and through - Jesus - the Light of the world

Our OT reading from Isaiah is a prophecy about Jesus

Jesus wasn't just sent as a light to save Jews but Gentiles (non-Jews) as well
 Jesus was sent - to wake up people from their blindness to God - to free people from being captives to their sin and rebellion against God - and to take people out of the darkness of their sin into Jesus' Glorious light

So, Jesus came and did as Isaiah prophesied

He came, He died for sin to be forgiven, He rose to defeat death - and He ascended to Heaven

And Paul told us - last week - to be prepared for Jesus' return...

So - this week - if we are children of the light

Paul says we should we live as a child of light?

What does that look like?

1. Duty of care towards those who care for us in the Lord (vv12-13)

First, he says - as a child of light - we have a duty of care towards those who care for us in the Lord

That's in verses 12 to 13

[PowerPoint 3-Those who care for us]

Paul's specifically referring to church leaders and leaders of ministry groups - who have spiritual care for us, in the Lord

We could also include: those teaching the word - whether to adults or children, and those who serve us spiritually through Pastoral care

Paul says, these leaders should be held in the highest regard in love, because of their work (v13)

Why would Paul say that?

He gives a couple of reasons in v12 - because they have to work very hard - and because their job is to care for us - and caring for others is a demanding job.

We can certainly lighten the load of our church leaders by making their job a joy and not a burden - Heb 13:17 is helpful - it says:

17 Have confidence in your leaders and submit to their authority, because they keep watch over you as those who must give an account. Do this so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no benefit to you.

Notice that leaders are accountable to God for how they look after the flock - so they need to be able to do this in a joyful and productive manner - and not

fending off gossip and petty or destructive criticism. That will not bring joy to the leader or to the flock - and it will prevent the leader from doing an effective job

1 Tim 5:17-20 is also helpful here - it says:

¹⁷ The elders who direct the affairs of the church well - are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching.

¹⁸ For Scripture says, "Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain," and "The worker deserves his wages." ¹⁹ Do not entertain an accusation against an elder unless it is brought by two or three witnesses. ²⁰ But those elders who are sinning you are to reprove before everyone, so that the others may take warning.

So, being a leader is an honourable job - but it also carries great responsibility - if there are accusations against a leader - they should be handled by the proper process - not through gossip or false accusations or lies.

For example - even in this last week - I have had gossip come back to me - that

a) I'm retiring - not the case - and

b) that someone in our congregation had died - yet they are well and truly alive (I guess it could be prophecy)

If there is a genuine concern about a leader - it should be directed to the leader or to the elders - and not spread through the congregation - because it might not be true.

And Paul's concern in v13 is for peace and harmony in the church - not disunity and disharmony

If the accusation turns about to be true then - as Paul says - it should and must be addressed publicly - for the benefit of peace and harmony and unity in the flock

[PowerPoint 4-Challenge 1]

Challenge: Are we holding our leaders in the highest regard in love because of their work? Are we building them up or tearing them down? Are we looking for the good in them or looking to nit-pick? Do we realize they need encouragement in their difficult and highly responsible job - or doesn't that cross our minds? Are we sending gossip back to its source and telling them to prove it or keep quiet - or take it to the elders if they have genuine concerns?
(pause)

2. Duty of care towards those in need (vv14-15)

Second, Paul says - as a child of light - we should have a duty of care towards those in need in verses 14 to 15

[PowerPoint 5-In need]

Some of the categories in these verses might not seem like they are in need but hopefully I can make it clear why they are in need

- a. Paul tells us to **warn those who are idle and disruptive**- some translations say unruly. Literally it is a military term meaning those who are **out of rank, disorderly, deviating from the prescribed order**. So, it means both not fitting in with everyone else and also not pulling their

weight - in that sense - they are idle. What's wrong with being idle and disruptive? It causes disharmony and resentment - and if people are idle, they can be an unnecessary burden on others, and whilst they're not pulling their weight it gives them time to be up to all sorts of mischief and gossip and this in turn leads to disunity and disharmony. Being idle and disruptive - can also become a habit - and leads to being lazy and expecting too much of others - and an expectation of being served rather than serving (Jesus said He came to serve, not be served - why should we expect anything different to Him). So, we need to gently warn people of their idle and disruptive behaviour - and the danger it is to themselves and to others

b. Next, Paul says to **encourage the disheartened** - literally the faint-hearted - it refers to people who lose heart quickly - those who are prone to drop out of circulation, those who are timid and lack courage - or those who quit and give up easily.

