



The Scrolls

Helping **CENTRAL BIBLE CHURCH** Families Belong, Become and Go Beyond

V25 N21

May 21, 2023

NOT HOME YET

“Fighting for What is Good”

1 Thessalonians 5:19-22

THIS WEEK'S CORE COMPETENCY

Single-Mindedness

I focus on God and his priorities for my life.

“But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”

Matthew 6:33



What is the will of God for those in Christ Jesus?

Sanctification is a matter of priorities. God's priorities are expressions of his will for us—many of which are succinctly stated in concise commands in the paraenetic portions of Paul's letters. *Paraenesis* transliterates the Greek term *parainēsis*, which originally meant any kind of advice, instruction, or counsel. One literary critic writes: “The bodies of Paul's letters also contain paraenesis (ethical exhortation), and several conclude with a paraenetical section (Gal. 5:1-6:10; Rom. 12:1-15:13; 1 Thess. 4:1ff). Placing these hortatory statements toward the end of the letter is a logical way for Paul to apply the theological truths he has been emphasizing and stress in another way his authority over and responsibility for the churches he had founded” (James L. Bailey and Lyle D. Vander Broek, *Literary Forms in the New Testament*, 26). Of course, each of these commands is a brief statement of the will of God.

An archetypal example of paraenesis is found in Romans 12:9-21. It reads:

“Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. 10 Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves. 11 Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. 12 Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. 13 Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.

14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. 15 Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. 16 Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.

17 Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. 18 If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. 19 Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: ‘It is mine to avenge; I will repay,’ says the Lord. 20 On the contrary:

‘If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink.

In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head.’

21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”

Paraenesis is also found in Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians. In 5:12-22 he writes:

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.

Similar wording and similar themes are contained in both. Examples of similar wording include: 1) “Hate what is evil; cling to what is good” (Ro 12:9), and “hold on to what is good, reject every kind of evil” (1Th 5:21-22); 2) “Live in harmony with one another” (Ro 12:16) and “at peace with everyone” (v. 18), and “Live in peace with each other” (1Th 5:13); 3) “Do not repay anyone evil for evil” (Ro 12:17), and “Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong” (1Th 5:15). Examples of repeated themes include: 1) love (Ro 12:9, 10; cf. 1Th 5:13); 2) joy (Ro 12:12; cf. 1Th 5:16); and 3) patience (Ro 12:12; cf. 1Th 5:14).

While Paul doesn't explicitly state in Romans that his instructions are expressions of the will of God, he does as much in 1 Thessalonians. “For this is God's will for you,” he writes (5:18).



EXAMINE GOD'S WORD

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:19-22

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.

Read in other translations

19 Do not put out the Spirit's fire; 20 do not treat prophecies with contempt. 21 Test everything. Hold on to the good. 22 Avoid every kind of evil. (NIV©1984)

19-22 Don't suppress the Spirit, and don't stifle those who have a word from the Master. On the other hand, don't be gullible. Check out everything, and keep only what's good. Throw out anything tainted with evil.
(MSG)

After reading the text, practice your Observation skills by noting the following:

- Underline "Do not" in vv. 19, 20.
- Circle "quench" v. 19.
- Circle "the Spirit" in v. 19.
- Circle "prophecies" in v. 20.
- Circle "contempt" in v. 20.
- Box "but" indicating *contrast* in v. 21.
- Circle "test" in v. 21.
- Bracket "kind of evil" in v. 22.

Box "but" indicating *contrast* in v. 13. What one word would you use to describe the **TONE** of this passage? (i.e., stern, joyful, cautious, etc.)

What word or idea stands out to you in this passage?

What one thing do you not understand in this passage?

Try to summarize the **THEME** of this passage in one word. If you were going to describe these verses, you might say, "This text is about _____."



