

1 Thessalonians 5:12-28

The emphasis of 1 Thessalonians 4-5 is Sanctification

- Sanctification is the process of purifying ourselves so we are ready when Jesus returns to be His spotless bride
- The word sanctification is related to the word saint
- Both words have to do with holiness
- To “sanctify” something is to set it apart for special use; to “sanctify” a person is to set them apart for holiness
- Paul begins at the end of chapter 3 (3:11-13) and finishes chapter 5 (5:23-24) with a prayer for them to be sanctified, “blameless in holiness”
- Remember that the first 3 chapters were all introduction
- These 2 prayers bookend the teaching and application of what Paul wants us to understand
- Since the introduction and conclusion is the topic of sanctification, then the main body of the text should be about instruction on sanctification

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- **1 Thessalonians 4:1-3; 7** – Paul’s main emphasis in verses 1-8 of chapter 4 is sanctification and controlling ourselves, us individually
- **1 Thessalonians 4:9-12** – This section deals with sanctification and those around us
 - Believers and unbelievers
- **1 Thessalonians 4:13-18** – Although the word sanctification is not said, Paul is motivating Christians to pursue sanctification in the light of the Second Coming
 - Those that die in Christ before Jesus returns will not miss out on any of the blessings of those believers who are alive at the time of His return
 - This means that you can live as boldly for Christ as you want without any fear
 - In fact, if you die, you will absent from the body and present with the Lord
 - Then you will come with Christ when He returns in the clouds and have the privilege of being glorified (completely sanctified) before those that are still alive

The emphasis of 1 Thessalonians 4-5 is Sanctification

- **1 Thessalonians 5:1-11 – 4:13-18** compares Christians who have died with those who remain alive at His return, **5:1-11** shows, because your future is secure (no wrath), your attitude and the way you live your life should be different than unbelievers
- Your new, sanctified life as a Christian should be radically different than it was before coming to faith in Jesus

2 Peter 3:10-14 – But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed. 11 **Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness,** 12 waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn! 13 But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. 14 **Therefore, beloved, since you are waiting for these, be diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish, and at peace.**

1 Thessalonians 5:12-13 – But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction, 13 and that you esteem them very highly in love because of their work....

- Leaders loving the church and the church loving the leadership is a big part of sanctification
- This is a brand new church, imagine having to establish the leaders of it in just a few months of it beginning
- At the end of their 1st missionary journey, Paul and Barnabas tried to appoint elders in every new church as soon as possible

Acts 14:23 – When they had appointed elders for them in the various churches, with prayer and fasting they entrusted them to the protection of the Lord in whom they had believed.

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- Later Titus was instructed to do the same thing

Titus 1:5 – The reason I left you in Crete was to set in order the remaining matters and to appoint elders in every town, as I directed you.

- Every church they planted was to have designated leaders
- In many of Paul's letters we see false teachers trying to assert themselves
- So Paul tries to find those that "diligently labor among you," and place them into leadership roles
- Their spiritual gifts, maturity, and love for Jesus and other believers have prompted them to step forward and assume leadership functions

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- Paul did the same thing in Corinth

1 Corinthians 16:15-18 – Now, brothers and sisters, you know about the household of Stephanus, that as the first converts of Achaia, they devoted themselves to ministry for the saints. I urge you 16 also to submit to people like this, and to everyone who cooperates in the work and labors hard. 17 I was glad about the arrival of Stephanus, Fortunatus, and Achaicus because they have supplied the fellowship with you that I lacked. 18 For they refreshed my spirit and yours. So then, recognize people like this.

- So we see leaders being put in charge over others in each church
- We are to appreciate the leaders effort
- The leaders should be laboring among the people

What does church leadership look like?

- Never described as priests

1 Peter 2:9 – But you are a chosen race, **a royal priesthood**, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

- All believers are priests
- Meaning there is no one between us and God
- This also means we can minister in a priestly way to other believers
- We can minister to them God's Word
- We can go to God for someone in prayer
- The word priest is never applied to a leader in the New Testament
- So what are titles of leaders in the church?

What does church leadership look like?

