

1 Thessalonians Ch5v16-28 - Healthy Church 2

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[0 : 00] Brothers and sisters, pray for us.! Greet all God's people with a holy kiss. I charge you before the Lord to have this letter read to all the brothers and sisters.

! The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.! Well, what a mishmash of commands and instructions.

We need God's help, so let's pray and see what God will do amongst us this morning. Let's pray. Father, we thank you for this ancient letter written hundreds of years ago to a church just like this. Your word written down to instruct us, to encourage us, and help us. And so we ask that by your spirit, you would be our teacher and you would build us up today, build us up in Christ, and encourage our hearts.

In Jesus' name. Amen. So what are we to do with all these instructions?

[1 : 32] Rejoice always. Don't treat prophecies with contempt. Greet each other with a holy kiss.

What are we to do with them? What are they? Well, I think what Paul is doing is giving us a picture of a healthy church.

We saw that in verses 12 to 15 the last time we looked at this together. You see, the local church is like a family.

Have a look at verse 12. Now we ask you, brothers and sisters. Verse 14.

We urge you, brothers and sisters. And down at verse 25. Brothers and sisters. Brothers and sisters.

[2 : 31] You see, we are brothers and sisters united in Christ for the encouragement and support of each other.

It's all about relationships. Healthy relationships between God's people. And what he's instructing us and encouraging us here is to say, I need you and you need me.

And we all need one another. So in verses 16 to 28, we are shown what our Christ relationship looks like in practice.

And there's two ways in which brothers and sisters in Christ help each other. Two very simple things we're going to look at together, which I think summarises this last section of the letter.

We're to speak to God about each other. And we're to speak to each other about God. Speak to God about each other.

[3 : 37] The prayer of one another. And to speak to each other about God. Speaking his word. So first, we speak to God about each other.

Let's look at verse 16 to 18. Rejoice always. Pray continually. Give thanks in all circumstances.

So here we have three different kinds of prayers that we can always be praying for each other. The first one is to rejoice always.

When we see each other, as we gather together like this, we are to be joyful, filled with spontaneous praise to God.

Have a look back at chapter 3, verse 9. Chapter 3, verse 9.

[4 : 38] How can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy we have in the presence of our God because of you?

When Paul thinks of the church, he's filled with joy. He's rejoicing that this church is continuing to work or to walk with Christ.

Every news report that he gets, there is a love for Christ and a love for each other. And he's overflowing in praise to God. As we gather together, even now, look around at one another.

These are your brothers and sisters that God has given to you to rejoice over. And as I look out this morning at each one of you, I am filled with joy because you are here, you love Jesus, and you continue to walk with Jesus.

So let us always rejoice over our brothers and sisters. Pray continually is the next one.

[5 : 57] We need to pray for each other. Just in the next verse, chapter 3, verse 10. He says, night and day, we pray most earnestly that we would see you again and supply what is lacking in your faith.

You see, none of us is perfect. None of us has the Christian life sorted. We come today with all kinds of struggles and issues, overwhelmed with pressures, some grieving, some hurting. Well, God has placed us into the family of this church amongst people who are here to pray for you. You see, life can be so hard sometimes that we just don't know what to pray.

And sometimes we can't even pray ourselves. So we need one of our brothers and sisters to come alongside us and say, tell me your story.

Tell me how your week is and I will pray for you. Pray continually for one another.

[7 : 09] And his third prayer was, well, let's give thanks in all circumstances. There's always reasons to be giving thanks to God. In fact, that's how the letter began.

Look at chapter 1 and verse 2. We always thank God for all of you and continually mention you in our prayers.

But what gives him such thanks? Verse 3, we remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Your work for God, your love for others, the hope that you have in Christ. You, and I am talking about you here today, all of us, you have been faithful, committed, persevering.

You have been here at certain times to speak a word of comfort to a brother or sister who's been grieving. You've been here committed to help when people have been low.

[8 : 31] Give thanks for your brothers and sisters who have stood with you through thick and thin and are still here with you today because they love you.

Let's go back to chapter 5 of Thessalonians. So here we have three kinds of prayers, verse 16, that we can speak to God about.

