

Season 6, Episode 7: Real Holiness (5:1-11)

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Sarah: The season is sponsored by Crossway. Today I'm sharing a book called A Better Encouragement: Trading Self Help With True Hope. It's a study on the theme of encouragement through Scripture by Lindsay Carson. As she journeys through Scripture, she exposes the folly of the self help industry and points to the better encouragement we have in the Gospel and what it looks like to root our hearts in it. In line with Paul's exploitation to the thessalonians to keep encouraging one another. The last few chapters are particularly helpful on what it looks like to practically encourage one another with the Gospel and the precious future hopes of Christ's return, as well as what it looks like to foster a culture of biblical encouragement in our churches. Grab a copy wherever you get your books.

Felicity: Welcome to Two Sisters and a cup of tea. My name is Felicity and I'm here in the States and I'm with my sister Sarah. She's in the UK and this episode we're going to be continuing in first, thessalonians talking about Jesus return as we hit chapter five of this letter. Good to see Sarah. Any joy in the cup today?

Sarah: And just a normal cup of tea, but I've got with it, I've got a morning coffee biscuit. Did you know that there were biscuits called morning coffee biscuits?

Felicity: No. Do they taste like coffee?

Sarah: They're very plain. No, I think they're to go with your coffee. But I was thinking, well, why can't I put it with my tea? So I put it with my tea. Yeah.

Felicity: Is there such thing as a morning tea biscuit?

Sarah: Well, I know I thought a bit prejudiced that there's not a morning tea biscuit, but there is a morning coffee one. What have you got?

Felicity: Just the usual, very normal cup of tea. And to be honest, I'm struggling for biscuits. Nothing of great adventure to report there. Still on the hunt for a good one.

Sarah: That's all right. Whatever we're drinking is matt.

Felicity: I see. Exactly. So, Sarah, while we are sipping our very ordinary tea, but having delightful times together, let us talk about this, the struggle with daily quiet times. And I think both of us can empathize with this big time. The heart is willing, the flesh is weak. It's a constant battle. What's some encouragement for our hearts in this? How do we battle to get up and read our Bibles?

Sarah: I think I've been thinking about this particularly this week. I've been thinking about it as I look back on. We've been in London for a year now to this week, and my husband asked me what I was particularly thankful for, and my first thing was to say, actually, the daily deposits of time with the Lord that have meant that we're keeping going and we're standing firm on this tree a year on. And genuinely, that is what I'm super thankful for. And it's not that it hasn't been a struggle to get up every day and it's not that it isn't a battle with my heart to want to do it, because it is because it's hard to get up early, isn't it? But seeing the fruit of just that little deposit day by day of recalibrating my heart with the truth of God's word has meant that a year on, that's the thing I'm most thankful for. So I guess I just take that as an encouragement. The battle is real, the struggle is there, but keep pressing on because whilst it's not going to be life changing in those moments that you're doing it, the deposits mount up.

Felicity: I love that.

Sarah: I love that.

Felicity: So as you look back, you see the joy of the battle, which is really encouraging because it's not that if you're not getting up in the morning with a big smile on your face at the thought of reading your Bible, then that's it, it's all over. But actually the reward of it is long term. I would echo that for sure. And I think trusting it comes back to that same thing, doesn't it? Trusting that God is working through his words. So as we do get up and get into it and pray and enjoy time with Him, he is doing a work in us. And often we're not the

people who are going to see that in ourselves. I think often it's our nearest and dearest who might notice more.

Sarah: Yeah. And also it's asking them to encourage you in that. Because actually David said, oh yeah, I've really seen that this year. And I was like, oh, tell me more often. It was really great to hear from him. I've really seen this resolute kind of you're not messing around like this is what your first thing of the day looks like. So yeah. Okay, let's read to read. Lisi, why don't you read for us at the beginning of chapter five?

Felicity: Yes, chapter five, verse one through to eleven. Now, brothers and sisters, about times and dates we do not need to write to you. For you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night, 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. But you, brothers and sisters, are not in darkness, so that this day should surprise you like a thief. You are all children of the light and children of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness. So then let us not be like others who are asleep, but let us be awake and sober. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night. 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. For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath, but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. He died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with Him. Therefore encourage one another and build each other up just as in fact you are doing.

Sarah: Thank you, Felicity. So we carry on with our Bible handling tools nearing the end, actually, as we near the end of the letter. But Felicity, let's think a little bit about the repetition tool. We've talked about this kind of in passing over the season as well, because I think it's something we use a lot. Talk to us about it and why it's so valuable.

