



GOOD NEWS GUIDE

THE TRUTH SHALL SET YOU FREE

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March, 2020

A Thessalonian Lesson

We are looking this month at a passage from Paul's first letter to the Christians at Thessalonica:



We ask you, brothers, to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love

because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves. And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all. See that no one repays anyone evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to everyone. Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophecies, but test everything; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil. (1 Thess. 5:12-22 ESV)

When we read a passage like this, or hear it read in church, we tend to notice a few words, but miss a lot of the message. But this is important stuff. Paul is telling Christians, both then and now, several things about how to behave as a redeemed child of God. Let's look at the details ...

... respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you ... esteem them very highly in love because of their work ...

Those whom God has called to be leaders in His church—pastors, elders, deacons, chaplains, teachers of His truth—deserve our respect because of the work they have been given to do. Not every one of them behaves responsibly and respectably, and that is sad and shameful. Bad behavior by a Christian leader needs to be exposed and dealt with promptly and effectively; but those who are being faithful in their Christian leadership deserve our respect, our support, our love, and our prayers.

The same consideration extends, of course, to our Christian parents, grandparents, and other elders

They have also been given a position “over us” by God, and we should always respect that.

We have to use discernment, of course, and be guided by the Holy Spirit. In giving respect to all of those to whom respect is due.

Be at peace among yourselves.

Paul expands this idea in his letter to the Romans:

Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.” (Romans 12:17-19)

Be a person who promotes and maintains peace, rather than one who stirs up conflicts. In all circumstances be guided by the Spirit of God's love, rather than the spirit of the world or of your own selfish desires and inclinations.

... admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all.

This is all about being an example and a guide for others. The Christian life is supposed to be a life of “growing” in grace; of becoming more mature in our faith, more able to hear and obey the guiding of the Holy Spirit, and so on. And we are to help and encourage our brothers and sisters who have not come as far in the process as we have.

But here, again, there is a little more than is obvious. You will find that the primary one who is idle, fainthearted, weak, and in need of admonishment is you, yourself. So give yourself a good Christian pep talk when you need one.

See that no one repays anyone evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to everyone.

Jesus said that the two most important commandments are (1) Love God with all your heart, mind, and strength; and (2) Love your neighbor as yourself. He also said we are to love one another as

He has loved us. And probably the most important part of loving is being willing and ready to forgive those who have hurt or offended us. Paul is saying here, live as Jesus commanded us to live.

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

When life is going well, rejoice! Give thanks to God! But when things go wrong, even when disaster happens, rejoice anyway! Thank God, because He is still with you, in the midst of the circumstances and all the way to the other side, and—this is important—He will bring you through it, and something good will result from it. Paul also wrote, *we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.* (Romans 8:28) Not just pleasant things; all things.

Of course this may sound silly. How can one rejoice about being confined to a cell or a bed, or looking at what's left of a home destroyed by a fire or flood, or suffering the death of a loved one? All I can tell you is, I know we can trust God. He is bigger than any set of circumstances. He spoke the universe into existence. And He loves us. That does not really make sense either, but it is true.

It is God's will that we who abide in Christ should rejoice and be thanking God, regardless of our circumstances. If we mean it when we pray in the Lord's Prayer, "Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done," then we should just do it.

Do not quench the Spirit.

Jesus said to His disciples (and to us): *I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you. ... When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth ...* (John 14:16-17, 16:13a)

And Paul wrote, ... those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. (Romans 8:14 NIV)

The point being made here is that the Holy Spirit of God has been given to us, to be with us and live in us, to act as our guide—to help us know what to believe and help us to believe it; also to help us know how to act and give us the ability to act that way. To "quench the Spirit" is to resist that guidance and help—to "do our own thing" instead of obeying the

Spirit's leading. The more we quench the Spirit, the less we are able to hear Him; the more we listen and obey, the easier it is to hear His next instructions.

Do not quench the Spirit. Instead, give Him your attention; agree to let Him lead, and set your mind on following faithfully and boldly.