Rejoice over one another. Pray continually. And give thanks in all circumstances. Now this isn't just the optional extra for the very keen.

Do you see what it says at the end of verse 18? This is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. This is God's design. This is his best for you that we pray for one another.

In fact, Paul saw the necessity of prayer. Verse 25. He reaches out to the church and says, Brothers and sisters, pray for us.

[9 : 42] I cannot do ministry. I cannot continue in the Christian life unless you are praying for me. Well, if Paul needed prayer, how much more are we in need of prayer?

Think of it like this. When you go on a flight, the stewards go through all the safety rules, don't they? Directing you to where the doors are in case of emergency.

But then they also say, well, if the cabin pressure reduces, you're to pull down the oxygen mask and the parent or adult is to place the oxygen mask on the child.

because without the intervention of the adult, the child can't breathe. Well, think of prayer like that. Sometimes we find life so difficult that spiritually we are finding it hard to breathe. We're finding it hard to walk with God.

[10 : 51] Well, our brother and sister is there through prayer to put on that oxygen mask, to breathe that life-giving work of God's spirit into our life so that we can keep on going.

God has placed you in the family of this church, brothers and sisters, to pray to each other to God.

Well, before we move on, we're given an example. You may be thinking, well, what should I pray for my brothers and sisters? Well, we have a prayer for the church and it's the most wonderful prayer.

Look at verse 23. May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through.

May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Don't know what to pray for each other?

[12 : 01] Look at verse 23. This is what we can speak to God about. Look at the beginning, that God would sanctify you through and through.

That God would change you, transform you, make you more like Jesus. What a great encouragement that through our prayers for each other, our prayers work, they connect with God the Father and by his spirit he works in our life so that we become more like Jesus.

More and more beautiful. More and more precious. But not only that he would work sanctification in our life, the second part of verse 23 is there that God would keep you.

May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. One day Christ will come. One day we will die and we will face him.

Are we ready to meet him? Well, God has given you to one another so that we can be ready for when Christ comes.

[13:21] Through our prayers we strengthen each other's hearts to go on walking and trusting to be ready to meet Jesus.

so wondering what you should pray to God about? What should I rejoice over my brothers and sisters about? What should I continually pray for?

What should I continue to give thanks for? Verse 23 thank you praise you Lord for what you are doing making them more like Jesus.

And would you please continue that work and keep them to the very end. So first a healthy church will always be speaking to God about each other.

It's a wonderful gift. Here's the second way brothers and sisters can relate to each other and help each other. We speak to each other about God.

[14:28] Verse 19 Do not quench the spirit. Do not treat prophecies with contempt but test them all.

Hold on to what is good. Reject every kind of evil. So what are prophecies?

Well prophecy is a word from God about his son the Lord Jesus Christ spoken by a prophet.

That's simple isn't it? A prophecy is a word from God about his son Jesus Christ spoken by a prophet. Let's have a think about this because it can be confusing because many people claim to be a prophet.

So what do we mean by that? Well first we want to think about prophets in the capital P sense. So think of prophets in the Old Testament. People like Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah, when they spoke the words they could say hear the word of the Lord or God has said.

[15:51] They spoke as representatives of God. Primarily they were speaking of the coming King, the coming Messiah, Jesus Christ, God's ultimate prophet.

But there weren't just prophets in the Old Testament, there were also prophets in the New Testament in the early church. So have a look with me to Ephesians chapter 2.

So go back to Ephesians chapter 2. It's another letter to a church and Paul is the author again. Ephesians chapter 2. And we'll pick it up in verse 19. So here he's speaking about the church. Brothers and sisters who've been brought together in Christ.

They've heard the gospel about Christ and they've been united together. Verse 19. So consequently you are no longer foreigners and strangers.

[16:59] You're not outsiders but you're fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household. You're now part of his family built on the foundation of the apostles people like Paul and prophets New Testament prophets with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.

In him the whole building is joined together. That is the church is brought together by Christ and they are built together by Christ.

So these prophets of the Old Testament the apostles and prophets of the New Testament were people who spoke on behalf of God.

