

Encourage One Another

1 Thessalonians: 5:9-18

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1 Thessalonians 5:9-18 – (NIV)

⁹ For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. ¹⁰ He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him. ¹¹ Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.

¹² Now we ask you, brothers and sisters, to acknowledge those who work hard among you, who care for you in the Lord and who admonish you. ¹³ Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work. Live in peace with each other. ¹⁴ And we urge you, brothers and sisters, warn those who are idle and disruptive, encourage the disheartened, help the weak, be patient with everyone.

¹⁵ Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always strive to do what is good for each other and for everyone else. ¹⁶ Rejoice always, ¹⁷ pray continually, ¹⁸ give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

v9 – What does it mean that God did not appoint us to wrath?

Before we had the hope of salvation (1 Thessalonians 5:8), we had an appointment to **wrath**. We no longer have an appointment to **wrath**, but now to **obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ**.

What is wrath?

Anger... It is important to understand that Paul means the **wrath of God**. We are saved from the world, the flesh, and the devil. But first and foremost, we are rescued from the **wrath of God**, the **wrath that we deserve**.

How is it we did we have an appointment to the wrath of God before we were born again?

Our appointment to **wrath** was in two ways...

- First, because of what Adam did to us and the whole human race, we are appointed to **wrath** (Romans 5:14-19).
- Second, because of our own sin, we are appointed to wrath.

When Jesus died on the cross, He stood in our place in our appointment to **wrath** and reschedules us with an appointment to **obtain salvation**.

What does it tell us that God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation?

Paul put two interesting ideas side-by-side here... **Appoint** emphasizes God's sovereignty but **obtain** is a word that emphasizes human response.

- Together, they show that the full scope of salvation involves both divine initiative and human response.

v10 – What does it mean that Jesus died for us?

The idea is that *Jesus died in our place*. Not simply that Jesus died for us in the sense as a favor for us; but that He **died** as a *substitute* for us.

What is the promise here?

Whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him: Having obtained **salvation through our Lord Jesus**, we will always **live together with Him**.

- The promise of unity with Jesus can't be broken; no matter if we live or die (**wake or sleep**), we will always be **with Him**.

Jesus' death isn't softened by calling it *sleep*, but our death can be called **sleep**.

- His death was *death*, so that ours would only be **sleep**.

v11 – What should children of the day be doing?

Therefore comfort each other: Paul again tells us not to *take* comfort, but to *give* **comfort** or encouragement (NIV).

- If all Christians have a heart to **comfort each other**, then all will be comforted.

and edify one another: To **edify** means to *build up*. When we have our first interest in building up other Christians, then God will **edify** us.

- The idea is of a church full of active participants, not passive spectators.

How were the Thessalonians doing in encouraging and building up one another?

Just as you also are doing: It wasn't that there was no **comfort** among the Thessalonians, or as if no one was edified. But they had to *continue* to comfort others, and to do it *more and more*.

v12 – What else should children of the day be doing?

Recognize those who labor among you: Christians are to **recognize** their leaders, and leaders are described in three ways...

- *Those who labor among you.* Leaders are recognized not by their title but by their *service*. A title is fine; but only if the title describes what that person really is before God and man.
- *And are over you in the Lord.* Leaders are recognized as being “**over**” the congregation in the sense of ruling and providing headship, as a shepherd is **over** the sheep. This describes a clear and legitimate order of authority.
- *And admonish you.* Leaders are recognized as those who **admonish** the congregation. To **admonish** means “to caution or to reprove gently; to warn.”

The Greek construction is three participles united under one article, thus indicating that they are not three distinct groups but one class of men discharging a threefold function.

v13 – How should Christians regard their leaders?

Esteem them very highly in love: They should do this **for their work’s sake**. They don’t deserve esteem because of their title, or because of their personality, but because of their labor on behalf of God’s people.

What specific is given here about how a Christian may esteem and love their pastor?

Be at peace among yourselves: Christians should simply put away all their squabbles and arguments.

- As parents love it when their children get along with one another, this is a great way to **esteem** and **love** the leaders of your church.

If a Christian can’t esteem and love their pastor, what should they do?

They should pray asking the Holy Spirit to change their heart, or go somewhere else and put themselves under a pastor they do **esteem** and **love**.

v14 – What does it mean to exhort (NKJV) or urge (NIV) someone?

To **exhort** is to tell someone what they must do, but without sharpness or a critical spirit. It is not rebuke or condemnation, but neither is it merely a suggestion or advice. It is urgent and serious but associated with comfort.

What were the Thessalonians urged to do?

Warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all: Paul told the Thessalonians — the people, not only the pastor and leaders — to minister in a variety of ways, depending on the state of the person who needs the ministry. So if

someone is **unruly**, the duty of the Christian is to **warn** them. Others need **comfort**, others need to be upheld.

What does it mean to be disruptive or unruly?

The **unruly** are those who are *out of order*, using a military word that describes the soldier who breaks ranks or marches out of step. This is the self-willed person who simply demands to hold his own opinion or preference. These must be warned.

