

## **INTRODUCTION**

Please take your Bibles this morning and turn with me to 1 Thessalonians chapter 5.

It has been on my heart for some time now to address what I believe to be a dangerous issue in the church as a whole and in our lives personally.

And I thought since we are celebrating our nation's 234<sup>th</sup> birthday today, it would be an appropriate time to address this issue.

It is clear that our world is changing around us.

The words by Patrick Henry, "Give me liberty or give me death," are becoming

meaningless in light of many who do not see this great country as those who founded it.

Where have the days gone when America once celebrated a National Day of Humiliation, Fasting and Prayer?

You won't hear those words today.

What you'll hear is "separation of church and state."

But that was not so in the beginning nor was that the intention of our founding fathers.

Recorded in the journals of Congress is a resolution that was passed without dissent declaring May 17, 1776 as a National Day of Humiliation, Fasting and Prayer.

Did you hear what I said? It was passed without dissent.

That is, Congress was in full agreement on

this resolution.

The resolution said, “The Congress....  
desirous ... to have people of all ranks and  
degrees duly impressed with a solemn sense  
of God’s superintending providence, and of  
their duty, devoutly to rely ... on his aid and  
direction ...

We do earnestly recommend Friday, the  
17th day of May be observed by the  
colonies as a day of humiliation, fasting, and  
prayer; that we may, with united hearts,  
confess and bewail our manifold sins and  
transgressions, and, by sincere repentance  
and amendment of life, appease God’s  
righteous displeasure, and, through the  
merits and mediation of Jesus Christ, obtain  
this pardon and forgiveness.”

Do you hear these words today?

Where is this call from our elected leaders?

Where is the humility, prayer, and fasting?

Where is the seeking of Almighty God?

Instead we hear the general “God bless America.”

Today many do not consider America a Christian nation.

They ignore history and are in the process of rewriting it.

At a press conference in Turkey, President Obama said, “One of the great strengths of the United States, is ... we have a very large Christian population -- we do not consider ourselves a Christian nation or a Jewish nation or a Muslim nation. We consider ourselves a nation of citizens who are bound by ideals and a set of values.”

Really?

If we never considered ourselves a Christian nation then why on July 1, 1776 did John

Adams address the delegates from the Thirteen Colonies before the Continental Congress stating that...“Before God, I believe the hour has come. My judgement approves this measure, and my whole heart is in it. All that I have, and all that I am, and all that I hope in this life, I am now ready here to stake upon it. And I leave off as I began, that live or die, survive or perish, I am for the Declaration. It is my living sentiment, and by the blessing of God it shall be my dying sentiment. Independence now, and Independence for ever!”

Why on July 2, 1776 did the Continental Congress approved the wording for the Declaration of Independence which says “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.”

And why on July 4, 1776, delegates of the

Continental Congress voted to accept it.

Why on July 8, 1776, the Declaration was read publicly for the first time outside of Independence Hall in Philadelphia, accompanied by the ringing of the Liberty Bell.

And on July 19, Congress ordered it engrossed in script on parchment and on August 2, 1776, the members of Congress signed the parchment copy.

Why on July 3, 1776, the day following the approval by Congress of the Declaration of Independence, did John Adams write to his wife, Abigail: “I am apt to believe that it will be celebrated by succeeding generations as the great anniversary Festival. It ought to be commemorated, as the day of deliverance, by solemn acts of devotion to God Almighty.”

Why as the parchment copy of the

Declaration of Independence was being signed by the members of the Continental Congress, August 2, 1776 did Samuel Adams declare: “We have this day restored the Sovereign to Whom all men ought to be obedient. He reigns in heaven and from the rising to the setting of the sun, let His kingdom come.”

Why did these men give their lives to declare independence from Britain if they did not believe and live with the desire to please Almighty God?

The 56 signers of the Declaration of Independence paid a tremendous price for our freedom: 5 were arrested by the British as traitors, 12 had their homes looted and burned by the enemy, 17 lost their fortunes, 2 lost sons in the Continental Army and 9 fought and died during the Revolutionary War.

Where are these kind of people today?

Not among many of our elected leaders.

They do exist with our military who even today are fighting an enemy to our freedom and I thank God for them.

But the question I want to ask this morning is “How did we get to this point?”

That’s the same question I ask the church.

The church today has lost its power and influence and in many cases has denied its Creator.

It has adopted the world with its practices and has demonstrated a philosophy of dependency on itself rather than God.

All of this, I believe, is symptomatic of a greater problem and that’s what I want to address today.

The passage I have in mind for our



consideration this morning is 1  
Thessalonians 5:20 which says, “Do not  
despise prophetic utterances.”

Paul says this to the Thessalonians as part of  
his closing thoughts in his first letter.

