

Cleanse Yourself

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[0 : 00] And the impact that has on how useful we are to God. 2 Timothy 2, verse...

! The third message, Paul's been kind of hammering us.

Early on in 1 Thessalonians, he asked us to treat one another better. Especially being careful of those that are in leadership over us. And then he urged us to lift one another up.

And then today, he's going to be commanding us to grow in our walk with the Lord. So it was, he asks, he urges, and now we're getting into more of commanding.

But before we get into that, I want to read 2 Timothy 2, 20-22. Paul says in 2 Timothy 2, 20-22, Now in a great house, there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay.

[1 : 24] Some for honorable use, some for dishonorable. Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from what is dishonorable, he will be a vessel for honorable use, set apart as holy, useful to the master of the house, ready for every good work.

So flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord with a pure heart. And I just, I went into my wife's domain and I grabbed a bunch of stuff.

And so, does anybody, does anybody know what this is? I almost want her to come up and pick it up so I don't break it.

But does anybody know what this is? It's a soup tureen. Yes, look at it. It's got a lid and it's got this ladle and it fits in there.

And don't anybody jump around and bounce this down because it will explode. Anybody know what a soup tureen is used for? Soup.

[2 : 39] All right, you guys are right on that. Okay. How about this one? This is, anybody know what this is? It is a pickle, relish actually, relish jar.

We use these in our house. We go and we buy like 50 pounds of rice. And then we fill them in here, put it on there, and then we stick them up on the shelf.

And it's really nice because you can see inside it. And you know, oh, I've got four jars left. I've got three jars left. I've got to go shopping for more rice. Very useful. Wonderful thing in the kitchen. Very handy.

Anybody know what this is? It's a basket. And you put things, watermelons. Watermelons might crush this one. I was thinking more bread, rolls, and things like that.

Laundry. That doesn't normally go in the kitchen, but it's definitely useful. This is something that comes out of the kitchen. Anybody know what this is?

[3 : 40] It is a coffee dispenser. Keeps your coffee hot. It doesn't spill in your hand. Wonderful tool. Anybody know what this is?

Unbreakable thermos, baby. Yeah, this is one of those you can use, right? You can take this fishing. You can take this in the forest. You can put soup. You can put coffee.

This thing's awesome, right? I intentionally threw it. Okay. But if we take a look at these, I'll be honest.

First, I use this every day. If there's a day that goes by that I don't have coffee, it's a good day to be in Texas.

This one, while I don't use every day, it's just rugged and dependable. It works.

[4 : 51] You don't worry about it. You don't worry about it. You saw me chuck it down. This is serviceable. It gets used quite a bit. But it's fairly delicate.

Okay? To be honest, this is both always in use and never, ever used.

Because my wife bought this for nostalgia reasons. And it sits up on the shelf for nostalgia reasons. We've never used it to dispense soup.

But it's pretty. Okay? Now, I'm not saying my house is great.

But just... Now, in a great house, there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay. Some for honorable use, some for dishonorable.

[5 : 53] Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from what is dishonorable, he will be a vessel for honorable use, set apart as holy. Remember, holy doesn't mean that you're untarnished.

Holy means that you've been set aside to God's purpose. Set aside as holy. Useful to the master of the house, ready for every good work.

What type of Christian are you? What type of Christian are you? You see, as believers, we get to choose how useful to God we are.

And that's what we're going to talk about today in 1 Thessalonians chapter 5. You see, Paul asked us to treat one another better. Paul urges us to lift one another up.

But Paul commands us to grow in our walk with the Lord. And that's what we're going to be talking about today. So if you've got your Bible, open to 1 Thessalonians chapter 5.

[7 : 19] Let's read verses 19 through 22. Do not quench the spirit.

Do not despise prophecies, but test everything. Hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil.

These are bullets. These are directives. These are statements. Do not quench the spirit.