DIG DEEPER

Answer the questions to help you apply the passage and prepare for discussion

1. The Greek word *sbennumi* translated “quench” (v. 19) is used *figuratively* in connection with “the Spirit.” When used *literally* (cf. Mt 12:20; 25:8; Mk 9:44, 46, 48; Eph 6:16; Heb 11:34), it is used in connection with *what*?
2. This word can also be translated “restrain,” “stifle,” “stop.” Why translate it “quench” here?
3. To “quench the Spirit” is a *figurative* expression. Put what it means in your own words.
4. The commands in verse 19 and verse 20 are not unrelated. Explain their *relationship*.
5. To what does the term “prophecies” refer?
6. Put what “treat with contempt” means in your own words?
7. Explain the *contrast* introduced in verse 21.
8. To what does “good” refer in verse 21?
9. To what does “every kind of evil” refer in verse 22?
10. **Discussion:** If their issue, the Thessalonians’ issue then, is not our issue, Central Bible Church’s issue today, how is what Paul says to them relevant to us? Talk about it.

Commentary On The Text

The paraenetic section of Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians beginning in 5:12 wraps up in 5:22. In order to understand 5:19-22, it's necessary to define the subject of the passage, that is, what the apostle is writing about. His mention of "prophecies" in verse 20 indicates that he's addressing *prophetic utterances* resulting from the exercise of the *gift of prophecy* in the church. One commentator explains: "There may have been a tendency in the early church, and perhaps the Thessalonian church in particular, to underrate the value of prophetic utterances. The gift of prophecy was the ability to receive and communicate direct revelations from God before the New Testament was completed (1 Cor. 13:8). Sometimes these revelations concerned future events (Acts 11:28), but often they dealt with the present (Acts 13:2). Perhaps people who had not received prophetic revelations were teaching their own views of such things as the Second Advent, with the result that prophetic revelations tended to be evaluated on superficial terms (e.g., the eloquence of the speaker) instead of on the basis of their intrinsic authority" (Thomas L. Constable, "1 Thessalonians," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament*, 709). Regarding the nature of prophetic utterances, another clarifies: "There is no evidence that such utterances were ever given the same authority as inspired tests (i.e., Scripture) or that they involved what is sometimes referred to as 'personal prophecy.' Rather, its focus was on the corporate life of the community" (Michael W. Holmes, *The NIV Application Commentary: 1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 183).

Regarding Paul's subject, he gives five commands: 1) "Do not quench the Spirit" 2) "Do not treat prophecies with contempt" 3) "Test them all" 4) "Hold on to what is good" 5) "Reject every kind of evil." The relationship of the five to one another is debated by commentators. However, it is generally agreed that the first one (v. 19), referring to the activity of the Holy Spirit, is linked closely to the four that follow. The figurative expression "quench the Spirit" refers to the work of the Holy Spirit. The Greek verb, which might simply be rendered "stop," "suppress," or "stifle," is rendered "quench" here because the Spirit's activity is often associated with fire (cf. Ac 2:1-4). The NIV©1984 makes the association explicit in its translation, "Do not put out the Spirit's fire." The image is that of water thrown on a fire.

How the Spirit might be quenched is alluded to in the second command (v. 20), "Do not treat prophecies with contempt." What inclined some in the church to "despise" (ESV, NKJV, HCSB), "scoff at" (TLB), "treat as unimportant" (NCV), or "utterly reject" (NASB) pro-

phetic utterances is unknown. One commentator speculates that converts from paganism might be put off by practices similar to those at pagan shrines, or that easily faked prophecies might be divisive (Holmes, 184), or that more showy gifts were valued above prophecy (F. F. Bruce, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 45, 1 and 2 *Thessalonians*, 125). In any case, Paul writes when the prophetic gift is exercised in church, the utterance must be received seriously and must not be ignored—no revelation from God should be disparaged.

