

HOLD FAST

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The Bible tells us to hold fast that which is good. To hold something fast means to grip it tightly. It cannot be taken from us because we value it and are determined to keep it.

Our first love and initial enthusiasm needs to be maintained — not for a few months, not for a few years — but to the end of our way of sacrifice. It is only those who endure to the end of life's way and are faithful unto death who will receive a crown of life. They will then live and reign with Christ a thousand years. Revelation 2:10; 20:6.

We will use 1 Thessalonians 5:21 as our text scripture: "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good."

We are admonished to test or examine God's word by individual and group study. This will determine the things which are worthy to keep in our memories, and to retain things which are virtuous and honest. All of these enable us to grow in truth and knowledge of God's plan. They also enable us to spread forth the gospel to any who have a hearing ear. They contribute to making our calling and election sure.

The Revised Standard Version and the New International Version use the word "test" instead of "prove." The idea of proving something by testing it is to see if it holds to the truth.

1 Thessalonians 5:21 (RSV) ". . . but test everything; hold fast what is good . . . "

1 Thessalonians 5:21 (NIV) "Test everything. Hold on to the good."

The NIV uses "hold on to" with the thought of never letting go of something worthy or valuable to us as New Creatures.

1 Thessalonians 5:21 (Living Bible) ". . . test everything that is said to be sure it is true, and if it is, then accept it."

Again, it emphasizes to test everything, but adds the thought of testing to be sure it is true and verified by God's words. Then if it is true, accept it and enter it into your heart and mind as part of your faith.

1 Thessalonians 5:21 (New American Standard) “. . . examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good.”

As we examine everything, the NAS adds the admonition to do it carefully, to do it in detail, making sure the words are harmonious with other scriptures. Determine who, what, where, why, and when it was used.

In the King James Version the term “hold fast” is used twice in the Old Testament. Each of these makes an entirely different point of what was held fast to.

The first led down the wrong path, one which was false.

Jeremiah 8:5 (KJV) “Why then is this people of Jerusalem slidden back by a perpetual backsliding? they hold fast deceit, they refuse to return.”

Jeremiah was setting before the people the folly of their lack of conscience. He wanted to prevent the ruin that was coming upon them, but they would not listen to reason.

They would not pay attention to their conscience. This is a warning to us, to search carefully for dullness of our own conscience--to pray for heavenly hope to overcome weaknesses. They balked at God's methods to separate them from their sins. Their excuses for their sins were deceptions. Yet they held fast to these sins.

What a realistic picture of this present evil world--drawing back from the word of God. Let us not draw back, or take our sacrifice off the altar. This is the only way to receive the crown of life.

Revelation 2:10 (KJV) “. . . be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.”

Job 27:3-6 (RSV) (Here Job gives a positive lesson for us to hold fast to). “. . . as long as my breath is in me, and the spirit of God is in my nostrils; my lips will not speak falsehood, and my tongue will not utter deceit. Far be it from me to say that you are right; till I die I will not put away my integrity from me. I hold fast my righteousness, and will not let it go; my heart does not reproach me for any of my days.”

Job's oath in these scriptures speaks of his undying faith in God and His plan. He never betrayed his conscience by speaking otherwise. He would not speak falsely nor assert any fact unless he believed it to be true.

If he knew himself to be guilty, he would not deny the charge. He would instead declare the truth, and nothing but the truth! Job makes it very clear that he would adhere to this resolution as long as he lived. Our resolution against sin should be a constant resolution throughout life. Our determination is to never spread wickedness or utter deceit.

We never know when we will breathe our last breath; therefore, while our breath is in us, we should never allow ourselves to say or do anything which can be judged against us. God breathed in us the breath of life; therefore, while we have breath we should praise Him. This is another reason why we refrain from speaking wickedly or deceitfully.

Job was always a good man. He held fast his integrity. A good preparation for our own death is perseverance in our integrity.