We might see they have spiritual gifts, but their confidence is low and so they don't even try to use those gifts. Paul says we need to gently encourage them - give them little tasks to boost their confidence - hold their hand - so they grow wings and fly

c. Next, Paul says **help the weak** - that is those who are physically weak due to age or health and need practical help - and those who are spiritually weak who need help with Bible reading, bible study and prayer - or those who are spiritually weak and might be tempted to lapse into immorality or other sin - they will need spiritual help, advice and guidance from God's Word - to help them get stronger.

d. Finally - Paul says be **patient with all**. As Christians we need to have the ability to show love and patience (long-suffering) with ALL people - even the difficult people and the difficult to love people. As Christians, we're not just looking to minister to perfect people - but also to imperfect people

I hope you can see that the idle, the disruptive, the disheartened, the weak and the difficult - whether they realize it or not - are all in need and Paul calls us as a child of light - to have a duty of care towards all of them

[PowerPoint 6-Challenge]

Challenge: How are we caring for those in need - are we gently warning the idle and disruptive; are we encouraging the disheartened; are we helping the weak - and are we patient (long suffering) with everyone? Are we one of those who are idle and disruptive - then we need to repent of it? Are we failing to encourage or help or show patience- then we need to repent of that and change?

(pause)

3. Duty of care towards ourselves (vv16-18)

Third, Paul says - as a child of light - we should have a duty of care towards ourselves in verses 16 to 18

[PowerPoint 7-Ourselves]

We can't serve God and others - if we're not taking care of ourselves - it's impossible

So, Paul says - taking care of ourselves looks like

a. **Rejoicing always** v16. Is Paul serious?

Yes, he is!

Paul's saying not just to rejoice in happy things but also to rejoice in sorrowful things. How is that possible?

It's possible, because a Christian's joy is not based on the circumstances, they're in but based on God.

Circumstances change - God doesn't.

Whatever is going on in our lives...

- We can have joy in knowing - God has given us forgiveness and eternal life as children of light - and followers of Jesus - we can rejoice always knowing that this is guaranteed because of our faith in Jesus and
- We can adopt the principle of finding a joy in a situation knowing that God - can bring something amazing out of every situation [examples - attempting to kill Joseph in OT- and killing Jesus - meant we were saved]
- Time will show us the joy

We can feel joy:

- In our obedience to God
 - In His mercy towards us;
 - In reading and applying His word to our lives
 - In following Jesus' teaching
 - In hanging out with fellow Christians
 - And in worshipping God in praise and song
- b. Taking care of ourselves lo also oks like - **praying continually**. If we want to have a good and close relationship with someone, we need to talk to them. The same thing applies to God - Paul want us to really

focus on a close relationship with God - by being in constant communication with our Heavenly Father by praying continually (without ceasing)

Our prayers don't have to be an audible voice - they can be thoughts - Prayer posture is not important - place is not important - we can pray anywhere - at any-time - not just Sundays or morning and evening - but anytime. A Christian should never be in a place they can't pray. And let's not forget that prayer is not just asking for stuff - it also includes praise, thanks and confession

- c. Taking care of ourselves also looks like - ***giving thanks in all circumstances***. What we are doing by being thankful in all circumstances is to recognize God's in control of everything and nothing happens by blind fate or chance or coincidence. By adopting this principle of being thankful in all things - it will change our view of trials - and we will be thankful a trial has come along so can God can teach us something or strengthen us - or make us more reliant on Him.
- d. Then at the end of 18 - Paul says those 3 things: of rejoicing always, praying continually and being thankful in all circumstances - are ***God's will for us in Christ Jesus***. So, our mindset shouldn't be "it's God will, so I must do it" but rather "It's God's will so I CAN do it"

[PowerPoint 8-Challenge]

Challenge: Are we taking good care of ourselves? Are we joyful -always looking for the joy in a situation? How's our prayer life? Constant, irregular or non-existent? Are we thankful to God or do we forget to thank God for everything? What changes might we have to make to take better care of ourselves?

