

ELIM ABERYSTWYTH, 2024

# STAND FIRM

Learning from the Letters to the  
Church of the Thessalonians

1 Thessalonians 5





**PAUL'S SECOND MISSIONARY JOURNEY**

# Context

- The letter is most likely the earliest example we have of The Apostle Paul's writing
- Paul had been (with Silas) to Thessalonica during his second missionary journey
- Thessalonica (now Thessaloniki) was a thriving port city in northern Greece





MACEDONIA

PHILIPPI

TH

THESSALONICA

BEREA

ATHENS

CORINTH

AEGEAN SEA

CRETE



# Context

- They were not on holiday!
- They arrived from Phillipi where they had been beaten, imprisoned and miraculously set free
- Within a few weeks they had established a group of Jesus followers which included 'some Jews... a large number of God-fearing Greeks and quite a few prominent women' (See Acts 17)



# Context

- Jealous members of the synagogue started a riot accusing the Christ followers of defying Caesar and his decrees
- The believers sent Paul and Silas to Berea under the cover of night
- The Word of God thrived in Berea and so some of those Jews from Thessalonica persecuted them again!

**PAUL KNEW AND LOVED  
THIS GROUP OF NEW  
BELIEVERS PERSONALLY**

**HE WROTE TO ENCOURAGE  
AND CHALLENGE THEM TO:**

- ◎ **STAND FIRM IN THE FACE  
OF PERSECUTION,  
CULTURAL ANTAGONISM  
AND RELIGIOUS  
JEALOUSY**
- ◎ **CONTINUE SEEKING TO  
LIVE WHOLLY HOLY LIVES**
- ◎ **HOLD ON TO THE HOPE  
OF CHRIST'S RETURN  
AND FUTURE KINGDOM**

**THE REALITY OF THESE ARE  
AS TRUE FOR US TODAY AS  
THEY WERE IN THE FIRST  
CENTURY ANO DOMINI**



# Previously...

- **1 Thess 1**

- Paul affirmed them, celebrating their turning to the one true God by the work of the Spirit
- Celebrated how their hospitality, their work (faith), patience (hope) and toil (love) had had a resounding impact
- Reminded them of the future hope in Jesus

- **1 Thess 2**

- Living and ministering to please God, not people
- Encouragement in suffering for and with Christ in the truth
- Looking to the eternal treasure of people won for Christ



# Previously...

- **1 Thess 3**

- Ensure we have the right foundations
- Suffering for Christ is to turn our hearts to, not from God
- Pursuing what God wants us to do is always for our best

- **1 Thess 4**

- Living to please God, not people
- Continue to love one another as a sign to others
- Our future hope - we will be with the Lord forever!







**Now, brothers and sisters, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, 2 for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. 3 While people are saying, "Peace and safety," destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.**



# The Day is Coming

- The timing and the details are not as important as the fact of the matter - Christ is returning
- They had already been taught that it will happen as an unexpected surprise to the sleeping world
- Once labour begins, there is no escaping it!
  - 'Peace and Safety' was a motto of the Roman Empire - soon undone!



**WE ARE MUCH  
CLOSER TO  
CHRIST'S  
RETURN TODAY  
THAN WHEN  
PAUL WROTE  
THESE WORDS -  
IT WILL STILL BE  
A SURPRISE BUT  
AS BELIEVERS WE  
DO NOT FEAR  
FOR OURSELVES**



**4 But you, brothers and sisters, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief. 5 You are all children of the light and children of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness. 6 So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be awake and sober.**



**7 For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night. 8 But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet.**



**9 For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. 10 He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him. 11 Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.**



# Awakening

- We are already awakened to His Kingdom and our daily aspiration is to live in His Kingship
- We are called to stay awake and sober; ready for battle in protective spiritual armour
  - The return of faith, love and hope
- Christ's death and resurrection have given us the light of salvation



**OUR  
WILLINGNESS TO  
LIVE (SUFFER) IN  
AND WITH CHRIST  
IN THIS LIFE, WE  
ARE SPARED HIS  
WRATH AND  
GRANTED THE  
PRIVILEGE OF LIFE  
IN AND WITH HIM  
IN HIS ETERNAL  
KINGDOM**



