

The Christian Arsenal

www.christianarsenal.com

1 THESSALONIANS 5:12-28

We've been studying the **Book of 1 Thessalonians** for the past eight weeks. We've seen Paul **commend, encourage, instruct, and exhort** the believers in Thessalonica. For the past two weeks, we've seen as Paul has instructed them about end time events. He taught them that one day, the Lord would come and take all believers to heaven...those whose bodies are already in the grave and those who are alive at His coming.

But, as we end **1 Thessalonians** today, we see Paul giving these folks some very practical advice. Paul is saying,

"Folks, in spite of what I've just shared with you about the truth of the Rapture, and the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ...we must still go about the business of living today.

God tells us that there is a season for everything...a season for living and a season for dying...a season for planting and a season for harvesting and so on.

We don't know exactly when Jesus is coming back for His church, so we must live in the light of the fact that He **is** coming back and **could** come at any time. So, let me just give you some practical ways you can live in the season we're in right now, so as to be **ready** when He does come."

And that's what we're going to see in our lesson today. Paul is going to give us very basic instructions how we, as a church, are to serve the Lord Jesus while we are anticipating His imminent return.

I've used this illustration before...

When my friend first became acquainted with the folks over at B'rit Hadasha (a Messianic Jewish Congregation), she was curious as to some of their beliefs. One morning she was visiting over there and she was in the office of the secretary. She asked "Just what do you folks believe about the Rapture of the church?" The secretary got up from her desk and went to the window and pulled back the curtain and said, "I look for Jesus every day."

I said that to say this...She didn't just stand at the window the rest of the day. She went back to her desk and went back to work...she went back to serving the Lord at her job even though she also looks every day for Jesus to come back.

And that's what we're to do...we're to look for His return and at the same time we're to serve Him, aren't we?

So, let's see what Paul tells us we're to do in these verses...

Verses 12-14...

Paul tells us in this passage not only how to live and serve the Lord Jesus until He comes for us, but also Paul addresses how to have a happy church family.

I've said before and I'll say it again...

Outside of my immediate family, you all are the closest thing to family that I have. I have a large family, but most aren't Christians...so other than blood, we don't have a whole lot in common.

But you're family to me...You're church family!

The Christian Arsenal

www.christianarsenal.com

And we see in this passage of Scripture that Paul touches on three different aspects of church family.

1) Leadership in the Church Family

Without leadership, a family falls apart and God has ordained leadership for the church. God has placed those in authority over the local body of believers and these are the folks Paul is talking about in **verses 12 and 13**.

Paul is speaking of those who diligently **labor among us** and **have charge over us** and **give us instruction**...and Paul says **we're to appreciate them**. I believe this is teaching us that we shouldn't take our spiritual leaders for granted. They are God's gift to us and He has appointed them to have charge over us and to instruct us.

Paul tells us we're also to **esteem them very highly in love**. **WHY?** Because of their **work!**

Our pastor and other leaders are not to be placed on pedestals. Abraham, Moses, David and even Peter made mistakes in their words and their deeds. All men have feet of clay...but let me tell you this...

When God's servants are led by God's Spirit and call you and me to obey God's Word, then we have the responsibility to obey...And we also must do it in a peaceful way.

This tells me our obedience must not be a grudging obedience, but a loving and peaceful obedience. We know that from **this** and **other** passages God has given us. By the way...do you know the most effective way we can love our church leaders? **BY PRAYING FOR THEM!!**

Paul addresses **family leadership**, but he also addresses

2) Ministry in the Church Family

Verses 14-16...

Family members must learn to minister to each other. Our church leaders cannot do all the work of the ministry. As good as David Love is...even **he** cannot do all the ministering in our church.

That's why Sunday School classes are so important, don't you think?

Let's see the different ways Paul tells us to take care of our church family...

a) admonish the unruly

In any church and certainly in a church as large as ours, there will be those folks who have just fallen out of step or they have even rebelled and they need another member of the church family to come alongside them and give them a word of admonition.

b) encourage the fainthearted

This word "encourage" is also a Greek word for "comfort" and it is actually made up of two parts... **para** which means "near" and **muthos** which means "speech". The idea here is that we don't scold these people from a distance, but **we get close to them and speak tender words of encouragement**.

