

Rob Mathis

Sermon: 1 Thessalonians 5:12-28

11.24.24

Folks, I am going to read through our passage this morning, first going straight through, then going pretty much line by line, and do so with careful deliberation. I want to underscore just how vital it is that we rightly handle the Word of God, so that when we read God's Word, we take time to study it, we talk about it, and feed on it carefully and prayerfully. That means we look at Scripture as just that Scripture, inspired by God's Spirit, and as **2 Timothy 3:16** says, ¹⁶“**All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness**”. I tell you that today I am troubled with all the nonsense out there being disseminated as God's truth, and God's sheep are being misled, not knowing Scripture, not studying it, and even being careless about handling it. I know that God is ever faithful to lead us on our earthly journey, in preparation for our eventual arrival with Him forever. And He is absolutely capable of caring for His sheep. But, also, sometimes people are less than careful. Sometimes folks will open

their Bible, closing their eyes even, and point to something, open their eyes, read it, and say, “Well, that is what God is saying to me today.”

Well, maybe. But what if you open your Bible and read, “Judas went out and hanged himself.” Then you turn to another passage, point, and read, “Go and do likewise.”

No mam. No sir. That won't do! So today, let us pay particular attention to His glorious Word! For by the end of this message today I want you to have a clearer picture of God's will for your life than you had before listening.

**Our passage this morning is from 1 Thessalonians 5:12-28;
listen as I read God's Word to you today:**

¹² Now we ask you, brothers, and sisters, to acknowledge those who work hard among you, who care for you in the Lord and who admonish you. ¹³ Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work. Live in peace with each other. ¹⁴ And we urge you, brothers, and sisters, warn those who are idle and disruptive, encourage the disheartened, help the weak, be patient with everyone. ¹⁵ Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always strive to do what is good for each other and for everyone else.

¹⁶ Rejoice always, ¹⁷ pray continually, ¹⁸ give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

¹⁹ Do not quench the Spirit. ²⁰ Do not treat prophecies with contempt ²¹ but test them all; hold on to what is good, ²² reject every kind of evil.

²³ 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. ²⁴ The one who calls you is faithful, and He will do it.

²⁵ Brothers and sisters, pray for us. ²⁶ Greet all God's people with a holy kiss. ²⁷ I charge you before the Lord to have this letter read to all the brothers and sisters.

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

Before we dive in this morning, let's pray:

Those who have been here with us at Rose Hill Church or watching online know that over the last several weeks we have been taking a deeper look at the New Testament book of 1st Thessalonians. We continue today with a wrap-up of what is most likely the Apostle Paul's earliest letter.

Historical Setting:

But before we do so I want to remind us of the historical setting for 1 Thessalonians, for those who do not remember way back to October 6th, when Pastor Brian began the series on this letter.

At the time Paul wrote this letter, the Thessalonian church was a brand-new group of believers that Paul, Silas and Timothy worked with briefly (perhaps for only a few weeks) before being run out of town (for more on that incident I will refer you to the Book of Acts, Chapter 17).

Thessalonica was the capital city of Macedonia, a Roman province, situated in the northern sector of Greece. Now, in the 21st century, many call this ancient city Salonika (Sal ON' ika), a city in existence for over 2,000 years, and still the capital of Greece's Macedonia.

As we see in the Book of Acts, Thessalonica was a very important strategic location for Paul's ministry, and in fact Paul traveled there several times for ministry purposes. It was the bridge between east and west; Rome to the west, all of Asia to the east. And though there were

Jews living in Thessalonica, the city, and the church there were predominantly Gentile.

Moving forward to today, in our post-modern world, one that at best is conflict-laden and often quite confusing, many Christians are exhibiting contempt and disdain for each other. We are not walking in the daylight of faith, hope and love. This is no clearer seen than with our recent US elections, where Christians have literally been hating on each other in the midst of massive division and strife. So, I think this is a perfect time for us to hear what our Heavenly Father is saying to us through The Apostle Paul and what Paul viewed as most important in his communication with his young church.

It was this: Paul developed and communicated an essential theology of the value and importance of the trilogy of faith, hope and love. To love God, love each other and the world, to rest in our faith in Jesus' goodness, and to hold on to hope of His eventual return.

And that is what the last 16 verses of 1 Thessalonians are all about; Paul is focusing the church on what matters most. What he believes is God's will for each of us!

Okay, so let's take a look at the key things Paul wrote to his fledgling church here, keeping in mind that we today are little different than first century Christians. We have the same kinds of struggles, flaws and weaknesses that they did then. Please note that as Paul writes this passage, as he does in so many of his writings, he is building one brick on another...