- Elder = overseer = bishop = pastor = shepherd = pastor-teacher

Acts 20:17-28 – From Miletus he sent a message to Ephesus, telling the **elders** of the church to come to him. 18 When they arrived, he said to them,... 28 Watch out for yourselves and for all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you **overseers, to shepherd** the church of God that he obtained with the blood of his own Son.

Titus 1:5-7 –The reason I left you in Crete was to set in order the remaining matters and to appoint **elders** in every town, as I directed you. 6 An elder must be blameless, the husband of one wife, with faithful children who cannot be charged with dissipation or rebellion. 7 For the **overseer** must be blameless as one entrusted with God's work, not arrogant, not prone to anger, not a drunkard, not violent, not greedy for gain.

What does church leadership look like?

- Elder = overseer = bishop = pastor = shepherd = pastor-teacher
- Only once are leaders referred to as pastors

Ephesians 4:11-12 – And he himself gave some as apostles, some as prophets, some as evangelists, and some as **pastors** and teachers, 12 to equip the saints for the work of ministry, that is, to build up the body of Christ,

- Pastor is an English word for shepherd (*ESV*)
- Since in **Acts 20**, the elders/overseers are to do the work of shepherding (verb), we can assume that the word shepherd (noun) is the same thing
- Elder, overseer, bishop, pastor, shepherd are all the same thing
- Notice that we did not include the word deacon

What does church leadership look like?

Philippians 1:1 – Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the **overseers** and **deacons**:

- Deacons are not leaders of the church
- They are a distinct group with distinct gifts

1 Timothy 3:2; 8 – Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, **able to teach,...**

8 Deacons likewise must be dignified, not double-tongued, not addicted to much wine, not greedy for dishonest gain.

- The requirements for elders are never applied to deacons
- Deacons are not required to be competent teachers
- It's an elders very job to teach

1 Thessalonians 5:12-13 – But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have **charge over you** in the Lord and give you instruction, 13 and that you esteem them very highly in love because of their work....

1 Timothy 5:17 – Let the elders who **rule** well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in **preaching and teaching**.

- The other thing that separates elders from deacons is authority or leadership
- “Rule” is the same word as “charge over you”
- Elders are the ones who have charge over the church and should be laboring in teaching

2 Timothy 4:1-2 – I **charge you** in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus,...2 **preach the word**; be ready in season and out of season; **reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience** and **teaching**.

1 Thessalonians 5:13-14 – ...Be at peace among yourselves. 14 And we urge you, **brothers and sisters, admonish the undisciplined**, comfort the discouraged, help the weak, be patient toward all.

- V. 13 – This loving relationship between elders and congregation should produce a peace in the church
- Paul then lists out all the things we all need to work on for our sanctification
- V. 14 – “**brothers and sisters**” – this applies to the whole church
- “**admonish the undisciplined**” – warn the unruly, idle
- 2 Thessalonians 3:6-12

2 Thessalonians 3:6-12 – Now we command you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from any brother who is walking in **idleness** and not in accord with the tradition that you received from us. 7 For you yourselves know how you ought to imitate us, because **we were not idle when we were with you**, 8 nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with toil and labor we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you. 9 It was not because we do not have that right, but to give you in ourselves an example to imitate. 10 For even when we were with you, we would give you this command: If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat. 11 For we hear that some among you walk in **idleness**, not busy at work, but busybodies. 12 Now such persons we command and encourage in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work quietly and to earn their own living.

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- **V. 13** – This loving relationship between elders and congregation should produce a peace in the church
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- **2 Thessalonians 3:6-12**
- Paul is specifically talking about certain people quitting working because they thought Jesus was returning very soon
- But I think this also has to do with correcting those that are not in step with what God wants them to do
- Those that are sitting still (idle) in their progression of their sanctification

1 Thessalonians 5:13-15 – ...Be at peace among yourselves. 14 And we urge you, brothers and sisters, admonish the undisciplined, **comfort the discouraged, help the weak, be patient toward all.** 15 See that no one pays back evil for evil to anyone, but always pursue what is good for one another and for all.

