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1 THESSALONIANS 5:19

Series: Real Christians in Challenging Times

[PRAYER] Heavenly Father, we want to thank you for the progress that's being made in Robbinsville, Mercer County in particular, the positive numbers we're seeing with the COVID. We're grateful. We thank you for all of those heroes that are working in hospitals and caring for people. We ask, Lord, that you would protect them and bless them. Lord, we thank you that we can have a church that cares and that we can enjoy relationships. We can be the church together. We're grateful that you created that for us so that we could enjoy each other, we can enjoy you, we can enjoy life more abundantly, in part because of the church that you've established. Lord, we need you and we experience that need. Especially when we've been away from you for a bit. Even if that's a few days or a week. We come back and we realize, wow, I really need to stay connected with the Lord. So when we say that in our hearts, Lord, we just want to apologize to you for not praying without ceasing, for not being joyful always. We need the spirituality that you offer to us through the relationship that we have with you personally. So thank you. Now we're going to open your word, Father, and we ask that as we do that you would teach us. That, Holy Spirit, you would illumine the word for us and give us specific applications that we can apply to our lives. Teach us what it means to be your servants and to follow you today. We ask this in Jesus' name, amen.

If you would please open your Bibles or open your books (the book is the Bible that you have in that particular book that you have) and we're going to use that as our basis for our study today. We're going to look at one verse in this passage, but we've been looking at the verses from 1 Thessalonians 5:12-22 and taking it kind of slowly. We want to savor these words, each one of them. What does it mean to rejoice always? What does it mean to pray without ceasing? So we've looked at those every week for some time now and it's been helpful. When we go grocery shopping there's two different ideas that we have. Sometimes when we go grocery shopping we're going grocery shopping in order to stock up. So we're members of Costco and we buy the big packages and we buy the bulk stuff and we're trying to prepare for what we need for the next week or few weeks or whatever. Then there's times when we go to the grocery store, we'll run out to ShopRite or something to get one thing because we have a need at the moment.

I think that 1 Thessalonians 5:12-22 is like the grocery store with shelves and we can go to 1 Thessalonians 5 and we can stock up on some of the things we need in our spiritual lives. And sometimes we go there because we have a need and we just need something right in the moment and that's important. Both of those are valuable. This is one of those refrigerator compartments where we can get what we need in the moment. So when we look at the passage, for example, it says – *Be joyful always* or *continually* and we saw how that joy is tied into seeing God's grace in everything that's going on. We recognize that fact or we see this idea of praying without ceasing

and we recognize that God has blessings waiting for us that are ready to come down if we'll just ask Him. So we want to be praying without ceasing. And then last week we talked about gratitude and how gratitude is seeing the good, not the bad in so many things in life, especially seeing the goodness of God in life. All of those are important and valuable.

Today we're going to look at one verse. We're going to look at this verse in 1 Thessalonians 5:19, another in this series of things, items on the shelf that we can go and grasp. Today if you're here to stock up, I hope you'll take note of what's here and grasp it for the future. So you have what you need to be refreshed when you need it. But I know that there are some people who are coming here and they are in need and they can't wait to stock up. It's like going out to the store right now for something you need to manage today. And today's passage fits right in with that. It's a valuable truth that we can put into our lives and understand together.

The verse in 1 Thessalonians 5:19 says this: *Do not quench the Spirit*. Now in each one of the lines that we've taken, watch one of these gifts that God gives to us in this passage what we've tried to do is go beyond just the words that are there into the theology that we see in God's word so that we have the depth necessary to put it into practice. We're asking questions like what does this passage mean, why is it there, and then how can we do it. What, why and how. I hope today as you look at this you're going to look at some reasons why this passage is here and then how you can implement it into your own life.

In order to do that, let's first look at the word *Spirit*. I think it would be good for us to do some refreshment in our theology to understand what it is that we're talking about when we're talking about the Holy Spirit. So on a theological level let's go back to Genesis.

In Genesis 1 the Bible says that God said this: *Let us make man in our image*. The Bible doesn't defend that, describe it, nor apologizes for a plurality of God there. Just makes the statement. It's just assumed, it's accepted that God is somehow plural. Let us make man in our image. But as the scriptures unfold we start to see what this plurality means. Before we get too far in the plurality though, we see in Deuteronomy, the Shema that the Jews say regularly, which says – *The Lord our God is one God*. So we know we have one God. But He has these three different personalities that show up in life. So understanding that God is one God with three personalities is difficult for our finite minds to comprehend. It's an infinite concept and we need to be able to wrap our minds around this. Even though it's hard to understand, we're going to look at the scriptures and understand what we're talking about here.

We see it illustrated in passages. I think it's most easy to understand in the incarnation when Jesus came down to earth we see that the Father has all these prophecies that are made. That God has these prophecies and they're being fulfilled in Jesus Christ. So there's the Father. He's like the architect with the whole plan. But then Jesus Christ is the one coming to earth. He's like the contractor. He's the one who fulfills the mission that God has. He's the one who created the earth, the Bible says. Jesus implements the things that God has established. But even in that story of the incarnation do you remember when Mary says to the angel, "How could this be? I'm a virgin." And the angel's response is this: "The Holy Spirit will come down on you to make this happen." So what's taking place there is that the Holy Spirit makes it very personal. That's what

we're going to see about the Holy Spirit. And this is the thing you're going to have to remember as we move forward. The Holy Spirit makes it personal.

When Jesus was baptized you remember we have the voice of the Father coming out of heaven, *"This is my Son in whom I am well pleased."* There's the Father. Then we have the Son being baptized, identifying with the community of believers at that time. And then we have the Holy Spirit. Do you remember what the Holy Spirit is doing in that moment? The Bible says that the Holy Spirit comes down from heaven in the form of a dove and lands on Jesus Christ. It's like this personal stamp of authentication that this is real. The Holy Spirit is personal.

When we come to this understanding of the church and how God has brought us all together, we see that when we become part of the family of God we look to God as Father. He is the one who is the Father of what's taking place in the church. We come together commonly as our heavenly Father. But Jesus is described as the head of the church. He is the leader of the church. He is the one helping guide what's going on inside of the church.

What is the role of the Holy Spirit in the church? Well the Holy Spirit makes it personal. He takes each one of us and gives us gifts, the gifts of the Holy Spirit. In the Bible we have twenty to twenty-five spiritual gifts mentioned, probably as examples of the individuality that takes place. Because God has given you a spiritual gift. And in that spiritual gift you are able to be the church. You're able to use the unique gifts that God has given to you, use the unique path that He's taken you through, use your challenges, use your hours and pains to provide you with opportunities to care for and love other people. The Holy Spirit makes it personal and works through us to do that. Well we see how the Holy Spirit works in history, we see how the Holy Spirit works in the incarnation and the baptism, we see how the Holy Spirit works in the church. How does the Holy Spirit and the Godhead work in our own personal lives?

Well when we come to God and pray, "Our Father." So Jesus taught us to pray to the Father. We do that primarily. Sometimes we pray to the Holy Spirit or to Jesus. But primarily we're praying to the Father. It's His will that we're asking to be made present on earth as it is in heaven. But when we come to Christ and accept Christ into our lives, we're asking Jesus to come into our hearts. We're accepting Jesus. He's our Lord and our Savior. So we are surrendering to Him. We are asking Him to save us and we appreciate the work that He has done on the cross. We accept it personally. That's Jesus' work in our personal lives.

But the Holy Spirit's work is something even different or more, should I say. Ephesians talks about the Holy Spirit as a walk. That we are walking in the Holy Spirit. It's very personal. He's telling us, "Stay away from that side over there. That shortcut is not a good idea." He's telling us, "Be careful of that overhang there that could get you into trouble." And He's not only guiding us through the path, but He provides us with the very power that we need to take the steps necessary to move toward life in order to go forward. We have the Holy Spirit empowering us to do what God would have us to do. The Holy Spirit makes it personal.

I remember in the story with the disciples how they were concerned. They were actually can I say afraid? Because Jesus said, "I'm going to leave you now and I'm going to be going away." And they go, "Wait, wait, wait, wait. We want to go with you."

“No, you can’t go with me. You’re going to have to stay here.”

And they’re saying, “Wait a minute. We don’t know where you’re going. What’s going to happen to us?”

In Jesus’ response to them He says, “Hey look, I’m sending you the comforter. I’m sending you the Spirit of truth. I’m sending Him to you and He’s going to do these remarkable things for you.”

In fact let’s look at this passage of scripture where Jesus talks about this and He says to His disciples: *When he (the Holy Spirit) comes, he will prove the world to be in the wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment: about sin, because people do not believe in me; about righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; and about judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned.*

I want you to see that the Holy Spirit is at work not only in people who are believers, who are Christians. But Jesus is saying the Holy Spirit is going to be working in the world. That’s the first line there. He’s working in the world. In the individual lives of people. And His primary work is a conviction work to help them see their need. Their need to come to Christ, their need to respond to them. But to experience their guilt. You can be assured that God is working in your heart to convict you of sin, but also in the lives of other people around. We don’t know exactly what the Holy Spirit is doing, but we know that He’s at work in the lives of people.

This week a mom called me because I work with parents and she said, “I have a seven-year-old.” I have never met this seven-year-old nor have I interacted with this seven-year-old. I know nothing about this seven-year-old. But this mom says, “I don’t know what to do. I have my daughter who has some speech challenges go to speech therapy several times a week. And today she rebelled against the therapy. She resisted the therapy. She’s coming home. My friend has taken her to therapy and now she’s coming home and I don’t know what to do.” Basically she’s saying I don’t know what to do to her. I don’t know what consequence to use. I don’t know how to punish her. I don’t know how to use this heart-based approach you talk about in order to help her.

Now I really respect this mom. She’s a great mom. But she’s a little bit on the intense side and so I said to her, “Here’s what I would suggest. First of all, is this a pattern? Does this girl do this all the time?”

She said, “No, she doesn’t do this all the time.”

I said, “Okay. Since she doesn’t do this all the time, here’s my suggestion: Do nothing. When she walks in the door say, ‘Honey, would you like to have a snack?’ Welcome her in. For one hour do not say anything because she’s probably expecting you to correct her and come into Rambo Mom mode, so you don’t want to do that. You don’t want to come onto her strongly because she’s probably already got her defenses up at seven years old. Don’t do it. Wait an hour and then come back in an hour and say to her, ‘Hey can we talk about what happened at therapy?’ and see if you can get around the resistance so you can talk to her.”

Well mom says, “Oh good. I never would’ve thought of that.” Because this is Rambo mom in action.

Okay, so I talked to her later and this is what she did. She did exactly what I said. She welcomed her daughter in, she went about her business. Thirty minutes later the girl comes in crying. “Mom, I got to talk to you about what happened in therapy” and started revealing what happened that really she had a belief error. That she’s been in this for so long, this is going to last so long, I feel like I’m not growing out of this. I feel like I’m... So she was discouraged. Mom didn’t need a consequence. She didn’t need to punish her. What she needed was to allow the Holy Spirit to work in her heart with a little bit of time. And that happened. God worked in this girl’s heart, she initiated with mom, and mom now has the opportunity to change what her daughter believes about this and do some visioning and so on.

See I would suggest when we come to these words *do no quench the Holy Spirit*, we’re not just looking about how we quench the Holy Spirit in our own lives. We want to be careful that we don’t quench the Holy Spirit in someone else’s life as well. God is working in the lives of your neighbors. God is working in the lives of your mate or a friend or whomever. God is working. And sometimes we can do things that quench the Holy Spirit’s work in their lives. We can try to be the Holy Spirit. “You should do this. You should do that.” And sometimes that quenches what God is doing. He’s at work in people’s lives. Don’t quench the Spirit.

The passage continues to tell us more about what the Holy Spirit does and how we can embrace this idea of the Holy Spirit in our own personal lives. Jesus continues by saying – *I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear...* And I’m really glad that God doesn’t share everything with me in the moment. He does it out a little bit at a time at points when I can bear it. That’s very important. He says – *But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come.*

The beautiful thing here is that the Holy Spirit is God is connected, knows everything about God, everything that He needs to know, and He is our guide. He wants to guide us through life so we know what’s going on in life.

