

SERMON: HOLD YOUR HOLT

1st Thessalonians 5:21

Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.

Introduction

This sermon could be considered a sequel to last Sunday's sermon. Both seek to address the real-life problems that we face today. There are many striking parallels with the early church and contemporary Christians. They had existential questions, problems, and concerns; we have our own set of questions, problems, and concerns. The advice Paul gives, in our text, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, was valid for them, and it is equally valid and helpful for us today.

Now, let me give you a quick review of your Sunday School and Wednesday Bible class teaching to help us understand this verse and Paul's other writings. The letters of the New Testament were written before the gospels. In fact, many scholars believe that 1st Thessalonians was the first New Testament book written. Many of the members of the early church believed that Jesus would return in a matter of weeks or months. The longest delay, they thought, would be about a year or two. This concept of His imminent return caused a lot of questions to arise, which Paul answered. Let's look at some of these questions to get a feel for the context of Paul's writing in this book and his other epistles.

Question: When we are raptured up, what will happen to our deceased relatives? Paul's answer: The dead in Christ will rise first. They will not be left behind; they will be ahead of you. (Please read 1st Thessalonians 4:13-18.)

Question: Since Christ is coming right back, should engaged couples proceed with marriage? Since there is no marriage in heaven, would that be a waste of time and money? Paul's answer: Go on and get married. It is better to marry than to burn with passion.

(Please read 1st Corinthians 7:9.)

Question: Should married people continue physical intimacy? What if I got pregnant and am raptured up? Will the baby be born in heaven? Paul's answer: Continue physical intimacy, except by mutual consent for spiritual reasons. Marriage is a symbol of Christ and His church.

(Please read 1st Corinthians 7:1-5.)

We have the full weight of the completed Biblical cannon, and these questions may seem silly to us now. However, we must admit that we have our own set of questions, problems, and concerns. I repeat: We have our own set of existential questions, problems, and concerns. When will the pandemic be over? Is the vaccine safe? Should we home school our children or send them to public or private school? Is democracy

really in jeopardy? How serious is the threat of domestic and foreign terrorism? Should I worship in person or virtually?

In the book of 1st Thessalonians, Paul gives a lot of good, practical advice. This verse capsulized a lot of his teachings. He told them and tells us to test or vet everything before acceptance. Don't get caught up in frivolous fads or unfounded conspiracies. He told them and tells us to hold firmly to our faith. Because Christ had not returned, many of them became disillusioned, discontented, disappointed, depressed, and had drifted from the principles of the faith. He admonished the church at Thessalonica not to abandon the tried and true principles. He told them to hold on and not let go - to maintain a firm grip on their faith. Our fore-parents expressed it this way, "Hold your holt; don't lose your grip." What are the practical steps to holding your holt in these difficult times? Let's explore.

Exposition

1. Lift Your Mind, Heart, and Spirit Constantly With The Word Of The Lord.

(Saturate Yourself With The Word.)
 (The Bible Has An App For Every Situation.)
 (Execute The Word In Your Everyday Life.)
 (2nd Timothy 3:16-17; Colossians 3:1-2.)

2. Learn The Will Of The Lord For Your Life.

(See How God Made You.)
 (God's Will Is Expressed Through Our Unique Gifts And Talents.)
 (God Speaks Through Opportunities.)
 (Seize The Opportunities to Serve.)
 (Listen To The Holy Spirit.)
 (2nd Samuel 2:1; Psalm 32:8; Psalm 37:23; Romans 12:1-2;
 Ephesians 5:17; Hebrews 10:36.)

3. Live The Life Of the Lord.

(Do What Jesus Would Do, If He Were In Your Situation.)
 (If Jesus Wouldn't Do It, Don't You Do It.)
 (If Jesus Would Do It, Do It With Enthusiasm.)
 (Philippians 1:21; Galatians 2:20.)

4. Love The Way and Work Of the Lord.

(Athletes Love The Sport And Can't Wait To Play After An Injury.)
 (Motorcyclists Ride Again After A Life-Threatening Crash.)
 (We Must Not Grow Weary In Well Doing.)
 (We Must Not Give Up When The Enemy Attacks Us.)
 (We Must Continue To Do The Right Thing, For The Right Reason.)
 (1st Corinthians 13:1-3.)

(What Is Your Labor Of Love?)
(1st Thessalonians 1:3; Hebrews 6:10.)

5. Look for the Victory of the Lord.

(Keep Hope Alive, Because There Is No Failure in God.)
(We Are On The Winning Team.)
(Romans 8:37; 1st Corinthians 15:57.)

Closing Thoughts

These are difficult times. The Word of God has practical advice to allow us to thrive despite the impediments of the evil one. The Bible is timeless and timely. Let's not give up on God; He has not given up on us. The Word and the Blood still work, so hold your holt! Give God Glory! Give God All The Glory!

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