Felicity: I love this one because it really is as straightforward as it sounds like literally reading slowly and spotting things that are repeated and that is often words, but also it can be ideas as well, kind of. So I think this in this passage, even just from a first reading, you would get the repetition of night and day, light and darkness. And as we hear that, we then think, okay, that is something that Paul, whoever's writing the author of the bit of the Bible we're in, they want us to take note of that thing. And we do that when we're talking and when we're writing. We repeat things that we think are important and that's what Bible writers do as well. So it's a really helpful first step. It's one of the first things I do, actually when we were with Andrew last week's, talking about the structure being the first thing I go often, structure and then repetition. And I think that kind of gives you a big picture idea of what the author is saying. So just one that is wide open to different colored.

Sarah: Absolutely crack out those colors. But it does link to the structure, doesn't it? In the sense that we've got in verse 18. So the verse of the last week's passage, we got therefore encouraged one another. And at the end of this week's passage you got therefore encouraged one another. And so we've got that repetition kind of helping us to see the structure as well, haven't we?

Felicity: Yes, absolutely. Yeah. Love that. So it then helps us to see the big ideas as well that are being parceled up and it helps you.

Sarah: To see them see the tone as well. Linking in, isn't it?

Felicity: All linking in, isn't it? As if they intended it as God intended it to be. I love it, but let's get into what is actually being talked about here. I think verse two, you know very well that the day of the Lord will come. So he has been teaching them on this before, I imagine when he was there in person, but also in this letter. So it's not that this is like new information, but the fact that he then does keep talking about it, reminding us and literally letting us know that we do need to be reminded about the reality of Jesus's return. I think that's just a really helpful starting point.

Sarah: Yeah, totally. And it's not only the realities, it's that it has implications that actually the information that he shared last time leads to action, leads to changed minds and changed beliefs on how am I going to act and how am I going to live in life. That doesn't it? And that's what he's kind of going on to kind of share in this part.

Felicity: Yes, absolutely. And the reality being in verse three, we get this kind of contrast only people are saying peace and safety and then destruction will come upon them. And there's a suddenness and immediately when Jesus does come back, it's not that there's

going to be a kind of gentle intro like this is it? And so those who are saying peace and safety, which was basically everyone who's not trusting in Jesus and actually be ready, that's the thing, isn't it? Be ready because this is what's coming. But then I love that as he gets into the next chunks of verses through four, through to eleven, be ready. Not by some kind of just, I don't know, mystery knowledge, but actually because you're people of the light, you're ready, you're primed in this.

Sarah: Yes. It's kind of encouraging them to live out who they already are in Christ, aren't they? You are already in the light. You are children of the day, so live in light with that identity because on the last day, that's who you still will be and that's who you're striving to be. So I think as we're getting more and more into this letter and seeing the link, we're starting to see more and more the links between holiness and Jesus's return, aren't we? Yeah. Which I think at the beginning I thought, oh, I'm not really sure how it's all connecting, but I'm starting to see the why it's so important.

Felicity: Yeah. And I think that's one of the things, isn't it, that I think in our thinking, when we think about holiness, if I think about before really getting into one, thessalonians holiness was almost a separate box. Like, here I am called to Christ, turning and trusting. And then oh, yeah. Now, what is it to be a Christian? Live out this holy life, which is all true, but actually, I think in this letter, pause brings them closer together, that as we live out the holy life, so we are able to keep going and be standing on the last day. And the holiness is not a separate thing, it's actually a means by which we are able to keep going because it's all part of living out who we are in the light. It's almost cyclical, isn't it? It all feeds each other as we see this return. So we want to be holy and as we keep being holy, so we are able to be there at the last day, but all through the grace of God yeah.

Sarah: Which is so important, isn't it? So in verse or is it in verse? Oh, no, I've lost it in verse nine. It's in verse nine. Where for God did not appoint us to suffer wrath, but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. And just remembering all the striving, you know, he's kind of calling them to be holy and to be to live out their identity as those called to be part of the day, part of the light, and not to be part of the night. Drunkenness and that, but he's doing it from the foundation of you've received salvation. You've received everything that you need for this. And that's just really crucial, isn't it? To keep remember, because I know the inclination of my heart is always going to strive, strive, strive, do, do. And again, it's just remembering it's been done, it's been done, it's been received. And that's your basis for then seeking to be holy and strive to do more and more of what he was saying.

Felicity: Yeah. And it kind of takes us back to the prayers, doesn't it? Sort of may God himself do this in us.

