

Hurst Green
9th Feb 20
Healthy Living
1 Thess 5

So we have looked Eternal Life and Living the Life which brings us to 1 Thess 5. The final chapter of the first book

We have covered a lot of ground and I have made a lot of points to help you in your Christian life because, as we have found out, much of this includes that phrase I rather like:

1 Thessalonians 4:1 (ANIV)

¹ *Finally, brothers, we instructed you how to live in order to please God, as in fact you are living. Now we ask you and urge you in the Lord Jesus to do this more and more.*

I like it because it is so easy to feel defeated if all we are told to what to do when we think we are doing it.

Here is that needed acknowledgement that we are doing it but we are urged to do it more and more because there is so much more to be done and as we saw a few weeks ago this is the gospel people really see. And them seeing the gospel in action allows us to tell them the gospel so that they might know.

Then it is over to the Holy Spirit to convict them and bring them to repentance.

If you have read about some of the great revivals in this land and throughout the world you will know that they start with people turning to God and then people start to come to repentance. Then as the revival takes hold people fall down in repentance and – shock and horror – It is not only in the Churches but it is wherever they are when the Spirit convicts them.

Now at the end of Chapter 4 we looked at the coming of the Lord and Chapter five starts with that theme on which I want to say a few words before focussing on verses 12 – 28.

We know the event will be in the same way as Jesus went because the angel told the disciples that when he also said everyone will see him come.

And in Chapter 4 we were given the comfort that the faithful dead will rise and the living will rise with them and that is for our comfort that we might not grieve like those who have no hope (4:13). We know we have the sure and certain hope of eternal life

Now the important thing to note about the first half of chapter 5 is some of the well-known phrases about the final days – or I hope that you know them well.

1 Thessalonians 5:2 (ANIV)

² *for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night.*

And this is the bit that counters those that claim that they can predict the end of the world and they are out there. I have seen a speaker predict the date and that seriously messed some people for quite a while – and by the way that date he gave has now long passed which makes him a false prophet!

What we are called to do is the obvious

1 Thessalonians 5:6 (ANIV)

⁶ *So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be alert and self-controlled.*

And again there are people who misuse this. This is not a call to be navel gazing trying to see when the last day will come but a call to be alert so that when it comes we will not be caught out.

What we are called to is what this whole book had been about

1 Thessalonians 5:11 (ANIV)

¹¹ Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.

Our calling is to be living the life, showing Christ to the world and then when that great and glorious day comes we will be ready despite all the things that will go on before it which you can read about in various places in the Old and New Testament always bearing in mind that these are prophecies which we interpret and we can, and do, interpret them in the wrong way!

Looking back we will see how they actually applied. A great example of how that works is the first coming of Jesus. All those learned men and all the books of the Old Testament and still they did not see what was happening despite choirs of angels and all the miracles that were going on including Holy Men rising from the dead (Matthew 27:52).

However from our perspective we look back and see with clarity how the Old Testament prophecies apply to Jesus – hind sight is a wonderful thing.

And so we are called to be alert and watch for the signs but not to be consumed because we have a job to do – Living the Life.

So let us turn to the last section of our book which is labelled “final instructions” and summarises much of what this book has been about and I want to do this in seven sections.

Firstly - **Respect your leaders 11-13**

This is always a strange one to include in a sermon but here it says

1 Thessalonians 5:12-13 (ANIV)

¹² Now we ask you, brothers, to respect those who work hard among you, who are over 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.

The church is all about building each other up but some churches have tremendous problems with factions and self interest groups which can result in people tearing down the leadership and doing the exact opposite of what we are called to here. Thankfully this is not a problem we have had here but it is always one to be aware of.

If you have a problem with a leader there is only one way to deal with it and that is to go and talk to them about it.

Now I know that there are poor or even bad leaders – people who have taken the role for the prestige or power rather than with a servant heart and I am not saying that all leaders are perfect for the truth is none of us are.

But for a Church to be healthy you need a respect for your leaders and if you need to know how to do it look at how David treated Saul even after he had been anointed King but let me also give you a different view of this passage.

The definition of leader does not only apply to the hierarchy because to be a leader you do not need the title.

