

83 – How to have an “unimpaired spirit”

In our last study, in 1 Thessalonians 3:13, we learned that the term, “in the presence of the Lord” was no a figure of speech, but a literal, physical place and time that we saw more clearly in Chapter 4:15-18, where Paul lines out the events that lead to our coming into His presence in the air upon His return.

1 Thessalonians 4:15-18

15 For this we are saying to you **by the word of the Lord**, that we, the living, who are surviving to **the presence of the Lord**, should by no means **outstrip** those who are put to repose,

16 for the Lord Himself will be descending from heaven with a shout of command, with the voice of the Chief Messenger, and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ shall be rising first.

17 Thereupon we, the living who are surviving, shall at the same time be snatched away together with them in clouds, to meet the Lord in the air. And thus shall we always be together with the Lord.

We also learned Paul’s prescription for living effectively in the world while we are not of the world.

1 Thessalonians 4:15-18

11 and that you be ambitious to be quiet, and to be engaged in your own affairs, and to be working with your hands, according as we charge you,

12 that you may be walking respectably [**decently**] toward those outside and you may have need of nothing.

Finally, we looked at what Paul termed, “*the day of the Lord.*” Which will come “*as a thief in the night,*” except to “*sons [and daughters] of the light and sons [and daughters] of the day.*” In **Chapter 5:9**, Paul reminds us of a point he made earlier in his letter:

1 Thessalonians 5:9

9 for **God did not appoint us to [the] indignation**, but to **the procuring of salvation** through our Lord Jesus Christ,

Procuring is “preserving; possession; obtaining). God didn’t set us up for the time when He unleashes His stored-up anger! No! Praise His name, He set us up to obtain, possess and preserve fully that which, up until the day we meet Him in the air, we have

only enjoyed as a downpayment of sorts, toward our completion; our fulfillment...the change of our corruptible to incorruption and our mortality to immortality.

Let's move on to **1 Thessalonians Chapter 5:12-28**

I confess that it took me all the way to verse 19 to realize how incredibly important Paul's message was to the Thessalonians...and to us today. His tone is desperately earnest and he says with few words what we will see more fully —I hope—as we expand Paul's combination of advice and instruction.

12 Now we are asking you, brethren, to **perceive those** who are toiling among you and **presiding** over you in the Lord and **admonishing** you,

13 and to deem them **exceedingly distinguished** in love, because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves.

Ask is “Gush-Request”

Perceive is to “Get knowledge by means of any or all of the senses.” Become aware of, study and pay attention to

Preside is “to protect or guard (in the sense of a guardian), to give aid; to care for, give attention to” – this has the idea of someone who has an accountability for the welfare of someone else —at least spiritually. This is a serious position which God appoints. No one appoints themselves to it, and you'll see the difference very quickly when confronted by someone who has assumed the position. Two of the quickest ways to spot a self-appointed “overseer” are: 1) A title, such as Prophet, or Apostle, or Evangelist precedes a person's name; 2) The person's tone is authoritarian rather than authoritative. They tend to lord it over or even patronize others – they have a condescending tone.

Admonish is warn, exhort (to give warnings or advice; make urgent appeals). Preside and admonish go together. If the one (or “ones”) presiding are God-appointed, your spirit will bear witness to their authority and their advice, warning, or appeal.

Now let's read it again...

1 Thessalonians 5:12-13

12 Now we are gushing out this request, brethren, to become aware of; study, and pay attention to those who are laboring heavily alongside of you and whom god has put in position to protect, guard, give aid and attention, and to care for you in the Lord, and who are warning, advising and appealing to you,

13 and to deem them exceedingly distinguished in love, because of their work. Meanwhile, with all these in place under God's authority and the anointing of the Holy Spirit, relax and be at peace among yourselves. There's no problem. All is well.

OK, let's move on . . .

1 Thessalonians 5:14-

14 Now we are entreating you, brethren; **admonish the disorderly** Warn, advise, or make appeals to those who fall out of ranks (like soldiers out of formation); who are irregular, inordinate, immoderate in pleasures; who are deviating from the prescribed order or rule. In the ecclesia there is an order prescribed by the holy Spirit, rather than by man, though men and women must discern and enforce it.

comfort the fainthearted,

calm, console, and encourage those lacking courage or resolution...the timid ones

uphold the infirm,

This has a weird double meaning that is at once negative *and* positive: **Uphold** is "*hold back, withstand, endure; keep one's self directly opposite to any one...hold to him firmly, cleave to, paying heed to him.*" Paul is referring to someone "**infirm**" or "*weak, feeble, without strength, powerless*"—also may refer to someone who is physically ill.