The Christian Arsenal

www.christianarsenal.com

Next, Paul tells us to

c) **help the weak**

The literal translation is that we are to “hold fast to them.” We’re not to let them fall. This isn’t speaking so much of **physically** weak people as it is **spiritually** weak people. **Spiritually weak Christians must be held onto by spiritually strong Christians.**

When we see a spiritually weak Christian falling into **sin** or even falling into **legalism**, we should be willing to come along-side that person and hold him up. God wants spiritually strong Christians to come alongside spiritually weak Christians and find out where the wound is...where the weakness is...and then apply the medicine of the precious Word of God.

And, you know, this kind of ministry isn’t always easy...sometimes it isn’t received well. Sometimes even Christians don’t want this kind of help...**so Paul tells us to be patient and to watch out that we don’t pay back evil for evil, instead we’re to seek the good in each other. I praise God for those who have seen weaknesses in my life and been bold enough to come to me and strengthen me...even though I may not have wanted to hear it at the time!**

Lastly, Paul tells us **to rejoice always!**

Joy takes the burden out of our service, doesn’t it?

“The joy of the Lord is you strength!”

Church family leadership is essential and is ordained by God!

Church family ministry is essential and is also ordained by God!

And the last thing I want us to look at today is

2) **Worship in the Church Family**

Verses 17-22...

Did you know that worship is the most important activity of a local church family?

I mean, leadership and ministry are important, but if leadership and ministry don’t flow out of worship, leadership and ministry become just busy activities without power and without heart. There may be “results” but these results will not be lasting and they will glorify man instead of God.

Worship should be a vital part of our **every day** Christian life. Sunday is the day we set aside for corporate worship, but we should worship our Lord **seven days of week.**

...by never ceasing to pray...verse 17

This simply means we should “keep the lines open” and be in conversation with God all through the day. We should speak to Him and listen for Him to speak to us.

We should also worship

...by never failing to praise...verse 18

God tells us to give thanks in everything! Does this mean we praise God **for** the evil things that happen in this world? **NO!** But, it **does** mean we give thanks to God in the midst of

The Christian Arsenal

www.christianarsenal.com

evil...for His presence and His provision and His sovereignty and the ultimate good that He is going to accomplish in spite of that evil.

By the way, this is an imperative...so if we refuse to do this...we sin! So, let me ask you, how many of us give thanks in everything on a regular basis?????

You know, we somehow have the idea that **the bad things we do** are worse than **the good things we don't do**. But some of the strongest language in Scripture is reserved for those who refuse to do what they ought to do.

Remember when the tribes of Reuben and Gad were about to let the other ten tribes go into the Promised Land without them...Joshua told them in **Numbers 32:23** that if they didn't go and help their brothers subdue the land then they would have sinned against the Lord and that verse ends, **"Be sure your sins will find you out."**

This was a sin because God's will was for all His children to go into the Promised Land and help each other subdue it.

And Paul says here... **"No matter what happens, it is God's will that you always be thankful..."**

Every experience, every circumstance is an occasion for praising and thanking God. You may be sitting there saying, "but you don't know all my problems..." **That's right! And you don't know all mine, either!**

God does, though! He knows all your problems and He knows all my problems and He still tells you and me that in everything we're to give thanks. **WHY?**

**Because He knows what's going to happen next!
Because He knows how it's going to come out!
Because He knows He is going to work all things for our good and His glory!
Because He knows what will conform you and me to the image of His dear Son!**

Paul also tells us here as we worship we're to worship **...by never quenching the Spirit...verse 19** Paul tells us we're not to quench the Spirit... "don't pour water on the fire of the Holy Spirit," and here it is directly tied in with the next phrase, **"do not despise prophetic utterances." (NAS) "do not treat prophecies with contempt..." (NIV)**

I believe Paul is saying, "Don't look with contempt on folks who have a spiritual gift that you don't have." The Holy Spirit has gifted different folks with different gifts...and we're not to quench the Holy Spirit by being jealous or suspicious of the gifts that other folks have.

I believe we can also look at this verse another way:
In those days, they didn't have the entire written Word as you and I do...and this meant they were not to **discount** or **treat lightly** or **set aside** or **despise** God's teachers. Prophecy can mean "foretelling", but it can also mean "forth telling."

And apparently, these folks had heard so many **false** teachers that they were in danger of discounting all teachers.

Today, this would mean, **"don't turn aside when the Holy Spirit is teaching you through the preaching or teaching or reading of God's Word."**

The Christian Arsenal

www.christianarsenal.com

...by never hesitating to examine...verse 21 God's Word is a very important part of worship! And the burden is on **us** to know God's Word so well that we can examine what we hear a preacher or teacher say and know if it's true or false.

