

**1 Thessalonians 5: 25-28; "Instructions for the Holy Brethren",**  
**Sermon # 34 in the series - "A Persevering Faith",**  
**Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on March 1st, 2009,**  
**in the Afternoon Worship Service.**

This will be the last sermon in our series through this book. I hope that you have grasped the theme of Paul's letter. It is that our faith must persevere through many trials, believing and trusting that the Lord will be our helper in all matters related to our faith. The coming of the Lord and His appearing at the last Day is the blessed hope which we meditate upon in our hearts, and it is one of our greatest motivations for holiness and for enduring all of our trials. But we can see from these last verses that the encouragement of faithful, like-minded brethren is also a great source of comfort and blessing to us as we go on through this life to the next. And we should always treasure and promote the fellowship with each other that Christ has given to us. Here in these last four verses Paul gives the saints in Thessalonica 3 commands and a benedictory prayer to close with. They are the three great duties which we owe one another as brethren. If we love the brethren we will engage in these duties ourselves and we will promote them in our church. The first duty is prayer; the second is showing proper and holy affection, and the third is the reading of the Scripture out loud. I hope that this message will be an incentive to each of you to engage each of these more and more as the days go by and we come closer to the time when each one of us will give an account of ourselves before God.

**1st - Prayer for the Brethren** (Verse 25)

Paul says, "Brethren, pray for us." Now certainly he is asking them, as his brethren, to pray for his ministry of the word, not only to them when he was with them; but also his ministry of the word in every place to which the Lord sent him. He wanted the brethren there to pray not only for him, but also for all the brethren who traveled with him, who helped him and supported him in the ministry. And, I believe that it should be an easy jump to apply these words, also, in relation to all brethren praying for one another. Paul wanted them to pray for him personally. He wanted them to pray for all those with him by name, thinking of them in individual and personal terms as to what they might need to glorify God in the Christian life to which He had called them. It is the same for us today. It is not simply that Christians in any given church should be praying for those who have preached the word to them occasionally, or even that prayer should simply be offered for those who preached the word to them every week. This is essential and necessary and good. But rather, prayer is to be made by each and every saint for each and every other saint as they know them, and they come to mind. And so we are here being given an importance principle of how we are to

engage in prayer. It is opened up further by Paul in other places in his letters. And so I want you to turn with me to Ephesians chapter 6 and verse 17. How is it that you can become stronger in prayer? Verse 17 says, "And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints--and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak." Here Paul is speaking of every believer putting on the whole spiritual armor of God. He would have every believer be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. I trust that this is what you want as well. You don't want to be a weak and lazy Christian. You want to be strong in Christ's cause and you want to be strong on behalf of others of His people. To be strong in Christ's cause is to realize the strength of the spiritual battle that is going on day by day in the lives of pastors, and indeed in the lives of all the Christians in the church you regularly attend. And the battle goes on in the lives of all of God's dear people in every place. There are certain questions that we must ask ourselves. Have I put on the whole armor of God? I hope that you have put on the armor and that you pray after you have put it on. The lesson is this. You can be ever so well equipped and be thinking that you and others can be strong in battle without prayer praying. But it cannot be so. God cannot be glorified in you and through you without prayer for others as well as yourself. You will deceive yourself and fall down in your duty to God and to other people if you do not pray. They will fall down in the work of the Lord and become ineffectual in it unless you pray. God uses means, and the means that He often uses is your prayers as a believer. He can work without them; but He does not often choose to do so. So the real question is; do you pray for all the saints? Do you love them and care about them enough to pray about the things that they are struggling with, the things that they desire to be and to become for God; the things that they currently are engaged in, in the work of the Lord. I think that you would be very surprised at what God might do with our church in the work of the Lord, if you would pray more for each of the people of our church on a regular basis.