Job 13:15 (NIV) "Though he slay me, yet will I hope in him; I will surely defend my ways to his face."

He did not curse God as Satan and his wife urged him to do (Job 2:9). He had lost all, but he kept his faith in God. Sometimes righteous men are censured and condemned as hypocrites. To bear up boldly against such criticism strengthens their integrity to not be discouraged or accept unjust censure. Like the apostles, we need good consciences in all things, being willing to live honestly.

Hebrews 13:18 (KJV) "Pray for us: for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly."

2 Timothy 1:13 (NKJV) "Hold fast the pattern of sound words, which you have heard from me, in faith and love, which are in Christ Jesus."

Revelation 3:3 (KJV) "Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast . . ."

These scriptures indicate that holding fast consists in not letting slip the things which we have heard and know to be true. The purpose of the truth is to guide us into knowing and doing God's will. Only through studying the instructions clearly,

outlined in the word of truth, do we know what our Heavenly Father wants us to do and to be.

To let the truth slip would be like a builder who neglects to consult his blueprints. As the builder continues without the blueprint, he could not be sure that the building erected would be in harmony with the architect's plans. The blueprint of the divine plan of the ages was designed by our Heavenly Father, the great Architect.

Hebrews 2:1 (KJV) "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip."

The things we have heard are of vital importance because of their source. The very first verse of Hebrews identifies this source as God. Paul reminds us in Hebrews 1:1 that God had previously spoken to his people through the holy prophets. But now he was speaking through his Son.

What a high position of authority was given by God to his only begotten Son. He appointed him heir of all things. He "anointed him with the oil of gladness, above his fellows." Hebrews 1:9.

It is through this divinely appointed channel that our Heavenly Father spoke to his called out ones at the beginning of the gospel age. He has continued to speak to them throughout the entire age. In a special sense this is true at the present time, when the Son is serving the brethren with meat in due season. This is what he promised to do when he returned.

Luke 12:37 (KJV) "Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them sit down to meat, and will come forth, and serve them."

It is important that we take earnest heed to the things which we have heard. They have come from the glorified Jesus, who has been exalted to the right hand of God. Every aspect of the divine plan is of vital concern to each dedicated follower of the Master. We cannot let any part of the truth slip through lack of interest or zeal.

By the grace of God we have been given the holy spirit. The same holy spirit given to Jesus and the apostles. The holy spirit enables our eyes and ears of understanding to open to the precious words of truth. In order to make our calling and election sure, we need to hold fast that which we have seen and heard.

Ephesians 1:17, 18 (RSV) “. . . that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you . . .”

We are admonished to hold fast our profession, our profession of faith.

Hebrews 4:14 (KJV) “Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession.”

Hebrews 10:22, 23 (KJV) “Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised) . . .”

Some versions of Hebrews 10:23 read: “Hold fast the profession of our hope.”

He is faithful. We know that the Lord will do his part. If there be any failure, it will be on our part; the responsibility rests with us. We have proven God’s great and precious promises in times of stress and danger. He will not fail us.

We have faith in our hearts before we make an outward profession before we confess the Lord with our mouth. “Profession” in Strong’s #3671 means “to confess, to acknowledge.” We cannot confess him with our mouth until we have believed unto righteousness.

Romans 10:10 (KJV) “For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”

The Lord has declared that if we refuse, or fail to confess him before men, he will count us as unworthy. There is then no salvation without a confession of our Lord.

If we hide our light under a bushel, if we shrink from the reproach of the cross, there is no hope of being accepted of the Lord. All who have received the truth, and the love of it, will be glad to let their lights shine. We rejoice to carry the living water to other thirsty souls. We do this because the glorious message has filled our hearts and blessed our lives.

In harmony with the terms of our consecration, we tell of our faith to others--a faith which reaches beyond the present life. We confess our hope that we will have

a part in the first resurrection--that we will be like him and see him as he is. We confess that we hope with him to be instruments in the Father's hands, bringing life and joy and blessings to all the world of mankind. Truly, ours is a wonderful hope. We rejoice to tell it!

If, then, we have this faith, this hope, let us hold fast to it and properly confess it before men. The adversary will take advantage of these circumstances to further discourage us. There will be temptations along the line of our faith and hope. There will be reproaches and persecutions permitted, all for the purpose of proving our loyalty.

We have a marvelous calling, and only those who are more than overcomers will fill the places in the elect class. Only those who have the spirit of the Master. We are also told to hold fast to our confidence:

Hebrews 3:6 (KJV) “. . . Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.”

Strong's #3954 gives the meaning for confidence as used here. It means frankness, bluntness, by implication, assurance. Other versions use the word blunt instead of confidence and some use courage instead of confidence. All of these seem to imply that we have full assurance of our faith and hope in the Lord and his promises.

Hebrews 6:11 (KJV) “And we desire that every one of you shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end.”

Hebrews 10:22 (KJV) “Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.”

Throughout all the ages there have been times of misplaced confidence. People have trusted in leaders who abused them or led them astray. People have trusted in their own abilities to build fortunes, to have power, to have a following.

But there is only one in whom we can have complete confidence. There is one who can and will keep his promises. That is our Heavenly Father.

Joshua 23:14 (NIV) “You know with all your heart and soul that not one of all the good promises the Lord your God gave you has failed . . . not one has failed.”

Many times in the Old Testament the people lost their confidence, or trust, in the Lord. When they did, they suffered. Then when they renewed their confidence and trust in the Lord, he blessed them.

This is a lesson for us. We must trust him where we cannot see him. We must trust in the Lord with all our hearts. We must have faith in his promises and confidence in his words. We must have patient endurance under all circumstances, trusting his ability to complete the good works he had begun.

Philippians 1:6 (KJV) “Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.”

In proportion as we grow in knowledge and grace, in the same proportion our confidence grows stronger.

Do not lose your confidence, do not lose your faith, do not lose your trust in God. Keep your confidence in the outworking of God’s plan. Keep your confidence in the great shepherd, and in his word.

Hebrews 10:35 ((RSV) “ . . . do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward.”

God will reward us according to our faith, our confidence, our zeal,. our sincerity. It is the reward of being joint heirs with Christ and receiving the crown of life.

Back to our text scripture: 1 Thessalonians 5:21 (KJV) “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.” We have covered some of the good things that we should hold fast to. Now let us explore the first part of the scripture: “Prove all things.”

The Lord’s people should not accept what they hear without proper examination. They should use sound judgment as to whether it is supported by the scriptures. Searching of the scriptures, in proving, will be of lasting benefit.

It is the duty of every child of God to judge what is right and what is wrong, what is true and what is false. It is possible, if the desire for the truth is paramount to all other desires, to direct every circumstance to make opportunities for study and investigation.

Each individual should prove his faith in the doctrines by God’s word. Every doctrine having any claim on our faith should be brought to the test of the word

and the testimony. The foundation of our faith is carefully fitted together. It is founded upon the solid rock. Therefore, our faith will be harmonious and strong and secure-- a beautiful structure. No winds of false doctrines will damage or overturn our faith and trust in God.

The Manna for August 18 reads in part:

“ . . . the Lord’s people should learn . . . not to receive what they might hear without proper examination . . . they should prove all things that they hear and exercise discrimination as to what is logically and scripturally supported, and what is mere conjecture

. . . They should prove what they hear with a view to holding fast everything that stands the test of the divine Word, and shows itself to be in accordance with the Holy Spirit; and they should as promptly reject whatever will not stand these tests.”

Let us prove and hold fast to: righteousness, faith in God, trust in God, the pattern of sound words, what we have received and heard, the profession of our faith, confidence in our hope.

Let us hold fast to the Lord, to his exceeding great and precious promises, to his people, as together we press on toward the glorious prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.