

Hold Fast What Is Good

By Patrick Swayne

The command to “hold fast what is good” is brief in our English Bibles; in the original language it is even shorter (1 Thessalonians 5:21). The command that the Thessalonians originally read was only two words long. The first word in the original language (from which we get the phrase “hold fast”) literally means “to have down,” and could also be translated “to keep,” “to possess,” or “to seize on.” The second (from which we get “what is good”) is a word that describes things that are good in of themselves, things that are inherently valuable or virtuous. The message was profound, though the lettering was brief – after having tested a thing, if it was found to be good it needed to be held on to no matter what. Those two words were a crucial command to the Thessalonians; and the corresponding five are just as important to us, as we will see.

Christians must hold fast **what is good**. There are a lot of things competing for our attention today. An honest evaluation of these things would reveal that most of these things are at best morally neutral, and many of them are neither moral nor good. Proving all things allows Christians to identify what is good and what is evil – but what then? Can a Christian then fail to hold on to good things, or hold fast to good things along with worldly things and not be affected? “Can a man take fire to his bosom, and his clothes not be burned?” (Proverbs 6:27). The answer is no. The Christian must heed the words of Paul: “Set your mind on things above, **not** on things on the earth” (Colossians 3:2). If the Christian is not setting his mind appropriately and holding on to good things, then he will be influenced by the evil that exists in the world today and will begin to hold fast to evil things.

Christians must **hold fast** what is good. After examining the fact that Christ was greater than angels, the Hebrews writer warned that His word ought to be held more firmly than the word delivered by angels: “Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away” (Hebrews 2:1). The word translated “drift away” literally means to flow past, or glide by, like a piece of wood gently floating down a river. Unless one is committed to wholeheartedly holding the gospel and that which is good, one will find that he will slowly but surely drift away from it. Half-hearted Christianity is an oxymoron – there is no such thing. Christ stated, “No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will **hold to the one**, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon” (Luke 16:13, KJV).

Christians must **hold fast what is good**. Whether a person realizes it or not, whatever he focuses on will be the focus of his life. If one focuses for instance on his outward problems, his life will be problem filled. If one focuses on sin, his life will be sin filled. However, if one focuses on good, his life will be filled with good. Life is what you make it, which is why Paul said, “Whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—**meditate on these things**” (Philippians 4:8). Evil things do indeed exist, but if one holds fast to good things he will find it easier not to be influenced by them.

Paul’s command to the Thessalonians was brief, yet it was crucial to their ability to remain faithful to Jesus. It remains just as important to us today. If we are not holding good things and them alone, if we are not holding fast to them rather than loosely, and if we are not truly focused on those good things that we hold, our lives will be filled with sin and sorrow.