Do not despise prophecies. Abstain from every form of evil. Boom, boom, boom. And that's what we're looking at today.

And we're going to start with quench not the spirit. Doesn't that sound really spiritual? I could have said don't quench the spirit, but that's, you know, verses quench not the spirit.

[8 : 21] It just sounds better. In Acts chapter 2, do you guys remember the story? Jesus has died. He has risen, and he's gone to glory. And the apostles and disciples are together in the upper room, and they're waiting because the spirit's going to show up.

And the spirit showed up as a great wind and as what? Tongues of fire above their head, right?

That's why it says in Acts, you know, I gave it away.

Terrible timing. That's right. The Holy Spirit, and it's depicted at other times as a fire, right? And I want to use this today because, well, everybody knows that a fire requires heat, fuel, and oxygen. It doesn't have to be exactly oxygen. It could be something that provides oxygen. They call it an oxidative, whatever, oxygen. Okay? So fire requires heat, fuel, and oxygen.

You take away all the heat, fire stops. If you take away all the fuel, fire stops. If you take all the oxygen, fire stops.

[9 : 28] You can smother it. You can choke it out. You can quench it. You can quench a fire really easily. And because we know fire needs heat, fuel, and oxygen, we can target one of those.

Like a halon, you know, it takes all the oxygen away from it. Boom, it's done. Boom, it's done. Or you can deep freeze it. I don't know how you'd do that, but you could.

It's been proven. Or you could take the fuel away. Whatever. When it says quench not the Spirit, I don't know about you, but I don't instantly think, well, how do you do that?

What does it mean? And so I wanted to take a look at it not from the quenching, but from the feeding aspect. Right? You see, the fire of the Spirit requires faith, food, and fellowship.

Just like a fire requires heat, fuel, and oxygen, the flame of the Spirit in our lives requires faith, food, and fellowship.

[10 : 47] Without faith, it is impossible to please God. Without faith, you don't have a relationship with the Spirit.

If you are not a believer, what are we doing here? I mean, just to be honest, if you're not a believer, why are you here?

Because we hold the answer to the truth. Not we, but God has revealed it to us in the Word of God, and it's a great place to be. But, I mean, how can we talk about building this flame of the Spirit in your life if you're not a believer?

You must believe. And, in fact, if you want to feed the fire of the Spirit in your life, you must walk by faith.

Take a look at the book of Hebrews, chapter 11, verse 6. It says, what does it say there? Without faith, it is impossible to believe Him.

[11 : 51] For whoever would draw near to God must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who seek Him. Faith is a prerequisite.

The food. I wasn't certain how to... I like the FFF, you know, faith, food, fellowship. What do you think food stands for? Learning. That's a great one. What are we supposed to learn? The Word of God.

That's right. That's what the fuel is. That's what the food is. You know, it's that the Word of God is the fuel of our life. In 1 Corinthians, chapter 2, verse 11.

1 Corinthians 2, verse 11. For who knows a person's thought except the spirit of the person which is in him's soul? So no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.

[12:56] We have to be in the Word. And we have to... For us to understand that, we be in the Word and the Spirit explains it to us. And it's... It is the fuel that is the foundation of our walk with God.

Apart from His Word, we don't have any foundation. Apart from what God teaches us in the Bible, we do a lot of guessing. Faith, the Word of God, and quite honestly, fellowship.

Hebrews 10, 24, and 25. Don't give up the gathering together. Why is that?

There's a story of a country preacher who had a parishioner that stopped coming to church. And so he encouraged him, and he encouraged him, and he encouraged him.

And one fall day, they were sitting over, having a cup of coffee in his parishioner's living room, sitting in front of the fire and talking about why or why not they should come to church.

[14:11] And the pastor took a pair of fire tongs, reached in, grabbed a coal, and set it on the hearth. Didn't say anything. Just set it on there. And they continued talking about whatever they were talking about.

Do you know what happened to that coal? It died. It went from glowing red to charcoal black. It went from too hot to touch without being damaged to no heat at all.

You see, when we interact with other believers, it challenges us. It encourages us. It strengthens and motivates us in ways that we can never be on our own.

If you want the Spirit of God to not be quenched in your life, then I suggest that you live by faith.

It's not always easy to do. I'll be honest. There's times when I don't want to do what God wants me to do. But do I trust Him and follow Him?

[15:29] Stay in the Word of God. Feed the fire. Give Him the fuel that He needs. And stay involved in church, in the fellowship of believers, in the Christian community.

Be active. When we act that way, when we behave this way, when our life is modeled by faith, by the Word of God, and by spending time with believers, you will not quench the Spirit of God.

In fact, you will dump water into a grease fire. Anybody know what that does? Big flame. Big flame.

All right. So, we're commanded not to quench the Spirit. And so, I can't exactly tell you, but I can tell you how to invigorate the Spirit in our life.

Secondly, we're told to despise not the prophecies. Let me just be clear.

[16:45] First of all, you know that there's two types of prophets. There's those that look into the future and say, on Tuesday, this is what's going to happen.

And if they are motivated or inspired or God-driven, they can look into the future and explain what's going to happen. That's one type of prophet. The other type of prophet is the prophet that stands in front of the church and speaks, this is what the Word of God says.

Oh, that's the sort of prophet that we have today. We call him pastor. We call him teacher.

It's not that I can look into the future and I can go, no, no, it's not that at all. It's that I have been given the responsibility of opening God's Word and sharing it.

Of trying to present it in a way that it's easy for you and others to grab onto. My job is to take the Word of God and the truths therein and put such good handles on them so that you can understand it, that everybody can pick it up and take it with them in full understanding.

[18:00] My job isn't to try and present such esoteric, intricate truths that people stand on the sideline and go, oh, isn't he smart?

I'm thankful that my job isn't to be smart because I'm not smart. My job is to take the Word of God and present it to people in a way they can carry it and understand it. And being simple-minded, I'm good at it.

But here we go. Number one, this is referring to preaching and teaching of God's Word. If you want to, you can write down 1 Corinthians 12-14.

If you want to, write down 1 Corinthians 12-14. That is a passage of Scripture that talks about the fact that the gift of prophesying the future, speaking in tongues, the sign gifts, they pass away.

But the church-building gifts of preaching and teaching and encouraging, those stay. So if you really want to dig into it, that's a good place to start.

[19 : 14] 1 Corinthians 12-14. Despise not the prophecy.

In 1 Thessalonians it says, Do not despise prophecies, but test everything, holding fast to that which is good. My friends, we all have access to the Word of God.

What a blessing it is here in America. If you don't have a Bible, I've got plenty in my office. I will give you one. Kine and Skansen, I've given them for them to hand out in their shop.

You know? Well, we have access to the Word of God that is amazing because God has given it to us. What a blessing that is. We've got this access to God's Word.

But look what it says here. Don't despise the prophecy. But what does it say? But test everything.

[20 : 21] What does that mean? What does it mean to test everything? Silence reigned over the face of the deep as everybody said, I don't want to answer that question.

What does it mean to test the prophecies? Obviously, we're not talking about future prophecy.

We're talking about the preaching and teaching. What does it mean to test it?

Very good. At a girl. Usher makes certain that she gets a good parking spot next week. That's what it means. It means that whatever I teach or whatever I preach is that you take your time and study the Scriptures and to see if I am barking up a wrong tree or if I'm accurate.

Isn't there a Bible verse that says, study to show yourself approved unto God, rightly handling the Word of Truth? That's what our challenge is.

Now, I've got to be honest with you. I'm the pastor. I still listen to preaching and teaching.

[21 : 39] In fact, Tim Heath, first pastor of this church, founding pastor of this church. He was my pastor. Ken Farman, second pastor of this church.

