

*1 Thessalonians 5:19*

## PREFACE

So far, in the latter half of Chapter Five, in a passage that addresses our responsibilities to—or behavior toward—those within the church family, we have looked at

our leaders or shepherds,

**Read 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13.**

the other members of the body,

**Read 1 Thessalonians 5:14-15.**

ourselves.

**Read 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18.**

Now Paul addresses our behavior regarding corporate worship—although I might add that his counsel is equally applicable to our lives in general, outside of the church sanctuary. While we will focus on v19 this morning, let's read the paragraph.

**Read 1 Thessalonians 5:19-22.**

**v19: DON'T BE AFRAID OF THAT WHICH IS OTHER-WORLDLY***Do not quench the Spirit*

The Greek text of this verse means that either

- the Thessalonians *had been* quenching the Holy Spirit, and were to stop doing that,
- or they were not to start doing it (habitually).

Likewise, because Paul does not specify, this injunction can be a reference to the quenching of the Spirit

- in themselves, and/or
- in others.

The utterly unpronounceable Greek word translated “quench” means to extinguish—as in dumping a bucket of water over a campfire. And fire is the imagery here, which is interesting, since the word translated “Spirit” is the familiar *pneuma*, which means

**a current of air, i.e. breath (blast) or a breeze;** by analogy or figurative a spirit, i.e. (human) the rational soul, (by implication) vital principle, mental disposition, etc., or (superhuman) an angel, dæmon, or (divine) God, Christ's spirit, the Holy Spirit :- ghost, life, spirit (-ual, -ually), mind.

When the people wondered if John the Baptist was the Messiah, he answered them,

“As for me, I baptize you with water; but One is coming who is mightier than I, and I am not fit to untie the thong of His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.” (from Luke 3:16)

D. A. Carson points out that John—whose baptism was one of *repentance* (Matthew 3:11), and thus only by water—says that the baptism *Christ Jesus* would bring would include the Spirit and fire as unified agents that will purify and refine.

And then, with just five brief words, Paul opens up a multi-faceted topic; we can take this in a number of useful directions.

### ***Quenching the Spirit Within Ourselves***

We do not have to purposefully set out to do it, to quench the Holy Spirit within us. In fact, one of the easiest (and most common) ways is to just forget about Him. Active sin can throw cold water on the Spirit burning within us, or we can simply ignore Him—which is sin, as well.

Paul reminded the Ephesians ([Ephesians 4](#)) of how they were now to live—how they were now different from what they once were. Near the end of a list of commands he included, in v30,

**Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.**

There is very little daylight between “grieving” the Spirit and “quenching” the Spirit; doing one is doing the other.

### ***Quenching the Spirit Within Others by Leading them Astray***

This is something that is probably not a frequent occurrence ([believer to believer](#)), but its consequences are so serious that we should be on-guard against even accidentally doing it.

Christ Jesus sends every believer in Him the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is a comforter, but He is also a goad: He prods, and pokes and convicts. The Spirit is also a *guarantor* of the promises of God. Let’s read how Jesus Himself described the work of the Spirit who would come once Jesus returned to the Father.

### **Read John 16:7-14.**

Now, imagine a fairly new Christian. The indwelling Spirit is bringing her to life, filling her with the promises of God, interpreting His written word for her, encouraging her over the rough spots of her new faith, convicting her of lingering sin. Then we come along—we, for whom the Holy Spirit has become someone akin to an old forgotten school chum: once dear to us, but now just a forgotten picture in a dusty yearbook. And we—probably not intentionally—say or do something to this new believer that effectively diminishes the importance of the Spirit. We speak of Him out of our own ignorance of His ministry, or worse, dismissively.

Or perhaps the subject of the Spirit doesn’t even come up, but our attitude and words, instead of encouraging this fragile new faith, dampen it with our spiritual laziness, or worse, cynicism. And we have just quenched the Spirit in this new life.

## *Quenching the Spirit Within Others by our Behavior in Worship*

Most commentators place the commands of this passage (vv19-22) in the context of corporate worship, and here is where in my estimation we can, without necessarily meaning to, do the most harm in quenching the Spirit in others.

In the typical Sunday morning worship service there are essentially two categories of responsibilities: those of the individuals in leadership, and those of the individuals in the congregation.

### **Leadership**

Everyone—*everyone*—even tangentially involved in organizing and leading the Worship Service is responsible to do nothing that would detract or distract from the potential work of the Holy Spirit. The responsibility of the worship leaders—from the ushers, to those in the sound room, to those standing on the platform—is to *lead the congregation in worship of the Lord God*, which means not one of them should do the least thing that would lead the congregation *out of* worship of the Lord God.