Paul tells us in **verse 22** that our lives should be characterized by abstaining from every appearance of evil.

...by never appearing evil...verse 22

Then, Paul puts in a nutshell in **verse 23** what the results of family leadership and family ministry and family worship are...

3) Sanctification of the Church Family

Verses 23-24...

Paul speaks of our sanctification...our **entire** sanctification...and Paul then speaks of our complete preservation of our **"spirit and soul and body."**

And in the time we have left, let's look at what this means. What does it mean to be sanctified? **It means to be set apart...to be consecrated...to be purified. It means to become more and more and more like Jesus!**

It doesn't happen suddenly! Sanctification is going on right now in your life and will go on until God calls you home. I heard my daughter-in-law say just this past week that things she used to do, and thought nothing of, bring deep conviction to her now. WHY? Because she is more like Jesus now than she used to be.

And Paul is praying here that God would sanctify them entirely and that their spirit and soul and body be preserved completely and without blame. So, let's see what all that means...

Did you know that you and I live in three worlds?
First of all there is the **physical world**...the earth world. That's the world our **body** relates to.

Then, there's the **soul world**...the psychological world. That's the world our **mind** and our **emotions** and our **will** relate to. This world is the intellectual world, the philosophical world...the psychological world.

Then, there's the **spiritual world. We relate to God in that world.**

Now, in **verse 23**, Paul mentions the body last, but let's look at it first. I want us to see how we can be sanctified **entirely** and be preserved **completely!**

Let me ask you...is the body important to God? Is God really interested in our bodies?

YES! He tells us our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit.

Romans 12:1 tells us to *"present our bodies as a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship."*

Psalms 139:14: *"I will give thanks to Thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made..."*

The Christian Arsenal

www.christianarsenal.com

Let me ask you...what tells your body what to do? What tells your body what to eat? Or drink? Or read? Or say? **What motivates your body?**

Your soul! **Remember what we said the soul is?** First, we said the soul is your **mind**...the rest of the verse in **Psalm 139** that we just quoted says **"...wonderful are Thy works, and my soul knows it very well."**

The soul is also your **emotions**. **Song of Solomon 1:7** talks about the soul **loving**.

The soul is also your will. **Psalm 27:12: "Deliver me not over to the soul (or the will) of my enemies."**

My soul causes me to act as I do.

My **mind** says, "I **think** I ought to do thus and so..."

My **emotions** say, "Yes, I really **feel** like doing thus and so..."

My **will** says, "Okay, I **will** do thus and so..."

Now, don't get confused! Many times we use the words soul and spirit interchangeably, they are not the same thing.

So, let's think for the next few minutes of **the spirit**.

The spirit enables us to relate to the world above us. The spirit separates us from the animals. Animals have a soul, but they have no spirit. They have a mind. They have emotions. They have a will...but they have no spirit!

It is through my spirit that I know God. Jesus said that we must worship God in spirit and in truth.

I believe as God created Adam, He gave Adam a body, soul and spirit. He was a trichotomous body. God said, "Let Us make man in Our image," didn't He?

Adam and Eve related to the physical world with their body. They related to the psychological world with their soul. **But it was through their spirit that they related to God!**

But what happened? God said,

"Don't eat the fruit of the tree in the midst of the Garden, because if you do, you will surely die."

Well, did they eat? **YES!** Did they die? **YES and NO!**

I mean, Adam went on and lived hundreds of years, didn't he?

Adam's body didn't die immediately.

Adam's soul didn't die immediately.

But, Adam's spirit died immediately!

Adam and Eve didn't die **physically**. They kept seeing and hearing and smelling and tasting and touching, didn't they?

Adam and Eve didn't die **psychologically**. They still knew where they were, and they still knew each other, didn't they?

The Christian Arsenal

www.christianarsenal.com

But, they did die **spiritually**. When God came into the Garden of Eden looking for them, rather than their being joyful, the Bible says they ran and hid themselves.

After Adam sinned and died spiritually, he became a natural man...a soulish man...a fleshly and sensual man. **He was ruled by the soul and not the spirit.**

And that's how all men have been born ever since. They have been born with a living body and a living soul and a dead spirit. One man said that man is born with a "God-shaped vacuum" that can only be filled when he comes to God through the Lord Jesus Christ.

