

PRACTICAL EXHORTATIONS PART 2

TEXT: I THESS. 5:19-28

INTRODUCTION:

1. The final section of I Thessalonians 5 (5:12—28) consists largely of exhortations. The common thread is sanctification in light of the imminent return of Christ (cf. 5:23).
2. We left off last week at verse 18.

I. QUENCH NOT THE SPIRIT (5:19).

1. A Christian can be guilty of resisting the Spirit, and grieving the Spirit, and “quenching the Spirit.”
2. It is like throwing cold water on a hot fire. In the Bible, fire is an emblem of the Holy Spirit.
3. Fire may be put out by pouring on water; or it could go out by neglecting to supply fuel. Neglect is a word closely connected to backsliding -- neglect to pray, neglect to attend church services, neglect to read the Bible -- then the fire goes out!
4. That is why Paul told Timothy to "stir up the gift of God, which is in thee" (II Tim. 1:6). Timothy had to stir it up or the fire would go out.
5. Demas quenched the fire. Paul said in II Timothy 4:10, "For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world."
6. Worldliness quenches the Spirit!

II. DESPISE NOT PROPHECYINGS (5:20).

1. There are two aspects to prophesying. The Old Testament prophet was a forthteller as well as a foreteller. Likewise the New Testament preacher is a forthteller, i.e., he proclaims the Word of God.
2. Paul is not advocating an uncritical acceptance of all so-called prophetic utterances. In verse 21 he says, “Prove all things.”
3. First John 4:1 says, “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.”

III. PROVE ALL THINGS (5:21a).

1. "Prove" means, "to test, examine, prove, scrutinize," the way an assayer proves the true nature and value of the metal he is testing, to see whether it is genuine or not.

2. We need spiritual discernment. This is sadly lacking today. Many nominal Christians now support abortion and homosexuality. Or if they do not support these things they say they are "neutral."
3. We cannot be neutral when it comes to important matters of morality or doctrine.
4. Christians often get swept up in all sorts of errors – liberalism, Pentecostalism, new-evangelicalism, hyper-Calvinism, the purpose-driven seeker-friendly style worship, the emerging church, and other new innovations, etc.
5. Albert Barnes said, "Other religions require their votaries to receive everything upon trust; Christianity asks us to examine *everything*. Error, superstition, bigotry, and fanaticism attempt to repress free discussion, by saying that there are certain things which are too sacred in their nature, or which have been too long held, or which are sanctioned by too many great and holy names, to permit their being subjected to the scrutiny of common eyes, or to be handled by common hands. In opposition to all this, Christianity requires us to examine everything."
6. Second Peter 2:1, 2b says, "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways."
7. Our Lord said in Matthew 24:11, "And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many."
8. To develop spiritual discernment we must study the Bible.

IV. HOLD FAST THAT WHICH IS GOOD (5:21b)

1. While we are to avoid that which is contrary to Scripture, we are also commanded to "hold fast that which is good" (5:21b).
2. Holding fast that which is good is just as much a duty as it is to "prove all things." Barnes said, "A man who has applied the proper tests, and has found out what is truth, is bound to embrace it and to hold it fast. He is not at liberty to throw it away, as if it were valueless; or to treat truth and falsehood alike. It is a duty which he owes to himself and to God, to adhere to it firmly, and to suffer the loss of all things rather than to abandon it. There are few more important rules in the New Testament than the one in this passage. It shows what

is the true nature of Christianity, and it is a rule whose practical value cannot but be felt constantly in our lives."

V. ABSTAIN FROM ALL APPEARANCES OF EVIL (5:22).

1. Not only from evil itself, but from that which may seem to be wrong. Some things are not necessarily evil, but it is wise for the Christian to avoid them.
2. In his commentary on this epistle, John Phillips mentions staying in a Christian home while preaching in their church. He did not know it at first but the husband worked the "graveyard shift" and left Bro. Phillips home alone with his wife and small child. That was unwise and this verse would apply to a situation like that.
3. Again I will quote Albert Barnes, "No one ever does injury or wrong by abstaining from the pleasures of the ball-room, the theatre, or a glass of wine."

VI. FINAL REMARKS AND BENEDICTION (5:23-28).

1. Verse 23 is a prayer for perfect sanctification, which should be the goal of each and every Christian. Sanctification has three aspects:
 - (1) Positional – we are set apart to God from the world the moment we are saved. It is complete, and it is perfect. "For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified" (Heb. 10:14).
 - (2) Progressive – we are growing in grace as we study the Bible, pray, and serve God. It is a life long process.