Now I don’t know about you, but if I go to a museum or a historical location where I get to see all these interesting things, I like that. And I like wandering around, reading the plaques, and looking at the things in the museum. But every once in a while the guide comes with a group of people. When the guide comes over to tell the stories and talk about, I kind of move over a little bit so I can have my ear close to what’s going on and I can hear what the guide is saying. Why? Because the guide shares extra information that I wouldn’t know about what historically took place at this location or why that particular piece of art is in that place. And when I hear the guide speaking, I am able to have more understanding about what I’m seeing around. The same thing is true with the Holy Spirit. He wants to guide us through life. So we don’t want to quench Him. We don’t want to put limits on Him. We want Him to guide us. We want to be empowered by Him. We want Him to be able to move things forward. We want Him to guide us through the challenges of life.

It says – *But the Spirit of truth...* He is the Spirit of truth and he will guide us into all truth. He knows more truth than I do. He has more truth than I need. He’s like the CIA with all kinds of information that they have and they gather and all this. But there’s specific details and

information that I need at certain times and the Holy Spirit gives and makes it very personal. You and I need this data, this information, this coaxing, this experience, this conviction with the Holy Spirit and we need to understand what that looks like. That's what he's talking about here. That's the power of the Holy Spirit.

That's the last word in our sentence. We're going to go to the next word or the word before that, *quench*, and talk about that word *quench* for a moment. Because the word *quench* literally in the Greek means don't put out the fire. Don't put out the fire of the Holy Spirit. So if we were going to say this statement positively instead of negatively it would be on fire with the Holy Spirit. That's the idea. Be on fire with the Holy Spirit. Stoke the fire idea. Or don't quench the fire of the Holy Spirit. That's the picture that's used in the words there.

So immediately I say, well look, I've got to call John Snee (because he's our resident firefighter) and see what he has to say about this. In fact last week he was trying to tell me something and it was going in one ear and out the other. He was trying to say to me you know there's three you put in a fire and... and I'm going I wasn't even listening then. But I'm going whoa. I want to hear that again, what he said. So I call him up this week. He calls me back and I say, "Look, I'm teaching about fire and I need to know that stuff you were trying to tell me last week."

This is the science behind fire. Fire needs three things and these three things. This triangle is the tetrahedron of fire. I'll throw it up here for you so you can see it. There are three things necessary in order to have a fire. They are fuel, heat, and oxygen. Now if you talk to John Snee, he does not say anything in a short paragraph, okay? So he goes on and on, telling me about all the things here. In fact he was telling me about backdraft. Do you know what backdraft is? That's when you don't have the oxygen, but you have the heat and fuel in there. So all you have to do is break a window or open a door and you have an explosion because the oxygen pours in there and lights that whole house on fire.

He was telling me there's a good fire and there's a bad fire. Now we're getting somewhere because I'm thinking yeah, a lot of time we think about when firefighters are putting out bad fires. But he's talking about how there's cooking fire that you need and there's a campfire that you need. So my question is: How do you keep this fire going? How do you not quench it? That's what I wanted to know. So he's describing these three things: Fuel, heat, and oxygen.

So I got off the phone and I'm thinking okay, if there are three things that stoke a fire or make a fire take place, I wonder if there are three things in our spiritual lives that could help us to insight that fire inside of us, to put us on fire with the Holy Spirit so we're not quenching the fire. So I'm thinking about these things.

Here's what I think. You might put some other things there. But I'm thinking what is the fuel? What do you think I think the fuel is? The word of God. Right. That's what I thought. Well the Bible. Because here's what happens. When you read the Bible what the Holy Spirit does with that is He illumines it. He says to you that verse. Oh you need that with your wife. Oh you better take that in your emotions. He takes the fuel of the word and he makes it come alive in a fire inside of us. So one thing we need is the word of God. It's so powerful.

When I'm thinking about the heat and that spark that takes place, I'm thinking about prayer, but not just prayer where we're talking about God. It has to be a prayer where we're also listening to God. So we're asking Him what is He saying.