"... you are in the middle of the world's night - but the spirit of Jesus within you is telling you it's already daytime. You are already children of the day, children of the light.... You are wide awake long before the full sunrise has dawned"

**NT WRIGHT, PAUL FOR EVERYONE: GALATIANS AND THESSALONIANS**



**THE DEATH AND  
RESURRECTION OF  
JESUS IS OUR  
FUNDAMENTAL  
CHRISTIAN CREED  
AND THE LIGHT OF  
THIS TRUTH SHINES  
BRIGHTLY INTO ALL  
THE DARKNESS  
THIS WORLD CAN  
THROW AT US**



**12 Now we ask you,  
brothers and  
sisters, to  
acknowledge  
those who work  
hard among you,  
who care for 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.**

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



**15 Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always strive to do what is good for each other and for everyone else.**



**HOW LIVE IN  
COMMUNITY  
TOGETHER AS THE  
PEOPLE OF GOD IS  
MEANT TO REFLECT  
AND REPRESENT  
THE COMING  
KINGDOM OF GOD  
TO THE WORLD  
AROUND US**



# Final Instructions

- We all exhibit learnt behaviours - we often need to unlearn worldly ways to grow in Kingdom ways
- Despite the youth of the church, the leaders were in place and to be honoured
- It is equally as loving to warn idle and disruptive people as to it is encourage the disheartened and help the 'weak'



**WE WANT ELIM  
ABERYSTWYTH TO  
GROW IN BEING  
A LOVING, KIND,  
HONEST,  
GRACIOUS AND  
GENEROUS  
COMMUNITY OF  
GOD'S PEOPLE**

**LET US STRIVE TO  
DO WHAT IS  
GOOD FOR EACH  
OTHER AND  
EVERYONE ELSE**



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



# RPG!

- **Rejoice, Pray, Give thanks** - these are the keys to unlocking the will of God for your life!
- **Material blessing is not a barometer of fulfilment** - those with least can often be the most joyful and generous
- **This is possibly the first of a group of memorable rhymes or sayings to teach principles of godly living...**



**19 Do not quench  
the Spirit. 20 Do  
not treat  
prophecies with  
contempt 21 but  
test them all;  
hold on to what is  
good, 22 reject  
every kind of evil.**



# Final Instructions

- It is possible to quench the Spirit - don't pour water on the fire of what He is doing
- This doesn't mean accepting or 'going along' with all that seems spiritual - we are to test prophecies (amongst other things) and hold to what is good
- Reject every kind of evil - do not cling to anything that is not of God



**IS THERE  
ANYTHING  
THAT THE  
SPIRIT IS  
DOING OR  
SAYING THAT  
WE HAVE  
BEEN  
POURING  
WATER OVER?**



**IS THERE  
ANYTHING  
WE ARE  
CLINGING  
TO THAT  
NEEDS TO  
BE PUSHED  
AWAY?**

**23 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.**



# God is Faithful

- **Through and through - God is not content to settle for anything less than all of us**
- **To be blameless in spirit, soul and body seems unattainable but there is good news...**
- **...This is on Him, not us!**



“... the most significant thing about Jesus is that in him the living God has put into effect his faithfulness to the entire creation.”

“The most significant thing about the church is that it is the company of people held... by the sheer faithfulness of God”

“... the calling of the individual Christian to be holy in body, soul and spirit... is here, by the faithfulness of God”



**25 Brothers and sisters, pray for us. 26 Greet all God's people with a holy kiss. 27 I charge you before the Lord to have this letter read to all the brothers and sisters. 28 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.**



# Final Instructions

- Continue upon the foundations of the early (Acts 2) church... Prayer, fellowship, teaching
- Pray together as they did in the upper room
- Live in loving community together - holy kisses!
- Read scripture together and honour the teaching of the Apostles



**STAND FIRM**

**THE ONE  
WHO CALLS  
YOU IS  
FAITHFUL**