The alternative to treating prophecies with contempt is contained in Paul's third command (v. 21a), "But test them all." The initial "but" provides a *contrast* to what Paul writes in verse 20 and provides the proper solution to the potential problem of counterfeit prophecies. Rather than throw out the baby with the bath water, "test them all," Paul writes. Unfortunately, he doesn't specify how to do this. He assumes a Spirit-filled congregation possesses the discernment to recognize the counterfeits. In 1 Corinthians, he writes: "Two or three prophets should speak, and the others should weigh carefully what is said" (14:29), presumably with a view to determining the credibility of their prophecies. It seems "the prophets themselves were to decide whether the messages of their fellow prophets were valid" (*The NIV Study Bible*, note on 1Co 14:29).

The last two commands, "Hold on to what is good" (v. 21b) and "Reject every kind of evil" (v. 22), describe what to do with the test results. One commentator summarizes: "Hold firmly to those that are good, and have nothing to do with those that are not (5:21b-22). Prophecies that pass the test are from the Holy Spirit and therefore ought not to be rejected or treated with contempt. On the other hand, any prophecy that fails the testing process is not from the Spirit and should therefore be rejected and avoided (the verb here, *apecho*, is the same as in 4:3, 'avoid sexual immorality')" (Holmes, 185).

The application of Paul's instructions to the contemporary church must focus on the credibility of biblical teaching rather than prophetic utterances. If the gift of prophecy ceased by the end of the first century with the completion of the New Testament, then "the point of 5:19-22 for the modern church is that it guard the truth of prophetic scriptural revelation and reject false teachings purportedly grounded on this revelation" (G. K. Beale, *1-2 Thessalonians*, IVP New Testament Commentary Series, 173). Put differently, "Christians should not disparage any revelation that has come to the church and has been recognized as authoritative and preserved by the Holy Spirit in Scripture. The temptation to put the ideas of men on an equal footing with the Word of God is still present" (Constable, 709).

Word Studies/Notes

v. 19 **Do not** Some commentators interpret the present imperative with the negative to mean “stop quenching the Spirit” (e.g., Robert L. Thomas, “1 Thessalonians,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, 11: 292; Michael W. Holmes, *The NIV Application Commentary: 1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 183). Others don’t think the readers are guilty of doing this; they argue the two negative imperatives involved should be taken the same way as the two present imperatives without the negative in verses 16-18 to indicate habitual action, i.e., “continually refrain from quenching the Holy Spirit (see Richard C. Blight, *An Exegetical Summary of 1 & 2 Thessalonians*, 2nd ed., 165; also F. F. Bruce, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 45, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 125). No English translations render the verse “stop quenching the Spirit.”

v. 19 **quench** Cf. “Do not put out the Spirit’s fire” (NIV©1984). Other possible translations of the word include “extinguish,” “restrain,” “stifle,” and “stop.” “The verb ‘quench’ is related to the figure of fire used in various places (e.g. Matt 3:11 par. Luke 3:16; Luke 12:49; Acts 2:3; Rom 12:11) to denote the Holy Spirit or his activity. As the context goes on to make plain, the activity chiefly in view here is prophecy. In this respect the Spirit may be quenched when the prophet refuses to utter the message he has been given, or when others try to prevent him from uttering it” (Bruce, 125). “‘Quench’ has apparently been chosen because fire is a common metaphor for the Holy Spirit’s activity (Matt. 3.11; Luke 3.16; 12.49; Acts 2.3; Rom. 12.11-12; 2 Tim. 1.6), and just as a thirst can be quenched and so put out, so can a fire” (Ben Witherington III, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 168). “In isolation 5:19 can be taken rather generally. But in the context of 5:20 and 5:21a it is clear that Paul is focusing on charismatic manifestation of the Spirit, specifically prophecy. Thus one can paraphrase 5:19-20 as, ‘Do not quench the Spirit, that is [or perhaps, ‘for example’] don’t treat prophecies with contempt’” (Holmes, 183).

v. 19 **the Spirit** “The Spirit is not to be prevented from doing his work. Some take the reference to ‘the Spirit’ to be a metonymy in which Spirit represents his activity [Hb, Hn, HNTC, Lns] since the Spirit cannot be quenched in regard to his being, but his activity or gifts can be resisted . . . Probably the suppression of prophetic utterances is the primary activity in this context [Hb, WBC]” (Blight, 165).

v. 20 **prophecies** The term is variously translated e.g., “prophetic utterances” (NEB), “inspired messages” (GNT), “what God has revealed” (GW). “The noun ‘prophecy’ [*prophēteia*] may have two meanings: it

could refer to the gift of prophecy, or to a specific message given by prophecy. This second meaning is the more common and is the sense here” (Gary S. Shogren, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, ZECNT, 226). “This refers to the utterances of members of the church who spoke messages directly inspired and revealed by the Holy Spirit” (Blight, 166). “The closest Paul comes to defining ‘prophecy’ is in 1 Corinthians 14. Apparently ‘it consisted of spontaneous, Spirit-inspired, intelligible messages, orally delivered in the gathered assembly, intended for the edification or encouragement of the people,’ by men or women (1 Cor. 11:4-5) who remained ‘in control’ of the activity” (Holmes, 183). “Vv. 20-21 are, then, explanations of what not quenching the Spirit means: it means not despising and thereby stifling prophesying” (Witherington, 168).

v. 20 **contempt** “When the prophetic gift is exercised in church, the utterance must be received seriously and not be ignored . . . There may have been a tendency at Thessalonica, as later at Corinth, to value more spectacular gifts above prophecy; hence the warning that prophecy must not be depreciated but heard with the respect due to the Spirit whose voice is communicated through the prophet” (Bruce, 125). Or in light of 2Th 2:2, the contempt for prophecies resulted from second advent speculations, “both the advent speculations and the prophecy that has gone with it” (Leon Morris, *The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians*, NICNT, 176).

v. 21 **test** “The proper solution to the problem of potential abuse is not to throw out the baby with the bath water; it is instead to ‘test everything’ (5:21a). Paul strikes a careful balance here: ‘Because such utterances are from the Holy Spirit, they must not be “despised”; but also because such utterances come through merely human vessels,’ they are not to be accepted blindly just because someone claims to have the Spirit” (Holmes, 184; cf. Blight, 167). “The everything that they are to put to the test is precisely the prophecies that some within the church had rejected. The first verb in the imperative, the same one that is found in 2.4 (see commentary), here means ‘to test in order to verify the character of something’ (1 Cor. 3.13; 11.28; 1 Tim. 3.10; 1 Pet. 1.7)” (Gene L. Green, *The Letters to the Thessalonians*, PNCT, 264).

v. 22 **kind of evil** “Evil” can be understood as a noun, “every kind of evil” (NIV) *prophecy* or as an adjective, “every evil kind,” *of prophecy*. In either case the meaning is the same — “test all prophetic utterances; hold fast to the good utterances, but abstain from every evil kind of utterance” (Blight, 168).



APPLY THE TEXT

CENTRAL MESSAGE OF THE TEXT

Test the interpretations of those who teach the Bible — like the Bereans did — so you can hold on to what is true and reject what is false.

CENTRAL MESSAGE FOR YOUR LIFE

(Rewrite the Central Message above to personally apply to your own life)



3 LIVING QUESTIONS

The “Living Questions” are simple questions we may ask of any text in order to apply the Bible to our life. Answer the questions below as personally as you can.

1. What does this passage teach me about God?

2. What does this passage teach me about myself?

3. What does this passage lead me to do?



FAMILY TALK

One of my favorite childhood memories is going to my grandparents' lake house at Possum Kingdom. We would fish off the dock, ski or run around the woods for hours and, my all-time favorite, cliff dive. Sandwiched between an older brother and younger male cousin, I was determined to not be outdone or left behind. So, I would strap on my life jacket, scurry up the cliff, put my toes over the edge and leap from what felt like hundreds of feet in the air. Every summer we'd arrive at the lake house and instantly beg our grandfather, Bops, to take us to the cliff. We were ready to throw caution to the wind. After all, we had jumped off these cliffs 1000 times. But Bops knew better. He knew tree limbs and all kinds of debris could settle under these cliffs and wouldn't let us dive until he made sure it was safe. In our immaturity, we were ready to leap before we looked, but Bops' wisdom said to always test first for safety. Our passage this week tells us to examine everything. Many things in today's culture have enough Christian verbiage to sound biblically correct. Unfortunately, so much of what is being posted on socials or spoken by the secular worldview as gospel is rooted in progressive Christianity or other philosophies that will lead our children astray. Like Bops, our job as parents is to test all things, to examine everything with the Bible as our plumbline of truth. Parents, we're praying you fall in love with God's Word and hold it in your heart so you can share truth with your child!

What Does The Bible Say?

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:19-22.

1. Who should you not quench?
2. How should you treat prophecies?
3. What should you reject?

What Do You Think?

What does it mean to "quench the Spirit?"

What Do You Do?

Using a dry sponge, add water to it little by little. Notice how the sponge grows when you add water to it. How is this like the Christian life?

CORE COMPETENCY: Single-Mindedness

I pay attention to what God thinks is important for my life.

MEMORY VERSE: 1 Thessalonians 5:11

"Therefore, encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing."

KidPIX COUPON

Earn 1 KidPIX Token by completing the CENTRAL Kids Bible Study on this page and another token by memorizing and reciting the memory verse for this week.

Questions: kids@wearecentral.org

- ☐ I completed my Bible Study
- ☐ I memorized this week's verse
- ☐ I brought my Bible to church
- ☐ I brought a friend



CHILD'S NAME

GRADE

PARENT SIGNATURE

OUR CORE COMPETENCIES

CENTRAL BELIEFS

Authority of the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16-17)
I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Church (Ephesians 4:15-16)
I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Eternity (John 14:1-4)
I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

The Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9)
I believe the Holy Spirit convicts, calls, converts and changes me as a child of God.

Humanity (John 3:16)
I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Identity in Christ (John 1:12)
I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:1-4)
I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God who became man, died for sinners and rose from the dead.

Life Purpose (Acts 20:24)
I believe I am a steward of God's resources and have been redeemed to participate in His Kingdom purposes for His glory.

Personal God (Psalm 121:1-2)
I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Salvation by Grace (Ephesians 2:8-9)
I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.



CENTRAL VIRTUES

Love (1 John 4:10-12)
I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Joy (John 15:11)
I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace (Philippians 4:6-7)
I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself and others.

Patience (Proverbs 14:29)
I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness (1 Thessalonians 5:15)
I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others

Faithfulness (Proverbs 3:3-4)
I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Gentleness (Philippians 4:5)
I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Self-Control (Titus 2:11-13)
I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Grace (Colossians 3:13)
I demonstrate forgiveness, mercy and generosity to others, even when they have offended me.

Hope (1 Peter 1:3-5)
I have a growing anticipation of God's promises and my secure eternity with Him.

Humility (Philippians 2:3-4)
I choose to esteem others above myself.



CENTRAL PRACTICES

Bible Study (Hebrews 4:12)
I study the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Biblical Community (Acts 2:44-47)
I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Compassion (Psalm 82:3-4)
I seek to serve the last, the least and the lost in my community.

Disciple-Making (2 Timothy 2:2)
I multiply godly beliefs, virtues and practices in others to encourage their spiritual growth in Christ.

Evangelism (Acts 1:8)
I share Jesus with others through personal proclamation and demonstration of the gospel.

Generosity (2 Corinthians 9:6-11)
I gladly give my resources to fulfill God's purposes.

Prayer (Psalm 66:16-20)
I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-Mindedness (Matthew 6:33)
I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts (Romans 12:4-6)
I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Worship (Psalm 95:1-7)
I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

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Stephanie Thomas (B.B.A University of Texas at Arlington). Stephanie is married to James and they have four children: Elijah, Levi, Ella and Simon. Stephanie has attended Central Bible Church for more than 20 years, has been on staff since 2014, and now serves as Children's Minister.

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