In fact he begins at verse 16 by telling them  
to “Rejoice always,” and then continues  
with 8 more exhortations like, “Pray without  
ceasing” (v.17), “in everything give thanks;  
for this is God’s will for you in Christ  
Jesus” (v.18), “Do not quench the Spirit”  
(v.19), “Do not despise prophetic  
utterances” (v.20), “But examine everything  
carefully” (v.21), “hold fast to that which is  
good” (v.21), and “abstain from every form  
of evil” (v.22).

When he tells them in verse 20, “Do not  
despise prophetic utterances,” he is  
identifying a problem that plagued this  
church and one that plagues us today.

How many of you have struggled with indifference to the things of God?

I'm not talking about a period of time in life where you fall into this sin but a daily struggle to keep your thoughts fixed on the perfect Word of God?

The Word of God is infinitely superior to all the words of man.

It is truth. Man's words contains lies as Romans 3:4 says, "Let God be true but every man a liar."

The Word of God is to be valued above all things.

This is illustrated by Jesus when He quotes Deuteronomy 8:3 which says, "...man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord."

Job expressed it as his highest priority when he said in Job 23:12, “I have not departed from the commandment of His lips; I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my necessary food.”

Respect for the supremacy of Scripture is what Paul had in mind when he cautioned the Thessalonians not to despise prophecies.

The word “despise” Gr.exoutheno carries the strong meaning, “to consider as absolutely nothing,” “to treat with contempt,” “to look down on” (MacArthur), “to reject” (UBS), or “to make light of” (Friberg)

Paul states this verb as a present active imperative which means he is commanding them to stop an action that is currently taking place.

You could phrase it this way: “Stop counting as nothing” (Robertson)

prophecies.

The word he uses for prophecies or as the NASB says “prophetic utterances” is the Greek word propheteia .

It can refer either to “spoken words or written words” (MacArthur).

This “suggests the public proclamation or preaching of the Word of God” (Believer’s Study Bible).

It means “forth-telling rather than fore-telling” (Robertson).

The verb form of propheteia is the word propheteuo. It means, “to speak or proclaim publicly” and is the “Spirit-endowed skill of publicly proclaiming God’s Word” (MacArthur).

Sometimes New Testament prophets “delivered brand-new revelation directly

from God (Lk.2:29-32 cf. v.38; Acts 15:23-29)” or they merely “reiterated a divine proclamation that was already recorded” (Lk.3:5-6; Acts 2:17-21).

So Paul is saying, “Stop counting as nothing” the “preaching of God’s Word.”

“Stop making light of it” because it is supreme over man and it is to be honored above man.

I believe we hear a statement like this and believe it and shout “Amen” but when it comes right down to it we don’t honor it in that way by the way we handle it.

Some days we can go without it.

Other days we think we don’t need to hear a portion of it taught because we think we already know it.

And in context to this passage we are

quenching the Spirit's Word.

Paul's command not to despise prophetic utterances takes us in 1 Corinthians 14 where prophecy is held to be more superior than the gift of tongues.

Paul says in verse 3 that "he who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men," whereas all tongues could do was edify oneself but "he who prophesies edifies the church" (v.4).

Tongues without interpretation had no value – no one was edified but with the gift of prophecy all were edified.

Paul stated in verse 12 and at the end of verse 26 that the purpose of the gifts were to edify the church.

Consequently verses 23-25 illustrate why the church is to exercise the gift of prophecy and not despise it.

Now as we think this further there are 2 basic reasons why we are not to despise prophetic utterances:

The first is *because of Scriptures essential character.*

# **I. Because of Scriptures Essential Character**

A. It is Infallible (no mistakes in its entirety)

1. It is perfect - Ps.19:7

“It is flawless because it was authored by God – and He is flawless” (MacArthur).

2. It is true

a) John 17:17

b) Ps.119:151

c) Ps.119:160

B. It is Inerrant (no mistakes in its parts)

1. It is pure in “every word” -  
Prov.30:5

“Every word of God is pure.”



2. It is tested and found to be “pure words” - Ps.12:6

“The words of the Lord are pure words, like silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times.”

One commentator says, “What a contrast between the vain words of men and the pure words of God. While the words of men are vanity, the words of God are purity; while men speak with flattering lips, God speaks with tested lips.

The words of God and the Word of God have passed through the furnace of persecution, philosophical disputation, scientific reasoning, and literary criticism; but they have not lost one precious ounce of their purity.

God preserves and keeps those who are oppressed and needy because He keeps His word. Even when The wicked walk on every side, as a result of vile men being in positions of authority, we may still trust the Word of God, knowing that "... all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose" (Rom 8:28) (KJV Bible Commentary).

- C. It is Complete (nothing needs to be added to it)
  - 1. Proverbs 30:6 gives a command to not add to God's Word

“Do not add to His words, lest He rebuke you, and you be found a liar.”
  - 2. Revelation 22:18-19 gives a

warning for those who add or take away from God's Word

“For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.”

“The message of the Bible is complete and needs no collaboration from anyone” (KJV Bible Commentary).