Look at what Paul says leaders do in v12:

- They labour among you
- They are over you
- And they admonish you

Now I would argue that these are things you all should be doing because the bible tells you to – welcome to being leaders of your Church!

We labour among one another as we follow what we have been taught in this book. As we encourage one another, build one another up and urge one another on to greater things as we serve one another.

We are called to teach and admonish one another

Colossians 3:16 (ANIV)

¹⁶ *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.*

And so at times we are all leaders of one another and so are called to respect one another. Actually we know that we are called to be more than that for we are called to love one another as Christ has loved us. You have to have respect for those you love and also for those you serve by teaching and admonishing them.

So respect your leaders and acknowledge that we all have a leadership role and this is also dealt with in this very next verse

Have a **Faithful Ministry** v14

1 Thessalonians 5:14 (ANIV)

¹⁴ *And we urge you, brothers, warn those who are idle, encourage the timid, help the weak, be patient with everyone.*

Here Paul quite clearly lays this role on everyone – the brothers – that is all of you.

Warn those who are idle. Now our mind probably turns immediately to those who we could call scroungers but the scope of this is much bigger than that.

We can all be idle in some ways. And given we are called in Hebrews 10 to consider how to spur one another on to love and good deeds as I mentioned two weeks ago we can all be idle if we are not doing that.

And how about how we behave in Church? Do we come along only to be served and not to serve? Do we come to use our spiritual gifts or to we keep them under wraps and so are idle in their use?

And how about:

1 Corinthians 14:26 (ANIV)

²⁶ ~~What then shall we say, brothers?~~ *When you come together, everyone has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. All of these must be done for the strengthening of the church.*

Are we being idle in not strengthening the Church? In not bringing those things. In ignoring that “everyone”? Everyone is every one of you and all that you should bring to this service – all should come ready to serve.

Warn the idlers and make sure you yourself are not being idle!

Encourage the timid

This is the command for us all to encourage one another to stand up as Christians. We are not meant to be a subversive army working under cover. We are meant to be seen and noticed as this whole book has been telling us.

In seeing us people will recognise our faith and ask the questions.

And we all need to be encouraged in our witness to do more and more!!

Help the weak

This could be weak in all sorts of ways; in our faith, in our health etc. and we all need help if only from time to time.

But remember that this is help to stand on our own two feet and not to be dependent on help all the time (that principle is covered in Chapter 4:11-12). But countering that there will always be people who cannot do things and so do need longer term help.

Be patient with everyone

And the kicker there is the “everyone”. Patience needs to know no bounds in the same way love needs to know no bounds.

We need to make allowances for those who are spiritually younger Christians than we are, for those who have not grown in Christ as much as they ought to have, for those we might normally not be patient with.

Be patient with everyone!!

And then *Always try to be kind to each other and to everyone else v15*

Kindness is an expression of our love and once again it is not just to the fellowship – everyone else!!

And this verse gives us an insight into how kindness works

1 Thessalonians 5:15 (ANIV)

¹⁵ *Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always try to be kind to each other and to everyone else.*

This is accepting that you have been wronged but changing your reaction to it – the human reaction is to get even – to pay back but the Christian reaction is to turn the other cheek as Jesus tells us to in the Beatitudes but to go even further.

To repay being wronged by being kind.

This is an important part of the Christian life because once again it is so different from the World's way that we stand out before we even begin to say something.

Paul says more on this in Romans 12 but in order to finish at least close to on time I will use Peter's summary in 1 Peter 3

1 Peter 3:9 (ANIV)

⁹ *Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing.*

And Peter emphasises the reward you get. Peter shows you the change that comes in your own life as you do this. Try and get even and you become bitter but be kind and you will live in blessings – under the open windows of heaven.

And then **the joy that it will bring you** (v16-18)

This sounds like a platitude doesn't it:

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 (ANIV)

¹⁶ *Be joyful always;* ¹⁷ *pray continually;* ¹⁸ *give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.*

One of those comments that are thrown around by the pious before we all go back to the old ways.

But it is not that – we are told time and again in the bible that we have the strength of the Lord so all this can be done.

Be Joyful. That is something that in our own strength we would find impossible but we can do it in the Lord's strength. The answer is in Philippians 4 in one of my favourite passages:

Philippians 4:4 (ANIV)

⁴ *Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!*

This is followed by another hint on kindness.

