

# The Watford Word

[www.watfordchurchofchrist.org](http://www.watfordchurchofchrist.org)

## What's on

**Sunday 26 March** - service, 10:30AM. Malcolm speaking - *Thessalonians wrap-up*

**Sunday 02 April** - service, 10:30AM. Stefan Wolmarans speaking.

**Sunday 09 April** - service, 10:30AM. Easter Sunday.

**Sunday 16 April** - service, 10:30AM.

## Today's Lesson: 1 Thessalonians 5:12-28

### The Effects of Grace

We come to some final instructions and encouragements. All are an expression of grace. This section is not as a checklist of rules to obey, but a reminder, a nudge, a call upwards towards Christlikeness. We want to be people who live like this without thinking too consciously about it - rather like learning a new language to the point we are not only able to speak it, but think in it without having to make the conscious effort to do so.

We have five sections to this passage:

#### 1. Leadership, vv12-13

Perhaps leaders have rebuked the idle too harshly. Paul encourages the congregation to honour their leaders, but also corrects the leaders' approach. Is he talking about elders here? Quite likely given the rapid appointments elsewhere, Acts 14:23.

'work hard' - same as 1 Thessalonians 1:3. They worked until weary on behalf of the church.

'in the Lord' - done with an eye on their responsibilities and on their source for such

caring and admonishing. Must be done in a Christ-like manner.

'admonish' - "It denotes the word of admonition which is designed to correct while not provoking or embittering" (J. Behm, TDNT, iv, p. 1021). See 1 Cor. 4:14.

'highest': 'hyperekperissou is a very forceful word (see on 3:10), called by Findlay a 'triple Pauline intensive' meaning 'beyond-exceeding-abundantly'" Tyndale

'love': agape - not affection, but much more. Not only respect your leaders, but love them. They are primarily there not to perform a function for your benefit, but to share in Christian love with you.

'work': Right to be held in high regard because of hard work, not talents or impressiveness.

'in peace': Perhaps harsh treatment from leaders has created distance between leaders and members. The leaders appear well-intentioned because Paul recognises their hard work. The call is for a change of behaviour and attitude all ways round so the church can be at peace.

#### 2. Community, vv14-15

"Admonish" - warning, accountability, expectation of change. 'idle' - loafers; keep soldier in formation. Some were not working and leaching off other Christians.

'help the weak', Rom 14; 1 Cor 8. 'The verb antechesthe (help) is used of holding on to something, cleaving to a person (cf. Luke 16:13). The weak need to feel that they are not alone and strong Christians should 'hold on to them' and give them the support they require.' Tyndale

### 3. General Reminders, vv16-22

If we work through relationship disharmony, we will find the effort and repentance rewarded with great joy. This joy is so important because it is so different to that of the world. That in the world is dependent on circumstances, that in the kingdom is dependent on our Lord. "They thought more of their Lord than of their difficulties; more of their spiritual riches in Christ than of their poverty on Earth; more of their glorious future when the Lord should come again than of their unhappy past." Leon Morris

See Phil 4.4. Source of joy is God, not circumstances, Matt 5:12. Lk 10:20. A mark of the early church. A joy that cannot be stolen, John 16:22. Supernaturally provided, Galatians 5:22-23, Romans 14:17.

A spirit of prayer more than a perpetual speaking. At times words will break out - as they do in Paul's epistles. It is our habit to look away from our circumstances, difficult as they are, to deliberately contemplate the presence of God.

"Though it is quite impossible for us always to be uttering the words of prayer it is possible and necessary that we should always be living in the spirit of prayer." Leon Morris

The way that Paul seems to spontaneously break into prayer when writing his letters may give us a clue as to his normal way of being when he was with people or on his own.

'give thanks' - write out things thankful for - and pray over them. A command, which requires decisiveness, and is possible.

'all circumstances' - I.e. good and bad. Only possible because of faith in God's sovereignty, Romans 8:28, Romans 5:3-5. We cannot control our circumstances, but we do not have to be controlled by them.

