

1 Thessalonians 5:11-28

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Preacher: Sam Bunnell

[0 : 00] Boy, didn't they do an awesome job, our combined youth and adult choirs this morning. Brother Greg, Miss Jessica did an amazing job working with them.

Would you take your Bibles with me and go to 1 Thessalonians? This is our final Sunday in 1 Thessalonians as part of this series, and we are in the last chapter, chapter 5, finishing up. I want to draw your attention back. By the way, I've never introduced myself. My name is Sam Bunnell, fairly new pastor of this church here, and church has been around 140 plus years, and I've been here not quite three months of that. So my family and I are new to the area, but we're loving it here and grateful to get to know so many of you. If I haven't met you or started to get to know you personally, I'd love to do that. So my family and I will be in the back and the lobby area right here, right after the service, before we head back to the lunch area, and love to talk to you, meet you, get to know you a little bit better. And if you're visiting with us, I definitely would like to get to know you as well. 1 Thessalonians chapter 5, I want to draw your attention.

You don't have to turn there, it's on the screens, but I want to draw your attention back to the very beginning of the book. And the theme of our first two messages here, my first two messages at this church as pastor, were about being a model church, the marks of a model church, the message of a model church. And we drew that concept from the scriptures in the very first chapter of Paul's letter, first letter to the church at Thessalonica. And he charged them that he recognized they had become an example to all the believers. And in verse 8 chapter 1, for the word of the Lord rang out from you in every place that your faith in God has gone out. So this church, even though they were new Christians, Paul had only recently come to that large bustling trade port city of Thessalonica and had shared the gospel with these people and they had established a new church there. Even though they were brand new, they had already become an example or a model church to many believers in every place that your faith in God has gone out. They became an example. We can draw from this letter that our God chose to include in the Holy Bible, both letters from Paul to Thessalonica. We can include ourselves in this idea that we should be an example to the believers. Every place that our faith in God would go out. So the title of the sermon this morning is The Responsibility of a Model Church. The Responsibility of a Model Church. Let's get into our text for this morning, 1 Thessalonians chapter 5 and verse 12. 1 Thessalonians chapter 5, beginning in verse 12. We'll read down through the end of the chapter.

Now, we ask you, brothers and sisters, to give recognition to those who labor among you and lead you in the Lord and admonish you, and to regard them very highly in love because of their work.

Be at peace among yourselves. And we exhort you, brothers and sisters, warn those who are idle, comfort the discouraged, help the weak, be patient with everyone. See to it that no one repays evil for evil to anyone, but always pursue what is good for one another and for all. Rejoice always. Pray constantly. Give thanks in everything, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. Don't stifle the spirit. Don't despise prophecies, but test all things. Hold on to what is good. Stay away from every kind of evil. Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful. He will do it. Brothers and sisters, pray for us also. Greet all the brothers and sisters with a holy kiss. Teenagers that said a holy kiss, all right? So don't get any ideas. I charge you by the Lord that this letter be read to all the brothers and sisters. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.

[4 : 56] Amen. And so ends Paul's letter to the church in Thessalonica. We can draw much from this. This is a rich passage. We could spend all day here and still not really get a hold of everything that Paul left in this final charge to this church. But I want us to draw attention to a few things. And number one, the big takeaway from today is my responsibility is to love God by loving others, even when it's difficult.

Throughout the latter part of chapter five, we see all kinds of admonishments, all kinds of commands that Paul leaves by the divine inspiration of God that Paul leaves to this church. Throughout all of these commands, there is a theme. There is an undercurrent. And that is love. That is love.

And so our responsibility is to, number one, love God. But how do we show our love to God? We show it by loving the ones Jesus loves, which is our neighbor, which is others, which is those here in the church.

It's our leadership. It's those around us. It's those in our community. It's everyone we come across, we show the love of God too, even when it's difficult. And he even paints out some scenarios that would make it difficult. Some of the relationships that he talks about are not easy to show love, but that is our responsibility. So that's my responsibility to love God by loving others, even when it's difficult. Number one, back in verse 12 and 13, it talks about loving our leaders.

So if you're taking notes this morning, point number one, love your leaders. Specifically your pastor. I've been waiting the entire series to get to this part right here.

[6 : 58] It's the only reason I picked this book. I'm just kidding. Totally kidding. Listen, it is important. Love your pastor. Love your teachers. Love all those that God has chosen to put in leadership in your life. We've got leadership all throughout this church, in different ministries of this church.

And there is some different challenges that leaders face than those that God has not appointed to those leadership positions for that time. The Bible puts it this way in verse 12, those who labor among you and lead you in the Lord and admonish you. So think through those people in your life.

Yeah, sure. Then the preacher gets up on Sundays. Lord willing, he should be doing those things. But there are so many other people in your life who, Lord willing, would be filling those roles for you.

So who are the people who labor among you, who lead you in your faith in Christ and who admonish you? Love those people. The Bible says, give them recognition, give them honor, give them respect.

To regard them very highly in love, verse 13, regard them very highly in love because of their work. That's the work that God called them to do. And so when we love our leaders, we're showing love to God.

[8 : 15] You don't love your leaders because they're the greatest among you. You don't love your leaders and lift them up on a pedestal and say they're better than we are. That's not showing biblical love.

You regard them highly because of the work that God called them to do that they're faithfully giving their lives to do. So love our leaders. Over in Hebrews chapter 13, it kind of gives some elaboration on this. It says, have confidence in your leaders and submit to their authority because they keep watch over you as those who must give an account. Did you catch that part?

There's a responsibility that leaders carry and that's why leadership is not something that should be rushed into quickly or hastily without great prayer and deliberation because it should be a calling that God has put on your life. We've got people who lead in the church. We've got people who lead in the school. We've got people who lead in their place of employment. All kinds of people represented in this building right now who are leaders. God has given you that role, that calling for this season of your life and you've got to give an account for it. You've got to give an account for it.

God will hold you accountable to whom much is given, much is what? Expected, required, etc. So if God has given you this role, you're going to have to give an account for the time and what you did with that leadership. So then have confidence in the leaders that God gives you. Submit to their authority because they do keep watch over you as those who must give an account. And then it says, do this so their work will be a joy, not a burden. Because you're not going to benefit if their work is a burden. Their work is for you. It is done for God, but God called them to work for you, for your behalf, for our behalf. So we must not give our leaders unnecessary grief. That doesn't mean you can't ever bring them a problem. They want to deal with the problems. That's what God called them to do.

But don't be an unnecessary burden to them. Don't give them so much grief that then their work is no benefit to you. That's what we learn from the scriptures. So just thought I'd share this with you real quick.

[10 : 51] Pastoring a church is not stressful, okay? I got about four years and then that's what I'm going to look like. Do the math. Anyway, it is, it is stressful. Well, before we jump to the next thing, it is stressful sometimes, folks. And anyone who's been in leadership, so many of you have in this room, you know that there can be sometimes seasons of stress and sometimes season of like, why did I do this again? Or am I sure that God called me to do this? But absolutely, it's so worth it. You know, I was dealing with a few things over the last couple weeks and I told my wife, you know, yeah, it's difficult to deal with problems and sure you'd wish that everything was perfect all the time, but look, I'm so glad and honored that God decided that I was the one who's going to help deal with this, you know? And whatever it is, whatever problem comes along the way, it's like, you know, it could have been somebody else that had to deal with this. I'm just grateful that God, now, am I fully equipped to do it? Man, I don't feel like it all the time. But apparently God said, yeah, you're the one.

So leaders, just a side note, leaders take joy and take just an awesome gratefulness to God that he would allow you to be the one to, by his spirit, deal with the problems that come up. That's part of the joy of the work that God calls us to do. So that's point number one, love your leaders. Point number two, love each other. Love each other. Let's look back at the text again, verse 13.

Be at peace among yourselves. We exhort you, brothers and sisters. It kind of spells out how do you do this? How do you love each other? You warn those who are idle. What's it talking about?

Those who don't work. Apparently back in the church in Thessalonica, there was some uprising against Christians and in the community, some negative sentiment toward those who became newfound followers of Christ. And so often it was hard for them to get jobs, et cetera. So some people just decided to become lazy and not work and depend on others to support them. And so he said, warn those who are like this. You can't do that forever. You have to be an honest, upright, contributing member of our society. And so it says, warn those who are idle, comfort the discouraged, help the weak, be patient with everyone. That's how we show love to each other. And then down in verse 15, always pursue what is good for one another, for each other. Who do we always pursue what is good for? Ourselves. That's what we do.

We spend our lives pursuing what is good for us. That's what everybody does. So if we're going to be different, I'm going to use my son Austin's testimony again this morning. He said, you know, it's important that the world around us sees that we're different. So if we're going to be different, then we have to pursue what is good for one another, not just for us, for ourselves. John chapter 13.

[14 : 05] John chapter 13. I give you a new command. Jesus said, this is what we call the great commandment. I give you a new command. Love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.

By this, everyone will know that you are my disciples if you love one another. And that's what we were just talking about. That's what makes us different. Everybody else, they love themselves.

And then if they're going to love somebody else, they're going to love who makes them feel good. They're going to love the people that it's easy to love. When we love the people it's hard to love.

When we love the people who it does us no good to show them love, no personal advantage financially or anything else, that we don't get anything out of it, but we just love them because Jesus loves them.

That is when people know that we are his disciples. That's when people know that there's something different about you and me when we love one another. So that's what we're commanded to do.

[15 : 08] Love our leaders. Love each other. I love this quote by Francis Schaeffer, one of the all-time great apologists or defenders of the Christian faith, wrote a lot of great books. If you read something by Francis Schaeffer, you'll probably get blessed by it. But he said, our relationship with each other is the criterion that the world uses to judge whether our message is truthful.

Christian community is the final apologetic. Do you know that the world is paying attention to us? When people find out that you go to First Baptist Church, they're going to be expecting something from you. That might be good, that might be bad, depending on their experience and how they view our church. But regardless, there's going to be an expectation. There's going to be something that they're watching to see. And then they're going to judge, right or wrong, they're going to judge not only you, not only our church, but God himself based on what they see. And that's why we are supposed to be here in community with one another, loving one another, supporting one another, encouraging one another in the faith so that we are not completely isolated, we're not completely on our own, and we're not all off seeking our own gain. We're seeking the good of those around us. Then they see, wow, that's a very loving community out there. I'd like to be a part of that. And our attitude about that community is not close the ranks, circle the wagons, you can't sit with us.

That's not the attitude. The attitude is wide open arms saying, please come into our community. They welcomed me in, we'll welcome you in. If you grew up here, you'll be right at home here.

If you're brand new in town, got here last week, you'll be right at home here. We're not going to judge you. We'll call sin, sin, but we're not going to judge you. We're not going to say, we're better than you are. You don't belong in our assembly. We will welcome you with wide open arms to be a part of our community. So that's what we do. Christian community is the final apologetic or defense of the faith. We can say all the words of scripture. We can preach the gospel.

We can go out and speak the truth. But when they see us sniping at each other, running each other down, gossiping about each other, not getting along, that undermines all the truth of the message that we just preached. It is vital that we obey our Lord's command. That's why he gave it to us, because it is essential. It is vital that we love one another. And finally, we love our God. Love your leaders, love each other, and love our God. Verse 18, this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

[18 : 29] So how do we do that? How do we love our God? There's all kinds of ways right here. It gives us kind of an ingredient list. Number one, rejoice always. Pray constantly. Give thanks in everything.

Don't stifle the Spirit. Don't reject biblical prophesying. Let's park here for just a second. When we say prophesying, we're not talking about Old Testament prophecy that Christ fulfilled.

We're talking about there's two meanings to the word prophesy when you see it in scripture. And it's either forth telling, talking about proclaiming or preaching, or foretelling, which is prophesying about the future, predicting the future. God gave special gifts of foretelling to Old Testament prophets. And Christ Jesus, the Son of God, is the embodiment, the fulfillment of all the prophecies. And so we don't reject biblical prophesying, which we're talking about proclaiming, forth telling, preaching. And then we stay away from every kind of evil. So this is how we love our God.

So let's go through each one. One, rejoice always. How do you do that? How do you rejoice when a family member dies? How do you rejoice when you lose a job that you desperately needed? How do you rejoice when something very traumatic happens to you, something potentially devastating happens to you? Or we don't have to go so extreme. How do you rejoice when you rejoice when you're just having a really bad day? And it seems like everybody's out to get you. Everybody's picking on you. Things are just not going as you want them to. Maybe you're sick.

Maybe you're not feeling well. How do you rejoice then? How do you rejoice when there's been a season of trials and they just never seem to let up? I think we jump down to the next one. Pray constantly.

[20 : 33] We got to stay in communication with our life source. Usually, if you feel like you're spiritually starving, it's because you are.

