

I Thessalonians 5:20–28

I Thessalonians 5:20 Despise not prophesyings.

THE Greek word for *prophesyings* is #4394 *prophēteia*. *Strong's Concordance's* definition is as follows:

prophecy, prophesying; the gift of communicating and enforcing revealed truth.

HELPS Word-studies defines *prophēteia* as follows:

“(from 4396 *prophētēs*, ‘prophet,’ derived from 4253 *pro*, ‘before’ and 5346 *phēmí*, ‘make clear, assert as a priority’)—properly, what is clarified beforehand; prophecy which involves divinely-empowered forth-telling (asserting the mind of God) or fore-telling (prediction).

Tayer's Greek Lexicon defines *prophēteia* as—

discourse emanating from divine inspiration and declaring the purposes of God, whether by reproof and admonishing the wicked, or comforting the afflicted, or revealing things hidden; especially by foretelling future events.

Directly after the command to *quench not the spirit* we have the divine com-

mandment to *despise not prophesyings*. One of the reasons the Thessalonians were instructed by the apostle to *despise not prophesyings* is that of all the gifts of the Spirit, prophecy is that which produces edification for the entire church.¹ Therefore, coupled with the command to quench not the Spirit and the spiritual fire associated with it, now the apostle tells the Thessalonians not to despise prophesying. To *quench not the Spirit* and to *despise not prophesyings* are linked together so that the fire of the Holy Spirit should not be dampened because of a low view of prophetic truth. Prophecy is also the gift of the Spirit that is brought forth from the inspiration of the Spirit, whereby the Holy Spirit will inspire a message directly linked to an assembly or individual it is intended for. Prophecy, when it is genuine and from above, is highly necessary to remind those gathered in the Lord's name that the Lord knows the hearts of all men.²

(*Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers*, I Thess. 5:20) *Despise not prophesyings*.—The highest outward or charismatic manifestation of this inward fire was the gift of “prophecy” (1 Corinthians 12:28; 1 Corinthians 14:1; 1 Corinthians 14:5; 1 Corinthians 14:39),³ which was an inspired and inspiring

1 I Cor. 14:4–5 *He that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth himself; but he that prophesieth edifieth the church. ⁵I would that ye all spake with tongues but rather that ye prophesied: for greater is he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues, except he interpret, that the church may receive edifying.*

2 I Cor. 14:24–25 *But if all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all: ²⁵And thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth.*

3 I Cor. 12:28 *And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.*

I Cor. 14:1 *Follow after charity, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy.*

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preaching. The despondency of the Thessalonians led them not only to quench the fervour of the Holy Ghost in their own bosoms, but to turn a cold and disparaging ear to the sanguine “prophets” who preached to them, the effect of which insensibility was to “quench the Spirit” by degrees in the prophets also. It is because of this double effect of gloominess, inward upon themselves, and outward upon others, that the command, “Quench not,” occurs between the exhortation to thanksgiving and the warning not to despise prophecy.

Prophecy will be either foretelling or forthtelling. This includes foretelling the future⁴ or forthtelling some hidden yet present truth brought forth by the inspiration of the Spirit.⁵ Nothing that is truly prophetic and is brought forth directly from God is either premeditated or imagined by man. God is the origin of

true prophecy, and those present when it is brought forth will know it.

First Corinthians reveals that believers should greatly desire the gift of prophecy to be brought forth when saints gather in Christ’s name. *Follow after charity, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy* (I Cor. 14:1). Because the church needs to further understand God and His will for man, the church should earnestly desire the gift of prophecy. This is not to say that those who do not have the gift of prophecy should attempt to bring forth divine revelation that has never been given to them by God, but rather that those who have been imparted with such a spiritual gift as this should have their revelations both embraced and recognized as having their source in God. All Christians, therefore, should highly esteem the

I Cor. 14:5 I would that ye all spake with tongues but rather that ye prophesied: for greater is he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues, except he interpret, that the church may receive edifying.

