**Test All Things and Hold Fast**

**By Pastor Fee Soliven**

**1 Thessalonians 5:16-28**

**Wednesday Evening**

**February 19, 2020**

**16 Rejoice always,**

Saints, Paul counseled this persecuted church to always be joyful. Paul had just commanded the believers to love one another, and then to rejoice. True joy transcends the rolling waves of circumstance. Joy comes from a consistent relationship with Jesus Christ.

**Psalm 32:10-11**

10 Many sorrows shall be to the wicked; But he who trusts in the LORD, mercy shall surround him. 11 Be glad in the LORD and rejoice, you righteous; And shout for joy, all you upright in heart!

**Psalm 68:1-4**

1 Let God arise, Let His enemies be scattered; Let those also who hate Him flee before Him. 2 As smoke is driven away, So drive them away; As wax melts before the fire, So let the wicked perish at the presence of God. 3 But let the righteous be glad; Let them rejoice before God; Yes, let them rejoice exceedingly.

Saints, when believers’ lives are intertwined with Christ, he will help them to walk through adversity without sinking into debilitating lows and to manage prosperity without moving into deceptive highs. The joy of living with Jesus Christ daily will keep believers always joyful.

**Psalm 35:27-28**

27 Let them shout for joy and be glad, Who favor my righteous cause; And let them say continually, "Let the LORD be magnified, Who has pleasure in the prosperity of His servant." 28 And my tongue shall speak of Your righteousness And of Your praise all the day long.

Saints, they can rejoice because of their sure salvation and their future hope. Nothing that happens on this earth can compare with the glory that awaits God’s people.

**17 pray without ceasing,**

Saints, Paul did not expect believers to spend all their time on their knees or with their eyes closed when he said they should keep on praying

**Ephesians 6:17-20**

18 praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints-- 19 and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, 20 for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

Saints, it is possible, however, for believers to have a prayerful attitude at all times.

This attitude is built upon acknowledging dependence on God, realizing his presence within, and determining to obey him fully. Then it will be natural to pray frequent, spontaneous, short prayers.

**18 in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.**

Saints, evil will happen to believers. When it strikes, they can still be thankful for God’s presence and for the good he will accomplish through the distress.

**Psalm 100:4-5**

4 Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, And into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him, and bless His name. 5 For the LORD is good; His mercy is everlasting, And His truth endures to all generations.

**Ephesians 5:20-21**

20 “giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, 21 submitting to one another in the fear of God.”

Saints, usually, God uses difficult times to build people’s character and strengthen their faith. It is easy to give thanks for the blessings; it is more difficult to give thanks for the blessings in disguise.

By far, the most difficult task is to give thanks no matter what happens—even in the situations that make no sense or are extremely painful.

Yet this difficult task has been assigned to all believers, for this is God’s will for you who belong to Christ Jesus. Learning to give thanks in everything means learning to trust God completely. When a believer can give thanks so willingly, he or she has trusted that God is completely in control of all situations and is working out his will.

**19 Do not quench the Spirit.**

Saints, to “stifle” means to douse a fire, so to stifle the Holy Spirit would be forbidding or restraining his work. By warning the believers not to stifle the Holy Spirit, Paul may have meant that the believers in Thessalonica should not grieve the Spirit through any of the sins that have been mentioned in this letter—immorality and laziness, for example.

**1 Corinthians 6:9-11**

9 Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, 10 nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. 11 And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.

Another look at the context suggests that Paul was referring to a situation in the church in which some of the believers had been limiting or forbidding the exercise of certain spiritual gifts, such as prophecy or speaking in tongues.

Paul warned that no one should ignore or toss aside the gifts the Holy Spirit gives.

**20 Do not despise prophecies. 21 Test all things; hold fast what is good.**

Saints, God appointed certain people as prophets to the church (1 Corinthians 12:10, 28).

**1 Corinthians 12:7-11**

7 But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all: 8 for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, 9 to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit,

10 to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. 11 But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills

**1 Corinthians 12:28**

“And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues.”

These people had special gifts in ministering God’s messages to his people. At times they would foretell the future (Acts 11:28; 21:9, 11), but more often they would exhort, encourage, and strengthen God’s people (Acts 15:32; 1 Corinthians 14:29).

**Acts 11:27-28**

27 And in these days prophets came from Jerusalem to Antioch. 28 Then one of them, named Agabus, stood up and showed by the Spirit that there was going to be a great famine throughout all the world, which also happened in the days of Claudius Caesar.

God spoke through prophets—inspiring them with specific messages for particular times and places. This gift provided insight, warning, correction, and encouragement.

The gift of prophecy is highly regarded.