Prayer also helps God's people come to terms with each other. When we pray for one another, it becomes much harder to be critical of one another. It becomes much more difficult to gossip and slander those whom you are praying for. Instead of always being critical, if prayer you are humbled, when you see that the people around you in the church you attend, really need you to pray for them. You begin, also, to look outside of the church that you attend to Christians in other denominations and to pray for them as well. You realize that you cannot agree with them doctrinally, but that doesn't mean that you shouldn't or you cannot wish the Lord's greatest blessings upon everything in their ministry and

their lives which would glorify Him. You realize that being a faithful Christian is not a matter of winning the wars of doctrinal disagreement, it is becoming more like Christ. It is speaking the truth in love, and holding to the convictions that you have formed in regard to the word of God. It is not abandoning the Confession of Faith, but it learning to hold these things forth in love, having often prayed for wisdom about how you should present them to others. There is as Paul said in Ephesians 6: 19 a mystery to the gospel. And there is just as great a mystery to the advance of the gospel and the truth of the word of God. It goes forward by means of prayer most often, and not by way of argumentation. So learn to pray for all the saints who you know anything about. Pray that God's work would run deeply through their lives and their labors. Pray always, with all kinds of prayer and supplication. Pray for the people of God.

**Secondly - Greet all the brethren with a holy Kiss.** (Verse 26)

This exhortation is a matter of displaying affection in our greeting of the Lord's people. It is not meant to be just a custom like shaking hands in affirmation or agreement with those who you are doing business with. It was not meant to become the custom that it has come to be in the Middle East and other places where men greet men by kissing each other on both cheeks. In many cases it is just a mere formality. I am not deprecating these customs in terms of the culture norms of societies and people. But this holy kiss was, and is, meant to be a true and sincere demonstration of love and good-will toward all the brethren. It was meant especially to be an expression of Christian love between the brethren when they first saw each other after not having seen each other for awhile. It was saying, "I love you with the love of Jesus Christ"; that love which is willing to listen, to care, and give of your time and attention to the other because they are Christ's and you appreciate them because of His love and grace at work in them. It is one of the outward ways in which the love of the brethren continues. Because it is an outward expression it is something which can be done in hypocrisy, without there being true feelings of sincere love and good-will in the heart, matching the outward action of affection.

A kiss is an expression of loyalty and faithfulness to the person who you are greeting in this way. But, oh how this expression has been abused. You will recall that Judas betrayed our Lord Jesus Christ with a kiss. Jesus even questioned Judas concerning this in Luke 22, verse 48. "Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?" In Proverbs chapter 27, verses 5 and 6 it says, "Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful." We must always be very careful that the kisses that we give the brethren are the true expression of our heart. You see this kind of loyalty, which is based upon the common cause of God and Christ, exhibited in the relationship of Jonathan and David. It is found in 1 Samuel 18, verse 1. ""Now when David had finished speaking to Saul, the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul."

In the next few verses we find that Saul, Jonathan's father, was jealous and suspicious of David since he had killed the Philistine, and the women had come out singing saying, 'Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten-thousands.' Saul thought that he would take the kingdom away from him and so he sought to harm David. But Jonathan and David, it says in verse 3 made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul." This is the kind of love that the brethren of Christ ought to have toward each other. When they see another brother having success in the ministry or their work or whatever it is that they are doing that is done for the glory of God, they ought not to be suspicious or envious, but to be able to rejoice. And when that person that you are in covenant with through Christ is being viewed with suspicion and prejudice, you still ought to love that brother or sister. Turn over to 1 Samuel 20, verse 32. Here in the context, Saul's suspicion and envy have turned to hatred and he is intent on killing David if he can now. In verse 31 he says, "For as long as the son of Jesse lives on the earth, you shall not be established, nor your kingdom." "Now therefore, send and bring him to me, for he shall surely die." Jonathan did not say, "Yes, father, you are the king and I will do as you command." In verse 32 Jonathan answers, "Why should he be killed?" "What has he done?" "Then Saul cast a spear at him to kill him, by which Jonathan knew that it was determined by his father to kill David." That is, Saul cast his spear at his own son. Why? Because he knew that he was not only favorable to David, but in covenant with him. This is how brethren show their true affection for one another; in their basically loyalty to one another when one is hated without a righteous cause. Look over at verse 41. David was in hiding from Saul and Jonathan went out into the field and shot his arrows beyond the little lad who was with him according to their pre-arranged agreement to show that Saul was against David. Then it says, "As soon as the lad had gone, David arose from a place toward the south, fell on his face to the ground, and bowed down three times." "and they kissed one another; and they wept together, but David more." "Then Jonathan said to David, 'Go in peace, since we have both sworn in the name of the Lord, saying, 'May the Lord be between you and me, and between your descendants and my descendants, forever.'" This is the kind of thing that could be said of the holy kiss between Christians. We are in covenant with each other through Jesus Christ. We are saying that we want the Lord to be between us forever.