And now when we have the word, we have the listening, all that takes place, but we need one more ingredient that's going to allow this fire to burst inside of us and to grow so we're not suppressing it, but it is accelerating inside of us. I would suggest that oxygen is the willing heart, a responsiveness, a willingness to obey.

Now if you put those three things together, God's word along with a prayer life that has an ear to listen and a heart that's willing to obey, can you imagine the fire that's going to grow out of that? Can you picture what God's going to do in the midst of that? That He takes us and He sets us on fire.

So not only does it purify what's going on inside of our hearts, but it provides us with an opportunity to be a light shining out so that other people can see the light. I just love that. Thank you, John. I should have you come up and preach the sermon. I just think that's really helpful. Do not quench the Spirit. That's what we're talking about in the midst of that passage.

But I come to this statement – *do not quench the Spirit* – which makes me realize I can quench the Spirit. Which leads me to this statement. It was so important I wanted to just throw this statement up on the screen for you. You have the power to restrict or release the Spirit of God in your life. You have the power to restrict or release the Spirit of God in your life. He's there, He's willing, He's ready, He's ready to do great things, He has this truth laid out for you. He wants to do these powerful things in your life and He's laid it out for you so you can see it. But we have to be ready to release that fire inside of us.

Here's some verses that struck me as I was in my study about this. These are verses you probably heard, you recognize. But notice how involved the Holy Spirit is on a very personal level. The first one is – *Do not get drunk on wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit*. This is another way of saying there's this sense of filling that takes place. In fact filling is used in all three of these words in different ways about the Holy Spirit's work. But we want to be filled with the Holy Spirit. And the word is continually be filled. It's not just a one-time event, but every day, every minute, every five minutes you're saying, "Father, fill me. Holy Spirit, fill me right now in my own life." So being continually filled.

Romans 15:13 says – *May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope*. Are you lacking hope? It's looking like one of the main reasons the Holy Spirit works in our lives is to provide that hope that we desperately need.

Hope starts the next verses in Romans 5:5. Hope does not disappoint us because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us. Somehow He pours this love right into our hearts, which we desperately need. The Holy Spirit is personal, He knows you personally, He knows your specific challenges, your temptations, your struggles, your needs. He knows what things make you work and He's got it all figured so that the Holy Spirit

brings the puzzle piece that matches your life exactly the way it needs to mesh inside of your heart. That's what the Holy Spirit does. He takes truth and brings it in this powerful way.

Let me take you to one more passage of scripture that's so helpful in understanding this idea of the Holy Spirit. Notice it says in 1 Corinthians 2:9-12 these words: *"What no eye has seen, what no ear has heard, and what no human mind has conceived" —the things God has prepared for those who love him—these are the things God has revealed to us by his Spirit.*

No eye has seen, no ear has heard. What does that mean? What that means is there is this very special unique new freshness that God wants to bring into your life. Something brand new that...it's not like someone else. This is your specific solution. It's like Coke for a while (I don't know if they still do it) they put names on Coke bottles. This is like your...this is the Scott bottle of Coke. The Holy Spirit gives that exactly what you need in that moment. It's these things that are so...no one has ever seen them. What you're going to experience with the Holy Spirit is different than what other people are going to experience. God is going to do something very powerful inside of you as a result.

Notice a little more about the Spirit. *The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. For who knows a person's thoughts except their own spirit within them? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. What we have received is not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may understand what God has freely given us.* So the Holy Spirit helps us understanding God, helps us understand life. It's like He's the interpreter.

Both when I was in Kenya and most recently when I was in Brazil doing some mission work there. We spoke through translators. Now I want to tell you what a bad translator is. A bad translator is someone who also tries to interpret. In other words what you do is you make a statement that's one sentence long, but the translator is over here giving a few paragraphs. You're going, "Wait a minute!" because you don't know what he's saying. You don't know, so the translator has all the power. They could say all kinds of things that who knows what they're saying. So the best translators are the ones who are saying what you're saying. If they have a question, they'll ask you so you can clarify it. But that's what a good translator or interpreter does. Someone who adds a lot of extras stuff, that's not the best kind of interpreter that you want working with you.