Do not despise prophecies, but test everything;

A prophecy is essentially a statement that contains a message from God for those who hear it. Some denominations encourage those who prophesy; other denominations discourage the practice or deny that it still happens. My belief is that God is able to speak through anyone at any time. It does not need to be announced, "Thus says the Lord."

For me, the meaning is, listen to what is being said. If it agrees with Scripture and the Holy Spirit is confirming it to my spirit, I accept it; if not, I reject it.

Any pastor or any Christian can say, "This is what God wants us to do." That is a prophecy. Test it to see if it is true. If so, give it your support; if not, then don't accept it or support it.

... hold fast what is good.

The primary good, of course, is love—agape love, the unselfish, God kind of love that is about giving, not getting. Immediately following 1 Corinthians 13, the great love chapter, Paul wrote, "Pursue love."

There are also many other things that are good—beauty, truth, exercise, rest, and on and on. Anything that is God-given and God-blessed is good. Hold fast to the good, preserve it, share it.

Abstain from every form of evil.

Do I need to tell you what is evil? The devil and his demons are evil, of course, and everything they promote is either evil or a perverted good. The world's enticements are evil, because their intention is to distract us from loving and obeying God. And the desires of our flesh are also evil when they urge us to do what God has not ordained and blessed. Paul tells us to be aware of the evils that surround us, and to shun them, avoid them, even flee from them.

My hope and prayer is that Paul's instructions will help you and me as we try to "abide in Christ."

Be blessed. Praise the LORD always. Amen.

Brother Roland

Ask me ... Send your Bible questions to me and I'll try to answer them in the "Good News Guide."
Your question may help someone else. **Brother Roland, P O Box 14, Fayetteville PA 17222**

C. S. Lewis on Forgiveness

[Jesus said,] "Pray then like this:

*"Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.*

For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."
(Matthew 6:9-15 ESV)

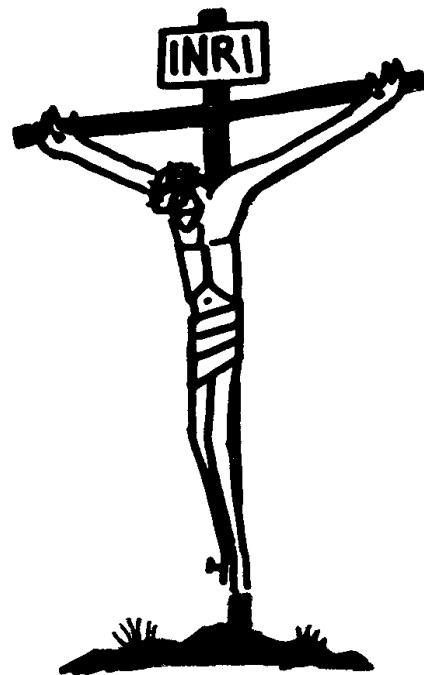
We say a great many things in church (and out of church too) without thinking of what we are saying. For instance, we say in the Creed "I believe in the forgiveness of sins." I had been saying it for several years before I asked myself why it was in the Creed. At first sight it seems hardly worth putting in. "If one is a Christian," I thought, "of course one believes in the forgiveness of sins. It goes without saying." But the people who compiled the Creed apparently thought that this was a part of our belief which we needed to be reminded of every time we went to church. And I have begun to see that, as far as I am concerned, they were right. To believe in the forgiveness of sins is not nearly so easy as I thought. Real belief in it is the sort of thing that very easily slips away if we don't keep on polishing it up.

We believe that God forgives us our sins; but also that He will not do so unless we forgive other people their sins against us. There is no doubt about the second part of this statement. It is in the Lord's Prayer; was emphatically stated by our Lord. If you don't forgive you will not be

forgiven. No part of His teaching is clearer, and there are no exceptions to it. He doesn't say that we are to forgive other people's sins provided they are not too frightful, or provided there are extenuating circumstances, or anything of that sort. We are to forgive them all, however spiteful, however mean, however often they are repeated. If we don't, we shall be forgiven none of our own.

From [The Weight of Glory](#)
Compiled in [A Year with C.S. Lewis](#)

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If He could forgive, so can we.

1 Corinthians 13

“The Love Chapter” is a wonderful description of the kind of love we are supposed to have for each other—the *agape*, the “God kind” of love that is all about caring, helping, forgiving, and serving others. It is the exact opposite of selfishness. We are commanded to love each other this way, but God also helps us do it, by the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. Enjoy the puzzle.

Puzzle:

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N I I T B L W Y K T W U T V T E H I E V T N F V H E T K S I T B
I T G H H O T V S X E S F D O P V W A U V I V T A U F A N T H D
K J N I X V V N J E T P R T F L V O R M S U I Z V K O C L I W P
E N I A M E R E E R H T E S E H T T L P N A Q T G B B W S S L E
E Z H O O N C T R I X P I L W O E O E D F O H K T W A I U N V W
S P T H H E D O C L T D O N O H I A N Y N E T O H Y P H K O Y Y
F B O S W V U N F V V A S R T V K G B O G A N H S C Z C L T F K
L O N Y W E B S I P I N P H P I E S Q R D S E T I K H O M P A B
E W N E I R P E B K Z T T S N N N A E J E D R P N N N F U R C V
S Z I S G F R O F I S I D T I I A A L O G U N U O E G A Y O F D
T K A E E A L D Z Z W I O O A E T C D W S D Y A V H N Y A U P B
O N G R H I M T S S W N E T E E V T I T A L W A Y S H O P E S U
N O I E T L M I E D G X N V S S I O S F E Y H J T Y G T F O M T
S W N V F S F C D U C U O T O F N P L N I T S S K O N O I G R D
I E U E M D I N E O O I O S Q L H O V F U E W P I B I F X A J O
E V B S T O W S Q M W F G M B E R F T B E C A Y R V Y D V G F N
V E R R J H S R E H T O R O N O H S I D T O N S E O D T I L E O
O R I E N A Q V A H K Z J L J K F N H W E V A O G L T R P S M T
L Y R P R A O Q E T O T W M E D H Y B O E L K Z S G G E I R J H
V T Q S U M W S R O O P E H T O T L L A E V I G I F I O C R H A
I H A Y X M E P Q G M J U T O P I T P Y W K W G X T N X L T B V
J I M A Z I G A Q Q P B A M M T L R P J L I Y K H T P W T Q S E
R N I W S M L B G L C A N F A T H O M A L L M Y S T E R I E S L
B G F L H J V R U I M J F E X B O V C U U S K U X O I V X L Q O
B G O A S U F F E R S O I C A N B O A S T N J A T D C N Z X B V
R V Y T H Y K C X Q V H K F Z X D A S J Q M M A S M Y Y E P L E
E E V I U I N V F D E R E G N A Y L I S A E T O N S I T I V Y R
F P V G C J I G T F H J P N R Y P Z O I M Y J F J R N R Q V I P
O F M E N O R A N G E L S J S C H J K K N K Z Z Y N W B T S A L

Words:

IF I SPEAK IN TONGUES
OF MEN OR ANGELS
AND DO NOT LOVE
I AM JUST NOISE
IF I CAN PROPHECY
CAN FATHOM ALL MYSTERIES
KNOW EVERYTHING
MOVE MOUNTAINS BY FAITH
BUT DO NOT HAVE LOVE
I AM NOTHING
IF I GIVE ALL TO THE POOR
SUFFER SO I CAN BOAST
BUT HAVE NO LOVE

I GAIN NOTHING
LOVE IS PATIENT
LOVE IS KIND
IT DOES NOT ENVY
IT DOES NOT BOAST
IT IS NOT PROUD
IT DOES NOT DISHONOR
OTHERS
LOVE IS NOT SELF-SEEKING
IT IS NOT EASILY ANGERED
IT DOES NOT KEEP SCORE
IT DOES NOT DELIGHT IN EVIL
IT REJOICES WITH THE TRUTH

LOVE ALWAYS PROTECTS
IT ALWAYS TRUSTS
IT ALWAYS HOPES
IT ALWAYS PERSEVERES
LOVE NEVER FAILS

THESE THREE REMAIN
FAITH, HOPE AND LOVE
THE GREATEST OF THESE
IS LOVE