be patient toward all.

be of a long spirit toward everyone, don't lose heart; persevere bravely in enduring misfortunes and troubles; bearing the offenses and injuries of others; be mild and slow in avenging; be longsuffering, slow to anger, slow to punish. All that is included in 2 words: "*be patient.*"

Now, let's put verse 14 back together:

Now we are calling you to come alongside us brethren; to warn, advise, make appeals to those who fall out of ranks (like soldiers out of formation); who are irregular, inordinate, immoderate in pleasures; who are deviating from the prescribed order or rule. Calm, console, and encourage the timid ones...those lacking courage or resolution. Hold back, withstand, keep yourselves directly opposite to anyone who is weak, feeble, without strength, powerless, or even

physically ill; but also endure him; hold to him firmly, stick to him and stick by him, paying heed to him. Finally, be of a long spirit toward everyone, don't lose heart; persevere bravely in enduring misfortunes and troubles; bearing the offenses and injuries of others; be mild and slow in avenging; be longsuffering, slow to anger, and slow to punish.

Now keep reading...

1 Thessalonians 5:15

15 See that no one may be rendering evil for evil to anyone, but always **pursue** [*chase*] that which is good for one another as well as for all.

16 Be rejoicing **always**.

17 Be praying **unintermittingly**.

This is as close as Paul comes to saying, *“live in a state of prayer...make your life one long prayer.”*

18 In everything be giving thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

19 Quench not [*don't extinguish*] **the spirit** [*the Holy Spirit*].

One other point where Paul uses the term, “*extinguish*,” in Ephesians 6:16 – writing about “*the large shield of faith, by which you will be able to EXTINGUISH all the fiery arrows of the wicked one.*” Here’s what got me as I prepared for our study tonight:

1. The Holy Spirit can be extinguished.
2. We are the ones who can put it out.
3. If you want to know how to avoid quenching the Holy Spirit, go back to verse 18...“*in everything be giving thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.*” and go back to everything from verse 12 on. Get all this right, and you have the best opportunity to live in harmony with and in the flow of the Holy Spirit.

But keep the following in mind, because these points apply as much as those that we’ve already seen:

20 Scorn not prophecies.

Don’t “*make of no account, or despise utterly*” – Prophets are those through whom God spoke to mankind, and prophecies were His chosen medium, until the time of the Apostles. Paul counts prophets—and by extension prophecies—second only to apostles in his list of those whom God has appointed to “adjust or attune the saints, dispense the word of the Lord, build up the Body of Christ into its maturity; into its stature of the

complement of the Christ, so that it cannot be carried about by every wind of teaching, human caprice, or by craftiness and thereby be carried off into the systematizing of the deception (**Ephesians 4:11-14**). Paul didn't have to tell the Thessalonians to respect apostles, because they had already demonstrated that love and respect, which warranted Paul's enormous joy in them as he wrote this first letter, and the second one coming up.

21 Yet **be testing all, retaining the ideal.**

Prove everything – form a careful opinion, examine, scrutinize, and, once, having proved, then APPROVE something as genuine. Hold fast to what you find perfectly pleasing, and what satisfies all expectations; keep it secure, keep firm possession of it.

The idea here is that we could potentially miss the ideal by failing to first identify it properly, and then lose it through sheer carelessness or in treating it casually. The unspoken instruction here is to discard what is less than ideal. We've all heard the cliché, "the good is the enemy of the best," and that clearly applies here. Barbara has this wonderful saying that goes along with this: she says, "If you don't want my God, you don't get my goods."

22 From everything wicked to the perception, **abstain. [hold yourself off from]**

23 Now may the **God of peace** Himself be hallowing you wholly

Here's a great plumb line to pay attention to, and it's easily run over: the Father is the God of peace...He's the sovereign of quietness, tranquility, and not the God of disturbance or agitation. So by simple self-examination of our own emotional state at any time, we can tell if we are in accord with, in agreement with, in alignment with the Father. Are we enjoying—right now—a state of quietness and tranquility, or are we feeling disturbed or agitated? Are we around others whom we observe as being in a state of quietness and tranquility, or disturbance and agitation. This is just like the simplicity of an infant: they're ever comfortable (i.e., quiet and tranquil) or they are uncomfortable (i.e. disturbed and agitated). Infants LIKE peace, and will fuss until we fix the situation to return them to peace. We are no different, yet we too often put up with disturbance and agitation and, thereby compromise our own well-being by removing ourselves from God's natural state in which we are being hallowed wholly.