(pause)

4. Duty of care towards the truth (vv19-22)

Fourth, Paul says - as a child of light - we should have a duty of care towards the truth in verses 19 to 22

[PowerPoint 9-Truth]

Jesus taught that the truth sets us free from the bondage of sin (John 8:32)

and that we are made holy - by God's Word - which is the truth (John 17:17)

So here in v19-22 Paul focuses on how important the truth is

- a. He says ***do not quench the Spirit*** - it literally means don't put out the Holy Spirit's fire.

By this he means things like - refusing to heed or listen to the Holy Spirit's leading and guiding - the Spirit might be telling us to serve in a certain way or help someone in a certain way - but we continually ignore it. It can also mean ignoring what the Spirit is revealing to us from God's Word and not acting on God's word and not applying it to our lives.

Also, when we think of our first topic - today - of duty of care towards our leaders in the Lord - if we discourage or gossip about a leader - that leader would not be able to function in the ways they should - and that would also be quenching the Spirit

- b. Next Paul says about Truth - ***Do not treat prophecies with contempt.***

Prophecy is - God's words given to human beings

- to declare God's plans and purposes
- to reprove, admonish and correct the wicked
- to reveal hidden things
- and to foretell future events.

At the time of Paul's letter to the Thessalonians - some were abusing the gift of prophecy - by speculating and setting dates for Jesus' return - and so there had been a tendency to dismiss all prophecy - so Paul says don't treat all prophecy with contempt and disregard it - instead - test it. For example, if someone were to prophesy that Jesus is coming back in 2022 - we could dismiss this as false prophecy - because it does not agree with Jesus' word - that no one knows the hour of His return.

Are there prophecies today?

Well - to answer that fairly - we need to balance

- a) the definition of prophecy - I just gave
- b) with what Hebrews 1:1 says - [In former days, God spoke through His prophets – but in these last days He speaks through our Lord Jesus;](#)
- c) With the fact that Paul tells us not to treat prophecy with contempt - why would he tell us that if there was no prophecy anymore
- d) And with the fact that in Paul's day they didn't have the complete NT part of the Bible as it was evolving right then - so prophecy was more prevalent

So, what we can say is - there must be prophecy today - but it's unlikely to be foretelling future events as we have them from Jesus and in the Word - but prophecy today can still- add insight into God's plans and purpose - it can still reprove, admonish and correct people - and it can still reveal hidden things

But Paul's point is - make sure we test these prophecies - checking that they line up with God's word. And if the prophecy relates to the future - we may have to wait to see if it is true or not

The people of Berea in the NT are a good example of what Paul expected of the Thessalonians and what he expects of us - reading from Acts 17:10-11:

As soon as it was night, the believers sent Paul and Silas away to Berea. On arriving there, they went to the Jewish synagogue. ¹¹Now the Berean Jews were of more noble character than those in Thessalonica, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.

Paul makes an additional point in v21-22 - that when we do test prophecy - we only ***hold on to what's good*** - that which agrees with God's character - and ***reject anything that is evil*** - because that is the opposite to God's goodness

[PowerPoint 10-Challenge]

Challenge: Are we serious about the truth? Do we have the mindsight of the Berean Christians - who checked what they were being taught was actually in agreement with God's Word? Or are we blasé about the truth?

(pause)

5. Duty of care towards encouragement (vv23-28)

[PowerPoint 11-Encouragement]

Finally, Paul says as - a child of the light - we have a Duty of care towards encouragement

He shows this by praying & instructing the Thessalonians in verses 23 to 28

His **prayer** consists of:

- a. Asking the God of peace to sanctify them through and through - Paul's praying they become more like Jesus
- b. And that they are able to present themselves to Jesus as blameless when Jesus returns - so no one can point an accusing finger at them

His **instruction** consists of telling them:

- a. To pray for their brothers and sisters in Christ
- b. To love their brothers and sisters in Christ - and show it - by greeting them with a holy kiss - i.e. be affectionate
- c. To read his letter - it would be an encouragement to read all Paul's letters and all of Scripture - as all scripture is God breathed and useful for teaching, correcting and rebuking...
- d. And to remember and acknowledge the grace (free gift of God) in sending Jesus

So, my final challenge:

[PowerPoint 12-Challenge]

Are we praying for each other to be more like Jesus? Are we loving each other?
 Are we reading and meditating on God's Word? Are we forever grateful for the
 grace of God shown in our Lord Jesus? Are we encouraging one another?

As Paul reminded us last week

We are children of the light (5:5) - Therefore encourage one another and build one another up - just as in fact you are doing (5:11)

Let's pray