Philippians 4:5 (ANIV)

⁵ *Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near.*

This joy is not the mask that hides the pain; this joy is focussing on God and letting his joy be our strength and he is close to us at all times.

Pray Continually. Some try and do this by having a small prayer they recite any time they are not doing something else but that misses out on the point and the excitement of praying continually.

This is a subject that crops up in many of the epistles either praying continually or praying night and day.

Do you remember way back in Chapter 1?

1 Thessalonians 1:3 (ANIV)

³ *We continually remember before our God and Father your work ~~produced by faith,~~ your labour ~~prompted by love,~~ and your endurance ~~inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.~~*

Praying continually allows us always to be in contact with God. We have our prayer times, or at least I hope you do, but at any time we can fire off a prayer be it for help, in thanksgiving, for someone or something or in praise.

We have the privilege of continual prayer and we should use it.

Give thanks in all circumstances.

Sometimes this is easy and sometimes it is not but remember Paul's letter to the Philippians

Philippians 4:6 (ANIV)

⁶ *Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.*

Thanksgiving in all things is another thing that makes us different from the world. The world looks at life and sees all that they consider wrong; the Christian looks at life and sees all that is good and thanks God.

This is God's will

As we have said before this is a tricky one that gets people staring up their own navel in no time at all as they try and work out what God's will for them is.

And yet this book has been telling us exactly what God's will for us is and the New Testament is full of ideas for being in God's will.

Yes we need to be challenging ourselves about the big picture, where should we be, what should we be doing, are we missing something.

But while we are doing that we know what God's will for us is – It is living the life!

Test Everything (v19-22)

Paul is giving these brief final instructions and in these three verses he captures a huge subject that we can allow to tie us in knots for days and many do.

Firstly Do not put out the Spirits fire

Or do not quench the Holy Spirit as some bibles put it. This is an important command for our lives and one that people often ignore.

We know we have the spirit in us because Jesus promised us that we would have it and the Spirit has many roles.

Most people are happy with the comforter and will probably put up with the conscience but it is beyond that that they will quench the Holy Spirit because he comes up with all these pesky gifts.

We don't mind the fruits, too much, but messages of wisdom and knowledge, more faith, healing, miraculous powers, distinguishing between spirits, tongues and interpretation those things many people find too far and so put out the Spirits fire.

Yet the bible we believe tells us that we should have them and worse than that it tells us we should eagerly desire them especially prophesy.

Have you been putting out the Spirit's fire?

Then Test Everything

We know there are false teachers out there and we know false things abound in this world as satan tries to derail us and all of those around us.

We know how to test things – we know the criteria to test them against. Are they from God? Are they in line with his Word mainly expressed in the Bible?

We need to test everything to ensure that we do not get tripped up and have our prize stolen from us.

Listen to the Saints cheering us on our way as we run this race.

Test everything including propheties and prophets and testing prophets is easy – does what they prophecy come to pass.

And then Paul winds up his letter with this great benediction in verse 23. Once again it is about being blameless for this letter has focussed on Holy Living and we need to be blameless and pure.

But remember verse 24

1 Thessalonians 5:24 (ANIV)

²⁴ *The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it.*

For that is the answer to most of our woes and worries – God is in charge and he will do what he has said and what he has promised.

And he proves this to us.

He proves it in our bibles where we see books written centuries apart aligning and showing each other to be the truth.

He has shown it in the lives of saints down the centuries which we can read about any time we are willing.

And he has shown it in our own lives and in the lives of those around us if we are willing to let the scales fall from our eyes and acknowledge the goodness of God.

I know that is true in my life and in the life of my family and I rejoice in witnessing to God's faithfulness and blessing as we have tried to walk his way.

Do it in your own life as you rejoice in the Lord and live in his joy and strength through his power.

Ah! A book with so much good advice and so many instructions for holy living that we could spend many more weeks studying it.

But studying it is no good whatsoever to you. It is the putting it into practise that is so important.

That is why we have kept returning to that theme or catch phrase of "living the life".

What I want you to do is to go out and live the life that has been shown to you in 1Thessalonians even as you are doing but with Paul I urge you to do it more and more and more and more.