; and may **your unimpaired** spirit and soul and body be kept blameless in **the presence of** our Lord Jesus Christ!

Unimpaired is "in no part wanting or unsound, complete in all respects, consummate."

This state of our spirit, soul and body is being kept flawless—without spot or blemish—

in the presence of the Lord. Again, Paul's term, "*in the presence of the Lord,*" is not a figure of speech, but a literal place and time. Paul's whole stamen is not a wish, as in, I hope you will keep...the words, "*be kept*" is an "Act" form of the verb, and it can be read, "*is being kept.*" In other words, this isn't something we are doing, as if by our efforts; rather, it is being done...our spirits, souls and bodies are **being kept** flawless in His presence. The picture is similar to what we saw earlier in Paul's letter: that of being presented at the time and in the place of His presence upon His return. In that presentation all of us is being kept flawless before Him and before the Father.

24 Faithful is He Who is **calling** you, Who will be doing it also.

Calling is much like "inviting." We've all been invited into this grand process of God's eonian purpose, which He formed in Christ Jesus.

The "IT" Paul refers to in the last part of verse 24—"Who will be doing it also"—is in verse 23 and 24 – the "*hallowing*" and "*being kept blameless*"—spirit soul and body—"*in the presence of the Lord.*"

25 Brethren, pray concerning us also.

26 Greet all the brethren with a holy kiss.

27 I am adjuring you by the Lord, [I am solemnly imploring you by the Lord—not by me—by the Lord] that this epistle be read to all the holy brethren.

This letter was certainly circulated throughout the region!

28 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you! Amen!

What did we gain from Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians?

1. Faith, Love, and Expectation produce, lead to, and require work, toil, and endurance.
2. Jesus Christ will "rescue us out of the coming indignation" – a specific time of tremendous struggle that precedes His literal return to the Earth. The Ord's return will come as a complete surprise to most, but not to us, as we stay alert to the signs that Paul also points out. Later in the letter, we discover how our "change" of form from the corruptible to the incorruptible, glorious body—the actual, compete "procuring of our salvation" will come about:
 - a. 16 for the Lord Himself will be descending from heaven with a shout of command, with the voice of the Chief Messenger, and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ shall be rising first.

17 Thereupon we, the living who are surviving, shall at the same time be snatched away together with them in clouds, to meet the Lord in the air. And thus shall we always be together with the Lord.

3. In chapter 2, we learned the difference between trial and testing. We formed the principle that God tests...the adversary tries.
 - a. In God's testing, He is examining, scrutinizing, proving and refining in order to APPROVE and stamp as genuine.
 - b. In the adversary's "trying," he attempts to throw off balance, detour, delay, distract and, if possible, destroy.
4. Paul contrasts the Thessalonians, who were once raging pagans and are displaying such great faith that they are renowned throughout the ecclesias, with the religious Pharisees who, for all their ritual and legalism, were actually opposing God by hindering the progress of gentiles wherever they could. Their fate, Paul declares, is the coming indignation, whereas ours is to be rescued out of it into glorified bodies like Christ's.
5. We found, in chapter 3 that persecution is to be expected. In fact, we're "located" for it.
6. Paul declares that the Lord Himself establishes our hearts unblamable—free from defect—in front of God in the time and place of the literal, physical presence of the Lord Jesus.
7. In chapter 4, Paul declares the will of God for us is our holiness, and he goes on to say how that looks in three simple sentences:
 - a. Be ambitious to be quiet, mind your own business, keep yourself busy and out of trouble by working with your hands; behave decently toward even unbelievers
8. In chapter 5, we have a laundry list of things to do:
 - a. Respect and revere those who watch out for you before the Lord
 - b. Warn and advise those who fall out of the ranks
 - c. Console the timid ones
 - d. Pay attention to the weaker ones among you
 - e. Be patient toward everyone
 - f. don't render evil for evil, but chase after what's good for everyone.
 - g. Rejoice always
 - h. Pray unintermittingly – just make it your way of life
 - i. Give thanks for everything – like it, don't like it...give thanks for everything.

- j. Don't extinguish the Holy Spirit
- k. Don't discount or worse, despise, prophecies
- l. Test everything and hold fast to the best
- m. Hold yourself off from everything wicked
- n. God is doing the hallowing, and He'll make sure your spirit, soul and body is being kept blameless in the Presence of the Lord.