Their words were God's words about Christ. And that is the word that we now have before us that we're reading and looking at which is written down for us in scripture.

So that's why we might call them prophets with a capital P. We should never ignore or sideline or turn away from God's word.

[18:16] It is the foundation for our lives and for our church. So there's prophets with a capital P.

Then there's prophets which we might say come with a small p. Because it seems there were these kinds of prophets. So in Ephesians chapter 4 verse 11 we read this.

It's been talking about Christ who gives gifts to his church. Verse 11 of chapter 4 So Christ himself gave to the church the apostles the prophets there what we've just looked at in chapter 2 verse 20 the apostles prophets!

The evangelists! The pastors! and teachers and what are they to do? To equip his people for works of service so that the body of Christ may be built up.

So Christ gave to his church gifted men and women who could teach and apply God's word to the church who like evangelists could reach out to others with the good news of Christ.

[19 : 34] They take what God has said in scripture about Christ and they teach it and proclaim it to those who do not know. So preachers and teachers are in a sense prophesying in a little p sense.

That's what's happening now. As I am teaching as we're preaching God's word we are encouraging and equipping the church so that it is built up in Christ and we are drawn closer to Christ.

And that means that there's a difference between those who spoke God's written word and those who preach and teach God's word.

Let's go back to Thessalonians. There's a difference between those who wrote it and those who may speak it today.

Let's go back to Thessalonians. And that difference is and we pick it up in verse 19 chapter 5 verse 19 and 20 do not quench the spirit do not treat prophecies with contempt but test them all.

[20 : 55] You see that's the difference. The word of God scripture doesn't need to be tested against anything. It is its own authority. But the words that we speak the preacher speaks needs to be tested against scripture.

And that's what I think Paul is saying the church needs to do. Everything they hear all that they speak needs to be tested against God's word.

So look at 1 Thessalonians chapter 2 verse 13. Keep following along with me it'll all be clear. 1 Thessalonians chapter 2 verse 13.

So he says and we also thank God continually because when you received the word of God which you heard from us you accepted it not as a human word but as it actually is the word of God.

So as Paul spoke he claimed that his word was God's word. We see the same in chapter 4 verse 2.

[22 : 18] 2. For you know what instructions we gave by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ.

So what he said came with the authority of Christ. And what he claimed to be his word what he said was the authority of Jesus Christ he now writes down for people to read.

So look at chapter 5 verse 27. Chapter 5 verse 27. He says I charge you before the Lord to have this letter read to all the brothers and sisters.

It's a command. It's a charge. You must read this word. Now I can prepare a sermon and send it round to you but I can't say I charge you you must read every word of this sermon.

I hope you would but it doesn't come with the same authority. Everything that I say everything that we say in terms of speaking God's truth must be tested against scripture.

[23 : 35] So verse 20 again do not treat prophecies with contempt but test them all against God's written word and if it is of God's word hold on to it because it is good it will bless you it will encourage you but if it's not of God's word reject it.

Now in another sense and I want us all to be clear on this we should all be prophesying to one another.

We should all as God's family brothers and sisters be taking God's word and speaking it into each other's lives. It's something we can do and we should all do because chapter 5 verse 19 not to do so not to speak God's word is quenching the spirit.

You see Christ has given his Holy Spirit to his church. He has given his word to us and the word and the spirit working together does a powerful work in God's life.

So if you are a brother and sister in Christ today let me encourage you to take the word of God which is about his son Jesus Christ and speak that truth into the hearts of one another and trust that as the spirit is prompting you and working in your life a word may come to mind for a particular person that you might go to them and say here's what God is encouraging me to say to you today to bless you God has given us his spirit to one another to build one another up in the faith as we teach God's word to one another that in a sense is what he has been encouraging the church to do so look at chapter 4 verse 18 he says therefore encourage one another with these words what words well he's just been talking about the resurrection hey everybody the

[26 : 04] Lord Jesus is coming again he's been raised from the dead and if you're trusting in him too he is going to raise you and there's going to be a wonderful reunion of all God's people so whatever you are going through today remember the Lord is risen can we speak words of encouragement to each other like that of course we can it's a little bit like the bumblebee I had in my bedroom this week when I found her she was weak and unable to fly so I got a teaspoon of sugar and a little bit of water and carefully put the bumblebee onto the spoon and there was her tongue!

like up all that sweetness and goodness and then all of a sudden it just buzzed flew into my face practically took off flying renewed restored strengthened well sometimes we're like that weak bumblebee and we need someone to bring the sweet nectar of God's word speaking that truth into our life so that we take off flying as God's people don't treat prophecies with contempt!

