

**While I'm Waiting
(Week 12)
1 Thessalonians 5:19-28
"The To-Do List... Conclusion"**

Introduction

Now may The God of peace Himself sanctify you completely. And may your whole spirit, soul, and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our LORD Jesus Christ. He Who calls you is faithful; He will do it. 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24

As we come to the close of Paul's first letter to the church at Thessalonica, we see that he was reminding them to follow the direction of The Holy Spirit in all things. In fact, it was with this admonition that he concluded his "to-do" list for the church. Paul wanted to be certain that the great work of The Spirit that had begun in the city was not hindered in any fashion. For you see, apart from the Holy Spirit, the church was/is just another social club. It is only by God's Spirit that anything of lasting significance shall be accomplished. As Christ Himself has warned us:

...apart from Me you can do nothing.

John 15:5b NIV

There are so many ways that a church can stray off course, when it comes to the leadership of The Holy Spirit, and Paul, in his concluding remarks, reminds the Thessalonians of this fact. He wants them to "stay focused", as it were, and not to lose sight of all that matters. It is when the Disciple Peter took his eyes off Christ in the tumultuous Sea of Galilee that he began to sink. There are many distractions that would so easily lead us astray from our mission, and sadly, many a church has come to an end, because it strayed off course never to return.

The devil loves to see churches, that were once consumed with The Spirit's fire, become merely an ash heap; a cold and lifeless remnant of what they once were, long extinguished in their zeal for Christ. God forbid that this should happen to any of His churches. Sadly, there are many of these dead churches that were once a fortress of hope, now long past any usefulness, with "Ichabod" (the glory has departed) written above their doorposts.

This world doesn't need another social club. It doesn't need any more self-help seminars, cheap psychological pep-talks, nor quasi spiritual gurus who would tell us to listen to our inner voices in order to find our own personal path to prosperity. What we need are churches which unapologetically preach and teach The Word of God. We need people who are filled with God's Holy Spirit sharing wisdom and instruction with others so that they too can become followers of Christ. We, the Church of Christ, need to make disciples.

Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of The Father, and of The Son, and of The Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you...

Matthew 28:19-20a

This is the one and only mission for a church that is filled with God's Spirit. It is a spiritual endeavor that can only be accomplished by The Spirit's leading. And quite frankly, nothing else is of any lasting significance.

Paul's words to the church of Thessalonica written over two thousand years ago are still relevant for the church today. We, in order to keep from straying off course, must be led by The Holy Spirit of God. And to be led of The Spirit is to be students (disciples) of God's Word, rather than man's. This world is full of so-called "experts", but only God knows what is needed. Only God, our Creator, knows how His creation is meant to function.

In the Apostle Paul's final admonition to the Thessalonians, he commands them to (in the positive form): **Allow** The Spirit to lead them, to **Accept** The Word of Truth (The Bible), in order to **Adhere** to what is good and **Abstain** from what is evil. Let us take them one at a time and see for ourselves what it means to be led by The Spirit of God in all that we do.

Allow The Spirit To Lead (vs. 19)**Don't stifle The Spirit.****1 Thessalonians 5:19**

If you come from a pentecostal or charismatic background, this verse could more than likely mean something entirely different than what Paul intended. Those who believe in the so-called "second blessing" (a second and miraculous filling of the Spirit that comes sometime after salvation, but only to a fortunate few) would use this verse to encourage one another in the speaking of unknown tongues or other spontaneous and uncontrollable behavior, such as "being slain in The Spirit". They would say to forbid such activity is to stifle the Spirit.

However, *The Bible* is clear in describing the work of The Holy Spirit. It is also very clear that one who possesses the Spirit will demonstrate self-control (**Galatians 5:23**). Therefore, to "lose control" of one's self and then credit the Holy Spirit for such things is antithetical to the teachings of scripture. The Believer, who is being led by The Spirit of God, will be like Christ Himself. Read the Scriptures and see how Christ conducted Himself in this world, and you will be able to see clearly what a person who is controlled by The Spirit will be.

But the fruit of The Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and SELF-CONTROL. The Law is not against such things.
Galatians 5:22-23

So, when Paul speaks of "not stifling" or "quenching" (KJV) The Spirit of God, what is he talking about exactly? The Spirit is often referred to as a "fire" in The Scriptures. The word that Paul uses here in the Greek text means literally "to extinguish" The Spirit. What he is telling the church at Thessalonica is not to do anything that would "put out The Spirit's fire" within the church. In short, we are to allow the Spirit rule over us. To fully understand how to do just that, we must first understand exactly what it is that The Spirit does.

Jesus gives us insight into the work of The Holy Spirit in the **Sixteenth Chapter of John**. He begins by saying that after He returns to heaven, He will send a "Counselor" to His disciples (**John 16:7**). And then He proceeds to tell them what this Counselor will do. He will convict the world about sin, righteousness, and the coming judgment (**John 16:8**). In short, The Spirit warns us that God will judge those who are in sin, because He is a righteous and holy God. We are convicted of our sins, and we cry out for forgiveness.

Then, once The Spirit has shown us our sinfulness and its deserved punishment, He will, as Jesus says:

When The Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all the truth. For He will not speak on His own, but He will speak whatever He hears. He will also declare to you what is to come. He will glorify Me, because He will take from what is Mine and declare it to you. Everything The Father has is Mine. This is why I told you that He takes from what is mine and will declare it to you.
John 16:13-15

So, you see, The Spirit convicts us of our sin and shows us our need for a Savior, and then, directs us to that Savior. In short, The Spirit brings glory to Christ. That is His purpose here on earth. He doesn't want to bring attention to Himself. He wants to point people to Christ. Now, we realize that God The Father, God The Son, and God The Spirit are One, but the mission of The Spirit is to show the world its need for a Savior. He is not here to show what incredible things people can do when they are under His control. He doesn't want to bring attention to "people". He desires that the people will direct their attention to Christ! We are saved today, because The Spirit has led us into salvation. And anything that takes away from His mission to do that is to quench His fire.

Once The Spirit has convinced us that we need a Savior and we surrender our lives over to Jesus, He then begins to do a work in us to conform us into the very image of Christ. He starts "remaking us" from the inside and out. This process is called "sanctification".

...God has chosen you for salvation through sanctification by The Spirit and through belief in the truth. He called you to this through our gospel, so that you might obtain the glory of our LORD Jesus Christ. 2 Thessalonians 2:13b-14

So... How do we extinguish the flame of The Holy Spirit? By doing anything that would hinder His mission to convict the **sinner**, point to the **Savior**, or sanctify the **saints**. To interfere with The Spirit in any way is to quench The Spirit's fire. We must allow The Holy Spirit to do His work within the church.

Accept The Word of God (vs. 20a)

Don't despise prophecies....

1 Thessalonians 5:20

When we read the words of Christ in **John 16**, and we see the working of The Holy Spirit to convict the sinner, point to the Savior, and sanctify the saint, we are also shown exactly what He uses to do each of these: The Word of God. Listen to the words of Christ as He describes The Spirit's mission:

...He will guide you into all the truth. For He will not speak on His own, but He will speak whatever He hears... John 16:13b

And now the words of Paul:

He called you to this through our gospel, so that you might obtain the glory of our LORD Jesus Christ. 2 Thessalonians 2:14

So what does The Spirit **use** to convict the sinner, point to The Savior, and sanctify the saint? Answer: The Word of God! This is why we must continually teach God's Word in the church. It is the means by which The Spirit brings His "fire" to the people. God has promised that His Word will always accomplish His will upon this earth.