I Cor. 14:39 Wherefore, brethren, covet to prophesy, and forbid not to speak with tongues.

4 II Chron. 20:37 Then Eliezer the son of Dodavah of Mareshah prophesied against Jehoshaphat, saying, Because thou hast joined thyself with Ahaziah, the LORD hath broken thy works. And the ships were broken, that they were not able to go to Tarshish.

Jer. 25:30 Therefore prophesy thou against them all these words, and say unto them, The LORD shall roar from on high, and utter his voice from his holy habitation; he shall mightily roar upon his habitation; he shall give a shout, as they that tread the grapes, against all the inhabitants of the earth.

Ezek. 6:2-7 Son of man, set thy face toward the mountains of Israel, and prophesy against them, ³And say, Ye mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Lord GOD; Thus saith the Lord GOD to the mountains, and to the hills, to the rivers, and to the valleys; Behold, I, even I, will bring a sword upon you, and I will destroy your high places. ⁴And your altars shall be desolate, and your images shall be broken: and I will cast down your slain men before your idols. ⁵And I will lay the dead carcasses of the children of Israel before their idols; and I will scatter your bones round about your altars. ⁶In all your dwellingplaces the cities shall be laid waste, and the high places shall be desolate; that your altars may be laid waste and made desolate, and your idols may be broken and cease, and your images may be cut down, and your works may be abolished. ⁷And the slain shall fall in the midst of you, and ye shall know that I am the LORD.

Amos 7:15-17 And the LORD took me as I followed the flock, and the LORD said unto me, Go, prophesy unto my people Israel. ¹⁶Now therefore hear thou the word of the LORD: Thou sayest, Prophesy not against Israel, and drop not thy word against the house of Isaac. ¹⁷Therefore thus saith the LORD; Thy wife shall be an harlot in the city, and thy sons and thy daughters shall fall by the sword, and thy land shall be divided by line; and thou shalt die in a polluted land: and Israel shall surely go into captivity forth of his land.

5 Jer. 26:12-13 Then spake Jeremiah unto all the princes and to all the people, saying, The LORD sent me to prophesy against this house and against this city all the words that ye have heard. ¹⁵Therefore now amend your ways and your doings, and obey the voice of the LORD your God; and the LORD will repent him of the evil that he hath pronounced against you.

Luke 1:67-75 And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied, saying, ⁶⁸Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people, ⁶⁹And hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David; ⁷⁰As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began: ⁷¹That we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us; ⁷²To perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant; ⁷³The oath which he sware to our father Abraham, ⁷⁴That he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear, ⁷⁵In holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life.

speaking forth of prophetic truth in the church, coupled with divine love, so that through both a gift of the Spirit,⁶ prophecy, and a fruit of the Spirit,⁷ love, spiritual edification is brought forth. And just as love should be hot, not lukewarm,⁸ so also should prophetic truth burn within the soul. If anyone cannot discern between that which his own mind brings forth and that which the Holy Spirit brings forth, then he should never claim to be speaking for God.

It is also common that those who lack Christ's baptism of the Spirit and fire will seek to condemn and mock the spiritual fervor of the Holy Spirit in Christ's true saints.⁹ The Greek word for *despise* is #1848 *eksouthenēō*. HELPS Word-studies says it is “(from 1537 /ek, ‘completely out from,’ which intensifies *outhenēō*, ‘bring to naught, reduce to nothing’)—properly, cast out as nothing; set at naught; ‘to count as nothing, to treat with utter contempt.’ *Strong’s Concordance* defines the word as “to despise, treat with contempt,” with its usage as “I set at naught, ignore, despise.” Not only those outside the church but also many who claim to

be in her will despise and set at naught the divine gift of prophecy. Hence, those comfortable in religion will want nothing to shake their dull state, even if it is the Spirit of God Who is intending to do so. Thus, many who claim to believe in God will push aside and ultimately treat with contempt that which is actually inspired by God. This was the habit of rebellious Israel, who rejected the prophets’ inspired words,¹⁰ and it is still clearly present and common today among many who profess to both believe in and follow the Son of God but ultimately reject the Holy Spirit’s promptings in His church.

