

## Lesson #5

### Pray and Trust

#### Trust The Process

##### **Main Passages:**

##### **1 Thessalonians 5:14-24**

*And we urge you, brothers and sisters, warn those who are idle and disruptive, encourage the disheartened, help the weak, be patient with everyone. <sup>15</sup> Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always strive to do what is good for each other and for everyone else. <sup>16</sup> Rejoice always, <sup>17</sup> pray continually, <sup>18</sup> give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. <sup>19</sup> Do not quench the Spirit. <sup>20</sup> Do not treat prophecies with contempt <sup>21</sup> but test them all; hold on to what is good, <sup>22</sup> reject every kind of evil. <sup>23</sup> 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. <sup>24</sup> The One who calls you is faithful, and He will do it.*

##### **Philippians 1:6**

*being confident of this, that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.*

##### **Hebrews 10:24–25**

*And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, <sup>25</sup> not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.*

##### **1 Corinthians 1:30**

*It is because of Him that you are in Christ Jesus, Who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption.*

##### **Big Idea:**

Discouraging seasons of life can lead us to the inner conversations in the locker room of our hearts; about God's purpose in what seems like a loss. In that moment when we are questioning whether or not God is working in us for His good pleasure, the Bible reminds us that we can trust the process. God has a plan, is in control, and desires for us to be victorious in Christ.

The Philadelphia 76ers have a team mantra "Trust the Process". This is rooted in a process where they seemingly lost games on purpose during the 2013-2015 season. All for the greater purpose of the future of the team. At first fans and players were besides themselves, but down the road the team caught on to the vision that was being played out. Then the fans and the whole organization made this the banner of their team, "Trust the Process".

## **Outline:**

**1<sup>st</sup> Teaching Point:** We “trust the process.”

- Philippians 1:6

**2<sup>nd</sup> Teaching Point:** We remember His plan.

- 1 Corinthians 1:30

**3<sup>rd</sup> Teaching Point:** We pray during the process.

- 1 Thessalonians 5:14-24

**4<sup>th</sup> Teaching Point:** We do it as a team.

- Hebrews 10:24-25

## **Lesson:**

**1. We “trust the process.”**

**Philippians 1:6**

*...confident of this, that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.*

- Trusting the process means that in both my best efforts and my worst failures in working out my salvation, I can be assured that it is God Who works in me, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.
- God has a plan to work all things, including the “losses”, for His glory and our victory in Christ.
- God’s sovereign plan trumps our momentary sight. We just need to sync up to His vision and plan for our life.

**2. We remember His plan.**

**1 Corinthians 1:30**

*It is because of Him that you are in Christ Jesus, Who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption.*

- Paul tells us that Jesus became to us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, meaning that He has already accomplished for us what the process is working in us.
- Our heads can be held high in every season because our final outcome is not in question despite how the present may appear. To “trust the process” is more than an unfulfilled phrase; it’s an unshakable promise.
- Trusting in God and His power, means we need to learn and remember what Christ has done for us.

**3. We pray during the process.**

**1 Thessalonians 5:14-24**

*And we urge you, brothers and sisters, warn those who are idle and disruptive, encourage the disheartened, help the weak, be patient with everyone. <sup>15</sup> Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always strive to do what is good for each other and for everyone else. <sup>16</sup> Rejoice always, <sup>17</sup> pray continually, <sup>18</sup> give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God’s will for*

*you in Christ Jesus. <sup>19</sup> Do not quench the Spirit. <sup>20</sup> Do not treat prophecies with contempt <sup>21</sup> but test them all; hold on to what is good, <sup>22</sup> reject every kind of evil. <sup>23</sup> 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. <sup>24</sup> The One Who calls you is faithful, and He will do it.*

- God's will for us in the “process” is that we would continually speak to Him.
- God made communication such a large part of who we are as humans, we should likewise make it a large part of our faith.
- Prayer is the best practical way to sync up with God's plan for us, especially when it is hard to remember due to our current circumstances.
- Prayer births confidence in our faith. It allows us to not be in the driving seat but rather submit our thoughts, fears, and doubts before God Who is in charge of all things.
- Praying continually is what God wills for us to do during all seasons of our life.
- It is part of the process. Without it we can't understand God's direction for us.

