

A Word of Conclusion for the Church #15

I Thessalonians 5: 16-28

I think we could all agree that our study in this insightful epistle has been encouraging as well as challenging. Clearly the church in Thessalonica stands as a tremendous example for the church to follow. It is evident that Paul loved the church there and sincerely desired them to prosper in the work God had placed them in. They were growing and reaching the lost around them and even throughout the world.

Paul has covered a great deal regarding the responsibilities and obligations of the church. We would do well to heed these words of wisdom and seek to achieve the standard that Paul established for the church there. I have been greatly challenged in my walk with the Lord as I have studied these passages.

Tonight we have come to the conclusion of Paul's first letter to the Thessalonian church. These are words of exhortation and encouragement. His conclusion is strong and beneficial. Once again he offers a reminder of what they possess in Christ and their obligations to continue for Him. Many might consider these just concluding words, but there is an abundance of help and guidance for us in the closing thoughts. As we conclude our study, I want to consider the [instructions](#) Paul leaves as we think on: [A Word of Conclusion for the Church](#).

I. Paul's Closing Exhortation (16-22) – Here Paul leaves them with an exhortation regarding their continued service unto the Lord. This deals much with their attitudes and actions. There is great application for us as well in these verses. Notice Paul speaks of:

A. Our Praise (16) – [Rejoice evermore](#). That is a simple statement, but it reveals a great challenge. It is brief, but straight to the point. The church is exhorted to rejoice evermore. This has the idea of "*rejoicing or being glad exceedingly*." Surely if anyone ought to rejoice exceedingly it ought to be the church. We have been redeemed from sin. We have been made partakers of the inheritance of God. We have the hope of heaven and eternal life. That is worth being exceedingly glad about.

- I know that we all face trials and burdens in this life, but we have reason to rejoice. The difficulties that we face down here are all temporal, but the hope we have in Christ is eternal. We are encouraged to rejoice evermore, quite literally at all times and in all seasons.

B. Our Prayer (17) – [Pray without ceasing](#). Just as we are to rejoice evermore, we are to pray without ceasing, continuously making our request to the Lord. I cannot emphasize the

importance of prayer enough. It is the means by which we make our supplications known unto the Lord. We ought to always be in an attitude of prayer and communion with the Lord. [Ephes. 6:18 – Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints](#);

- I fear that we often reserve prayer for church services, at meal time, or at the close of the day, but we need to be consistent and continual in prayer. What a blessed privilege we have to come before our heavenly Father in prayer.

C. Our Petition (18) – [In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you](#). Surely the church in Thessalonica had reason for thanksgiving. They had faced much adversity, but God had been good and blessed them abundantly. Paul exhorts them to give thanks unto the Lord in every situation and circumstance.

- We could handle that much better if we had been instructed to give thanks for good things or pleasant things, but we are exhorted to give thanks in everything. We need to realize that all that we enjoy is of the Lord. I know that we have a hard time being thankful for the trials of life, but they too are for our benefit. It is in our adversity that we learn to trust the Lord and are made more like Him. We will never face anything that our God is not able to handle. He is sovereign in every aspect of our lives. We can give thanks in every situation.

D. Our Persuasion (19-20) – There was a couple of things that Paul wanted them to be settled in. He wanted them to be persuaded of the truth and possess a desire to maintain truth. This persuasion is actually two-fold. First we are to be persuaded regarding:

1. The Spirit (19) – [Quench not the Spirit](#). This is yet another simple statement that reveals profound truth. We all know the benefit and working of the Spirit within our lives. We are indwelt with the Spirit at salvation and He continues to guide us as we seek to live for the Lord. Paul warns them of the danger of quenching the Spirit.

- We are not to extinguish or hinder the Spirit as He works in our lives. We have the indwelling of the Spirit for our benefit. He is there to comfort and guide our lives. He reveals sin and brings conviction.

- The Spirit is of immeasurable benefit to the believer, but we must guard against grieving the Spirit. We must ensure that we keep our lives free of unconfessed sin and seek to walk in a way that pleases the Lord through the guidance of the Spirit. It is dangerous to willfully disobey the leading of the Spirit.

2. The Scriptures (20) – Despise not prophesyings. The church was exhorted to treat the Word of God with the utmost respect and accept it with full assurance. They were not to despise the utterance of the Word, whether it was the public reading of the Word or a preacher expounding upon the Word. The word **despise** carries a strong indication, literally meaning “*to consider as nothing, to look down upon.*”

- As was noted the prophesying could refer to the written Word or those who expounded upon the Word, teaching and preaching of the Word. The people were not to consider the Word of God of little value. They were to embrace it and accept its teaching. They were expected to allow the Word to bring about profitable change in their lives.
- We too need a renewed passion for the Word of God. We need to embrace it and allow it to speak to us, bringing profitable change to our lives as well.

