

Keep Awake: 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

Introduction: No, the brethren in Thessalonica didn't need to worry about those who had fallen asleep, but that didn't mean they were given the green light to close theirs. They were to stay awake! The world takes offense at this message because the phrase is associated with holy living. Those who sleep (now in a different context) are those who take part in evil. They're not children of light but darkness. What about you? Are you awake or asleep?

Vs. 1-11: Wake Up!

- Children of Light:

- **Romans 13:11-13** "Besides this you know the time, that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed. The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy."
- **1 John 2:8** At the same time, it is a new commandment that I am writing to you, which is true in him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining.
- The whole thing is practical. Did Paul hear something that troubled him? Were they being pulled back into the darkness? Was he rounding out the point? It is a natural progression. It's been my experience that some struggle within any group. A local congregation may be healthy as a whole (good reputation), but that doesn't mean every branch is producing good fruit.
- We don't know when Jesus will appear. Now is the time to be sober-minded. Now is the time to exercise wisdom and think realistically. What's your spiritual plan?

Vs. 12-28: Look Inward & Outward

- Application (12-22):

- One characteristic of a child is that they're unaware. When they're babies to toddlers, it's adorable. It can be cute when they get a little older, but it begins to cross the line into frustration and annoyance. When you're an adult and live in "unawareness," it's flat-out off-putting and problematic in all relationships. I say this because we've got to move past constantly fixating on personal sins we're trying to master and move towards helping others. I'm speaking in general terms. 1-11 has to do with not falling asleep on yourselves. Vs. 12ff asks you to stay awake for others as well.
- Leaders: Here's a straightforward reminder: we have two brothers serving you. Continue to pray for them and support and encourage them and their wives. You may not agree with everything they choose for this congregation in the years to come, Lord willing. But remember, they love you and will significantly benefit from your encouragement. Will you remember to tell them so? Hug them. Send them a text message or email. Give them a shout. Love them.
 - When they admonish you (giving you instruction about correct behavior, teaching you), please respect where they're coming from. Don't disregard them. They're trying their

very best to help, not hinder. If you receive counsel from them, truly seek to put it to practice. Keep open communication.

- Be at peace: **Mark 9:50** Salt is good, but if the salt has lost its saltiness, how will you make it salty again? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another."
 - My niece & nephew's generation tells us not to be salty, but the Lord disagrees (cheesy joke, I know).
- Help: Yes, we all need help. A decent number of people at North Collin are going through different trials at different levels of maturity and knowledge. There's no way around it. Some here have within themselves wisdom greater than others. Running from this reality (and that's true of every local group) is to be puffed up. Paul gives specific instructions.
 - *Admonish the idle/disorderly/undisciplined.* Imagine receiving this letter. It more than likely had an application for someone. Are you one who can admonish? Here's a fun definition for you - "*to advise someone concerning the dangerous consequences of some happening or action - 'to warn, warning.'*" Don't you know that everyone loves to be admonished? Nope. Because so many times, they don't see what they're doing as dangerous. They don't like being corrected. They don't like the implication of "you're out of your depth and don't know what you're doing."
 - Are you disorderly/undisciplined? You know what's tricky about this - not everyone realizes this about themselves. I've had to be corrected. I hope I don't have to be again in my life, but I'm not holding my breath. However, I've also had to admonish others many times. Brothers who aren't mature, arrogant, and hard-headed.
 - On the other hand, I've had to deal with "soft sisters." Don't get me wrong; they're even hard-headed sisters and soft brothers. It's not fun having to be that guy. But, if you don't feel comfortable doing it, you've got to get out of preaching. Yet, take notice of how this seems to be directed to everyone! You don't see this often because we don't trust one another to handle it well. Or, to be fair, sometimes others aren't good at admonishing others. But here's the bottom line: it's needed, and we've got to figure out how to do this because it's required.
 - Paul will call for the brethren to avoid those who continue in idleness. So, this can turn into a problematic situation. It's not to be ignored, and it's not fun.
 - *Encourage the fainthearted.* Okay, this is the fun one.
 - Encourage/Comfort the fainthearted/discouraged/disheartened. This one is tricky because sometimes a fainthearted spirit results from idle living. Sometimes it's simply because of legitimate trials and tribulations. We need those with the wisdom to know the difference and how to do so, but it is required. Even when someone is suffering from poor decision-making, they need encouragement at times and admonishing other times. Then there's the wisdom of knowing how long to nurse wounds and when it's time to push others to move forward. But none of this takes away from the simplicity of the instruction. Admonish the idle and encourage the fainthearted.
 - Generally speaking, those who encourage and help others see the big picture in a tactful/appropriate manner. We're telling others not to lose hope and rid themselves of fear. God is in control and will make all things right in His own time and way.
 - *Help the weak.*

- Help/support weak people, but that weakness comes in different forms, and the context doesn't necessarily help me know which one. Weak physically? Weak as in sick? Weak as in conscience? Weak as in the "the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak"? Perhaps we should be ready to help them all, no? Does it matter?
- However, a key element is that we're putting others first. This is a crucial characteristic of Christ.
- *Be patient with them all.*
 - Honestly, this may come easier for some than others. Patience is something I continue to work on in ALL areas of my life: husband, father, brother, son-in-law, brother-in-law, minister - just as a child of God.
 - This applies to those who are idle, fainthearted, and weak. We cannot afford to lose our cool or prematurely conduct ourselves. We have to think things through, be patient, and act accordingly. Sometimes a lack of patience is due to youthfulness. Sometimes it comes from pride/anger. Sometimes it's the yin to the yang known as passion/conviction. That last one, in particular, is one I struggle with. It's the flip side of the coin. You love that Phinehas had a passion for God, but you don't want him chunking a spear at you. You love the commitment and James and John, but you don't want them calling down fire from heaven. Know what I mean?
 - All of this leads to the next instruction. I believe it's needed because of the practicality of it all - it can be challenging.
- Seek good: This applies to one another and everyone outside the body.
 - Getting back at others can happen in the most subtle ways, but it can be disastrous. Are we willing to help? How will we talk about one another?
- *Rejoice, pray, and give thanks*: I put these together in order because they need to be practiced together. While always in prayer, Christians need to be those who find the good in all circumstances. This is easy to hear when you're not in a trial. It's impossible to grow if we can't learn how. This has to do with our core beliefs. Do we trust God? Are we too invested in this world?
- Quench, despise, test, hold fast and abstain: The Spirit of God has been at work and still does so today. I'm not sure that I appreciate this passage, but when I consider what follows, I take away the idea of what was being revealed and gifted by the Spirit. The Spirit worked through Christians long ago in miraculous ways: prophecies, speaking in tongues, gifts, etc., and it seems that's what Paul has in mind.
 - However, it also had to be tested. Just because someone says they have a message from God doesn't make it so. Remember John's instruction: **1 John 4:1** *Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world.*