**Ephesians 4:11-13**

11 And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, 13 till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;

The words spoken, therefore, should not be treated contemptuously. Paul was not advocating blind acceptance of every word spoken by any self-styled prophet.

Instead, believers were to test everything against God’s word in Scripture, discern what was true and what was false, and then hold on to what is good. The word translated “good” (kalos) was sometimes used to describe what was genuine—as a genuine coin is opposed to a counterfeit. All believers are responsible to listen, discern, and learn.

Christians should not believe everything they hear just because someone says it is a message inspired by God. There are many ways to test teachers to see if their message is truly from the Lord. One is to check to see if their words match what God says in the Bible.

Other tests include their commitment to the body of believers, their lifestyle, and the fruit of their ministry. The most important test of all is what they believe about Christ.

**1 John 2:19**

They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us.

**1 John 3:23-24**

23 And this is His commandment: that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, as He gave us commandment. 24 Now he who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. And by this we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us.

**1 John 4:6**

We are of God. He who knows God hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

**22 Abstain from every form of evil.**

Saints, the separation is real and important: believers must “hold on to what is good” (5:21) and at the same time keep away from every kind of evil. Paul did not mean that believers must literally withdraw from the world, for to do so would mean that they could not shed the light of Christ so that more might come to him.

Believers can, however, make sure that they don’t give evil a foothold by avoiding tempting situations and concentrating on obeying God. (See also Romans 12:9.)

**Romans 12:9**

“Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good.”

**Psalm 34:13-16**

13 Keep your tongue from evil, And your lips from speaking deceit. 14 Depart from evil and do good; Seek peace and pursue it. 15 The eyes of the LORD are on the righteous, And His ears are open to their cry. 16 The face of the LORD is against those who do evil, To cut off the remembrance of them from the earth.

**23 Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.**

Saints, Paul described God as the God of peace. Jesus had told his disciples that he would give them peace (John 14:27; 16:33).

**John 14:27**

“Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”

**John 16:33**

These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

The end result of the Holy Spirit’s work in believers’ lives is deep and lasting peace. Unlike worldly peace, which is usually defined as the absence of conflict, this peace is confident assurance in any circumstance; with Christ’s peace, no believer needs to fear the present or the future.

 While “perfection” will not occur until believers are fully glorified, sanctification is the process of moving toward that goal, moving toward Christlikeness.

In order to be made holy in every way, God will need to work in all areas of a person’s life—the whole spirit and soul and body. This expression is Paul’s way of saying that God must be involved in every aspect of a believer’s life. As believers live in God’s presence, he will keep them blameless for Christ’s return.

Perhaps the Thessalonian believers were wondering, when their fellow believers died before the Second Coming, if those dead believers would be able to receive this perfection from Christ. Paul explained that the supernatural process would occur for all believers.

**24 He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it.**

Saints, The Thessalonians could count on these promises because God is faithful. God created the world, and he has faithfully ordered it and kept it since the creation. Because God is faithful, believers can count on him to fulfill his promises to them. If God can oversee the forces of nature, surely he can see his people through the trials they face. Trusting in God’s faithfulness day by day gives confidence in his great promises for the future. What he has promised, he will do.

**25 Brethren pray for us.**

Saints, Paul spent a lot of time in prayer for the believers in the various churches. He mentioned several times his own prayers for the Thessalonians.

But Paul also asked believers to pray for him and his coworkers, as well

**Colossians 4:2-4**

2 Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving; 3 meanwhile praying also for us, that God would open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in chains, 4 that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak.

Saints, every believer, even this gifted apostle, needs the prayers of fellow believers.

**26 Greet all the brethren with a holy kiss.**

Saints, Paul asked that the believers greet each other in Christian love to help break down the divisions in this church. He wanted his readers to express their love and unity to one another.

**27 I charge you by the Lord that this epistle be read to all the holy brethren.**

Saints, Paul’s wording here is very strong;

**I command you in the name of the Lord, means:**

**“I put you on oath before the Lord.”**

Paul did not write merely to the leaders; he had written to everyone, so all the Christians needed to hear every word of it. For every Christian to hear this letter, it had to be read in a public meeting.

Paul wanted to make sure that everyone had the opportunity to hear his message because he was answering important questions and offering needed encouragement.

**In Closing:**

**28 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.**

Saints, As Paul began this letter, so he ended it. Paul’s final prayer was for the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ to be with them. Paul often ended his letters this way, asking his readers to continue to experience God’s undeserved kindness and love every day of their lives, and then to pass along that grace to others.

**Let’s Pray**

**Benediction**

**"May The LORD bless you and keep you, May The LORD make His face shine upon you, May The LORD be gracious to you, May The LORD lift up His countenance upon you, and give you His (Shalom) peace.” In Jesus Name!**