Sarah: So again, the implication of the application is here for us already, therefore encourage one another and build one other up with these words. What does this encouragement look like? Let's going to drill into that a bit more. Can it involve challenge as well? What does encouragement really look like?

Felicity: I think verse eight is actually really helpful on this, but since we belong to the day, let us be sober, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, in the hope of salvation as a helmet. And there's kind of even that phrase, let us be sober, putting on faith. There is a challenge in that, isn't there? Like, come back to who you are. Your people who have turned to the living true God, that's who you are. Are you, are you being who you are? I think that's the challenge for me is remember who you are. Am I behaving in such a way that am I sober in it? Am I clear thinking as to who I am? And in that then putting on faith. So there's a deliberate action there, isn't it? The encouragement, I think, is, this is who we are. You are able to live in faith in this way, you are able to not in a kind of like do better, but actually this is what it is to be us. And that's encouraging. I think that's encouraging. What do you think?

Sarah: Yeah, definitely. It's wanting a teachable heart. It's always wanting a teachable heart that's going to receive the news of our salvation again and again and receive people's encouragement to keep striving, to keep urging us to live more and more for Jesus who's coming back, isn't it? And so when we hear people's encouragement or when we hear people's challenge, we hear that in love and we hear that because they're really concerned that we do keep going until about the final day and that we do live out our calling to be

children of the light and not as a darkness. I think for me, then, therefore it's praying, Lord, give me a heart. That's really teachable that's really kind of easily wanting to be edified by others, wanting to be listening to people's encouragement to keep going.

Felicity: Yeah, I think that's really helpful and to then accept that that encouragement might be a bit of a challenge. On holiness am I living out this light of life, this life of life, this life of light in order that I would keep going. And so it's okay. And it's actually welcome for someone to say to me, are you holy in that area? Because that's going to impede your keeping goingness if you're not.

Sarah: And we all need that encouragement, don't we? Because actually, without encouragement, without kind of people spurring us on one another, sparing one another on in our day to day living, then we're more inclined to just seek off the world, don't we? And therefore less able to have our eyes fixed on Jesus and less able to remember him coming back at any moment. So we all need this, but we need people on the ground in our local church, families side by side, living with us to be able to encourage us well, I think so true.

Felicity: And that's a real challenge to me, I think, as I think about how to love people well and laying myself open to being loved well as well, which is kind of what you're saying in the teachable heart, isn't it? But, yeah, I feel like it almost sort of just shapes our view on encouragement a little differently. I feel like there's a bit more meatiness to it or grit to it.

Sarah: Than big time, because the purpose is eternity, isn't it? Which is huge, isn't it? But I think it gives a real depth to what we're seeking to do as we seek to send that text to someone, as we seek to send them a voicemail, as we seek to give them a call or meet up for a coffee and just share a word of scripture with someone. Actually praying that the Lord would help us to encourage with eternity in view is a really valuable thing to do, isn't it? And that won't be in vain. That is a good and helpful way of living this out, I think.

Felicity: Yeah. And one that we definitely need to pray for. You want to pray for us in this?

Sarah: Absolutely. Our father. We thank you. We thank you for this word. We thank you for the reminder that Jesus will come back and that he will come back at a time we're at least expecting. Father, we pray, please, would you help us to be ready? Would you help us to be ready for that day? Would you help us to live as children of the light, children of the day and Lord, would you help us as sisters in Christ, sisters in our church families we pray. Would you help us to be those who seek to encourage one another who seek to encourage one another with eternity and view, lord, how we need your help in that to keep our eyes fixed on this bigger and most glorious picture and story that we're living for. Please help us to be those who are great encouragers of others to keep living. For this hope we pray. Amen.

Felicity: Amen. Thank you, Sarah. Do sign up to our monthly newsletter where actually we seek to encourage so you'll receive nuggets of encouragement link to what we're studying each season. We would love to connect you with you in that way. It's just once a month it lands in your inbox, hopefully bringing joy and encouragement. The link to it is in the show notes, so do sign up if you haven't already. And this has been an encouragement for sure, Sarah, being in this.

Sarah: It absolutely has, isn't it? It's really valuable. Just go and open it with someone in your church family. Just do it. Absolutely. We'll be praying on for people to be encouraging one another in their local communities as we go from here.

Felicity: And we will see you next time as we approach the end of the letter. Not quite, but yeah, I know. I say approach.

Sarah: I know.

Felicity: Yeah. All right, see you next time.

Sarah: Bye. Bye. Bye. We're thankful for Crossway sponsoring this episode.