And in order for every man since Adam to have a spirit...**he must be born again!** Jesus told Nicodemus he must be born again in order to see the kingdom of God. **Nicodemus knew about God in his soul, but Nicodemus didn't know God in His spirit.**

Nicodemus said, "Am I supposed to re-enter the womb of my mother?"

Jesus said, "I'm not talking about a **physical** birth." Jesus wasn't even talking about a **soulish** birth. **He was talking about a spiritual rebirth.** Jesus said, "Nicodemus, that which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit."

Getting back to **1 Thessalonians**...Paul isn't writing to a pagan community. He isn't writing a bunch of heathens. Paul is writing Christians! And he's saying, "You folks have **already** been born again! You folks have a body and a soul and you also have a spirit!"

John said in **John 1:12-13**:

"But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

Listen, this is how it should work...

The body should be controlled by the soul.

But the soul should be controlled by the spirit.

And the **human** spirit should be controlled by the **Holy Spirit!**

And when all this happens, we will be sanctified entirely and preserved completely! Our lives will glorify God and we will be without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ!

Does this make sense? NOD YOUR HEAD!

See, your soul told your head to nod and I hope the Holy Spirit told your spirit that this is all true!

Getting saved is not getting man out of earth into heaven.

Getting saved is getting God out of heaven into man.

Getting saved is getting the Holy Spirit into me so I can function the right way!

And when unsaved folks don't act the way they ought to act...please, please don't be surprised or shocked! Paul said in **1 Corinthians 2:14**:

"...a natural (a soulish, a fleshly) man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him. He cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned."

The Christian Arsenal

www.christianarsenal.com

Have you ever wondered why some people are more spiritually mature than others? Why some people live more victorious Christian lives than others?

Well, before you got saved, your **soul** was in control. But after you got saved, **a battle began and it was a battle for control**. Your soul began warring against your spirit.

Your soul says, "Read this book. It has some bad passages in it, but you're all grown up...you can just skim over them...it's really not that bad."

Or, "Watch this movie. It has some bad language in it, but you can get past that..."

But, your spirit under the control of the Holy Spirit says,

"No, you don't need to read that book or watch that movie because your mind needs to be dwelling on things that are **true, honorable, right, pure, lovely, of good repute.**"

(Ever had that happen to you?)

Well, maybe you're not bothered with books and movies. Maybe it's not the things you **read or watch** so much as it is the things you **say**.

Your soul says, "Tell that person off, she (or he) deserves it!"

And your spirit, under the control of the Holy Spirit says,

"No, don't tell her off. I have written that a gentle answer turns away wrath."

Maybe books, movies and your tongue aren't your problem...maybe the Holy Spirit tells you,

"You really need to get into God's Word today. You should study to show yourself approved unto God...and you really need to set aside some time for prayer."

But, your soul, your flesh, your mind and emotions and will whisper in your ear, "Oh, you don't have time today for that. You have too many much more important things to do.!"

Have you ever heard the story of the old farmer with the dogs that fought all the time? One day his dogs were fighting and someone asked the farmer which dog he thought would win, and the farmer said, "the one I feed the most."

And that's the bottom line, folks! There is a battle going on in us...a battle between the soul and the spirit, and the one you feed the most will win!

If you seek daily to feed your spirit and walk controlled by the Holy Spirit, your spirit will win over your soul. But if you feed your soul, you will not listen to the Holy Spirit and your soul...your emotions, will and mind...will win over your spirit, and your flesh...your body...will be satisfied!

Let me also say this...this battle will go on as long as we live in this body of flesh...because our flesh wants to be controlled by the soul, not the spirit. However, this is not impossible! Look at **verse 24...**

With God, all things are possible!

The Christian Arsenal

www.christianarsenal.com

When we live according to what we've just seen, not only will we be sanctified entirely and preserved completely, but our worship will be pleasing to the Lord. Let me read to you a wonderful definition of worship that I read this past week.

“...to worship is to quicken the conscience by the holiness of God, to feed the mind with the truth of God, to purge the imagination by the beauty of God, to open up the heart to the love of God, to devote the will to the purpose of God.”

Well, Paul asks the Thessalonians to pray for him and to greet each other with a holy kiss and to be sure and read this letter to all the brethren, and we've done that...we have **read** and **studied** and **pondered** this letter for the past eight weeks, haven't we? Then he pronounced a blessing of grace of Jesus upon them and I believe on us, as well!