

## Contagion

Week 12

The next slide is going to have a compilation of twin cars. I have tried to factor all of you in ... and I hope that one of the sets of cars will appeal to you. (SLIDE)

So pick the set that interests YOU most. Then IMAGINE that you own BOTH. You wake up everyday with the choice ... which one will I drive TODAY?

My guess is, even though they are similar ... eventually you will begin to enjoy one more than the other. It could be the color ... it could be the way the seat feels ... it could be any factor, but one of those will be your favorite.

So pick your set ... and then consider which one of those you would like the most.

So ... I want you to file that thought away as we begin this morning. We WILL come back to it.

Today ... we finish up our **Contagion** series. It has been (almost) a verse by verse look at the book of 1 Thessalonians.

After today ... Every single word from the book will have been read out loud, and almost every verse has been explained.

Paul wraps up his letter to the church with machine gun kind of style. It's almost like he's writing to beat the mail man who is one block over. He hits them (and us) with a lot of stuff today ... and we will only be able to tackle a few of them.

Next week we will have a service of Remembrance of the **September 11 terrorist's attacks of 2001**. Our goal will be to try and remember with a spiritual perspective.

And then the week after that ... we will begin a new series titled: **Transparency**. In that series we are going to look at the lives of a few Biblical people who messed up BIG TIME ... BLEW IT ... FELL INTO SIN ... DOVE INTO SIN ... then realized their mistake, and came running back to God.

What's going to make this series unique ... is that we are also going to look at the lives of few of our very own people who have done the same. Blew it ... recognized it ... and came running back to God. They are going to be TRANSPARENT about their journey.

When you become transparent; that's when God can begin to SHINE through our lives. Hopefully that will be a very cool series.

But now let's close out our Contagion series.

Remember where we have been the last 2 weeks. Paul has described what happens to Christian when they die ... and He has affirmed the 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming of Jesus.

### 1 Thessalonians 5:12-28

***Now we ask you, brothers and sisters, to acknowledge those who work hard among you, who care for you in the Lord and who admonish you. <sup>13</sup> Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work.*** [Simply put ... those who are in servant leader positions in the church ... hold THEM as the highest influences in your life ... this is referring to those that teach, those that lead small groups, those that work with our youth and children ... and those that are appointed to lead ... and one of the greatest ways to honor those that lead is the very next line ...]

***Live in peace with each other.*** [So you should recognize that this is a letter not just written to church LEADERS ... it is a letter written to ALL believers. SO ... pay special attention to the very next line]

***<sup>14</sup> And we urge you, brothers and sisters, warn those who are idle and disruptive, encourage the disheartened, help the weak, be patient with everyone. <sup>15</sup> Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always strive to do what is good for each other and for everyone else.*** [We are ALL responsible for keeping our brothers and sisters on the straight and narrow. We should be warning those who are not participating; we should be warning those who are causing disruptions.

And on the positive side we should ENCOURAGE those who are down; be strong for those who are weak ... and be PATIENT with everyone. And then TOGETHER

we are to make sure that NO ONE seeks revenge ... but instead, only what is good for all of us.]

<sup>16</sup> **Rejoice always**, <sup>17</sup> **pray continually**, <sup>18</sup> **give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.** [Don't rejoice FOR every circumstance. But give thanks IN every circumstance ... It's not like; "Oh great, I got another zit; Thank you Jesus!" ... No, we need to know that we can ALWAYS rejoice because of what Jesus has done. If someone I know, someone I love, dies. I don't have to rejoice because they died, but I can rejoice if they knew Jesus. I can rejoice because I know Jesus, and my eternity with Him is promised by Him. If God is #1 in our lives; then we should be in constant conversation with Him ... these 3 small verses paint a picture of what a Christian attitude should look like. Some people think DEEPLY spiritual people need to be solemn, gloomy even. But NO ... Search the Bible from one end to the other ... you will never find a verse that says, "Groan in the Lord always, and again I say groan." But you will find a verse that says, "Rejoice in the Lord ALWAYS and again I say rejoice!"] Let me add this ... there are ENOUGH groaners in the world ... let's try our best to be rejoicers.

[Now let's look at verse 19 ... and camp out here for a moment]

<sup>19</sup> **Do not quench the Spirit.** [The image created here is the familiar image of the Holy Spirit as a fire or a flame. It IS a Holy Fire, so it's one that WE cannot create. But we CAN provide the proper environment in which it can continue to burn; and burn brightly. Think of a campfire. I love campfires! If you build a campfire of THIS size, how long will it burn at that size if it's left unattended. The answer is: a very brief time. For you to KEEP it at that size you MUST keep feeding it wood for fuel.