You see, the basic loyalty between us is based upon our loyalty to Christ; His cause and His kingdom. Turn over to Psalm 2 and you will see this. After saying that the nations and the peoples rage and and the kings plot against the Lord and against His Christ, and do not want to have Christ rule over Him, which is because of their sin; God says in verse 10, "Now therefore, be wise, O kings; be instructed, you judges of the earth." "Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling." "Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish in the way, when His

wrath is kindled but a little." "Blessed are all those who put their trust in Him." The reason that we greet the brethren with a holy kiss is because we have greeted Christ and brought Him into our souls by faith. Because of Christ, we would bring the interests and the concerns of our brethren into our souls as well. This is what is truly conveyed by the holy kiss. It is well pictured by Paul's last meeting with the elders of Ephesus in Acts 20, verse 35. As he spoke to them and told them of his ministry and where it was leading him; to prison and to death, he said to them, "I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak." "And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that he said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'" "And when he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all." "Then they all wept freely, and fell on Paul's neck and kissed him, sorrowing most of all for the words which he spoke, that they would see his face no more." "And they accompanied him to the ship." Here is true brotherly love expressed. Ask yourself now, do I have it?

**And then the final injunction is - Read the Scripture out loud.** (Verse 27)

"I charge you by the Lord that this epistle be read to all the holy brethren." Let us understand how important it is; not only that the Scripture be read, but that it be read out loud so that the words are actually heard and thereby God may even be heard even more clearly than if the words are silently gazed at. "Faith come by hearing and hearing by the word of God." It does not say that faith comes by seeing, but rather faith comes by hearing. Ours is a hearing faith. We know that just seeing a crucifix or seeing the Mass performed will not save a single soul. But the reading and the hearing of the Scriptures will. 1 Timothy 4: 13 says, "Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine." The word for reading there is *anaginosko*. It means particularly the public reading of the Scripture as it is translated in the NAS. "Give attention to it." I would urge you all to read it out loud sometimes even to yourself. When I first came to know the Lord, I went on one occasion over to the Herbert Hoover library in West branch. They have a beautiful grounds there and I sat and read the first hundred of the 150 Psalms out loud that day. It was a beautiful day and the Lord gave me great joy in Him and the hearing of His blessed word that day. I hope that you will avail yourself of this means of grace. Paul charged it upon this congregation.

Read the Scriptures out loud to your children. This is how they will become acquainted with them. Don't simply read children's books which have condensed stories of what the Bible relates in them. Read them the unadulterated Scriptures. Let them ask questions. You give them the answers straight from the Bible. And then, finally, let us all prize the reading aloud of the Scriptures as one of the greatest privileges of our worship here at this church. For it truly is. If the cause of Christ is not prospering in this country at this time it is because the Bible is not being read aloud by churches and families. Let us always have a place for it in our worship, even if other churches give it up altogether. God will always honor His

Word. I would think that if many of the Christian radio stations of today would allot more time for the reading of the Scripture that many persons who do not know the Lord at all, coming across that station, would stop and listen. But even if that does not happen, you read the Word aloud and listen when it is read, for it is God's book and when He speaks to us through it, all spiritual good comes to our souls. Never forget this, for God is faithful to His word to do everything that He has promised in it. His truth endures to all generations and forever. I pray as Paul did, in closing this exposition of His Word, that the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ would be with you. Amen