I attended and worked with Ken. Craig Apel. He was the pastor that I was... He was my pastor when I went to college, but he was also when I went into the ministry and I was a pastor.

He was a senior pastor that I humbled myself before and allowed him to speak and teach into my life. And then when my life went completely sideways and I left the ministry for years, I sat under Dr. Chris Griggs, best preacher I have ever been under.

Tim Heath is fantastic at theology. He's really, really good at it. He can nail those things. Ken

Farman is a wonderful human being that everybody enjoys and he's just a great friend.

Craig Apel, fabulous mentor. has fought many battles, has led many churches, and has a great perspective. And I call him up still occasionally and submit my questions to him.

[22 : 53] Craig, what's wrong? What do you mean? It's the only time you call me. Okay. Right?

And then there's Chris Griggs who was...

If I could ever become a shadow of him as a presenter of God's word, that's a bar I will never achieve.

Okay? But as a pastor, I still humble myself to other pastors.

I still get online and listen to other sermons. I still spend time. Just a couple weeks ago, I'm at the pastor's conference, listening to others speak God's word into my life.

Did you know that I didn't agree with everything they said there? And this is a place I chose to go because they're solid in their biblical teaching. But I also know the word of God, and whatever they say, I don't just go, okay.

[23 : 58] But I balance it against what I know. And that's the same thing that we are supposed to do. Is we're supposed to listen and appreciate and receive, but we have access to God's word.

We are supposed to test things. And we submit ourselves to the teaching of others because they will have a different perspective than we have.

They will have a different life journey than we have. God will have taken them in a different route to get where they are. And just because somebody, as Frank says, do you always serve as a good, bad example?

You know? We each have a role. But look, the goal is for us to be more of who God has called us to be.

I want to be honest. I will never be this. I just, I'm not that delicate. I will never be this.

[25 : 06] I'm more along these. And I'm okay with that. This is beautiful.

This is, this is very, very lovely to look at. And in, in circumstance, it's going to be this, you know, this will be used at Thanksgiving, you know, or at Christmas or a wedding, you know, and that's great.

And it'll be, it'll be oohed and aahed. And the ladies will go, oh, isn't that lovely? Meanwhile, I'll be drinking coffee out of this. And tripping and falling and picking it up and still, you know, have you ever dropped your coffee cup in the mud?

Cleaned it off and drank coffee out of it? Yeah. Serviceable. And it ends with this.

Embrace. Embrace. Not. Evil. Remember, we started with, do not quench.

[26 : 14] The spirit. I think this is one way that we cannot quench it. First of all, I want to, I want to, I want to, I want to say that this isn't Romans chapter 14, verse 16, which you probably don't have a clue what is.

So let's look it up. Romans chapter 14, verse 16, verse 16 says this, do not let what you regard as good be spoken of as evil.

Now, if I just clip that verse out of that and just throw it up here, it would fit perfectly. Okay. But I want you to pay attention to the greater context of Romans chapter 14.

Romans chapter 14 is, is Paul's instruction to strong Christians, not to take advantage or abuse weaker Christians. I'm, we're talking in Sunday school.

yesterday I was driving down the road and I had somebody drop a couple F bombs on me. And I laughed.

[27 : 32] I had a hard time driving straight. I was laughing so hard. That's totally offensive to hear in church, isn't it? But you got to understand, I'm talking to my non-believing brother who was complaining that he's not healing as fast as he used to be.

And I told him, dude, that's because you're nearly 70. At which point in time he told me he loved me. By expressing himself in colorful and foul language.

I knew what his intent was. I was able to laugh about that in fellowship and enjoy and, and be real with him. We don't want to be so righteous that we drive other people away.

And we don't want to be so earthly that there's no difference between us and them. He knows that I'm a pastor. He knows that I want him to come to church. He knows that I stand for God.

He also knows that I used to serve in the military. And I'm not going to push him away right when we're connecting. Romans 14 verse 16 says, don't let what you know to be good be called evil.