When inspiration of the Spirit is present in an assembly and prophecy is brought forth from God, those who are unbelievers or unlearned will recognize the presence of the Lord and come to realize for themselves that God is among them. *But if all prophecy, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all: And thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth* (I Cor. 14:24–25). Un-

6 I Cor. 12:4–11 *Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; to another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.*

Rom. 12:5–7 *So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching; Gal. 5:22–23 *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.**

8 Rev. 3:15–16 *I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.*

9 Acts 2:13–15 *Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine. But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judaea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words: For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day.*

10 I Sam. 8:7 *And the LORD said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them.*

Isa. 30:10 *Which say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits:*

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doubtedly no church can worship God as it should if it does not regularly feel the Lord's presence through the gift of prophecy manifested among its members. Understandably, for actual faith in God to be produced, the true Word of God must be spoken.¹¹ Since it is the Word of God that actually prompts faith in God, this must include God's will being revealed through prophetic truth. In respect to the gift of prophecy and its penetrating effect on the unlearned and unbelieving, Barnes writes,

(Barnes' Notes on the Bible, I Cor. 14:25) And thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest—Made manifest to himself in a surprising and remarkable manner. He shall be led to see the "real" designs and motives of his heart. His conscience would be awakened; he would recall his former course of life; he would see that it was evil; and the present state of his heart would be made known to himself. It is possible that he would suppose that the speaker was aiming directly at him, and "revealing" his feelings to others; for such an effect is often produced. The convicted sinner often supposes that the preacher particularly intends "him," and wonders that he has such an acquaintance with his feelings and his life; and often supposes that he is designing to disclose his feelings to the congregation. It is possible that Paul here may mean that the prophets, by inspiration, would be able to reveal some secret facts in regard to the stranger; or to state the ill design which he might have had in coming into the assembly; or to state some things in regard to him which could be known only to himself; as was the case with Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1,¹² seq.); but perhaps it is better to understand this in a more general sense, as describing the proper and more common effect of truth, when it is applied

by a man's own conscience. Such effects are often witnessed now; and such effects show the truth of religion; its adaptedness to people; the omniscience and the power of God; the design of the conscience, and its use in the conversion of sinners

*And so falling down on his face—*The usual posture of worship or reverence in eastern countries. It was performed by sinking on the knees and hands, and then placing the face on the ground. This might be done publicly; or the apostle may mean to say that it would lead him to do it in private.

*He will worship God—*He will be converted, and become a Christian.

1 Thessalonians 5:21 Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.

After the encouragement of the Thessalonians to *despise not prophesyings* comes the command to *prove all things and hold fast to that which is good*. This undoubtedly includes determining where true prophetic truth is being spoken and where it is only presented as such. To *prove all things* is necessary, since many have claimed to speak for the Lord but actually do not represent Him at all.¹³ Discerning of spirits¹⁴ is therefore both critical and necessary to ensure that nothing that does not have its source in God is allowed into His church. This is why all things should be proved by both God's Word and God's Spirit before they are confirmed as having come from Him. The simple believe every word, and because they have no fixed doctrines or truths by which to be governed, they will often embrace many things not inspired or led by the Holy Spirit. *The simple believeth every word:*

11 Rom. 10:17 *So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*

12 Acts 5:1 *But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession,*

13 Matt. 7:21–23 *Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.*²² *Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?*²³ *And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.*

14 I Cor. 12:10 *To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues:*

but the prudent man looketh well to his going (Prov. 14:15).

(*Benson Commentary*, Prov. 14:15) *A foolish man; believeth every word*—Is easily deceived with the smooth words and fair pretences of false and deceitful men;

Not one person, nor one man who professes to walk by and be led by the Spirit, should be considered as the Lord's without careful biblical and spiritual scrutiny. Thus, it is imperative that God's people learn the great difference between the Holy Spirit with His true workings and the false prophets and ministries that claim to come in Christ's name but in truth have no real connection to Him. *Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world* (I John 4:1).