- **First, he says to acknowledge those who work hard among you,** care for you and admonish you; this is directed at each of us in the Body of Christ to give honor and respect to God's leaders in our churches. I think the reason for this admonition is that it is so important for us to value the Church, the local body of believers, and to do so we must recognize those the Lord has called out and placed in positions of service, of leadership, of faithfulness to the living out of the Word of God in instruction and training in righteousness.

That is foundational to what follows, because if we cannot follow and respect and give reasonable honor to those who lead us, we should examine ourselves, for verse 13 says to hold such in highest regard IN LOVE, not because of who they are in the flesh, but rather, it says, because of their work!

And this respect, this high regard, this love, and honor, leads to what?

The latter part of verse 13 says for us, as believers, to live in peace with each other. It starts with us being at peace with our leaders and each other, and this leads to what we are to do out of this...But make no mistake about it; honoring our church leaders and those who sacrifice so much for the sake of the Gospel, is how we get to the “living in peace with each other”, and allows verse 14 to happen; **for it says that each of us, “Brothers and Sisters”,**

- **are to ourselves warn those who are idle and disruptive**
- **encourage the disheartened**
- **help the weak**

- **be patient with everyone**
- **And going on in verse 15, make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong (I think the way this is worded, it is a directive not simply to watch over your neighbor, but think twice before wronging another for wronging you!)**
- **Always strive to do what is good for each other and for everyone else**
- **Let's read that together on the screen; "Always strive to do what is good for each other and for everyone else."**
- **Wow! Boom! The ancient Greek here means "Every, any, each".**
- **The way I read it, this does not mean, unless "they", whomever "they" are, don't think like you, look like you, vote like you...and on and on.**
- **And from there, we get into probably my favorite all-time passage; 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18; I want us all to read this together; it will be on the screen. Please note that we are reading from the New American Standard Bible for these verses:**

“Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing. In everything give thanks, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.”

I want to stop and pause here.

In case you were wondering, ALWAYS, WITHOUT CEASING, IN EVERYTHING...yep, the original Greek Paul used says exactly what is translated. Impossible right? Of course. It is impossible for us to do this on our own. Jesus said, “Apart from Me you can do nothing.” **Remember this! God fully expects each of us to rely on Him, His Spirit living in us, to carry out His will.**

Verse 19, I think, hits the nail on the head; “Do NOT quench the Spirit”. Folks, this Christian life business is very serious, very serious indeed. It is so, I think, because the fall of humanity was a plummet, a swan dive into near-oblivion. And it has taken God His everything, His ONLY Begotten Son, to even begin to get back what humanity lost in the Garden of Eden.

Following up, in verses 20-22, Paul is directing us to have a right attitude about God's directives, the sharing of our faith one to another, respecting each other, not having contempt, but also being wise as a serpent about what you listen to from others. Just an aside, I have seen more garbage out there on the internet, on YouTube, on so-called Christian shows, and in Christian books that is no more solid teaching than you find in a comic book.

Hold to what is good and REJECT EVERY KIND OF EVIL. I might add, be very careful with what you say and do toward others, remembering what James 3 says; ⁶The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole body, sets the whole course of one's life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell.

Folks, this Christian walk is a life of relinquishment, surrender, a bowing down to His will not ours. And then, you know what happens as a result of learning to walk in this manner; verse 23; "May God Himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through". And then this leads to the second part of verse 23;

“Then will your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” This mention of “The coming of the Lord Jesus” is talked about all through the New Testament, including mention of it earlier in 1 Thessalonians. This concept of Jesus return was a crucial piece to not only Paul’s teaching but that of all of the Apostles, being mentioned at least 318 times in the New Testament.

And in verse 24, we see Paul give an emphasis; “The One Who calls you is faithful, and He will do it.”

And we finish in verses 25-28 with Paul’s final admonitions, a wrap up of his letter if you will. He encourages believers to pray for Paul and Silas and Timothy and those called to preach the Gospel; to greet one another “with a holy kiss”, meaning love each other warmly, and to read this letter (emphasizing how important what he is writing is). And then Paul gives a final benediction, “The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.”

**So, in finishing, you gotta be careful with His Word.
Don’t quench the fire of His Spirit, treat His Word with**

respect, not contempt, hold on to what is good, reject evil. And by all means, live out a life of faith, hope and love, by the power of His Holy Spirit, rejoicing always, praying without ceasing and giving thanks in all things. For this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

Let's pray: