

Christian Living 2
1 Thessalonians 5:19—28

Paul continues with practical advice and admonitions for the Thessalonians to live lives pleasing to the Lord. We are to uphold faithful spiritual leaders (those who faithfully and unashamedly uphold the Grace message) and be at peace with each other. In our personal lives we are to always rejoice, always pray and always give thanks. These are things every believer should be doing at all times. Imagine a world where all believers were able to perfectly carry out these three little instructions! It seems the more a believer is overcome by the knowledge of God's great love, the more he or she will respond to that love with thanksgiving, prayer and rejoicing. Most people seem to be naturally drawn to the opposite of these attributes. Instead of rejoicing, they are disheartened and spiritless. Instead of praying, they become self-reliant. Instead of having an attitude of thanksgiving they condemn, judge and find fault with everything and everyone. Obviously, it's much more natural for us to be negative rather than positive. We need to realize it's not about cleaning up the old nature to make it look good but to put it to death, allowing God to take control of our lives so that we will be able to please Him.

Quench not the Spirit (verse 19)

The Holy Spirit dwells in every believer (Romans 8:9), acts as a seal (Ephesians 1:13; 4:30), makes intercession for us (Romans 8:26), makes it possible for us to walk pleasing to God (Galatians 5:16—25) and reveals God's Word to us (1 Corinthians 2:9—12). To quench is to extinguish, as in putting out a fire. When we quench the Holy Spirit we are smothering Him thus making Him ineffective in our lives. We quench the Spirit when we allow the old nature to take over so as to please self. When we do this we are walking according to the flesh. When we read God's Word we do not hearken to the truths it contains. Ephesians 6:16 shows how we can quench the fiery darts of the wicked one by putting on the armor of God, but instead, we often quench the work of the Holy Spirit in our life thus allowing Satan to accomplish his work in trying to obstruct God.

Despise not the prophesying (verse 20)

Why would Paul speak of prophesying in this Age of Grace? Because when I Thessalonians was written the sign gifts had not yet passed away. Sign gifts were given to Israel as confirmation that God was speaking to them (1 Corinthians 1:22). The first use of signs came at the hands of Moses when he was trying to convince Pharaoh to let Israel go into the wilderness to worship God (Exodus 7:3—5). These signs proved the message came from God. These confirmations of God's message continued with Joshua (sun stood still. Joshua 10:12—14), Elijah (famine for 3.5-years. 1 Kings 17, 18), Gideon (fleece. Judges 6:36—40), Jesus (many miracles, signs and wonders. John 20:30) and Peter (healings, raising from the dead. Acts 5:15; 9:36—40). Israel was still looking for signs to prove the message was authentic in Jesus' day (Matthew 12:38; John 6:30). Sign miracles were also performed by Paul to confirm to Israel that God was now speaking through him. If he came to them announcing a new revelation from God (the Mystery) without any signs, Peter and the rest of the Hebrew church would have soundly rejected him as a heretic.

Paul says that these sign gifts were going to fade away (1 Corinthians 13:8—10). God originally spoke to mankind through the prophets, before the completion of the Bible. He would speak to the prophet and the prophet would speak to the people. Once Scripture was complete, God said everything He wanted to say. With His full revelation having been complete, these sign gifts and baptisms faded away. (Ephesians 1:10 note: this Dispensation of Grace sums up all things in Christ. There is nothing more to be revealed to mankind about His future plans.) (Colossians 1:25 note: this verse can be understood to be saying that Paul was made a minister of the Dispensation of the Mystery and thus filled fully (completed—Strong's G4444 pleroo) the Word of God.)

Prove all things (verse 21)

The only way that we are able to prove all things today is by Scripture. When someone preaches something, we need to go back to Scripture to see if it stands the test. If someone says that God spoke to them we test it by Scripture. Claiming extra-biblical revelation from God is contrary to Paul's teachings. God has told us everything we need to know to live a life pleasing to Him. From God's word we know that it is God's will for us to be filled with the knowledge of His will so we will walk in a worthy manner (Colossians 1:9—10). His will is contained in Scripture, specifically Paul's 13 epistles. Ephesians 1:9 also states that He made known to us His will, again through His Word. We can know God's will from Scripture so there is no reason to wait for Him to send you a special message. His will for us is that we walk in a sanctified manner, in the power of the Holy Spirit (1 Thessalonians 4:3; Galatians 5:16). Believers, in general, desire to have a personal experience with God rather than a true knowledge of Him through Scripture and walking a sanctified life. People are more concerned about temporal decisions than they are about learning about Christ and walking in obedience to Him.

Abstain from all appearance of evil (verse 22)

Not only are we to stay away from evil, but we are also to stay away from even the appearance of evil. God wants us to live pure and holy lives that will not tarnish Christ's name. We need to do this as a testimony to unbelievers so that we give them no reason to reject Christ. We also need to be role models for other believers. Both believers and unbelievers are watching and critiquing what we do. We can also cause a weaker Christian brother to stumble if we do something he may think is a sin (1 Corinthians 8:9).

God is faithful (verses 23—24)

As Paul closes, he leaves the Thessalonians with the hope (confident expectation) that God will carry them into eternity no matter what they are going through on this earth. Their future is assured. God has already sanctified them when they believed as seen in the Corinthian church (1 Corinthians 1:2; 6:11). God will also ultimately sanctify them (and us) when they (we) are brought before the Father after the Rapture of the Church. Although the Father sees us as without sin now, we won't actually experience that freedom until the Rapture when we will be given our new body and completely purged of all sinful urges. Notice that Paul says our spirit, soul and body will be preserved blameless (1 Corinthians 1:8—9; Ephesians 1:4; Colossians 1:22). We will finally have attained perfection, in Christ.

God will demonstrate His faithfulness at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is faithful because He will do what He said He would do. This is not the Day of the Lord. The Day of the Lord is prophesied in the Old Testament and points to the time when God takes control of the earth and give Israel her promised land (Ezekiel 20:33—44). However, Paul speaks of another day when he says we are blameless in the Day of our Lord Jesus. This Day is about the Body of Christ being caught up to be with Him, our day of redemption (Ephesians 4:30). Paul is the only author who tells us of the Day of Christ (1 Corinthians 1:8; 5:5; 2 Corinthians 1:14; Philippians 1:6, 10; 2:16). It will be a glorious day, not at all like the Day of the Lord. An understanding of the separate programs for Israel and the Church, Body of Christ will lead one to understand the difference between the Day of the Lord (Prophecy) and the Day of Christ (Mystery).

Closing remarks (verses 25—28)

As Paul bids them farewell he asks that they pray for him and his traveling companions. Paul asked the churches to pray that he would have opportunities to preach the Gospel (Colossians 4:3), and be bold in his preaching wherever he went (Ephesians 6:19). Good examples for us today.

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