

SERMON TEXT: I Thessalonians 5:16-24 (Present day Salonika, Greece, also called Therma in the past)

Vs. 19 – Do not put out the Spirit’s fire, (Extinguish - σβεννυτε -)

Vs. 20 – do not treat prophecies with contempt. (Do not despise - μη εξουθενειτε -)

Vs. 21 – Test everything. Hold on to the good.

Vs. 22- Avoid every kind of evil.

Vs. 23 – May God Himself, The God of peace, sanctify - αγιασαι - you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless -αμεμπτως - at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Vs. 24 – The One Who calls you is faithful, and He will do it.

GREETING: Let us hold unswerving to the hope we profess, for He Who promised is faithful.

How do you put out a fire? Deprive the fire of Oxygen using a fire Extinguisher – Water – Dirt.

In the opening verse of our sermon text today, as the Apostle Paul writes to the believers in Thessalonica, present day Salonika, Greece, Paul simply says: Literal translation: “*Do not extinguish the Spirit*”

As we celebrate the ADVENT season, we look at and see how God has COME. In Bethlehem – Will come on the Last Day – To Us – And we pray He would come to others.

By God’s grace He has come to us and has brought us to faith in Jesus, through the Means of Grace – The Gospel in Word and Sacrament (Baptism – See Acts 2:38-39, Acts 22:16, Matt. 28:19-20).

When someone has been brought to faith in Jesus as their One and only Savior, it means that we have been covered with Christ’s perfect life (Gal. 3:26-29), our sins are forgiven, and we can look forward to heaven as heirs of eternal life.

What does it mean to extinguish the Spirit which lives in us as believers?

To EXTINGUISH the Spirit’s fire means that person is no longer a believer on the road to heaven, but is now an unbeliever, on the road to hell. What a drastic change!

In addition to this: Paul adds:

Vs. 20 – **do not treat prophecies with contempt.** (Do not despise - μη εξουθενειτε -)

God’s Word is Prophecy.

Scripture speaks of Christ’s first coming as an infant lowly to live – die - and rise for the sin of the World.

God’s Word speaks of Christ’s Second coming to take us and all believers to heaven.

In Catechism Class we learned the 3rd Commandment: *Remember the Sabbath Day by keeping it holy.*

What does this mean? We should fear and love God that we do not despise preaching and His Word, but regard it as holy and gladly hear and learn it.”

Do you know someone who has drifted away or just plain walked away from the Word of the Lord?

When this happens, the person has treated God's Word with contempt and extinguished the Spirit's fire.

When we see this happen in others, it hurts our heart.

When we ourselves struggle to dig into the Word of God, the Holy Bible, we see our own sinful nature at work. We also see the devil and the sinful world which try to lead us away from Christ Jesus and the salvation that He has won for us on the Cross of Calvary.

God through the Apostle Paul is warning the congregation in Thessalonica and US, to remain faithful to the Word of our Lord.

Vs. 21 – **Test everything. Hold on to the good.** How do you test preachers of the Bible? You, yourself must be in the Word, studying it. Reading it and *Let Scripture Interpret Scripture!*

Vs. 22- **Avoid every kind of evil.** Do not pet the Lion. Do not put yourself into the Lion's Den. Flee from evil, do not give Satan a foothold. Stay away from those naughty internet sites. Do not go to the bar without your spouse or if you have a problem with alcohol. Do not get caught up in those gossip sessions that some people enjoy, rather walk away. Do not read books that are filled with false doctrine and do not make it a regular practice to listen to those preachers who distort the Word of God. Garbage In! Garbage Out!

Thessalonica was Greek. Some of the philosophies of the Greeks include:

SOPHISTS – Who taught that truth is a matter of individual opinion.

The Sophists taught that there is no such thing as ABSOLUTE TRUTH. (Sounds like Pontius Pilate: John 18:38)

Of course, as Christians we know that God's Word is Truth. What God says, God means. As God has revealed His Word and His Will and the Way of Salvation in the Holy Bible, we have the Absolute Truth. What God has revealed to us in the Holy Bible is always correct, even when we cannot understand it with our own human reason.

STOICS – Who taught that living according to reason is happiness and everything else is unimportant.

EPICUREANS – Who believed: Eat Drink and be Merry for tomorrow we die.

SKEPTICS – Who taught that nothing really matters at all.

Also included in the history of the Greek culture was mythology which included the false gods and beliefs of: Zeus (See Also Acts 14:11-12) – Apollo – Dionysius – Pluto – Hermes – Poseidon – Hera – Aphrodite – Artemis (See also Acts 19:24-35) – Athena.

It was these types of things that posed a threat to the faith of the believers in Thessalonica. There was also confusion concerning the coming of the Lord Jesus on the Last Day. (See First Thess. 4:13-18)

And so to state it again, God through Paul says: - Do not put out the Spirit's fire, – do not treat prophecies with contempt. – Test everything. Hold on to the good. - Avoid every kind of evil.

God in His Grace has come to us and has brought us to faith in Jesus and sanctified us, that has made us Holy through faith in Christ Jesus.

1Co 6:11 ye are washed but ye are sanctified but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.

Unfortunately: We know that because of our Sinful Nature, which we have had since the moment we were conceived (Ps. 51:5), that by nature we are hostile to God (Rom. 8:7), and that Every Inclination of our heart is only evil all the time (Gen. 6:5) and our righteous acts are as filthy rags (Isa. 64:6), We are not ALWAYS Faithful to God, YET: GOD IS ALWAYS FAITHFUL.

He always has been, and He always will be!

Vs. 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.

Vs. 24 – The One Who calls you IS FAITHFUL, and He will do it.

Do Not Give up on God. He did not give up on you but kept on hanging on the cross to make payment for all your sin.

Rom. 5:8 - “But God demonstrates His love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us!” AMEN