It may be that many who serve on Sunday mornings haven't thought of it in this light, but leading the worship of God is a solemn and holy responsibility, and should be approached with an earnest desire to fulfill his or her designated role before the Lord—and *to* the Lord—with the nurturing of the work of the Holy Spirit in the congregation always in sight. Permit me to illustrate the importance of this with a parable.

Albert had had a rough week. Pressures at work and conflict at home drove him to distraction—and to his knees. Saturday morning found him awake early, before the rest of the family. He went into a quiet room and poured out his heart to the Lord. By the time he rose from prayer he felt the Spirit at work in him. By the time the rest of the house was up for breakfast Albert felt as if God had lifted a heavy weight from his shoulders. For the rest of the day, through the night and into the next morning as he dressed for church, he was eager for the chance to give thanksgiving and praise to God for how He had answered his prayer. He felt enveloped in the love of God, his spirit revived, and he wanted nothing more than to worship the God who loved him so.

By the time in the service when the worship team took the stage, Albert was brimming over with devotion and joy. It was as if the clouds had parted, and he was standing before the very throne of God.

The pianist began playing the intro to the first song—but suddenly the singers, instead of raising their mics, turned to the pianist, grinning and laughing along with him for starting the wrong song. Some in the congregation good-naturedly chuckled over the mistake as well, but Albert felt the image of heaven in his mind flicker, like interference disrupting the image on a TV screen.

The words of the first song were perfectly in-tune to the condition of Albert's heart—as if God Himself had made the selection. The Holy Spirit had cleared the momentary interference, reopening the portal to the throne room of God. Singing with all his heart, Albert could picture himself bowed before the throne, pouring out praise and adoration to Father God.

The words on the overhead screen changed for the next verse—but the words were to a different song, not matching the melody at all. While the worship team sang on, oblivious to the mistake, the congregation murmured into silence. And once again, heaven faded in Albert's mind and heart, as he, along with everyone else stood silently waiting for the correct words to appear. The screen finally changed to the chorus of the correct song—but the team was already singing the next verse.

By now Albert was struggling to reconnect with his God; his heart had not changed, but it felt as if someone had just severed the cord connecting it to heaven. The next song had nothing to do with worship or praise, and the moment was gone.

### **Congregation**

Those seated in the pews may not be responsible for *leading* the worship, but have the same burden not to do anything that might quench the Spirit in others in the congregation.

Scripture doesn't seem to address this setting directly, but it does in general. In addition to Paul, here, telling the Thessalonians not to quench the Spirit, we have the apostle in his letter to the Romans.

### **Read Romans 15:1-2.**

Add to that the command to love one another—on which Paul commends the Thessalonians—and we have sufficient grounds for the teaching that in the worship service we are to think of others before ourselves, which would include not quenching the Spirit in them. So let's consider a second, brief parable.

It is the first Sunday of the month, and Alice is bowed in prayer as she holds the bread and wine in her hands. In obedience to the Savior's command to "do this in remembrance of Me" ([1 Corinthians 11:24-25](#)), she fills her mind with the image of Christ Jesus on the cross. Her heart aches over what He suffered, but is also filled with love and gratitude that He suffered that for her. Overwhelmed with adoration for His sacrifice, her spirit rises to connect with His—when, abruptly, a woman sitting behind her turns to her husband and whispers loudly, "Will we be able to finish dinner before the game starts this afternoon?"

Suddenly Alice is torn from her contemplation of Christ's sacrifice. The image of her Lord fades quickly from her mind, replaced immediately by the image of a football game on television.

## CONCLUSION

It is so important not to quench the Spirit, whether in ourselves or in others, because the Holy Spirit plays a key role in the worship of our God.

- He is the one who lifts us out of ourselves and places us before the throne.
- He is the one who focuses our thoughts on a holy God.
- He is the one who supplies the words of our praise.
- He is the one who sends back to us God's response to our worship of Him.

The Spirit is key to the transaction. As Jesus told the Samaritan woman at the well,

**“But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.” (John 4:23-24)**

True worship is not a fleshly occupation; it is a *spiritual* occupation. So God's Holy Spirit in communion with our spirit is essential. And this means that it is not, by nature, *mechanical*. In worship we may do mechanical things—standing, sitting, kneeling, lifting of hands—but these are either prompted by the Spirit Himself, or by the worship leaders, to facilitate a spirit of worship.

No matter the situation or place—but especially in the corporate worship of a holy God—we are to guard against anything that would quench the work of the Spirit in ourselves or our brothers and sisters in Christ.