



BELLVILLE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

A Congregation of the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa

PO BOX 552 • BELLVILLE • 7535
 LINGEN STREET • BELLVILLE • 7530
 TEL: 021 948-2417 / 021 948-2529
 FAX: 021 948-2419
 e-mail: bellville@presbyterian.org.za

1 THESSALONIANS 5

~ Brent Russell ~

- We **wind up** the first book of the Thessalonians today
- We have tried to **concentrate on the second coming of Christ**
- And you have heard the **two of us preach quite different sermons** on the subject of Christ coming again in glory

- And as Rod and I have preached we realise that there is so much information here that we could preach tens of more sermons from these powerful little letters

- As we have preached we have tried hard to help you **understand these truths**:
 - **That Jesus died so that we will only fall asleep**
 - **That we will be raised with Him when he comes again**
 - **That we don't know when he will come again**
 - **That we better be ready for this incredible event**

- Much of the writing and thinking behind these scriptures are Paul's concern that somehow the Thessalonian church will not be ready for Christ's coming
- **And our motivation as your ministers is that you might not be ready for Christ's coming and so we are reminding you again and again to ready**

- And we echo Paul's constant reminder
- Be ready
- Be ready
- **The story is told** of a farmer in a Midwestern state who had a strong disdain for "religious" things. As he ploughed his field on Sunday morning, he would shake his fist at the church people who passed by on their way to worship.
- October came and the farmer had his finest crop ever--the best in the entire county. When the harvest was complete, he placed an advertisement in the local paper which belittled the Christians for their faith in God.
- Near the end of his tirade he wrote, "Faith in God must not mean much if someone like me can prosper."

- The response from the Christians in the community was quiet and polite. In the next edition of the town paper, a small ad appeared. It read simply, "God doesn't always settle His accounts in October."
- **We want you to be ready to settle your account with God whenever you are called to settle it**
- **Paul starts chapter 5 with the image of the Day of the Lord coming as a thief in the night**
- An **unusual image** for a God who is a God of compassion, love and of mercy and of light
- Other images used for God are **ordinarily more wholesome**, good and powerful
- And yet God will come as a thief in the night

- **Thieves are scary characters**
- A **family friend** of our woke up during a nap one afternoon last week with a strange man in the room going through her handbag
- She acted as if she was still asleep
- And thankfully the man left without harming her
- But she is traumatized
- The safety of her home has been violated
- **So the image of a thief in the night is not overly helpful at first sight**

- **A thief comes to take something of value**
- **Money, jewellery, electronics**

- **What the Bible is telling us is that God will come to steal us away from under the noses of the world**
- He will come at a time and an hour when the **world is unsuspecting, naïve and unprepared**
- He will sneak and **steal away those who are his**
- **His treasure**

- **Those who have been called by his name**
- Those who have the mark of the spirit of God in their lives

- Like the angel of death during the time of the **Exodus**
- **Those who are marked with the blood of the lamb will be saved**

- It is only when things are gone that we understand their true value
- Its all those little things that are important to us
- Or things that were useful to us which are appreciated only when they are gone

- And so it will be when God comes to steal us away
- when we disappear it will be then that the world will understand who we are
- It will be then that the value of the church will be recognized

- Certainly not appreciated whilst we are around but our value will be sorely missed when we have been stolen away under the secrecy of night
- When Jesus comes again
- **This sermon is going to get very practical from here on out**
- **Paul writes to His flock that they better be ready**
- **And he ends this letter with a number of very practical, simple even obvious things to do so that "your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" – vs 23**
- Many of us have **burglar alarms** in our houses
- An early warning system to tell that a thief has come
- Tried to set ways in which we might **be prepared** for them

- **Yet there is the unavoidable truth that Jesus will come again**

- **And so here are 15 things you can do to keep your spirit, body and soul blameless before the Lord**

- **So follow with me from vs 12 – 22 as we look at 15 practical instructions for you to put into practice in your lives**

Love your ministers!

- Paul's simple command is to love your ministers
- Lekker hey!

- The instruction is a little more than just to love those who teach you God's word
- I am going to deviate a little from the NIV translation here
- The **wording** in the original Greek is to recognize them
- To know them to, to discern them
- And then to esteem them

- Paul is suggesting to this church that they be able to **recognize** those who have been gifted to teach the scriptures to others and those who have been gifted to lead others
- And then to **love and esteem** them
- To be able to see who has these gifts and to listen to them as they explain what is in the scriptures
- And to esteem them
- **This means small group leaders, youth leaders, SuperSchool teachers**
- Respect them and Love them

- **Phone Linn on Monday get a list of some of the teachers and leaders in the church write them a little anonymous love letter of encouragement**

Relationships with other people

- **Warn the idle**
 - You have been warned by Rod and I over again the last number of weeks
 - We have passed the message on to you so that you may tell others
 - BE READY!