How can we quench the Spirit by the way we worship together? Well ... We can limit Him with our own expectations. If we have too much of a mechanical idea of what our corporate worship should look like ... We NEED 1 song; then announcements; then 3 more songs; then communion; then offering; prayer time; a sermon; an invitation; and a goodbye song. If we ONLY think the Holy Spirit works through a system ... we're wrong. He is FAR larger than any human system.

But ... the gist of this verse is probably more personal. Remember the automobiles that I showed you to start the service. Which one did you choose? (Ask the audience ... and why?) If pressed, I would take ANY of those vehicles, but

if I had to choose ... I would probably choose the TRUCKS (and out of the trucks ... I would pick the red one. It's very functional ... and it's just very, very manly].

But here was the original question ... if you had both of your choices in the driveway, which one would you drive?

Here's the deal ... If we are Christian, we have two natures within us. One is the Holy Spirit nature ... and the other, our old SIN nature. They are BOTH parked in the driveway of our heart. Which one are you choosing to take for a spin?

**Let me put it another way** ... and this way ALWAYS seems to grab people's attention. I have shared this before, but someone is always hearing it for the first time. [And for those who are hearing it for the 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> time, you SHOULD be able to share it now with someone else]

There was a man who had just bought a rental storage facility, and it wasn't in the nicest part of town. So, he pulled out his trusty yellow pages, and turned to the Guard Dog section. He called around, and found out what the going rate was, and he realized he only had enough cash on hand to purchase one dog.

He called up "Guard Dogs R Us" He said, I've done my research, I KNOW that you guys test and test these dogs ... I also know I can only afford ONE dog ... but I want your BEST dog. So which one rated the highest on your **strength** test?

The salesman from Guard Dogs R US said, "Let me see" ... then he answered, "Oh wow, it was a tie between two Rottweiler's ... **Zeus and Hercules**."

The man then asked, "OK which of those two ranked higher in **SPEED and AGILITY?**" The salesman typed in the numbers, and then replied, "Oh wow, they are even in that category too."

Ok, ok ... there is one last MAIN category left ... which of those two dogs tested highest in the **endurance** drill? The salesman replied, "Ok let me get to those numbers ... NO WAY! You are not going to believe this they both scored a 97 on the endurance test ... it's another tie!!!

The man is now getting irritated, and says, "So you are telling me that these two dogs are your best dogs, and they grade out exactly even?" The salesman answered, "Yes, yes, I guess I am."

The man who called in then asks, "Ok, which one of these dogs would YOU buy if you needed a great guard dog?"

"Well, they grade out exactly even ... so you couldn't go wrong with either one."

"That's not what I asked, I want YOUR VERY BEST DOG. OK, if these 2 dogs got into a fight which one would win?"

"Sir, we would never do that ... it would be cruel and inhumane to fight these dogs."

"I know that ... it's a hypothetical question. Which of these 2 dogs would win in a fight?"

"Sir, they have both had the exact same training, they are the same age, there are no deciding factors ... I cannot answer your question."

The man is now getting very upset ... "If you do not give me a legitimate answer, I am going to take my business elsewhere ..."

"OK, ok, here is your answer ... the one that would win this incredible fight would be hmmm mmmmmmm ... they are so close, it would be the one that had the most to eat on that exact day."

What do we have inside of US? We have the Holy Spirit and we have a sin nature.

They are NOT even. The Holy Spirit is far more powerful. But He also works in conjunction with how we live, and how we FEED Him.

So ... with the way you spend your time. With the way you entertain yourself. With the things that you read. With the things that you think about most.

Are you feeding the Holy Spirit or are you feeding your sin nature? (PAUSE)

Paul commands us to NOT quench the Holy Spirit. He says, "Put another log on the fire ... then another one ... and then another one."

Paul then finishes out his letter.

<sup>20</sup> **Do not treat prophecies with contempt** [Yeah, somebody probably predicted that Jesus would be back by now, and some of you quit your jobs, because you believed them; but that doesn't mean everything that Christians say about your future is wrong ... sometimes you DO need to listen and learn] <sup>21</sup> **but test them all; hold on to what is good, <sup>22</sup> reject every kind of evil.**

<sup>23</sup> **May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>24</sup> The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it.** [WHO is doing the sanctifying? God is. We are not earning His favor, we are not trying to get brownie points ... we should simply be doing our best to stay close to Him.]

<sup>25</sup> **Brothers and sisters, pray for us. <sup>26</sup> Greet all God's people with a holy kiss. <sup>27</sup> I charge you before the Lord to have this letter read to all the brothers and sisters.**

<sup>28</sup> **The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.**