(*Benson Commentary*, I John 4:1) *Believe not every spirit*—By which any teacher is, or professes to be, actuated: or, believe not every teacher who pretends to be inspired by the Spirit of God; *but try the spirits*—Namely, *whether they are of God*—By the rule which God hath given. We are to try all spirits by the written word: *To the law and to the testimony!* If any man speak not according to these, the spirit which actuates him is not of God. *Because many false prophets*—Or false teachers; *are gone forth into the world*—With an intention to draw disciples after them.

(*Barnes' Notes on the Bible*, I John 4:1) The true and the false teachers of religion alike claimed to be under the influence of the Spir-

it of God, and it was of importance that all such pretensions should be examined. It was not to be admitted because anyone claimed to have been sent from God that therefore he was sent. Every such claim should be subjected to the proper proof before it was conceded. All pretensions to divine inspiration, or to being authorised teachers of religion, were to be examined by the proper tests, because there were many false and delusive teachers who set up such claims in the world.

Christians are instructed to *believe not every spirit*, but *try the spirits*, lest spiritual imposters are mistaken for those actually inspired by the Lord.

(*Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers*, I Thess. 5:21) *Prove all things*.—The right reading inserts a “but”:—“I bid you pay all reverence to the cheering utterances of your prophets (comp. Acts 15:32);¹⁵ but take care! put everything to the test.” That the warning was needed, or would be needed soon, is shown by 2Thessalonians 2:2.¹⁶ It is couched in general terms (all things), but, of course, has special reference to all things purporting to be manifestations of the Spirit. And how were these revelations to be tested? If they were not in accordance (1) with the original tradition (2Thessalonians 2:2), (2) with the supernatural inspirations of the other prophets who sat as judges (1Corinthians 14:29),¹⁷ (3) with enlightened common sense (I John 4:1),¹⁸ they could not be “good.” The word “good” here is not vague and general good in the moral sense—not the same Greek word as in 1Thessalonians 5:15¹⁹—but “good” in the sense of “genuine,” ...

I Thessalonians 5:22 Abstain from all appearance of evil.

15 Acts 15:32 *And Judas and Silas, being prophets also themselves, exhorted the brethren with many words, and confirmed them.*

16 II Thess. 2:2 *That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand.*

17 I Cor. 14:29 *Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge.*

18 I John 4:1 *Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.*

19 I Thess. 5:15 *See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men.*

If a man is led by the Holy Spirit and has a strong foundation of apostolic doctrine, he will avoid not only doing evil but also doing any other thing that might have the appearance of it. Evil is the work of the devil, and any evil, even if it is so only in appearance, should never be even remotely connected to the children of God. This world also, because it is under the influence of Satan,²⁰ will promote evil as a form of good. Undoubtedly, he who engages in and practices evil hates the light. *For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd* (John 3:20). *Hate* is a strong word, yet that is exactly what exists in those who because they abide in darkness, hate the light. The Greek word for *hate* is #3404 *miseó*. *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance* defines it as “From a primary *misos* (hatred); to detest (especially to persecute); by extension, to love less—hate(-ful).”

(*Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers*, John 3:20) Not only does the man that doeth evil love darkness rather than light, but he hates the light. (Comp. Note on John 7:7.)²¹ Its presence makes manifest and reproves his works, which he would hide even from himself. It illumines the dark and secret chambers of the heart, and reveals thoughts and deeds which conscience, seeing in this light, trembles at, and turns away to darkness that it may hide itself from its own gaze.

(*Barnes' Notes on the Bible*, John 3:20) that men by nature “hate” the gospel. No man who is a sinner loves it; and no man by nature is disposed to come to it, any more than an adulterer or thief is disposed to come to the daylight, and do his deeds of wickedness there.