I'm pressing on the upward way,
New heights I'm gaining every day;
Still praying as I'm onward bound,
"Lord, plant my feet on higher ground."

Lord, lift me up and let me stand,
By faith, on Heaven's table land,
A higher plane than I have found;
Lord, plant my feet on higher ground.

My heart has no desire to stay
Where doubts arise and fears dismay;
Though some may dwell where those abound,
My prayer, my aim, is higher ground.

I want to live above the world,
Though Satan's darts at me are hurled;
For faith has caught the joyful sound,
The song of saints on higher ground.

I want to scale the utmost height
And catch a gleam of glory bright;
But still I'll pray till Heav'n I've found,
"Lord, plant my feet on higher ground." -- Johnson Oatman, Jr.

(3) Ultimate sanctification will be realized when we leave this world either through death or the rapture. This is referred to as "glorification" in Romans 8:30 – "and whom He justified, them He also glorified." The verb is in the past tense because it has already been settled in heaven.

2. Second Thessalonians 2:13 and I Peter 1:2 refer to "sanctification of the Spirit." Sanctification is something the Holy Spirit does in us (cf. I Thess. 5:23).
3. God puts the "spirit and soul" before the body (I Thess. 5:23). Most men put the body first. This is what "carnal" means.
4. It is on the basis of I Thessalonians 5:23 and Hebrews 4:12 that many students and teachers of the Bible believe man is "trichotomous." Those who are "dichotomous" teach that "soul" and "spirit" are synonymous and are used interchangeably in the Bible. If this were true than Hebrews 4:12 would not make sense.

"For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."

- a. Our spirit is that part of man which enables us to have communion with God. Jesus said, "But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:23, 24).
- b. "The *spirit* is the highest and most distinctive part of man. It is the life principle imparted to man by God Who is Spirit, enabling him to know and communicate with God. But with the fall, man as a

spiritual being was separated from God and spiritual death resulted. The impartation of a new spiritual nature in the new birth is necessary so that man can again have direct communion with God” (Hiebert, *I & II Thessalonians*).

- c. Our soul has to do with our emotions, desires, affections, sensations, and appetites. It is the seat of the different affections and passions, such as love, hatred, and anger, etc. Some would associate this with the mind or the personality. “Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul” (I Peter 2:11).
- d. “The *soul* may be viewed as the self-conscious life of man, the seat of personality. The self-conscious personality reaches out in two directions. In its relation to the world, the soul is entirely dependent upon the body for its information and responses. Through his spirit, man reaches up to the spiritual world, Godward. The fallen man has an awareness of the reality of God and the spiritual world, but in his unregenerate condition he had no direct communion with God. Thus, the unregenerate man can only understand a religion of the senses. With the new birth, he is brought into direct relation with God through the renewed spirit, enabling him to worship God in spirit and truth” (Hiebert).
- e. Our body is the house (Paul calls it “this tabernacle” in II Corinthians 5) in which our person dwells. “For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens” (II Cor. 5:1).

- 5. "Faithful is He that calleth you, who also will do it" (5:24). Verses 23 and 24 are connected. Our sanctification depends on God, "who will do it."
- 6. As He has begun a work of grace in our hearts, we may depend on His faithfulness to complete it. God will do everything He has promised to do, and that certainly includes His promise to answer

our prayers (cf. 5:17), so Paul says, “Brethren, pray for us” (5:25). Paul often asked for prayer in his epistles (cf. II Thess. 3:1).

CONCLUDING REMARKS:

1. “Greet all the brethren with an holy kiss” (5:26). This was the custom in that part of the world. Our Lord said to Simon in Luke 7:45, “Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet.”
2. This suggests it was customary. It was to be a “holy kiss,” not a romantic kiss or a sensual kiss, etc. Bible teachers say that in Bible times, men sat with men and women with women.
3. “I charge you by the Lord that this epistle be read unto all the holy brethren” (5:27).
4. God wants His Word to be read in church. The Roman Catholic Church kept the Bible away from the people.
5. Sadly, even in many so-called “evangelical” churches, there is little or no Scripture reading or preaching. When new members transfer here they are pleasantly surprised at our emphasis on Bible teaching and preaching.
6. “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen” (5:28) – benediction.