Usually, it's because you've cut off that communication with the one who loves you most, the one who is most faithful to you, most dependable. Say, oh no, I open my Bible and I read it every morning. That's great. We're not just called to read the Bible. We're called to meditate on the Bible. Let it speak to us. Somebody said, you can read the Bible, but you really need to let the Bible read you. I think there's some truth to that. God's words are alive. The old King James version says they're quick and powerful. That word quick or quicken means alive. They are alive and powerful. They don't return ineffective. God's words will make a difference if we meditate on them.

Joshua 1.8 commands us to meditate on the words of God. Then it says, you will have good success in the things that God has for you. So how do we rejoice always? We pray without ceasing. We pray constantly. Does that mean you walk around with your eyes closed? Of course not, right? But it means you maintain a constant attitude of prayer, staying in communication with the God who loves you most.

And then when you keep, I almost like to say you just don't hang up the phone with God, you know. Just get him on the line and don't hang up the phone. It's okay. He wants to be with you as you go throughout your day. And silently in your own head or sometimes if you're by yourself and people won't think you're crazy, you can talk out loud to God. Tell him about things that are going on.

He gives peace that surpasses all of our understanding. He gives peace that is inexpressible, inexplicable. So we pray constantly. And then we're able to give thanks in everything. It doesn't necessarily mean you give thanks for every trial. Now maybe you can get to the point where you can do that. But in the midst of every storm, you give thanks to God. You give thanks that He is faithful.

[23 : 01] You give thanks that you don't have to go through it alone. You give thanks that somehow we know that all things work together for what? For good for those who love God and are called for His purpose.

God works all things together for our good, most of all for His glory. And so that's what we can give thanks for in the midst of our storm. All of this shows our love to God. This is how we practically do it.

You can tell your wife or your husband that you love them all day long, but if you never show it, do they believe it? Of course not. Our words ring hollow over time. Actions speak louder than words.

And obviously God knows our heart. And so when we, out of a heart of love that He has transformed, then we show our love to God by rejoicing, by praying, by giving thanks, by not stifling the Spirit in us. How do we stifle the Spirit? Anybody want to take a guess on that one? What stifles the Holy Spirit of God in our lives? Life, life can, circumstances. Anything else? What stifles the Holy Spirit?

Death cannot, actually. Death cannot kill the Holy Spirit of God. He's got you to take you right to heaven. Somebody else said something. Yes, disobedience, sin, that's good. Pride, all those things.

[24 : 43] Selfishness, just call it sin. Sin can stifle the Spirit. Don't quench the Spirit of God, another translation of that verse we'll read.

When the fire is burning and the fire is a Holy Spirit, is a picture of the Holy Spirit throughout the New Testament, we see the Holy Spirit mentioned as a fire at Pentecost, etc. And so when we pour cold water on that fire, we can quench the Holy Spirit's fire. Now, does that remove His presence from us? No, you cannot remove the Holy Spirit from you if you're a child of God. Neither can you manufacture the Holy Spirit's presence in your life if you're not a child of God. And plenty of people try to do that. I guarantee you there's people sitting in this room this morning that are pretending to be a child of God, and they're not. You can't manufacture the Holy Spirit's presence in your life, and those who have Him cannot remove Him. But you can quench Him.

You can limit His effectiveness in your life. You can stop listening, put in earplugs, nope, not having it today. I'm going to live my life how I'm going to live it today. I'm not going to listen to you. Oftentimes, we'll do that. We may not say those words, but that's what we're communicating with how we live. So don't stifle the Spirit through sin. Don't reject biblical preaching.

Now, if I'm ever not biblical, you come to me, let me know, and I will sit down. Others have caught certain things I said, and usually it was just kind of a mistake, you know. And somebody recently came and said, you keep saying Jesus was in the grave three days and three nights, and He was only in there two nights. I said, you know what? You're right. For some reason, I think I heard that when I was a kid, and it just stuck. And He rose again on the third day. He didn't make it to that third night. So that was unbiblical, and somebody caught it, and I'm glad they did.

But the bulk of what I tried to do by the power of the Holy Spirit is biblical preaching. Don't reject that. And then stay away from every kind of evil. That is what can get in and mess it up. That doesn't mean that you're going to live a perfect life or be a perfect person, but don't go running toward it.