- **“comfort the discouraged”** – fainthearted, feebleminded
- Literally “small souled” – they are easily discouraged and need encouragement
- Comfort those that have a hard time grasping the greatness of God
- **“help the weak”** – help those that have various weaknesses if you have the gifts to help them
- Weak in faith, physically, mentally, financially, those that are exhausted in life
- **“be patient toward all”** – Understand that we all have differing problems and differing gifts that we bring to the church each week
- Don't get frustrated with those who struggle with things that come naturally to you
- Don't get frustrated with the preacher who is trying to reach those people

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 – Always rejoice, 17 constantly pray, 18 in everything give thanks. For this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.

- **“Always rejoice”** – Our joy comes from knowing that this life is not the end
- Even when circumstances in this life are tough, we can have joy because the final outcome is always eternal life in glorified bodies
- **“constantly pray”** – This is a way of life of always being in a conversation with God
- **“in everything give thanks”** – Because we are always in a conversation with God, we constantly see how God is working in our life for good
- These are 3 positive things that are always active in our lives
- These 3 things will always propel us forward in our sanctification
- There are also negative things that we need to avoid so the sanctification process is not interrupted or stopped

1 Thessalonians 5:19-22 – Do not quench the Spirit. 20 Do not despise prophecies, 21 but test everything; hold fast what is good. 22 Abstain from every form of evil.

- We are to allow the Holy Spirit to control and guide us in our sanctification
- Quenching is the image of water being thrown on a fire to put it out
- We can smother the fire of the Holy Spirit so much that we put out it's work in us
- We **quench the Spirit** when we despise prophecies (the proclaiming of God's word)
- Paul was proclaiming the Word of God
- **"Do not despise prophecies"** means we need to respect the supremacy of God's Word in scripture and hold it above man's word
- If we hold God's Word as divine truth, then the Spirit will guide us in discernment of right and wrong
- We **"test everything"** someone teaches us against what God's written Word says
- Then we **"hold fast what is good"**
- We keep whatever passes the test of comparing what someone says to scripture

1 Thessalonians 5:23 – Now may the God of peace himself **sanctify you completely**, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

- You are sanctified (set apart for holiness) in a sense, at the moment of salvation because it was God's will for Christ to die for you

Hebrews 10:10 – And by that will we have been **sanctified** through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

Acts 13:38-39 – Therefore let it be known to you, brothers, that through this one forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, 39 and by this one everyone who believes is **justified** from everything from which the law of Moses could not justify you.

- Sanctified is related to being justified
- We are set free from sin by the blood of Christ

1 Thessalonians 5:23 – Now may the God of peace himself **sanctify you completely**, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

- The problem is we still live in this world and this body, and even though we are set free from sin, we keep sinning
- That's why the Bible refers to sanctification as a process that you continually increase in throughout your life (progressive sanctification)
- Maturing more in Godly characteristics

2 Peter 1:5-8 – For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith excellence, to excellence, **knowledge**; 6 to knowledge, self-control; to self-control, perseverance; to perseverance, godliness; 7 to godliness, brotherly affection; to brotherly affection, unselfish love. 8 For if these things are really yours and are **continually increasing**, they will keep you from becoming ineffective and unproductive **in your pursuit of knowing** our Lord Jesus Christ more intimately.

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- Progressive sanctification is what happens when we obey the Word of God
- It's the same as growing in the Lord

John 17:17-19 – Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth. 18 As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. 19 For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth.

- Sanctification is the reason you are sent into the world
- Before salvation, we were like the world, separated from God
- Now, we are witnesses to our standing with God, and we are separate from the world
- Little by little, day by day, become more like Christ and we witness to the world (by being more like him) God's glory

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- Eventually we arrive at **complete sanctification (Glorification) at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ**

Philippians 1:6 – And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to **completion at the day of Jesus Christ**.

1 John 3:2 – Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him...

Philippians 3:21 – who will transform our lowly body to be like his **glorious** body,

- This glorified state will be our ultimate separation from sin

1 Thessalonians 5:24-28 – He who calls you is trustworthy, and he will in fact do this. 25 Brothers and sisters, pray for us too. 26 Greet all the brothers and sisters with a holy kiss. 27 I call on you solemnly in the Lord to have this letter read to all the brothers and sisters. 28 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.