But the enemy in our lives tries to throw in all kinds of extra stuff into the interpretation of the world, tries to throw these extras things in to try to get you to think differently. So the enemy has you looking at the world so you're saying to yourself, oh I'm nobody. I'm never going to get it right. So you start making these statements about who you are because the enemy is throwing in these extra comments into this interpretation of life. Who are you listening to? Because who you listen to a great extent determines how you think about life. And the Holy Spirit wants to be this interpreter of life for you. So as life is unfolding you're able to pay attention to the Spirit and He can help you as you're moving forward.

I may have a desire to do something good. Well certainly if I have a desire to do something bad the Holy Spirit speaks into me with conviction and says, "Uh uh uh, don't do that". But I may

have a desire to do something good. But sometimes my good desires get carried away and they make my life imbalanced. So the Holy Spirit speaks into that and says, “Hey, let me interpret what’s going on here for you. You’re getting out of balance here.” And so sometimes the Holy Spirit speaks into us about things that are even good things that need to be limited. He helps us deal with our desires. As life is unfolding and our emotions starts to come about inside of us, the Holy Spirit is there to say, “Whoa. Watch out. Your anger is starting to get ahold here, starting to turn you into an ugly person. Be careful about this.”

So the Holy Spirit helps us. He helps us with our loneliness. When we’re struggling and just being lonely, the Holy Spirit is right there to be with us. The Holy Spirit is working in the lives of other people around us so that our desire is not... We don’t have to be in control of everyone else. We can recognize God is working in this situation. We can trust Him. The Holy Spirit is interpreting life. He’s our guide, as we saw earlier, guiding us into all truth. Here He has all this important information that He wants us to understand and He feeds us that information through His word, through just that quiet voice inside of us. The Holy Spirit is powerful. The Holy Spirit is this personal Savior. Jesus is our Savior, but the Holy Spirit saves us from some of the things we could get into trouble in. So we need this Holy Spirit. We don’t want to quench the Holy Spirit. We don’t want to put the bad things on the fire to cause it to go out. We want that fire burning inside so that we are in step with the Holy Spirit in our lives. We’re walking in this role that God has given to us to partner with the Holy Spirit in our lives.

Just one more thought about this as I was considering these ideas about the Holy Spirit. I was thinking one of the most dangerous things we could do is take the self-guided tour through life. I know sometimes when I’m going and making choices I’ll say, “That’s too expensive. I’m going to take the self-guided tour and I’m not going to pay for the tour itself.” Sometimes when you take the self-guided tour you might cut some corners, but you end up in some places you don’t want to be. The self-guided tour of life, you end up in places where not only you shouldn’t be but are determinantal to your emotional and spiritual health. You end up in places where it takes a lot of time to recover from those things. You do not want the self-guided tour of life. I’m just telling you. You have access to the guide who wants to be right there to guide you in all truth. It’s the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit personalizes the things that we need in our lives. He empowers us. He not only guides us from the outside and gives us information about what life is happening, but He empowers us to take the steps.

So I just want to suggest this morning if you’re struggling in an area of your life, you know you’ve got big mountains in front of you, and you need power just to take the steps. You need more of the Holy Spirit. He wants to fill you right now. I want to pray for you today that God’s going to fill you with the Holy Spirit right now and God’s going to do some powerful things in your heart to allow you to trust Him in ways that you’ve never been able to do before. The Holy Spirit can allow you to do that. That’s who He is and we’re grateful for Him.

Would you stand with me as I pray for all of us.

[PRAYER] Heavenly Father, I thank you so much that you’re so complex we can’t even understand you fully, but that you understand us. Even the deep things of our own hearts. We thank you for the Holy Spirit. We want to submit, Holy Spirit, to your leadership in our lives. We

want you to come and fill us right now. Show us what it means to be filled with your Spirit and to live a life this week that is controlled by you. Guide us into the challenges that we face. Interpret life in a way that we can experience. Lord, we pray with Paul in this statement that we would not quench the Spirit in our own lives. That we would be able to trust you in all things. We ask this in Jesus' name, amen.