Don't quench! the Spirit's work speak the word about Christ to one another and we will see the church built up now before we move on you're wondering what could I possibly say well there is a word for the church and it comes in verse 24 after the prayer here's the word the one who calls you is faithful and he will do it the one who calls you is faithful and he will do it maybe there's a brother or sister today struggling with sin wondering if God has actually forgiven me maybe doubting if God loves me fearful that I'm never going to make it that somehow I'm going to lose my salvation well brother or sister if that is you if

God called you to faith God will keep you in the faith he will not let you go what wonderful words of encouragement that we can speak God will keep you he is faithful so second then a healthy church speaks the word of God to each other and finally don't forget to kiss I hope you had a wonderful welcome as you came in the door today I wonder how many of you got a kiss please don't answer verse 26 greet all God's holy people with a holy kiss well if you are from Latin America a kiss on either cheek is quite normal when

I was there it was quite normal to come into the church and an older man or an older sister hermano in Cristo mwah mwah well if you are in an Asian country it might be a respectful bow for others it might be a good handshake well I'm not encouraging you all that we should all start kissing each other that's not what the text is saying but I do think it's saying how we greet one another as brothers and sisters is really important because our greetings are more than just a polite formality it expresses so much more verse 26 it's a command greet God's people with a holy kiss!

[30 : 27] handshake or a holy hug you see holy is that heart motivation behind the greeting holy means to be set apart so as I greet you as we gather together what I'm saying is I'm for you I am with you I am speaking to God about you and I am speaking God's word to you our prayers for one another as we greet one another is a reminder that their prayers for me is like that oxygen enabling me to breathe again spiritually those words that you speak to me are like the sweet nectar enabling me to fly and it all starts with a kiss bump or however you like to greet one another

I am for you I am with you I need you and you need me God in his wonderful design has put us together to see each other through to the end to become more like Christ and so verse 28 the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you Amen well let me pray for us before we sing Father God how good and pleasant it is to gather together as your people I thank you Father for the gifts of one another people who stand by us and pray for us and who speak

God's truth into our life Father may we do so more and more and we thank you for the work you have done and are doing in our lives in Jesus name Amen well we're going to sing I want to draw your attention first I'll read this second verse it says beneath the cross of Jesus his family is now my own once strangers chasing selfish dreams now one through Christ alone how could I now dishonor the ones that you have loved beneath the cross of Jesus see the children called by God that is what we are

God's children loving one another as we help each other along let's stand together as we sing voy Thank you.

Thank you.

[35 : 21] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

We continue together as God's people, brothers and sisters in Christ, as we remember the death of Christ in this simple meal that is set before us.

Please turn to God's word, 1 John, just before the very end of the Bible, 1 John chapter 4.

[37 : 20] 1 John chapter 4. As you're looking that up, just a reminder that, well, this is a family meal, isn't it?

A family meal. And as we gather as we are renewing our love for Christ.

And we are renewing our love for one another. And we are renewing our love for one another.

Saying, I am here for you. I am your brother and sister. So if you are trusting Jesus for the forgiveness of sins, welcome, welcome to this meal.

Let us pray. Let us pray. Let us pray. as we go into the week let us remember these words and may God give us grace to follow out these words verse 19 we love because he first loved us whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar for whoever does not love their brother and sister whom they have seen cannot love God whom they have not seen and he has given us this command anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister thank you father for my brothers and sisters for one another here today father encourage us that we may go on speaking to God about one another and speaking to one another about God amen please do stay behind for tea and coffee do catch up with Amy as well she's here for a brief time her words are precious thank you Trish thank you very much thank you
Thank you.