What does it mean to be fainthearted (NKJV) or disheartened (NIV)?

Those who, literally, are *small-souled*. By nature or experience they tend to be timid and lack courage. These need comfort — in the sense of assisting strength — to be brought to them.

How may we strengthen the be fainthearted (NKJV) or disheartened (NIV)?

By sharing with them how God helped us when we were fainthearted or disheartened (everyone is there at some point in time). This is why fellowship is so important.

Proverbs 27:17 – *As iron sharpens iron, so a man sharpens the countenance of his friend.*

Who are the weak?

This in context refers to the weak in faith. The **weak** must be upheld and assisted with an eye to building their own strength instead of perpetuating their weakness.

How should we regard times of doubting God?

Doubt is an experience common to all people. Even those with faith in God struggle with doubt on occasion and say with the man in Mark 9:24, “*I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!*”

- Some people are hindered greatly by doubt; some see it as a springboard to life; and others see it as an obstacle to be overcome.

What is doubt?

A working definition of doubt is “to lack confidence, to consider unlikely.” Satan introduced doubt into Eve’s mind when he asked, “*Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?’*” He wanted her to lack confidence in God’s command. When she affirmed God’s command, including the consequences, Satan replied with a denial, which is a stronger statement of doubt: “*You will not surely die.*”

- Doubt is a tool of Satan to make us lack confidence in God’s Word and consider His judgment unlikely. Lest we think that we can lay all of the blame on Satan, the Bible clearly holds us accountable for our doubts:
- See Zechariah being told that he would have a son in his and his wife’s old age (Luke 1:11-17).

What is the problem with doubt?

The Bible says that doubt is a destroyer of life. James 1:5-8 tells us that when we ask God for wisdom, we are to ask in faith, without doubt.

- If we doubt God's ability to respond to our request, what would be the point of asking in the first place? God says that if we doubt while we ask, we will not receive anything from Him, because we are unstable.

James 1:6 – *He who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind.*

What is the remedy for doubt?

The remedy for doubt is faith...

Romans 10:17 – *So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*

God gave us the Bible as a testimony of His works in the past, so we will have a reason to trust Him in the present.

- Once we have an understanding of what God has done in the past, what He has promised us for the present, and what we can expect from Him in the future, we are able to act in faith instead of doubt.

The most famous doubter in the Bible was Thomas, who declared that he would not believe that the Lord was resurrected unless he could see and touch Jesus himself (John 20:25-29). When he later saw Jesus and believed, he received the gentle rebuke, *“Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”*

Hebrews 11:1 – *Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.*

We can have confidence even in the things we cannot see, because God has proven Himself faithful, true, and able.

Why should we be patient with all?

Though different approaches must be taken with different people, Christians must be **patient with all**.

- This is because true Christianity is shown by its ability to love and help difficult people (EGRs – Extra Grace Required).
- If we only ministered to perfect people, not much ministry would happen.

v15 – Why shouldn't we pay back wrongs done to us?

The Christian never should seek revenge or vengeance, but let God take up our side. Instead, we must **always pursue what is good both for yourselves and for all**.

Romans 12:19 – *Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,” says the Lord.*

When we have a forgiving heart towards others, not only is it good for them, it is good for ourselves.

v16-18 – Why should we rejoice always, pray continually, and give thanks in all circumstances?

for this is God's will for you: Our relationship with the Lord gives us good reason to rejoice so we should experience that relationship through prayer and giving thanks to Him from whom all blessings flow.

- The thought isn't "this is God's will, so you must do it." The thought is rather "this is God's will, so you can do it."
- It isn't easy to rejoice always, pray without ceasing, and in everything give thanks, but we can do it because it is God's will.

What does it mean to rejoice always?

Not only rejoicing in happy things, but in sorrows also. The Christian can **rejoice always** because their joy isn't based in circumstances, but in God.

- Circumstances change, but God doesn't.

Why don't Christians have more joy?

They are too mired in the world. If you embrace an eternal perspective, you can't help but be joyful.

What does it mean to pray continually?

Pray about everything, all the time... Prayer is communication with God, and we can live each minute of the day in a constant, flowing, conversation with God.

- There is significant, important value in a time where we shut out all other distractions and focus on God in a time of closet prayer (Matthew 6:6).
- But there is also room — and great value — in every-moment-of-the-day fellowship with God.

What is implied by praying continually?

- The use of the voice is not essential in prayer.
- The posture of prayer is not of primary importance.
- The place of prayer is not of great importance.
- The particular time of prayer is not important.
- Christians are never where they cannot pray.

Why should we give thanks in all circumstances?

We don't **give thanks for** everything, but **in everything**. We recognize God's sovereign hand is in charge, and not blind fate or chance.

- "When joy and prayer are married their first-born child is gratitude." (Spurgeon)

What applications come to mind from this passage?

- We are not appointed to wrath; embrace the gift of salvation!
- We are called to encourage one another, so do it!
- Doubt is deadly; grow in faith.