#### **4. We do it as a team.**

##### **Hebrews 10:24–25**

*And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, <sup>25</sup> not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.*

- We need to take the days we trust the process and pour into those who are in a tough season.
- If we are in sync with God's redemptive plan, we are to lovingly remind our brothers and sisters of God's final plan for us.
- We have to surround ourselves with men and women who are on the same “game plan” as the one God has for us. If we are not surrounded by fellow believers and pursuing faith together, we will for sure feel defeated, and alone in a world that doesn't understand God's “process” for us.
- God encourages us to meet together. In doing so, we are to pray and lift one another up, so that we can stand strong in the difficulty of knowing that God is in control, but the world is still broken until Christ returns.

##### **Small Group Discussion Questions:**

1. How does understanding God's pursuit and plan for redemption affect you?
2. To what or to whom did you look for hope and love in past seasons of difficulty?
3. To what or to whom did you place your trust?
4. What are practical ways for us as believers to identify when we are not trusting in God's will and plan for our lives?
5. Does Jesus ever have to sit in the weight of trusting the Father's plan, over His temporary desires? If so, how did He respond?
6. What is something you can do this week, that can help root you into God's will for



your life in Christ?

**Small Group Prayer Suggestions:**

1. Our Anxieties (Luke 12:25-26)

Sovereign God, I confess that my life, used to seem secure and much more certain and now feels fragile and vulnerable. And yet my worries are foolish; they are wasted time and do nothing to change the situation or glorify You.

They only rob me of the rest that comes from trusting in You, Father. So, I acknowledge my helplessness in this situation, and instead of trusting in myself, I am coming to You in faith. You know and control all things so I will trust You my faithful Father with my life and all of my other concerns. In Jesus name, I pray. Amen.

2. Trusting the God Who is near. (Isaiah 41:10)

Powerful God, You repeatedly command Your people not to fear, and You always present Yourself as the solution to my fear. When bad news comes, my heart can grow crippled and doubtful with fear. Please help me to trust and better see Your strength and rest in Your presence, no matter the hardship that comes.

You are not a God who is far away. Your nearness was demonstrated when You sent Jesus to earth, and You continue to be present with me today through Your Holy Spirit Who is in me. Unlike the rest of the world that trembles at the sound of bad news, let me be a witness as my heart trusts in the God Who is with me. In the name of Jesus, I pray. Amen.

3. Praising our trustworthy God (Psalm 28:7)

God, our strength and shield, You have power over every storm. You are on Your throne and we rejoice in You. In the midst of so much uncertainty across our world, our faith in Christ holds us. We will trust the One Who died and defeated death by His resurrection. In dark storms, we have bright hope.

Our future is secure in Christ Who loves us. So, with thankfulness we sing our songs of praise, declaring our joy and our hope found in Christ alone! In the beautiful name of Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen!

## Additional Commentary: Philippians 1:6<sup>1</sup>

**1:6** The second characteristic of Paul’s thanksgiving for the Philippian believers was that he prayed with confidence. That confidence was based on the working of God in their midst, not in his own ability or persuasiveness. Two matters emerge as significant emphases: the nature of the work in the Philippians and the time orientation involved.

God began the work in the church. Obviously if he starts something, it will reach completion. Paul easily moved between the tensions of human agency and divine initiative, accepting both in a natural way. The Philippians had a partnership with Paul, but God actually worked it in them. Both the contrasts between these two realities and Paul’s comfort with each deserve attention.