D. It is Authoritative (it is the last word)

1. When God speaks everyone is to listen

- a) Isa.1:2 - “Hear, O heavens,  
and give ear, O earth! For the  
Lord has spoken.”
- b) Deut.32:1 - “Give ear, O  
heavens, and I will speak; and  
hear, O earth, the words of my  
mouth.”

2. God’s Word is the final word and  
we are to be obedient to it (being  
obedient to God’s Word is  
synonymous to being obedient to  
God)

- a) 1 John 2:4-5
- b) 1 John 5:2-5

E. It is sufficient (it is able to meet all  
your needs)

- 1. For salvation - 2 Tim.3:15
- 2. For maturity - 2 Tim.3:16-17
- 3. For hope - Rom.15:4

#### 4. For blessing - Jas.1:25

F. It is Effective (it is able to do exactly what it says)

1. It will do exactly what God sends it to do - Isa.55:10-11

“For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, And do not return there, But water the earth, And make it bring forth and bud, That it may give seed to the sower And bread to the eater, So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.”

2. It will do in your life what it says it will do

When God says you can be saved

from your sin and have an eternal home in heaven prepared for you – that’s exactly what it means!  
You can trust His Word.

## **II. Because of Scriptures Generous Benefits**

### **A. It is the Supreme Source of Truth**

1. It cannot lie because it’s author is truth
  - a) Tit.1:3 says, “God cannot lie.”
  - b) John 16:13 - “However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.”

c) 2 Pet.1:20-21 - “Knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.”

2. You can trust it

Ps.119:42 - “Let Your mercies come also to me, O Lord—Your salvation according to Your word. So shall I have an answer for him who reproaches me, For I trust in Your word.”

B. It is the Source of True Happiness

1. Jesus said there was a blessing given to those who heard and obeyed the Word - Luke 11:27-28

2. Proverbs 8:34 likens the man who listens to wisdom as one who listens and gives heed to God's Word

“Blessed is the man who listens to me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors.”

One commentator says that wisdom “pronounces a blessing on those who listen to her instruction, walking in her ways. It promises happiness to those who wait daily at her gates, who keep faithful vigil at her doors. It holds out life and divine favor to those who find her, but personal loss and death to those who miss her” (MacDonald, W., & Farstad, A. (1997, c1995). *Believer's Bible Commentary : Old and New Testaments* (Pr 8:32). Nashville: Thomas Nelson).



C. It is the Source of Victory Over Sin and the Forces of Evil

1. The Psalmist asks and gives the answer to how one can be cleansed from sin (Ps.119:9, 11)
2. Jesus illustrated in His temptation with Satan that the Word of God is our source for overcoming it (Mat.4:1-11)
3. God's Word is the only offensive weapon given for the spiritual battle (Eph.6:17)

“The sword to which Paul refers here is the machaira, which varied in length from six to eighteen inches. It was the common sword carried by Roman foot soldiers and was the principal weapon in hand-to-hand combat. Carried in a sheath or scabbard attached to

their belts, it was always at hand and ready for use. It was the sword carried by the soldiers who came to arrest Jesus in the Garden (Matt. 26:47), wielded by Peter when he cut off the ear of the high priest's slave (v. 51), and used by Herod's executioners to put James to death (Acts 12:2)” (John MacArthur, Ephesians).

D. It is the Ultimate Source of Spiritual Growth

1. It is profitable - 2 Tim.3:16-17
2. It is practical - 2 Peter 2:1-2

E. It is the Only Perfectly Reliable Source of Guidance

1. It lays down the right path - Ps.19:8

“The statutes [testimonies] of the

Lord are right [lay down a right path], rejoicing the heart.”

2. It is not only “a light to my path” but it’s the path the lights on -  
Ps.119:105

“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.”

#### F. It is the Source of Hope

1. It constantly upholds you -  
Ps.119:116

“Uphold me according to Your Word, that I may live; and do not let me be ashamed of my hope.”

2. Paul stated its purpose in Romans 15:4 was to give “hope”

“For whatever things were written for our learning, that we through

the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.”

## **CONCLUSION**

1. How are you responding to the Word taught or preached?
2. Do you say, I’ve heard that before, I don’t need to hear it again?
3. Be careful how you respond.
4. Your response will either quench the Spirit or be one of submission to the Spirit.
5. As you celebrate America’s 234 years of independence, remember that that independence didn’t come without a price.
6. Many sacrificed their lives so that we could enjoy the freedoms we have

today.

7. These were men and women who lived their lives based on the Word of God also believed that the Word of God was to be supreme and Jesus was to be worshiped without the tyranny of government telling them otherwise.
8. So as you enjoy your 4<sup>th</sup> don't forget what it's truly about and don't forget God who gave you those freedoms.
9. The greatest freedom is the freedom of the soul from the bondage of sin.
10. Jesus said in John 8:31-32, "If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free."
11. Let's pray (Lord's Supper).