For just as rain and snow fall for heaven and do not return there without saturating the earth and making it germinate and sprout, and providing seed to sow and food to eat, so My Word that comes from My mouth will not return to Me empty, but it will accomplish what I please and will prosper in what I send it to do. Isaiah 55:10-11

Church, if we desire to see a mighty work of The Holy Spirit in our midst, it will begin with The Word of God! We must not "despise prophecy" as Paul tells the Thessalonians. We must rather embrace it. When my thoughts do not line up with The Word, it is my way of thinking that needs to be corrected, for The Word of God is the standard of perfection. We must do everything that we can to teach, trust, and obey The Word of God and not despise its precepts. For to reject The Word is to reject the God Who spoke it. This world doesn't need any more of man's wisdom. We need to listen and believe the voice of truth.

Adhere to The Good and Abstain from The Bad (vs.21-22)

...but test all things. Hold on to what is good. Stay away from every kind of evil. 1 Thessalonians 5:21-22

Paul admonished the church of Thessalonica to do what is good and to avoid that which was sinful. And simply put, the best way that we can do this is to follow The Spirit as He uses the Word of Truth to guide us. We obey The Scriptures. This is the very heart of someone who is in love with Christ. In fact, if you want to experience Jesus in a real and tangible way, then obey His commands.

The one who has My commands and keeps them is the one who loves Me. And the one who loves Me will be loved by My Father. I also will love Him and will reveal Myself to him. **John 14:21**

So, do you desire to have a closer walk with The LORD? Do you want to feel His presence in a powerful way, with the confident assurance that you are never alone? Then OBEY the Word of God! Jesus promises to “reveal Himself” to those who love Him enough to obey His commands. Now, I don’t know about you, but I want to feel His presence. I want Him to reveal Himself to me with every passing day.

One of my favorite characters in *The Bible* is Abraham. He was, as *The Bible* says, “God’s friend” (**James 2:23**). If you closely read the story of Abraham’s life in the book of *Genesis*, in the many encounters that he has with The LORD, God will introduce Himself to Abraham over and over again and uses many different Names to reveal Himself. Names such as El Elyon (Most High God), Magen (your Shield), El Shaddai (God Almighty), El Roi (God Who sees me); just to name a few. So, why was God giving Abraham all these different depictions of Himself? As Abraham walked with God and obeyed His commands, God revealed more and more of His character to Abraham, as time went by. Abraham came to know God on a more intimate and personal level with every passing experience. This is exactly what Christ wants for each of us. As we trust and obey His Word (commands), He enters into a loving relationship with us and reveals more and more of His character to us, as time goes by. This is what it truly means to have a “walk with God”. One of my favorite verses of Scripture is found in the book of *Micah*:

He has shown you, O man, what is good: And what does The LORD require of you But to do justly. To love mercy. And to walk humbly with your God? **Micah 6:8 (NKJV)**

I LOVE that verse! The implication of it is exactly the same concept that Paul is giving the Thessalonians at the close of his letter, to live according to The Word. To adhere to what The Word says is good and Abstain from what The Word says is evil. Do this, and Christ will reveal Himself to you more and more with every passing day. Now ***that*** my friends is a recipe for an abundant life.

Paul tells the Thessalonians to **“test everything” (vs.21)**. And by what standard are we to test everything? By the standards set forth in The Word! If what you are hearing does not line up with God’s Word, then make no mistake, it is false. We must examine everything in the light of God’s eternal truth. We need this kind of scrutiny more than ever in this wicked world in which we live. For just as Scripture has warned us; in these last days, good is called evil, and evil is paraded as good (**Isaiah 5:20; Romans 1:18-32**).

As Paul continues His final thoughts to the church at Thessalonica, he assures them that God will in fact finish by His Spirit what He has begun in them, and that this letter, which has now become Scripture, was to be read aloud in the church, and that is exactly what we have done here as well in these past weeks. We, like they, are in desperate need of The Word, to be read aloud and taught with clarity in our churches.

Now may the God of peace Himself, sanctify you completely. And may your whole spirit, soul, and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our LORD Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful: He will do it. Brothers and sisters, pray for us also. Greet all the brothers and sisters with a holy kiss. I charge you by The LORD that this letter be read to all the bothers and sisters. The grace of our LORD Jesus Christ be with you. **1 Thessalonians 5:23**

And let His chosen ones altogether say... TRUTH!