What work had God begun? Referring to the immediate context only, some interpreters prefer to explain it as the support the church gave to Paul. They say Paul meant the “sharing in the gospel.”<sup>12</sup> The rule of context always guides the interpreter, but it is conceivable that Paul may have drawn on the wider context of Christian experience as well. The experience of God’s grace always lay under the surface of Paul’s words. Most likely that is true here since a reference to the support seems awkward.<sup>13</sup> Further, how does the reference to the “day of Christ” relate to their completion of the gift? Did Paul expect them to continue supporting him until the second coming?

Paul had a general Christian characteristic in mind when he made this statement. Even those who interpret the passage as referring to the specific financial gift normally generalize it somewhat. They refer to the spirit which produced the gift or the opportunity and responsibility of supporting the gospel.<sup>14</sup> It is more likely, however, that Paul saw the Philippians’ generosity as evidence of the grace of God in their lives, and in this text he spoke to that grace. In 2 Cor 8:7, a passage that urged the Corinthians to be like the Philippians in giving, Paul urged the development of the grace of giving. Giving evidenced the maturity of their thought and action. The good work in 1:6 refers to what lay behind their generosity, the calling and Christian maturity of the church.

Since Paul spoke of the work beginning and ending, that he had only their initial salvation experience in mind is unlikely. He also had in mind an ongoing process of growth in the Christian’s life (Phil 2:12). The whole salvation process, particularly the progressive element, is what Paul meant here. Since God began a work of Christian growth, evidenced by their giving, he would complete that growth.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Taken from: Richard R. Melick, *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, vol. 32, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1991), 57–59.

<sup>12</sup> So G. Hawthorne, *Philippians*, WBC (Waco, Tex.: Word, 1983), 21.

<sup>13</sup> First, this would be better suited to an articular expression in Greek, like “the good work,” i.e., the previously mentioned participation in the gospel. The text, however, says simply “good work,” leaving the precise nature of that work to the reader’s understanding. Second, it is difficult to see how the work of the gift to Paul could have been unfinished, and it is equally difficult to know what would have completed it. Paul never approached his congregations with the expectation of continued support. He did just the opposite. He seemed surprised when they sent a gift for him. If each gift were a complete act, which seems likely, what was left undone?

<sup>14</sup> Hawthorne says, “Paul was certain that the Philippians would never waiver in their generosity, would never cease sharing their good gifts to help spread the gospel, until the Parousia” (21). He does say that other interpretations can “be right by extension” (22).

<sup>15</sup> This suits the need of some progressive element in this passage, as well as the fact that for Paul giving is one aspect of the Christian life which measures growth (2 Cor 8:1–7). Commentators sometimes draw attention to the fact that these words recall the LXX translation of creation. There are some parallels in Gen 1, 2. They point out the allusion to God’s work in the beginning and Paul’s commitment

Paul expressed the confidence that the growth would take place “until the day of Christ Jesus.” He glanced backward to their salvation and forward to the completion of their character when the Lord returns. No doubt the reference to the “day of Christ Jesus” is the “day of the Lord” so common in the Old Testament (Joel 2:1; Amos 5:20). The question is why the end times were included at this point. Although Paul could have thought in terms of the imminent coming of the Lord, he also was more aware of a delay than earlier in his ministry.<sup>16</sup> Paul’s use of the phrase “until the day” actually called to mind the consummation of the present age. It was Paul’s way of making two emphases: sanctification was an ongoing process and the process would continue to the end of the age. At that time the believers would be complete in character. They needed not to fear the judgment which characterized that day.<sup>17</sup>

Some scholars take the confidence to be directed to the church at large, rather than to individuals within the church.<sup>18</sup> The plural “you” makes the text uncertain, and it could have been addressed to the church collectively. On the other hand, the distributive plural commonly occurs in the epistles. It seems better here. Paul’s thankfulness came with the confidence that God would work in the individual Christians until the day of Christ. This confidence occurred for two reasons. First, Paul was confident that what God began God would complete, and his words came from a deep conviction that God worked in them. Second, Paul saw the manifestations of their right relationship with God. Their gift evidenced their Christian maturity. Since God worked in them and they responded, Paul’s confidence was justified.

