

“Quenching the Holy Spirit”
1 Thessalonians 5:19-22
(Preached at Trinity, December 29, 2019)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. Beginning with **Verse 12** Paul began the final section of this letter. It is rich in practical instruction. Paul describes practically some of the elements of the sanctification he has been teaching since we began **Chapter 4**
1 Thessalonians 4:1-3 NAU - "Finally then, brethren, we request and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us *instruction* as to how you ought to walk and please God (just as you actually do walk), that you excel still more. ² For you know what commandments we gave you by *the authority* of the Lord Jesus. ³ For this is the will of God, your sanctification"
2. In essence, these verses are a general exhortation of Christian conduct. To review once again:
Verses 12-13 describe Christian conduct with respect to the elders of the church
Verse 14 describes Christian conduct with respect to the disorderly, fainthearted and weak
Verse 15 describes Christian conduct with respect to those who have injured you
This is in the context of the patience commanded at the end of **Verse 14**
Verses 16-18 describe some of the essential attitudes of the Christian life. Paul describes the Christian attitude as being dominated by Joy, Prayer, and Thanksgiving.
3. In **Verses 19-21** Paul gives three final exhortations, still maintaining the use of the imperative. These are not mere suggestions. These three are closely connected and have to do with how we receive instruction from God. It begins with the statement, "Do not quench the Spirit."
4. The Holy Spirit is God's gift to His redeemed people. The Holy Spirit indwells us. He enlivens our soul and equips us for eternity. His presence is a true taste of our eternal reward. In this way He is referred to as the earnest or pledge of our inheritance.
Ephesians 1:13-14 NAU - "In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation-- having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, ¹⁴ who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of *God's own* possession, to the praise of His glory."
2 Corinthians 1:22 NAU - "who also sealed us and gave *us* the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge."
5. The Holy Spirit is God's mark of authenticity upon us. We are assured of being the people of God whereby we can cry out Abba Father. We are protected and secured until the end.
6. The Holy Spirit is also the agent of our sanctification.
1 Thessalonians 4:7-8 NAU - "God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification. ⁸ So, he who rejects *this* is not rejecting man but the God who gives His Holy Spirit to you."

Ephesians 3:14-16 NAU - "For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, ¹⁵ from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, ¹⁶ that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man"

- I. What does Paul mean by his charge, "Do not quench the Spirit?"
- A. The Holy Spirit enflames our hearts towards Christ. **Verse 19** is tied to the powerful work of the Holy Spirit. We can receive His leadership or we can resist it.
1. Resisting the Holy Spirit is like pouring water upon burning coals and quenching the fire.
Paul uses the word σβέννυμι. It literally means "to extinguish" It's the word Jesus used to describe the failing lamps of the foolish virgins.
Matthew 25:8 NAU - "The foolish said to the prudent, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.'"
 2. Paul is commanding us to avoid extinguishing the influence of the Holy Spirit by our stubborn resistance. Paul is telling his readers, live like you are under His influence, under His control. Don't resist Him.
 3. When we deliberately resist the stirring of the Holy Spirit you are acting more like a lost person than a believer.
Listen to Stephen rebuking the wickedness of the Jews
Acts 7:51 NAU - "You men who are stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears are always resisting the Holy Spirit; you are doing just as your fathers did."
- B. How does **Verse 19** fit in the context of this passage.
1. Some have insisted that it should be tied to the end of **Verse 13** "Live in peace with one another."
 - a. It is true that part of the Holy Spirit's influence in us is the work of peace. The fruit of the Spirit is "love, joy, and peace."
 - b. This seems a bit arbitrary and **Verse 19** is a distance from **Verse 13**. We could just as easily apply it to any of Paul's commands in this section.
 2. We need to notice the close link between **Verse 19** and **Verses 20-21**
 - a. Paul is tying the work of the Holy Spirit with prophetic utterance. When Paul wrote this epistle, the Apostolic period had not ended and the Canon was not yet complete. Prophecy was still active. It was the chief of the gifts.
1 Corinthians 14:3-4 NAU - "But one who prophesies speaks to men for edification and exhortation and consolation. ⁴ One who speaks in a tongue edifies himself; but one who prophesies edifies the church."
 - b. But there were also false prophets. It was necessary to weigh prophetic utterances carefully. While it was necessary for them to reject false teaching, it was also essential for them to receive what was true.