E. Our Perseverance (21) – Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. They were to “*test or examine*” all things. Their lives were to be lived in light of the holiness and righteous standard of God. They were to embrace that which was good and refrain from that which was sinful. He again urges them to remain steadfast and committed to the things of God.

- There is sound wisdom in this exhortation for our generation as well. We need to examine all aspects of our lives in light of God’s Word and His will for our lives. We must embrace and hold fast to that which is holy and forsake all that hinders our Christian lives.

F. Our Perception (22) – Abstain from all appearance of evil. Paul continues to urge them to maintain a godly witness in this sinful world. They were expected to refrain even from the appearance of evil. If something they engaged in would cause a brother to stumble, they were expected to forsake it.

- The modern church needs reminded of this fundamental truth. We must guard our witness. We must be careful how we present ourselves, so that we are perceived in a positive manner that exalts the Lord and points others to Him. Many today have no concern whatsoever about how others view their lives. We are not our own; we have an obligation to live upright and above reproach.

I. Paul's Closing Exhortation (16-22)

II. Paul's Closing Benediction (23-28) – The closing verses reveal Paul's blessing and prayer for the church in Thessalonica. Consider:

A. His Intercession (23) – *And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.* Here he offers a closing intercession for their sanctification and purity. He desired that they would remain pure and holy before the Lord, being found without spot at His coming. He wanted them to maintain the relationship they had with the Lord and continue to live in a way that honored and magnified His holiness.

- That ought to be our prayer and desire as well. We ought to seek a sanctified life, one that reveals the God we serve in a positive and influential manner. We need to strive to be more like our Lord each day that we live. It ought to be our desire to be found faithful to Him when He calls us home. We have an obligation to live upright before the Lord.

B. His Affirmation (24) – *Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.* Here he offers an encouraging reminder of the faithfulness of the Lord. Christ had saved their souls and placed them into Christian service. He had called them from a life of sin and darkness unto His marvelous light. They had started well in the Lord and He would be faithful in equipping them to continue. Paul was simply reminding them of the source of their strength.

- We too need to be reminded of the faithfulness of our Lord. He has saved us by His marvelous grace. He has placed us within His family, calling us to a life of service. He has equipped us with the gifts we need to serve Him. He has never failed and He never will. Our Lord will be there to lead, guide, and strengthen us throughout the journey!

C. His Supplication (25) – *Brethren, pray for us.* Paul offers a humbling and profound reminder to the church. He desires that they pray for him. Paul was well aware of the need and power in prayer. He earnestly wanted the church to pray for him.

- I can assure you that if the apostle Paul desired and needed the prayers of the church, we do as well. We need to continually lift one another up in prayer unto the Lord. We are living in a difficult day. We will never endure without the help of the Lord. We need to pray for one another. We need to make it a daily priority to pray for the church!

D. His Conclusion (26-28) – Here Paul reveals his closing desire for the church. In these closing remarks we discover three things he desired of them.

1. Their Unity (26) – **Greet all the brethren with an holy kiss.** Simply Paul desired that they love one another and dwell together in unity. He desired that they bond together in Christian love and stand united for the cause of Christ. Paul knew that more difficulty would surely come, but if they stood together, in love, they could endure.

- We desperately need that unity and Christian love for one another. We need the help and strength of those around us. We need to stand united for the cause of Christ.

2. Their Conformity (27) – **I charge you by the Lord that this epistle be read unto all the holy brethren.** He knew that the Holy Spirit has inspired the writing of this epistle. He knew the benefit that it would be to the church. He charged them that it be read among all the brethren. Paul desired them to continue to grow and mature in the Lord, conforming to His image.

- That truth has not changed and it never will. We need to hear and heed the Word of God in our day as well, conforming to the image of our Savior. We need to make it a priority to study and meditate upon the Word of God. It must continue to be the emphasis and priority of our services and our lives.

3. Their Victory (28) – **The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.** What closing words of comfort for the church. Paul prays for the grace of the Lord to be abundant in their lives. He wanted them to experience His grace and enjoy the victory that He gives.

- Oh how we need His abundant grace in our lives as well. We need Him every moment that we live. We need the grace and guidance of our Lord. I rejoice in what I have in Him and I pray that we as His people will continue to grow in His grace!

As we conclude this wonderful study, I wonder how our lives compare to those in Thessalonica. I am aware that they were mortals just like we are, but I have been greatly challenged by their testimony. I think we all would have to agree that we could be closer to the Lord than we currently are. No doubt we could be accomplishing more for His glory.

I pray that we will see our Lord for all that He is and seek to be more like Him. May Fellowship strive to be more like Thessalonica in service to our blessed Lord!