#### **Additional Commentary: 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18<sup>2</sup>**

**5:16** The next group of exhortations consists of three brief imperatives that are very general in character. The logic that links them to one another and to the surrounding paraenesis is somewhat obscure and in fact each could be treated independently. Wanamaker unites the three commands by categorizing them as “religious duties,” observing that each of the three commands “either has its source in God ... or is directed toward God.”<sup>129</sup> Best observes a link between vv. 16–18 and the preceding paraenesis. In his estimate vv. 12–15 concern behavior toward others, while vv. 16–18 address the inner life of each believer. Since the inner life (vv.

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to the truth that God will consummate it. The allusion may be significant (see R. Martin, *Philippians*, NCB [London: Oliphants, 1976], 66, and Hawthorne, 21); but the linguistic correspondence is not as significant as the conceptual correspondence (the work was finished in creation), the correspondence with Genesis is incomplete, and Paul used the expression of “beginning and completion” elsewhere (2 Cor 7:1; Gal 3:3). See M. Silva, *Philippians*, WEC (Chicago: Moody, 1988), 51–52. The parallel to Genesis is vague and hardly provides the basis for understanding. It may, at best, recall the fact that God begins and ends the process.

<sup>16</sup> He wrote of a delay in the Lord’s return as early as 2 Thess 2:1–12, so by the time of the writing of Philippians this delay had been reinforced in his mind.

<sup>17</sup> A similar time orientation occurs in Phil 1:10–11 where Paul prayed that they would be filled with the fruit of righteousness at the day of Christ. Paul’s use of the preposition ἄχρι parallels the use of εἰς in 1:10.

<sup>18</sup> Martin says, “The Philippian church will be preserved to the end time” (65).

<sup>2</sup> Taken from: D. Michael Martin, [1, 2 Thessalonians](#), vol. 33, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1995), 180–182.

<sup>129</sup> Wanamaker, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 199.

16–18) shapes the outer attitudes (vv. 12–15), the two passages are supportive of each other.<sup>130</sup>

Rejoicing, praying, and giving thanks, however, were not exclusively personal spiritual experiences. They were just as much, if not more so, public expressions characteristic of the church assembled. As a result, distinctions between the internal and external practice of religion seems rather unlikely. It is more defensible to argue that vv. 16–18 present activities directed toward God, whereas vv. 12–15 and vv. 19–22 deal with actions and attitudes toward others.<sup>131</sup> But such an emphasis still neglects the corporate nature of the practices commended in vv. 16–18 and also results in vv. 16–18 interrupting the flow of commands in vv. 12–15 and vv. 19–22 that deal with attitudes and actions of the brethren toward others (primarily other Christians).

Once taken out of the realm of private expressions of faith and recognized as community activities, these commands may be seen as expressions of a common faith. Paul was commending joyful worship directed toward the one true God to whom the church owed ceaseless thanks. Grumbling toward leaders (cf. vv. 12–13), impatience with the immature (v. 14), and anger toward those who do wrong (v. 15) must not tarnish the fellowship of the congregation (cf. 1 Cor 11:17–19). The church must not let its problems create an atmosphere of gloom or pessimism. Rather, an optimistic atmosphere of joy, thanks, and praise ought to characterize the assembly when believers gather (cf. 1 Cor 14:15–17; Eph 5:19–20; Col 3:16–17).

Continuity is emphasized with each of the imperatives. “Be joyful” (*chairete*), “pray” (*proseuchesthe*), and “give thanks” (*eucharisteite*) are all present tense, implying continuous or recurring activities. “Always,” “continually,” and “in all circumstances” strengthen the message that these actions should consistently characterize the Christian life.