'quench' is the word for putting out a fire. In those days getting a fire going was hard work. How important it was to not let it go out! Different from today when starting and stopping fire is so easy. Holy Spirit and fire associated, Acts 2:3, Matthew 3:11. Do not grieve the Spirit, Ephesians 4:30. Live in the way I (Paul) have taught you, as pleases God, and you will not be quenching the Spirit.

'prophecy' - See 1 Corinthians 14:1.

Perhaps they had been burned by false prophecies regarding the second advent and had begun to treat all prophecies with skepticism (even cynicism?).

'The New Testament clearly regards the prophets as important. They are classed with apostles (Eph. 2:20; 3:5), and, more formally, ranked second to them (1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:11). Prophecy is the gift of God (1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:11), or of the Spirit (1 Cor. 12:10-11). Commentators regularly point out that prophets were forth-tellers rather than fore-tellers; their characteristic function seems to have been exhortation (Acts 15:32, and cf. the notable discussion in 1 Cor. 14, especially vv. 29-40). Essentially the prophet was someone who could say, 'Thus saith the Lord'. But it should not be overlooked that this might, and sometimes did, involve foretelling the future (Acts 11:27-28; 21:10-11).' Tyndale commentary

### 4. Final Prayer

See 1 Thessalonians 3:11-13 for another 'prayer'. It concluded that section as this one does here. Worthy of a study to find all such examples in Paul's writings?

'May God...': 'but' is in the Greek before these words. You cannot do this yourself for yourself, but God can. 'Himself' emphasises the essentiality of only God having the capacity to help them.

'whole' - word used of sacrifices and 'whole' stones used for altar. Sacrificial language appropriate for Christians striving to be whole-hearted.

'of peace': Why does Paul emphasise this aspect of God? Perhaps because there was so much anxiety. Connecting with 'shalom'? cf. Rom. 15:33; Romans 16:20; 2 Cor. 13:11; Phil. 4:9; 2 Thess. 3:16.

'sanctify' -

- i. We sanctify ourselves - the decision
- ii. God sanctifies us - the power; Ephesians 5:26 - Spirit; Romans 15:16 - Son (and Word, John 17:17).

The sanctification is quantitative (you are established as having holy status), but also qualitative (you are in process of becoming complete).

'through and through...blameless': complete holiness, wholeness, not partial. No compromise.

'spirit, soul and body': May be not three parts, but indicative of comprehensive purity.

'coming': referring back to questions. Don't speculate, but be ready. Be completely blameless now and when Jesus comes back. i.e. ongoing as natural and habitual aspect of your lives.

'He is faithful' - The most reassuring words possible. He called you, he is faithful, therefore you can be faithful no matter what. Not achieved by human effort, but not achieved separate from human involvement. cf. 1 Cor. 1:9; 1 Cor 10:13; 2 Cor. 1:18; 2 Thess. 3:3; 2 Tim. 2:13; Heb. 10:23; Heb. 11:11

## 5. Final Requests

v25: 'pray for us': He is willing to let them know he is in need. Continuous tense. See also Rom. 15:30; Eph. 6:19; Col. 4:3-4; 2 Thess. 3:1-2, and cf. Phil. 1:19; Heb. 13:18.

'kiss': 'Paul means 'Give all the brothers a kiss from me' (cf. 'My love to all of you in Christ Jesus', 1 Cor. 16:24); it is his warm greeting to his Thessalonian friends. There are other references to such a 'holy kiss' (Rom. 16:16; 1 Cor. 16:20; 2 Cor. 13:12), and to a 'kiss of love' (1 Pet. 5:14).  
'Tyndale

'charge you' - 'I put you on your oath as Christians' - strong. See Acts 19:13. Illustrates his concern that the confused and worried be educated and reassured. Could also be that some were questioning his love for the Thessalonians, and in this letter of loving reassurance, he wants that accusation to be countered.

Paul's emphasis on grace is clear from start to finish (1 Thessalonians 1:1).

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## AIM UK&I

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The Old Testament Survey module took place on recently. If you missed it, but would like to join in and watch the recordings, please speak to me or email [courses@aimukandireland.com](mailto:courses@aimukandireland.com). The website [www.aimukandireland.com](http://www.aimukandireland.com) contains more information.

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