3. The reason why the gospel, is hated is that men are sinners. “Christ is hated because sin is loved.”

When a nation or generation forsakes God and chooses sin, it will first attempt to change the definition of what God considers as sin. This is done to encourage the spread of evil in the world. Hence, if the sentiment is that sin is not sin and is not an affront to God, then more people can be led into practicing it. For this reason Satan and those led by him will label *evil good, and good evil*. Isaiah speaks of this devilish practice, routinely engaged in by those who have rejected divine rule: *Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!* (Isa. 5:20). It is not enough for evil men to depart from the light, since they will simultaneously attempt to pervert what true light really is. Therefore sinners and/or apostates will consistently claim that sin is righteousness and that righteousness is sin. Not content with merely breaking God's commandments themselves, those who walk in sin will routinely seek to deceive others that sin is not sin and is actually righteousness.

(*Benson Commentary*, Isa. 5:20) *Wo unto them that call evil good, and good evil*—That endeavour to confound both the names and the natures of virtue and vice, of piety and impiety; commend and applaud what is evil, and disparage and discountenance what is good; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness, &c.—Ignorance and error, for knowledge and truth: in other words, who subvert, or pervert, all the great principles of truth, wisdom, and of righteousness. A most corrupt condition of a church and state is that indeed, “in which men, accustomed to vices, begin, with the things themselves, to lose also the names of them, and to draw a veil, as it were, over their impieties, by sanctifying their crimes with the names of virtues.”

20 (NIV) I John 5:19 *We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one.*

21 John 7:7 *The world cannot hate you; but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil.*

To fear the Lord is *to hate evil*,²² and all who possess true reverence for Him will do exactly this. It is for this reason that engaging in even the appearance of evil should be avoided. Ultimately light and darkness should never be merged or molded into one, simply because they are totally contrary one to another, and therefore any truce or connection between the two should never exist. This is the will of God, and you can be sure that any who speak contrary to this do not speak for Him.²³

I Thessalonians 5:23 And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Greek word for *blameless* is #3648 *holokléros*. *Strong's Concordance* defines it as “complete, entire.” Its usage is “complete in every part, sound, perfect, entire.” Jesus saves the whole man, his whole being.

(Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers, I Thess. 5:23) Sanctify you wholly.—Rather, *sanctify you whole*. The idea is rather that of leaving no part unsanctified,

Paul's prayer for the Thessalonians was that the entirety of their whole being, body, soul, and spirit would be preserved blameless at Christ's coming. It is thus the will of God that every part of a man, including his body, soul and spirit, is sanctified and actually preserved blameless at the coming of the Lord Jesus.

I Thessalonians 5:24 Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.

The faithfulness spoken of is directly related to the previous verse, that God would be faithful to sanctify the believer's body, soul, and spirit at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. Because it is God Who calls, it is also God Who faithfully saves. The faithfulness of God therefore extends far beyond merely calling men to Himself, since His faithfulness will continue until the saved inherit all that He has purposed for them. Thankfully, all weight and responsibility for the believer being found fit for heaven and sanctified in God's sight rests on the one Who has called him to heaven. God is faithful, and those called by Him through Jesus Christ should wholeheartedly and without reservation believe this. *God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord* (I Cor. 1:9).

(Barnes' Notes on the Bible, I Cor. 1:9) God is faithful—That is, God is true, and constant, and will adhere to his promises. He will not deceive. He will not promise, and then fail to perform; he will not commence anything which he will not perfect and finish. The object of Paul in introducing the idea of the faithfulness of God here, is to show the reason for believing that the Christians at Corinth would be kept unto everlasting life. The evidence that they will persevere depends on the fidelity of God; and the argument of the apostle is, that as they had been called by Him into the fellowship of his Son, his faithfulness of character would render it certain that they would be kept to eternal life.

