

# The Word of the Lord

## An Exposition of I & II Thessalonians

### I Thessalonians 5:6-19

#### Scriptures

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*Romans 11:8*  
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*I Thessalonians 5:6 Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober.*

*Thayer's Greek Lexicon #2518*

The Greek word for *sleep* is *katheudó*. When used figuratively, *Thayer's* defines it as "to yield to sloth and sin, and be indifferent to one's salvation: Ephesians 5:14; 1 Thessalonians 5:6."

When men are asleep to the spiritual realm, they cannot perceive and are not aware of either the opportunity for salvation or future judgment for sin.

The opposite of spiritual sleep is being vigilant to hear God's voice and avoid the danger of disobedience by rejecting God's commandments.

*Ezekiel 3:17 Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me.*

Conscious of the possibility of being found unapproved and suffering the Lord's wrath, a watchman will apply himself first through preparing for the Lord's arrival, and secondly, warning others of it as well.

*I Thessalonians 5:7 For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night.*

The figure of speech used here is graphic when it compares those not watching for Christ's return and the Lord's Day to those sleeping in the night because of drunkenness.

If lived in and maintained, sin will completely separate a man from any true awareness of God and His coming judgment.

And like a drunken man who knows not where he has been the previous night, or what he has done, so are those who are not preparing for Christ's return, equally as ignorant of their state, and final judgment for sin.

A spiritually sleeping and drunken man has no real awareness of Jesus Christ, because also he has not the spiritual ears and eyes to perceive Him.

***Romans 11:8 According as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear;***

Ultimately, sinners can be so occupied with sin's pleasures that no real thought is given to spiritual things nor the judgment that is sure to come on any who willingly reject divine law.

***I Thessalonians 5:8 But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation.***

The contrast to being drunk and sleeping in the night is to exercise faith, love, and the hope of salvation.

***Romans 8:6 For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.***

*Barnes' Notes on the Bible, Rom. 8:6*

*For to be carnally minded* - Margin, "The minding of the flesh." The sense is, that to follow the inclinations of the flesh, or the corrupt propensities of our nature, leads us to condemnation and death. The expression is one of great energy, and shows that it not only leads to death, or leads to misery, but that it is death itself; there is woe and condemnation in the very act and purpose of being supremely devoted to the corrupt passions. Its only tendency is condemnation and despair.

*Is death* - The penalty of transgression; condemnation and eternal ruin; Note, Romans 5:12.

*But to be spiritually minded* - Margin, "The minding of the Spirit." That is, making it the object of the mind, the end and aim of the actions, to cultivate the graces of the Spirit, and to submit to his influence. To be spiritually minded is to seek those feelings and views which the Holy Spirit produces, and to follow his leadings.

*Is life* - This is opposed to death in Romans 8:5. It tends to life, and is in fact real life. For to possess and cultivate the graces of the spirit, to be led where he would guide us, is the design of our existence, and is the only path of happiness.

Believers are encouraged to pursue faith, love, and the hope of salvation because these spiritual qualities stem from above and originate in the higher spiritual realm.

***Faith.*** The first quality listed by the apostle for the Thessalonians to pursue is that which produces peace with God.

***Romans 5:1 Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:***

Thus, it is by pursuing faith that men prove themselves willing to hear God's voice and obey it in their lives. This teaches us that faith, at its core, is an act of submission to divine rule and government. By also pursuing relationship with the Lord, this reveals that men are not satisfied with the natural and carnal world they were birthed into, and are seeking a heavenly world beyond it.

***Love.*** If a man knows not love, then he knows not God.

Consequently, until men are acquainted with and manifest divine love; they will lack any true knowledge of God.

Since the man who lacks love, the scriptures clearly state, knows not God, nor has any real fellowship with Him (I John 4:8). Like spirit, love is what God is.

***I John 4:16 And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.***

Jesus said that men would know who were His true disciples by the love they held one for another. (John 13:35)

Love, therefore, is that test which reveals if a man has given himself to be Christ's disciple, or if he merely panhandles Christ's name.

By love, we also know whom the Lord has revealed Himself to, as well as those whom He has not.

***I Thessalonians 4:9 But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another.***

***Hope of salvation.*** When a man possesses the hope of salvation and is waiting for Christ's return, this reveals that he has believed upon the Son of God and is aware of the exalted position or authority given to Christ.

*Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary, I Thess. 5:8*

Faith, hope, and love, are the three pre-eminent graces (1Th 1:3; 1Co 13:13). We must not only be awake and sober, but also armed; not only watchful, but also guarded. The armor here is only defensive; in Eph 6:13–17, also offensive. Here, therefore, the reference is to the Christian means of being guarded against being surprised by the day of the Lord as a thief in the night. The helmet and breastplate defend the two vital parts, the head and the heart respectively. "With head and heart right, the whole man is right" [Edmunds]. The head needs to be kept from error, the heart from sin.

***I Thessalonians 5:9 For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ,***

***Obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ.***

If a man wants any real hope of heaven, he must realize that it is only through the Son of God that he can gain it. It is therefore solely through Christ that both spiritual and eternal life is received.

***I Corinthians 1:9 God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.***

There is no other attainable way to enter heaven apart from responding to God's call in Christ.

***I Thessalonians 5:10 Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him.***

Charles Spurgeon once said, "If Christ died for you, then he will not forget you." Ultimately, Jesus died on the cross so that those chosen by God might through Christ, live through Him.

To *live together* with the Son of God is the Christian's true hope.

*John 17:24 Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.*

*I Thessalonians 5:11 Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do.*

The comforting and encouraging message that the Thessalonians were to share and spread to others was that, whether living or dead, it made no difference, because God had purposed that all saved by God, should live together with His Son.

This is why neither death nor life, can suspend relationship with the Lord, once the Son of God enters a man's heart, in the presence of the Holy Spirit.

*I Thessalonians 5:12&13 And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; <sup>13</sup> And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves.*

True ministers are spiritual gifts given to the body of Christ by Christ.

*Ephesians 4:8 Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.*

*Ephesians 4:11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;*

To be under Christ's rule requires that men freely become subject not only to Jesus's words and His Spirit but also, as evidenced here, to those ministers whom He has placed in the church, spiritual ministers also purposed for the church's growth and spiritual development.

*Ephesians 4:14 That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;*

*Barnes' Notes on the Bible, Eph. 4:14*

*Tossed to and fro* - κλυδωνιζόμενοι *kludōnizomenoi*. This word is taken from waves or billows that are constantly tossed about - in all ages an image of instability of character and purpose.

*And carried about with every wind of doctrine* - With no firmness; no settled course; no helm. The idea is that of a vessel on the restless ocean, that is tossed about with every varying wind, and that has no settled line of sailing. So many persons are in regard to religious doctrines. They have no fixed views and principles. They hold no doctrines that are settled in their minds by careful and patient examination, and the consequence is, that they yield to every new opinion, and submit to the guidance of every new teacher. The "doctrine" taught here is, that we should have settled religious opinions. We should carefully examine what is truth, and having found it, should adhere to it, and not yield on the coming of every new teacher. We should not, indeed, close our minds against conviction. We should be open to argument, and be willing to follow "the truth" wherever it will lead us. But this state of mind is not inconsistent with having settled opinions, and with being firm in holding them until we are convinced that we are wrong. No man can be useful who has not settled principles. No one who has not such principles can inspire

confidence or be happy, and the first aim of every young convert should be to acquire settled views of the truth, and to become firmly grounded in the doctrines of the gospel.

When children are young, they are most vulnerable to deception. This is especially true concerning those who, though born of God, remain young because of their spiritual youth and lack of divine wisdom. And just as a toddler will place virtually anything in his mouth even if it is dangerous and might cause harm, new believers, because of their lack of proper spiritual perception, can be easily deceived to receive false doctrines purposed to deceive them from the simplicity found in Christ.

***II Corinthians 11:3 But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.***

*Barnes' Notes on the Bible, II Cor. 11:3*

*But I fear* - ... The mention of this seems to have suggested to him the fact that the first woman was deceived and led astray by the tempter, and that the same thing might occur in regard to the church which he was so desirous should be preserved pure. The grounds of his fear were:

(1) That Satan had seduced the first woman, thus demonstrating that the most holy ones were in danger of being led astray by temptation; and,

(2) That special efforts were made to seduce them from the faith. The persuasive arts of the false teachers; the power of philosophy; and the attractive and corrupting influences of the world, he had reason to suppose might be employed to seduce them from simple attachment to Christ.

*Lest by any means* - Lest somehow (*μήπως μέρως*). It is implied that many means would be used; that all arts would be tried; and that in some way, which perhaps they little suspected, these arts would be successful, unless they were constantly put upon their guard.