William Hendriksen rightly states: “It is as if Paul were saying, ‘By making light of the utterances of the prophets among you, you are belittling the work of no One less than the Holy Spirit.’”¹

3. How do we apply this today? “do not despise prophetic utterances.”
 - a. There are no new prophecies today. Prophecy ceased with the end of the Apostolic period.
 - b. But it is true that preaching is a form of prophetic utterance. It is not the speaking forth of new revelatory utterance but the speaking forth of what God has already spoken in His Word.
 - c. The preaching of the Word of God today should be considered a prophetic utterance. In other words, it is a proclamation of the Word of God – Thus saith the Lord.
 - d. William Perkin’s book on preaching is titled, “The Art of Prophesying.” He writes: “Preaching the Word is prophesying in the name and on behalf of Christ. Through preaching those who hear are called into the state of grace, and preserved in it.”²
 - e. Regarding the duty of those who listen to the preaching he writes: “It is to submit to it. For if the minister has a commission to redeem your soul, it must be by the Word and holy discipline. So your duty is to hear God’s Word patiently, to submit yourself to it, to be taught and instructed, even to be checked and rebuked and to have your sins unveiled and your corruptions torn up. So if your soul is to be redeemed, your minister must uncover its weakness and purge its corruption. Such teaching may seem harsh and painful; the discipline of the gospel may seem rough to you. Yet you must not rage and rebel against it.”³

C. Part of the work of the Holy Spirit is in applying the words of Christ to us.
John 14:26 NAU - "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you."

1. The Holy Spirit accompanies the preaching of the Word.
He applies the word to our hearts – our minds and consciences.
2. I’ve had individuals on numerous occasions say, “That was convicting. It was like you were preaching directly to me.”
3. We have the duty to examine what we hear.
Verse 21 - "But examine everything *carefully*"
4. The Jews living in Thessalonica spoke bitterly against Paul’s preaching.
Acts 17:13 NAU - "But when the Jews of Thessalonica found out that the word of God had been proclaimed by Paul in Berea also, they came there as well, agitating and stirring up the crowds."
There was something distinctly different about the Bereans. They listened intently and examined the Word carefully.

¹ William Hendriksen and Simon J. Kistemaker, *Exposition of I-II Thessalonians*, New Testament Commentary, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1953–2001), 3:140.

² William Perkins, *The Art of Prophesying*, (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2002), 7.

³ *Ibid.*, 118-119.

Acts 17:11 NAU - "Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so."

- D. If we resist the clear teaching of Scripture we are quenching the Holy Spirit
1. If I am merely giving you my opinions they have no greater weight than the opinions of others.
 2. If I am rightly applying the Word of God then it carries Divine authority. You must not dismiss it. Too often, people see preaching as merely the opinions of man. Thus, they find it easy to dismiss, especially if they find it offensive.
Few feel the weightiness. That they will be held accountable for every word heard.
 3. Paul's charge is clear:
1 Thessalonians 5:21 NAU - "But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good;"
 - a. Paul doesn't say, "Hold fast to the parts you like."
 - b. When Paul refers to that which is good, he isn't merely describing that which is good to you. He is referring to that which is consistent with the teaching of Scripture.

II. What is the result of quenching the Holy Spirit?

- A. He begins to withdraw His holy influence
1. If the Holy Spirit is the agent of our sanctification we will find His influence hindered.
Paul speaks of the fruit of His gracious influence – "love, joy, peace . . ." etc. We will find ourselves barren of His fruit.
 2. We must never look at obedience as meritorious. We cannot earn God's grace. The Law can never condemn us.
But God has provided means of grace whereby we might grow in holiness and sanctification and in the blessings of His fellowship; that we might know Him more; that we might comprehend more of His love for us; that we might know the blessings of walking in communion with Him.
 3. When we cease seeking the leadership of the Holy Spirit through His Word, He will cease directing us through His Word.
- B. How much do we suffer the loss of the Holy Spirit's leadership by our own stubborn and rebellious refusal to follow His leadership and promptings?
1. Puritan pastor, **Thomas Jacombe** (1622-1687) – "If the person led (by the Spirit) shall once begin to struggle with him that leads him, and shall refuse to follow his guidance, what is then to be done, but to leave him to himself? Continued, rooted, allowed resistance to the Spirit, makes him so to cast off a person as to lead him no more... Let it be your great and constant care and endeavour to get the Spirit's leading continued to you. You have it; pray keep it. Can it be well with a Christian, when this is suspended or withdrawn from him? How backward is he to good, when the Spirit does not bend and incline him thereunto! How unable to go when the Spirit does not uphold him! What vile lusts and passions rule him, when the Spirit does not put forth his holy and gracious government

over him! O, it is of infinite concern to all that belong to God, to preserve and secure to themselves the Spirit's leading!"⁴

Conclusion:

1. We must guard our hearts carefully against resisting the Holy Spirit. We must come to worship prepared to hear from Him. We must search the Scriptures carefully regarding what we hear.
1 Thessalonians 5:21 NAU - "But examine everything *carefully*; hold fast to that which is good;" - δοκιμάζω
Romans 12:2 NAU - "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect." - δοκιμάζω
 Then Paul contrasts the good in **Verse 21** with "evil" in **Verse 22**
1 Thessalonians 5:22 NAU - "abstain from every form of evil."
 πονηρός – can also mean "bad."
2. Do you have the discernment to discern the good from the evil?
 While "the good" is singular, Paul wants us to know evil comes in many forms and must be avoided in all its manifestations.
3. May God grant each of us to live a Spirit filled life, a life lived in submission to the Holy Spirit. Cease resisting Him.

⁴ C. H. Spurgeon, *Treasury of David, Vol 1*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers), 406.