The frequent references in Paul’s letters indicate that joy is a characteristic of a healthy Christian life.<sup>132</sup> Joy is produced by the work of the Spirit in the believer (Gal 5:22). But Christian joy is not self-centered. The believer rejoices in the good fortune of others (Rom 12:15) and when others demonstrate obedience in the Lord (Rom 16:19; 1 Cor 13:6; 2 Cor 7:9; 13:9; Phil 4:10). The presence of good Christian company is a source of joy (1 Cor 16:17; Phil 2:28), as is the believer’s future hope in the Lord (Rom 12:12). So even in the midst of personal tribulations Paul could find cause for joy (2 Cor 6:10; cf. 1:6). And Paul could rejoice in the spread of the gospel, even when it involved the personal pain of self-sacrifice (Phil 1:18; 2:17–18; cf. 2:19–20; 3:6).

**5:17** The word chosen for “prayer” (*proseuchomai*) is a general one that implies a worshipful approach to God (cf. Rom 8:26). Paul encouraged his churches to make prayer a part of their personal spiritual discipline (Rom 12:12; Phil 4:6). He and his coworkers prayed together regularly (1:2; 2 Thess 1:11; Rom 1:10) and valued the prayers of the church on their

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<sup>130</sup> Best, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 234.

<sup>131</sup> See the following discussion; vv. 19–22 deal with the church’s attitude toward prophets and their teachings delivered in the assembly; cf. 1 Cor 14:26, 29.

<sup>132</sup> Paul encouraged or celebrated Christian joy dozens of times in his letters and for a wide range of reasons. The greatest concentration of references to joy or rejoicing is found in Philipians, written while Paul was under arrest.



behalf (5:25; cf. 2 Cor 1:11, where “prayers” are petitions, *deēsei*). But prayer was also a feature of the public worship of the assembly. Paul linked public prayer with prophecy in his discussion of propriety in worship in 1 Cor 11:4 and with the public exercise of gifts and giving thanks in the assembly (1 Cor 14:15–17). Clearly, Paul expected Christians both privately and in the public assembly to approach God with praise, intercessions, requests, and thanksgiving.

**5:18** “Give thanks” translates the same verb (*eucharisteō*) Paul used when he told the Thessalonians that he thanked God for them and for their faith (1:2; 2:13). His thanksgiving for the church was directed to God both for what God had done (cf. Col 1:12–14) and in response to the faith and godly actions of the Thessalonians (2 Thess 1:3; 2:13–15).<sup>133</sup> Paul’s prayers of thanks for his churches were frequently expressed in his letters (not just in private devotion) and were clearly intended as public affirmations encouraging continued praiseworthy behavior. Public thanksgivings also serve as an example of gratitude toward others, which all Christians should follow, for ingratitude is characteristic of ungodliness (Rom 1:27). In addition, Paul’s public expressions of thanks showed his genuine appreciation for the churches and strengthened the bonds between them (Rom 1:8; 1 Cor 1:4; Phil 1:3; cf. Phlm 4–5).

“In all circumstances” translates a phrase that could just as well mean “at all times.”<sup>134</sup> But the difference in meaning is not great, and Paul may have chosen an ambiguous phrase to cover both time and circumstance (cf. Eph 5:20, “give thanks always and for everything,” RSV) Paul never instructed the church to thank God for evil events but to thank God that even in evil times and circumstances our hope remains, and God continues his work in our lives (Rom 8:28).

The second half of v. 18 may look forward to vv. 19–22. But the “for” more likely connects the clause with what precedes in vv. 16–18a. The identical statement “this is the will of God” also occurs at the beginning of the paraenetic section of the letter (see the discussion on 4:3). Thus at the beginning and near the end of these two chapters Paul reminded his readers that the commands given are not of human origin but divine.

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<sup>133</sup> For an example of thanks directed to individuals see Rom 16:3–4.

<sup>134</sup> Wanamaker argues that this “temporal understanding is to be slightly favored” (*1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 200).