 - The ball is now in your court
 - Like a **baton** passed in a relay
 - It is now **your mission** to help warn others that Jesus may come tomorrow
 - The truth of the church is that there are always those who have strayed
 - Those who have become idle in their **scripture reading**
 - Those who have become idle in their **prayer life**
 - Those who have become idle with **church attendance**
 - Warn them that Jesus may come again when they least expect him

- **Encourage the timid**
 - Not all of us are strong people
 - Some are a little timid, shy or **apprehensive**
 - **Some are quite simply scared when we talk of this these things**
 - Things of heaven and hell and judgement are frightening thoughts for all sorts of reasons
 - They simply need your **encouragement**
 - They need to walk alongside them
 - To share with them some of their anguish
 - To encourage them

- **Help the weak**
 - There are also those who are simply **weak in the faith**
 - We must help to remind them that the promises of God will always be fulfilled
 - Some find it hard to believe in these truths
 - The overwhelming nature of what we have preaching about is just difficult to understand for some
 - They need to be helped
 - Gently, kindly they need to be helped to believe that if they are in Christ and He in them that on the day of his second coming they will be raised to Glory with all the other saints
 - **Help the weak of faith to believe the promises of God**

- **Be patient**
 - Patience is not my strong point
 - At all
 - Ever
 - I am impatient with all sorts of people in all sorts of strange ways
 - Especially with people who don't do things my way
 - **We are called in these days of hope and waiting to be patient with each other**
 - **In fact to be patient with EVERYONE**
 - This means those who think differently to us in what ever way
 - It means being patient with those who simply irritate us senseless
 - It means having a long fuse and being slow to anger

- **Do not be vengeful**
 - Vengeance is mine says the Lord
 - Do not plot revenge against someone that has hurt you
 - **And if you read into the first chapter of 2 Thessalonians you will see that those who are against us will be punished by God**
 - It is not your place to be vengeful against anyone
 - This is hard to do
 - Because we may often see people getting away again with the same things that hurt us
 - Allow God to be the giver of punishment and judgement
 - No matter what it is that has been done to you in whatever time and place
 - Allow God to be our avenger Deuteronomy, Samuel, Jeremiah and Romans all contain the promise that God will avenge our cause

Relationship with God

- **Be Joyful always**

- Joy and happiness are not the same thing
- It's a bit like love
- You can be **infatuated** and you can love someone
- Infatuation is a shallow – transient emotion as is Happiness
- Joy, like deep love is something more deep rooted, more powerful more life changing
- **The art of living a good life is to be filled with joy even when you are unhappy**
- Real joy is something that only the Spirit of God can give to us
- **It is an all pervasive, all encompassing positiveness, hopefulness and optimism about life that God gives to us**

- **Pray continually**

- Pray continually
- (silence)
- Are you praying?
- An reporter was interviewing **Corrie Ten Boom**
- The great lady of faith and as he was speaking she was muttering the whole time
- Eventually he stopped and asked her if something was wrong
- She replied – no I was just saying thank you to Jesus for sending such a nice young man to speak with me!
- Simply be constantly aware of the presence of God with you
- He promises to never leave you or forsake you
- He is with you 24/7 so speak to Him 24/7
- Make it a habit to talk to God as often as you can
- When you are driving in your car, washing your hair, mowing the lawn, going for a jog – whatever you are doing spend time talking to God
- **I recall dragging my exhausted body up the side of Kilimanjaro some years ago panting out praise and worship songs**

- **Give thanks**
 - **This means you give thanks for all that God ends on your path**
 - Lord I know I am going to be late for this meeting because I have a **flat tyre**
 - But thank you Lord that I am learning patience
 - Lord I know it's horrible to be in **hospital** but thank you for the doctors who are looking after me
 - Lord my **finances are tough** but thank you that I have people who share their things with me
 - **Scottish minister Alexander Whyte** was known for his uplifting prayers in the pulpit. He always found something for which to be grateful. One Sunday morning the weather was so gloomy that one church member thought to himself, "Certainly the preacher won't think of anything for which to thank the Lord on a wretched day like this." Much to his surprise, however, Whyte began by praying, "We thank Thee, O God, that it is not always like this."
 - Give thanks in your lives, through good times and bad
 - In seasons of plenty and in the droughts
 - In happiness and in sadness
 - Give thanks to God

- **The final encouragements to the church at the end of this first letter are four fold**
- **And they bear special relevance to the coming of Christ**
- Remember the call is - Be Ready
- Be Ready
- Be Ready
- And these four are of critical importance to our being ready for Christ
- They have to do with our being blameless before God even more substantially than anything I have said up until now
- All of these things I have spoken of up to now are the **icing on the cake**
- **These final four commands are the cake itself**