[26 : 56] When you stumble, when you fall, don't stay there. Get up and try again. God is faithful. God forgives. God can help you get back up on the high road that He wants you to walk on and walk with you on that road. So that's how we show our love to God. Real quickly before we're done, Deuteronomy 6, love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. Let's read that together. Could you with me? It's on the screen. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. All right? That's how we love God. Now, do we love God that way? Usually not, but that's what we should be striving for. Every day we should wake up and say, God, let me love you today with all my heart, with all my soul, and with all my strength. Help me.

He knows we're weak. He knows we struggle, but let's ask Him to help me show my love to you that way. And then 1 John chapter 5, this is what love for God is. To do what? Keep His commands, commands, and His commands are not a burden. His commands are not a burden. Sometimes it feels like it. Man, He won't let me go out and get drunk, and He won't let me go out and do what I used to do.

That's such a burden. Is it? Is it really? Is it really to have a better marriage, to be a better father or mother, to be a better employee, to be a better friend, to make a difference really in somebody else's life? Is that a burden? No. His burden is light. His yoke is easy.

So that's what love for God is, to keep His commands. So recap, the responsibility of a model church. Let's say it together. We're doing a lot of interactive today. All right, here we go. Ready? Love your leaders. Number two, love each other. Number three, love your God. Let's make it personal now.

Love my leaders. Love each other and love your God. Ready? Here we go. One, love my leaders. Love each other. And number three, love my God. Amen. That's what we're going to do. As a church, we'll bond together and strive for that. A reminder, the takeaway is my responsibility is to love God by loving others, even when it's difficult. It's difficult to love your leaders sometimes. Leaders will let you down. God did not call leaders to your life to be perfect examples to you, but He called them to be faithfully pursuing Jesus and be an example of that. Help you to try to do the same. So we are supposed to love our leaders even when it's difficult. Loving each other, that's not always easy, is it? People will let you down. Your neighbor will let you down. Your friends will let you down. Your family will even let you down. Guess what? You'll even let yourself down sometimes.

[29 : 59] And you'll let others down too. We all let each other down, but God still calls us to love each other even when it's difficult. That's how people know we're different. And then finally, loving our God.

First Thessalonians 1, you became an example to all the believers. The word of the Lord rang out in every place that your faith has gone. That is how we can be an example. That's how we can be the church that God called us to be. For the next several weeks, we're going to be starting a series called We Are the Church. We Are the Church. Notice there's a personification there. We. This building is not the church. This is where we gather together and we are so grateful for it. But we are the church.

So we're going to look biblically at what the word of God has to say about the doctrine of ecclesiology, which is the doctrine of the church. So that's what we're going to talk about. What it looks like, what our responsibilities are. And so we kind of had that First Thessalonians prepare us for that and lead us into this study of the church. I'm grateful you're here with us this morning. Would you bow your heads with me quickly and just have a couple of questions before we're gone today?

With our heads bowed, kind of alluded to it earlier, if there's anyone here who doesn't know for sure that you have put your faith in Jesus at a specific moment in your life, not talking about coming to church for a long time or believing you're a Christian for a long time, do you know of a time when you have put your faith in Jesus? You've made that decision.

Would you slip your hand up today if you say, I've never done that. Say, I've never put my hand, my faith in Jesus. Nobody else is looking, but I'd like to pray for you. Put your hands down. Let me ask this question. Is there somebody in here today who says, I need to be more like Jesus and I need to show love? Whether it's more love to God, more love to my leaders, more love to my brother or sister in Christ, more love to somebody else. Would you slip your hands up? It's all around the room. Thank you guys. You can put your hands down. God, every person that raised their hand has a specific person or people in mind. And I just ask that you would intervene in that situation. Whatever has been difficult about showing love, I pray that you would, by your Holy Spirit, transform that situation. That you would let your power become very real.

[32 : 46] Even if the other person doesn't change, that's hard to show love to. I pray that you would empower your child to show love anyway and be a wonderful testimony of the grace and love of God in their life.

I thank you for your goodness to us. I thank you for calling us to this place to worship you, to hear from your word. I ask that you would go with every teacher, every student as they start a new semester, every member of our church, everyone who attends, every visitor, let them go from this place, equipped by your spirit, to make a transforming difference in this community by showing your love. We'll thank you for it. It's in Jesus' name we pray.