It is worth noting that God is the source of all calls of God. The work of salvation, therefore, has always been the Lord's work, and because of this, He will complete all that is necessary to save the believer

22 Prov. 8:13 *The fear of the LORD is to hate evil: pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate.*

23 I Tim. 6:3–5 *If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; ¹He is proud, knowing nothing, but dotting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, ²Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself.*

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through the working of His own spiritual and mighty power.²⁴

(*Matthew Poole's Commentary*, I Thess. 5:24)
It is an act of grace and mercy to call men; but when called, God's faithfulness is engaged to preserve them, and perfect the work begun:

I Thessalonians 5:25 Brethren, pray for us.

Paul realized not only that God was the source of his strength but also that other believers' prayers were necessary to ensure his future safety and continued ministerial success. No believer should go it alone, and none will if saints pray for one another as God has willed them to do. Undoubtedly, if mature believers pray for those sent to preach Christ, such prayers will not go unheeded or unanswered. Ultimately, every man both needs and is dependent upon the prayers of others. The apostle knew this and thus implored the Thessalonians to pray for himself, as well as Timothy and Silas.

I Thessalonians 5:26 Greet all the brethren with an holy kiss.

All God's people are to be greeted in a spiritual and holy manner. The Jews and many of the Gentiles around them demonstrated this respect and affection by sharing a *holy kiss* on the cheek, hand, or head. It was also the woman who kissed Jesus' feet who revealed her great love and affection for the Savior. *Thou gavest me no kiss; but this woman since the time I came in hath not*

ceased to kiss my feet (Luke 7:45). It is also hard to speak of a kiss without remembering the deceptive kiss of Judas when he betrayed Christ,²⁵ feigning friendship toward the Savior when actually his heart was set on betrayal. Hence, by both positive and negative examples it is observed that the biblical custom of greeting one another with a holy kiss is visible throughout God's Word.²⁶ It was evidenced in I Samuel in Saul's ordination²⁷ and in the book of Exodus as a display of deference and respect for those older than us.²⁸ At times there is no greater way to reveal love and affection for our brothers and sisters in Christ than by greeting them with a holy kiss. And though in our present Western culture spiritual wisdom should be used regarding this custom, it is surely not out of step with the revelation of God's Word.

I Thessalonians 5:27 I charge you by the Lord that this epistle be read unto all the holy brethren.

We have here Paul's charge to the Thessalonians that the epistle he penned to them should be read by all the holy brethren. The Greek for *charge* is #1775 *enorkizō*. It means "to adjure." According to *Strong's Concordance* its word origin is #3726 *horkizō*, which means "to make (one) swear, to adjure." The usage is "I adjure by, charge solemnly by."

(*Benson Commentary*, I Thess. 5:27) *I charge you*—Greek, ορκίζω υμᾶς, *I adjure you*, that is, I lay you under the obligation of an oath;

24 II Tim. 1:9 [God] hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began,

25 Luke 22:47–48 And while he yet spake, behold a multitude, and he that was called Judas, one of the twelve, went before them, and drew near unto Jesus to kiss him. ⁴⁸But Jesus said unto him, Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?

26 Rom. 16:16 Salute one another with an holy kiss. The churches of Christ salute you.

I Cor. 16:20 All the brethren greet you. Greet ye one another with an holy kiss.

II Cor. 13:12 Greet one another with an holy kiss.

27 I Sam. 10:1 Then Samuel took a vial of oil, and poured it upon his head, and kissed him, and said, Is it not because the LORD hath anointed thee to be captain over his inheritance?

28 Exod. 18:7 And Moses went out to meet his father in law, and did obeisance, and kissed him; and they asked each other of their welfare; and they came into the tent.

that this epistle—The first he wrote; *be read to all the holy brethren*—Namely, of your church. ... This epistle was doubtless sent to the presidents and pastors of the Thessalonian church, and the command, that the epistle should be read, was delivered to them.

“The same course, we may suppose, the apostle followed with respect to all his other inspired epistles. They were sent by him to the elders of the churches, for whose use they were principally designed, with a direction that they should be read publicly by some of their number to the brethren in their assemblies for worship; and that not once or twice, but frequently, that all might have the benefit of the instructions contained in them.