Ultimately, just as there are true ministers in Christ's church, so also is there an equal amount, if not more, of imposters sent by Satan to deceive the elect. Their devilish aim is to not only bring disgrace to the gospel, but also, by teaching falsities, to bring distrust to God's Word, and to practically remove people from a true knowledge of God's Son.

***I Thessalonians 5:14 Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men.***

It is the responsibility of all who are in Christ's body, not only His ministers, but also the church, to be concerned about and comfort, if necessary, the weak in faith as well as be ready to address those who break spiritual rank.

Ultimately, sin can only spread and affect others in the church, if those who are God's people, neglect their religious duty. It is therefore a responsibility that everyone in Christ's spiritual body, care for and are concerned with, all the other members in it. This will include, if necessary, both warning the unruly and comforting the feeble-minded and weak.

*Barnes' Notes on the Bible, I Thess. 5:14*

*Warn them* - The same word which in 1 Thessalonians 5:12 is rendered "admonish." It is the duty of every church member, as well as of the ministers of the gospel, affectionately to admonish those whom they know to be living contrary to the requirements of the gospel. One reason why there is so little piety in the church, and why so many professors of religion go astray, is, that the great mass of church members feel no responsibility on this

subject. They suppose that it is the duty only of the officers of the church to admonish an erring brother, and hence many become careless and cold and worldly, and no one utters a kind word to them to recall them to a holy walk with God.

*That are unruly* - Margin, "disorderly." The word here used (ἄτακτος *ataktos*), is one which properly means "not keeping the ranks," as of soldiers; and then irregular, confused, neglectful of duty, disorderly. The reference here is to the members of the church who were irregular in their Christian walk. It is not difficult, in an army, when soldiers get out of the line, or leave their places in the ranks, or are thrown into confusion, to see that little can be accomplished in such a state of irregularity and confusion. As little difficult is it, when the members of a church are out of their places, to see that little can be accomplished in such a state. Many a church is like an army where half the soldiers are out of the line; where there is entire insubordination in the ranks, and where not half of them could be depended on for efficient service in a campaign. Indeed, an army would accomplish little if as large a proportion of it were irregular, idle, remiss, or pursuing their own aims to the neglect of the public interest, as there are members of the church who can never be depended on in accomplishing the great purpose for which it was organized.

*Comfort the feeble-minded* - The dispirited; the disheartened; the downcast. To do this is also the duty of each church member. There are almost always those who are in this condition, and it is not easy to appreciate the value of a kind word to one in that state.

***I Thessalonians 5:15 See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men.***

It is God Who will manifest Himself as His people's avenger, and they should never take this spiritual responsibility upon themselves.

***II Thessalonians 1:6 Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you;***

Thus, there is no reason whatsoever that the people of God should ever render back again, either evil for evil or railing for railing. To do so betrays how Jesus said His called should conduct themselves in the world.

***Matthew 10:16 Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.***

*Matthew Poole's Commentary, Matt. 10:16*  
*harmless as doves.* Amongst the beasts of the field there is none more innocent than a sheep; amongst the birds of the air none more innocent than a dove; to both these our Lord compares his disciples.

The opposite of rendering evil for evil is pursuing good.

Jesus went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed by the devil, (Acts 10:38) and we should seek to do the same.

Ultimately, God has purposed Christians for good works, and it should be their primary aim, while living in this world, to pursue doing them.

***Ephesians 2:10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.***

***I Thessalonians 5:16-22 Rejoice evermore. <sup>17</sup> Pray without ceasing. <sup>18</sup> In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. <sup>19</sup> Quench not***

*the Spirit.* <sup>20</sup> *Despise not prophesyings.* <sup>21</sup> *Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.* <sup>22</sup> *Abstain from all appearance of evil.*

Though these imperatives are grouped together, they are meant to be carefully and thoughtfully considered individually.

*I Thessalonians 5:16 Rejoice evermore.*

No one in the history of the world has been given more reason to rejoice for the lives given to them by God than Christians. We are the most blessed of peoples, and therefore should constantly thank God, Who is both the source and origin of all our blessings.

Through belief in the Son, we have gained access to the joy, peace, and love of God's own Holy character. And though many of God's blessings given to us are intangible and reside in our hearts, still they are real and confirm His presence in our lives. The Lord is good beyond all measure, and none know this more than those He has saved and made His own.