Do not quench the spirit

- The spirit is symbolized often by fire
- And the instruction is do not put out the fire of the spirit

- The scriptures testify to the truth that the Spirit is the mark of our salvation
- **No spirit – no life**
- **It is kinda simple!**

- And Paul's writes this simple command do not put out the spirits fire
- Live in such a way that the Spirit of God does more and more with your life
- The next three statements are tied to this one
- Each of the following warnings are things we can do that allow God's work to happen in us
- If we do not do them we quench or put out the work of the Holy Spirit

Do not quench the Spirit - Respect prophecies

- Great prophetic words from God are mostly very hard to listen to
- They make us **uncomfortable**, they make us squirm or they unnerve us with their insight into our lives
- Because prophets have the ability to **speak into situations with profound Godly insight**
- And they see through pretences and all other kinds of masks that we put up

- If you hear biblical prophetic teaching that makes you uncomfortable, listen and respect the teaching as God's word to you
- The fact that it makes you uncomfortable is the reason you must listen and respect the message, because God's truth sits uncomfortably when we are outside of His will
- If you ignore what a prophetic preacher is saying, you quench the work of the Spirit
- **The discomfort is the spirit of God within you beginning to prune away the rubbish or damage as He makes you whole**
- It is not pleasant – but it is necessary
- And if you ignore God's word then you will quench the work of the Holy Spirit in your life

Do not quench the spirit - Test everything

- We have friends who have a **baby**
- And he is in that phase where they put everything into their mouths
- Hmm old dog bone yummy munch, munch
- Oooh someones finger munch, munch
- And I am sure that parents out there have stories of many other grim and smelly things that their children have put into their mouths
- It is a **sign of childishness** if we do not test things but just grab them

- **If we do not have the ability to recognize the difference between good and evil we will find all sorts of rubbish floating in**
- We may clutter our lives so much that we will once again choke out the work of the spirit
- Part of the work of the spirit comes as we learn to test things
- As we ask the Holy Spirit is this OK? Is this good/evil?
- To ignore and to not test is to undo the work of God in our lives
- And we will quickly find our selves distant, isolated and cut off from the work of God simply because we chose not to test things and to see them as God would have to see them
- **It's like watching JAWS 3D without 3-d glasses on you miss the reality**
- **By allowing the Holy Spirit to guide your testing of things you see them as God would see them.**

Do not quench the Spirit - Avoid evil

- The final command is avoid evil
- In fact in Ephesians the Bible is marvellously clear
- **Eph 5:3** But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people.
- This is not only about do not do evil
- But don't even let it LOOK like you may be doing evil

- If it may look to others like you are doing evil then you are probably closer to doing it than you should be
- I was having a great debate at our young adults small group a week ago
- About the fact living together is just wrong
- And the question was posed but what if we don't sleep together?
- The answer is: to others it will look as if you are committing evil and if you are in fact not committing this evil, you are far too close to being able to commit it than you should be

- You are following me here - If it looks to others like you may be doing evil, then you probably in a bad place and overwhelmingly close to doing it

- If Jesus should come tomorrow – be found doing good and avoiding evil

- If you are living together get married or move out
- If you are pirating music or software go and burn those CD's
- If you are a gossip who loves to pass a scandal on - just stop
- Get rid of your collection of smutty men's magazines
- If you are doing business with anything less than absolute integrity – come clean now no matter what it may cost in money or pride

- I cannot be clear enough here – by allowing the presence of evil to reign in your life you will quench the work of the spirit

- We all sin, that is part of our humanity
- But if you are allowing sin to remain unchallenged in your lives you will find that it's roots run deep and grow quickly
- So as much as you are able, avoid every kind of evil, avoid even the appearance of evil

Conclusion

- Let me close
- Rod and I get up and preach every Sunday motivated by these two things:
 - we want you to be able to understand God's promises
 - we want you to be ready to face him if he comes again or when you die
- It is really these two element that motivate us to preach every Sunday
- For Paul the same drive is what caused him to write these letters to the Thessalonian church
- It what drive him to write, preach and pray for the souls of his flock
- It is these two things
 - A desire that every person would understand the promises of God in Christ Jesus
 - A desire that every person would be able to stand before God unashamed because they have been hidden in Christ
- It is my desire for you so take these words to heart
- Make the lifestyle changes you need to make as God leads you
- In all things help the Holy Spirit do his work, do not quench his action in your life
- And Every blessing that the father has in store for you will be yours
- Take these things to heart and **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. ²⁴ The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it.**