That which is a *charge* should not be compromised. Thus, in every Christian assembly it is imperative that Paul’s epistles to the Thessalonians should be read, studied, and ultimately preached to all the holy brethren. By doing so, we can hope that the return of Jesus Christ both maintains and holds the proper place it ought to in believers’ hearts. What caused the Thessalonians to sound out the Word of the Lord with such a holy, spiritual fervor was that they knew Jesus would soon return, and so they joyfully sought to spread His message to the world.

The ultimate end of all hope is to be—at Christ’s return, through Christ’s power—transformed into the same image as the Savior. It is also this hope, if believed, that purifies the Christian’s heart and life. *Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure* (I John 3:2–3).

(*Barnes’ Notes on the Bible*, I John 3:3) This hope of seeing the Saviour, and of being made like him; that is, every true Christian. On the nature and influence of hope, see the notes at Romans 8:24–25.²⁹

Purifieth himself—Makes himself holy. That is, under the influence of this hope of being like the Saviour, he puts forth those efforts in struggling against sin, and in overcoming his evil propensities, which are necessary to make him pure. The apostle would not deny that for the success of these efforts we are dependent on divine aid; but he brings into view, as is often done in the sacred writings, the agency of man himself as essentially connected with success. Compare Philippians 2:12.³⁰ The particular thought here is, that the hope of being like Christ, and of being permitted to dwell with him, will lead a man to earnest efforts to become holy, and will be actually followed by such a result.

What a man hopes for must, and will, form his character. Consequently, when saints set their affection on the return of Jesus Christ and possess genuine hope in it, they will be spiritually changed in the process. *And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure* (I John 3:3). There is nothing that purifies a man’s soul more, and prepares it better for the judgment, than possessing genuine and sincere belief in the Son of God’s return. It is this future anticipation of seeing the Lord in glory and being made like Him that greatly purifies a man’s religion. What men hope for is that which will ultimately form their character. When this is Christ, then it will be His image that men are transformed into. Thus, one of the great keys to spiritual transformation is by *beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord*.³¹ This principle is

29 Rom. 8:24–25 *For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?* ²⁵*But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.*

30 Phil. 2:12 *Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.*

31 II Cor. 3:18 *But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.*

so much greater than when men seek to change themselves through an unhealthy preoccupation with self. Hence, it is not by saints looking at their own reflections and shortcomings in the mirror that they are changed but rather only by beholding the glory of the Lord, which will produce transformation of life. The return of the Son of God in glory is also the true source of all genuine spiritual revival. We know this simply because it was belief in the Lord Jesus Christ and His return that prompted the Thessalonians to sound out the Word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia but also in all other places their faith was spoken of.³² They had been spiritually illuminated that Jesus Christ was Lord of all and were equally assured that He would come again to assert His lordship over the world.³³

I Thessalonians 5:28 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.

Appropriately, the apostle closes his epistle to the Thessalonians the same way he

began it³⁴—by reminding them that it was through the grace of God that they were saved.³⁵ Christianity at its core is a religion of grace. The specific grace spoken of is that grace given to sinners through the person of God's Son,³⁶ whereby through sincere and genuine belief in Him³⁷ they can receive forgiveness of sin and are promised to share in Christ's eternal glory.³⁸ The return of the Son of God in glory therefore is linked to and purposed for revealing not only Christ's own glory but also the purposed glory that will be imparted to all called to heaven through Him. Thankfully the *glory* of God, like the *grace* of God, is a gift from Him. It is the Lord Who gives *grace and glory*, and if man has received grace as a gift from the Lord, then you can be sure that he will also have divine glory imparted to him. *For the LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly* (Ps. 84:11).

32 *I Thess. 1:8 For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing.*

33 *Phil. 2:9–11 Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: ¹⁰That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; ¹¹And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

34 *I Thess. 1:1 Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians which is in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

35 *Eph. 2:8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:*

36 *John 1:17 For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.*

37 *Acts 16:31 And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.*

Rom. 10:9 That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.

38 *Col. 1:27 To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:*