[28 : 53] See, connecting with people, even though they're vulgar and vile, and there's nothing wrong with that. Don't let people judge you on that.

This is completely different than mushrooms. Mushrooms are evil. There's nothing redeeming about them. And so we need to make certain that we preach that. There's nothing wrong with consuming alcohol.

I said that once in church and almost didn't make it out alive. Because some woman had been married to an abusive alcoholic.

And she chased me around the sanctuary for a while, telling me how evil and wrong I was. I'm not evil and I'm not wrong. Consuming alcohol in and of itself isn't bad.

Unless you're the sort of person that one drink is too many drinks. Then any drinks are too many. It's not wrong. Drink, smoke, chew, whatever.

[30 : 11] As long as you're not doing it in abuse and taking advantage. See, and for me to stand here and say that that's not wrong, that's different than me forcing an alcoholic to drink alcohol.

That's what Romans 14, 16 is about. Is stand with people, but take the time to educate them. Such as that lady who had been married to an abusive alcoholic.

I come alongside her and say, I get why you're unhappy. But you need to understand, it wasn't the fact of alcohol. It was what he did with it and how he used it.

Those are two separate things. That's teaching. Okay? The principle still holds here in 1 Thessalonians, but that's not what 1 Thessalonians says when it says, don't embrace evil.

See, in 1 Thessalonians, yeah, you still want to, you still want to do what's right and you still want to teach it. But, but specifically what Thessalonians is talking about is acts of omission and commission.

[31 : 23] Don't do evil. And don't stand on the sidelines and allow evil. You know, have you ever seen those little videos where the cat's sitting on the side of the fish tank and it's watching the fish and the dog walks by and goes, boof, and the cat falls in the pool?

Yeah, that's an act of commission. We're not supposed to do things like that. You know. You know. Nor are we supposed to do acts of omission.

That is, you see the dog coming and you say, hey, I'm not involved in that. And you let the dog go push the cat into the water. That's an act of omission. We are not to allow evil into our lives either by embracing it or allowing it.

If you want to be a useful vessel of God, you need to pay attention and avoid evil.

In fact, just as dirt and water can smother fire, sin and evil can smother the spirit. You don't put fuel into the wood stove, it's going to go out, right?

[32 : 57] Or if you shove a whole bunch of dirt in the wood stove, fire's not going to work. We want to feed it. We want it to grow. We want it to do it right. And the same is true in our life with God.

See, if we go through this section in 1 Thessalonians, Paul is talking to those whom he knew and whom he loved. And he's like, look, I've got to wrap this letter up.

I'm going to finish it up. And I'm going to challenge you in these areas so that you can grow in your walk with God. And he says, be careful of those in leadership.

Watch over them. Honor them. He says for us to be better and to work with and encourage those that are struggling.

And then he says that we are to take care of ourselves. Pay attention to leadership, help other people, and also deal with ourselves.

[34 : 00] And that's what the call is here today. As believers, our choices, our actions, choose how useful to God we are.

And don't get me wrong. I love the glass jar. It's fragile. It sits on the shelf most of the time, holding food.

I can see it. I can, I mean, it's a tool. It's useful. The basket is good. It's fine. It's not super strong, but it's useful.

The tureen is beautiful. And in the right circumstance, it adds immensely. But I want to be the sort of believer that is durable and useful every day.

I want to be the sort of believer that's not offended when people drop me. I want to be the sort of offender, believer that the master can rely on every day.

[35 : 36] I want the spirit to guide and lead my life. I want to be an encouragement to everybody. And the only way that we can do that, the only way that I can do that, is by taking care of number one.

By taking care of me. If I'm not taking care of me, there's no way I can help you. And if you're not taking care of you, then you're not being the man or woman that God has called you to do.

Let you do that. Let you do that. Let us strive to be useful to our master. Let's pray. Okay.