*I Thessalonians 5:17 Pray without ceasing.*

If a man has a genuine relationship with the Lord, it will be proven in his prayer life.

He who prays unceasingly is aware of his great need for God in his life.

Barnes' Notes on the Bible, I Thess. 5:17

That Christian is in a bad state of mind who has suffered himself, by attention to worldly cares, or by light conversation, or by gaiety and vanity, or by reading an improper book, or by eating or drinking too much, or by late hours at night among the thoughtless and the vain, to be brought into such a condition that he cannot engage in prayer with proper feelings. There has been evil done to the soul if it is not prepared for communion with God at all times, and if it would not find pleasure in approaching his holy throne.

*I Thessalonians 5:18 In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.*

*For this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.* It is the will of God that those called to Him should remain thankful.

The opposite also of being thankful, is being unthankful. This condition, though rarely thought of as spiritually evil, is exactly that.

*II Timothy 3:2 For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,*

When men are therefore ungrateful, and especially so towards God, this reveals their fallen condition of being separated from Him.

It is also this condition of being unthankful that, the scripture reveals, results in darkened spiritual understanding.

*Romans 1:21 Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.*

*Barnes' Notes on the Bible, Rom. 1:21*

*Neither were thankful* - The obligation to be "thankful" to God for his mercies, for the goodness which we experience, is plain and obvious. Thus, we judge of favors received of our fellow-men. The apostle here clearly regards this unwillingness to render gratitude to God for his mercies as one of the causes of their subsequent corruption and idolatry. The reasons of this are the following.

(1) the effect of ingratitude is to render the heart hard and insensible.

(2) people seek to forget the Being to whom they are unwilling to exercise gratitude.

(3) to do this, they fix their affections on other things; and hence, the pagan expressed their gratitude not to God, but to the sun, and moon, and stars, etc., the mediums by which God bestows his favors upon people. And we may here learn that an unwillingness to thank God for his mercies is one of the most certain causes of alienation and hardness of heart.

Ultimately it is only when men respond with genuine thankfulness to the Lord, that reveals whether they are fully aware that the source of their every blessing is God.

***1 Thessalonians 5:19 Quench not the Spirit.***

Every person also in the Old Testament or New who truly possessed the Holy Spirit walked, spoke, and preached as if it was, spiritual fire driving them. The same is true today for those filled with God's Spirit. It is for this reason that the scripture reveals that men should not quench the Holy Spirit's working in their lives. By this it is meant to not put out or dampen the Spirit's workings in the soul.

The Bible also often reveals the Lord's own nature as that which is described as fire.

***Hebrews 12:29 For our God is a consuming fire.***

*Barnes' Notes on the Bible, Heb. 12:29*

*For our God is a consuming fire* - This is a further reason why we should serve God with profound reverence and unwavering fidelity. The quotation is made from Deuteronomy 4:24. "For the Lord thy God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God." The object of the apostle here seems to be, to show that there was the same reason for fearing the displeasure of God under the new dispensation which there was under the old. It was the same God who was served. There had been no change in his attributes, or in the principles of his government. He was no more the friend of sin now than he was then; and the same perfections of his nature which would then lead him to punish transgression would also lead him to do it now. His anger was really as terrible, and as much to be dreaded as it was at Mount Sinai; and the destruction which he would inflict on his foes would be as terrible now as it was then.

Fire is therefore often used to denote the presence of the Lord and, if necessary, His anger and judgment for sin. Lastly, Jesus Christ, in John's vision of the resurrected and ascended Son of God, possesses eyes as a flame of fire.

***Revelations 1:14 His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire;***

Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers, Rev. 1:14

*His eyes were as a flame of fire.*—Comp. Revelation 19:12; Daniel 10:6. The eyes of the Lord, which are in every place, beholding the evil and the good, are here described as

like unto fire, to express not merely indignation (He had looked once on the Jewish rulers in indignation) against evil, but determination to consume it; for our God is a consuming fire, purging away sin from those who forsake sin, and consuming in their sin those who refuse to be separated from it. (See Revelation 20:9; Daniel 7:9–10; Jude 1:7.)

By understanding that the Lord likens Himself to fire, emblematic also of the Holy Spirit, we should be able to recognize the great importance of Paul's command to the Thessalonians to quench not the Spirit, either in ourselves or others around us.

If a man then quenches the Spirit, he will do so, only to his own detriment.