"LISTEN, WHILE THE SPIRIT IS SPEAKING"

1 Thessalonians 5:19-22
4-15-2026

*** Every time you hear a message from the Word of God,**
YOU MUST LISTEN, WHILE THE HOLY SPIRIT IS SPEAKING!

2 Responsibilities that you must fulfill every time you hear a message:

I. ***You are Responsible to:***
ALLOW THE HOLY SPIRIT TO SPEAK TO YOU (v. 19-20)
(Listen with spiritual desire)

A. *We Allow Him to Speak by not:*
SMOTHERING HIS FIRE (v. 19)

B. *We Allow Him to Speak by not:*
BELITTLING HIS MESSAGE (v. 20)

II. ***You are Responsible to:***
MAKE SURE IT IS THE HOLY SPIRIT SPEAKING TO YOU (v. 21-22)
(Listen with spiritual discernment)

A. Before You Swallow it:
PUT IT TO THE TEST (v. 21a)

B. If it Passes the Test:
DON'T LET GO OF IT (v. 21b)

C. If it Fails the Test:
DON'T COME NEAR IT (v. 22)

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INTRODUCTION:

Verses 16-22 appear at first to be a string of abrupt, unrelated commands with no theme or common point.

However, a closer look reveals that verses 16-18 have the theme of "consistency" being emphasized (in Gk., the emphasis is on the adjectives - "evermore" "without ceasing" "in everything").

Now verses 19-22 have a theme describing our attitude and responsibility to the message of the Holy Spirit.

Whereas v. 16-18 deal with our inner (private) spiritual life, verse 19-22 describe our outward (public) spiritual life (when we hear preachers proclaim God's Word).

If God has one command for His churches that He makes very clear, it is the command found 7 times to 7 churches in Revelation 2 & 3. At the end of each message to each church, jesus Christ says: "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches" (cp. Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22).

PROPOSITION: Every time you hear a message from the Word of God,
YOU MUST LISTEN, WHILE THE HOLY SPIRIT IS SPEAKING!

2 Responsibilities that you must fulfill every time you hear a message:

I. You are Responsible to:
ALLOW THE HOLY SPIRIT TO SPEAK TO YOU (v. 19-20)
(Listen with spiritual desire)

A. We Allow Him to Speak by not:
SMOTHERING HIS FIRE (v. 19)

"The Spirit" = the Holy Spirit of God.

"Quench" = to extinguish, or put out like you do a fire; to smother or stifle

The Spirit is likened unto a flame in Acts 2:3; and a purifying fire in Is. 4:4.

It is the Spirit who burns into our hard hearts with His convicting power (Luke 24:32). It is the Spirit who warms our cold hearts with His encouraging power.

He convicts and encourages by the Word (the Scriptures).

Many things can quench the Spirit's working in a church. Such as:

1. Sinful actions (on the part of members) (immorality, idleness, etc.) (Sin in the camp keeps God from working; EX: Achan's sin, Josh. 7)

2. Sinful attitudes (pride, self-righteousness; bitterness; anger)

3. Coldness
   --Mechanical singing, praying, and worshipping (The Spirit is not free to work; He is put in a box, confined)

   --Unfriendliness

**But the way He is quenched according to this context is by your having an apathetic attitude toward the preaching of the Sword of the Spirit (v. 20).

B. We Allow Him to Speak by not:
BELITTLING HIS MESSAGE (v. 20)

V. 20

"Despise" = to treat something lightly; to consider something to be nothing; to down-grade, or treat with contempt.

While N.T. prophets did foretell the future and proclaimed new revelation from God (Acts 11:27-28; 21:10-11), their primary function was like that of a Pastor: they exhorted (Acts 15:32) and proclaimed God's Word in simple language that everyone could understand (I Cor. 14).

Apparently, the Thessalonians -- who had welcomed Paul's message "not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the Word of God" -- were rejecting their own prophets' (or pastors) messages.

Today, many will travel many miles to hear a noted Bible teacher or radio or TV preacher, but when their own pastor presents the same truths, they will turn him off (Walton, R.B.P., I Th., p. 63).

Disrespect for the preacher
Distrust in the preacher

--Some treat lightly what is said because they treat lightly the one who said it (disrespect). (They belittle the preacher because of his lack of degrees, his young age, etc.)

--Others treat lightly what is said, because of others who have spoken the Word in the past, but proved to be false prophets (distrust) (They close themselves off to all preaching because of others who failed).

Your attitude toward a meal affects how you will like the meal. EX: If you were told that _____ was a tremendous cook (her recipes were great, etc.), because you come with positive anticipations, the meal, though not perfect, will seem great to you!

If you come to church and expect nothing, you will get nothing.

If you come to church full of what the world gave you, you won't be hungry for what the Spirit can give you.

Your attitude toward a meal affects how others will like a meal. EX: Suppose you came to a banquet and a plate of spaghetti and meatballs sat right in the middle of a table.

1. How much would you eat if everyone else only ate 1 meatball?
2. How much would you eat if the others had a disgusting look on their faces as they took a bite?
3. Or what would you think of this so-called banquet if only a few guests showed up?

APPLICATION - Your hunger for the Word is catching; so is your indifferent, cold, uninterested attitude toward it.

1. When you come to church, others will know if you are hungry or not.

2. When you listen to a message and yawn or sleep through it, others will be turned off.

3. If you don't come, your absence will also affect others.

II. You are Responsible to:

MAKE SURE IT IS THE HOLY SPIRIT SPEAKING TO YOU
(v. 21-22)
(Listen with spiritual discernment)

While God wants us to be hungry to learn His truth, He does not want us to swallow it unless we are sure it is edible.

(ILLUS: baby's tend to eat anything and everything -- Warning to new Christian: Beware of what you eat!

A. Before You Swallow it:
PUT IT TO THE TEST (v. 21a)

V. 21

The Thessalonian believers seemed to be easily swayed or prone to accept anyone's doctrine without checking it out first with other Scripture.

Therefore, Paul showed concern about the stability of their faith, and had to warn them about deceivers and false doctrine that was floating around (II Th. 2:2-3).

NOTE: The early Church did not have a completed N.T., so they had to compare what they learned with the O.T. and the oral teaching of Christ and the Apostles. (Satan could more easily slip in false prophecies; therefore, people had to measure what was heard with the God-breathed standard!)

"Prove" = to test or examine what is spoken, to see if it is genuine truth.

You are to abound more and more "in knowledge and in all judgment (insight), that ye may approve things that are excellent" (Phil. 1:9-10).

We need spiritual discernment - especially in our day!

--New religious teachings are springing up
--More books are published than every before
--The world-wide media (TV & radio) is being used to promote much false doctrine.

All of the varieties of cults, religious, viewpoints, etc., don't surprise me because God has told us it would be this way in the last days.

I Tim. 4:1-2 - "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times

some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils: Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron"

II Tim. 4:3-4 - "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their own ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables."

God does not place a premium on ignorance!
"There is a way that seemeth right unto a man . . ." (Prov. 16:25)

The Bereans searched the Scriptures! (Acts 17:11)

We are to test the Spirits (SEE: I Jn. 4:1-3, 6)
(How: By comparing what we hear with the Word of God).

We don't trust a spirit by how it "looks" or how it "feels," but by what it says!

You test a spirit by putting it to the objective doctrinal test and a subjective emotional test!

Put everything you hear (messages, advice, counsel) to the acid test of Scripture!

NOT to the test of your likes and dislikes (don't accept it just because someone's doctrine may suit your lifestyle)

NOT to the test of what you heard in the past (what you learned previously may have been incorrect).

NOT to the test of your own theological presuppositions.

The Roman Catholic church deliberately kept men blind from the truth; ignorant of their mishandling of Scripture by telling the people: "You are not qualified to discern on your own; you cannot interpret without us, etc."

However, "in Christ" we all have the Holy Spirit who teaches us.

I Jn. 2:26-27 - "These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you. But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him."

(NOTE: This verse does not relieve us from being taught, going to church,

etc. What God is saying is that God's Spirit will teach you how to distinguish between truth and error. **The Holy Spirit also uses men to do this teaching with Him - Eph. 4:11-14).

How do you examine what you hear?
Follow these simple hermeneutical principles:
As you listen to a message, ask yourself:

1) Is this person interpreting this passage in a <u>normal</u> (literal) way, or is he making it say something it really does not say?

2) Is this interpretation supported by the <u>context</u>? (does his view follow the line of thought here?)

3) How does this teaching <u>compare with other Scripture</u> that I know? (does it contradict?)

B. If it Passes the Test:
<u>DON'T LET GO OF IT</u> (v. 21b)

God does not merely want us to approve what is good, but to hold firmly on to it and retain it (make it a part of your life).

Hold on to it like you would a precious gem that was examined and found genuine.

C. If it Fails the Test:
<u>DON'T COME NEAR IT</u> (v. 22)

In the Greek, we see that God deliberately sets up a contrast:

1) "Hold fast" ( ) the Good
2) "Hold off" ( ) the Evil

V. 22

"Abstain" = keep yourself away from; separate yourself.

God is not saying here: Don't do what "looks" like evil (EX: Don't drink soda out of a can because someone might think you are drinking beer).

While the principle is true that we should avoid appearing to do wrong even

though we actually are not (Rom. 14:16), this is not the point being made in this context.

God is saying: After you have proven (tested) someone's teaching, if it has any shade, form, or visible evidence of evil in it, "spit it out" and throw it away! Stay away from it.

We are to avoid doctrinal error no matter what form or appearance in which it may present itself.

False teaching may dress itself up in many various sizes, shapes, and colors (don't be deceived!).

The Holy Spirit only works with Truth!

--A book may veil itself in an attractive cover and title, but the Spirit can only use it if it has pure doctrine inside.

--A preacher may be eloquent and say many good things...

--A church may be large and have many attractive features . . . but all that matters is: Is the truth being taught?!

"The worse forms of wickedness consist of perversions of the truth, of spiritual lies." (Lenski, p. 370-71).

The most destructive sin is false doctrine, because it deals with your soul; your relationship to God; your present life, and your eternal destiny!

CONCLUSION:

Listening to God's Word is serious business.

You cannot be passive about it.

Every time you hear a message from the Word of God, you must listen to what the Holy Spirit is saying!

2 Responsibilities we must fulfill every time we hear a message:

1. You are responsible to allow the Holy Spirit to speak to you

   --Don't smother His fire

   --Don't belittle His message

2. You are responsible to make sure it is the Holy Spirit speaking to you

   --Before you swallow it, put it to the test

   --If it passes the test, don't let go of it

   --If it fails the test, don't come near it