

1 Thessalonians 5:19 Commentary

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JESUS IS COMING AGAIN
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1 Thessalonians Overview				
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Exemplary Hope of Young Converts	Motivating Hope of Faithful Servants	Purifying Hope of Tried Believers	Comforting Hope of Bereaved Saints	Invigorating Hope of Diligent Christians
Written from Corinth Approximately 51AD				

1Thessalonians 5:19 **Do not quench** the **Spirit** ([NASB: Lockman](#))

Greek: [to pneuma me sbennute](#), (2PPAM)

Amplified: Do not quench (suppress or subdue) the [Holy] Spirit ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

NLT: Do not stifle the Holy Spirit. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

Phillips: Never damp the fire of the Spirit ([Phillips: Touchstone](#))

Wuest: Stop stifling and suppressing the Spirit. ([Eerdmans](#))

Young's Literal: The Spirit quench not

DO NOT QUENCH THE SPIRIT: [to pneuma me sbennute](#) (2PPAM):

- Song 8:7; Ephesians 4:30; 6:16
- Genesis 6:3; 1Samuel 16:4; Nehemiah 9:30; Ps 51:11; Isaiah 63:10; Acts 7:51; 1Cor 14:30; Ep 4:30; 1Ti 4:14; 2Ti 1:6
- [1 Thessalonians 5 Resources](#)

DON'T STIFLE THE SPIRIT

Stifle (derived from Old Norse *stífla* = "to dam, choke, stop up") in English conveys some interesting nuances as we ponder quenching or stifling the Spirit - to smother or suppress; to impair the respiration or obstruct the passage of air ("spirit" is *pneuma* which means breath of air or air in motion - "breath" is from the verb *pneo* = to breathe); to be asphyxiated; to die from lack of oxygen (while we don't die when we quench Him, there is a sense in which our spiritual life is "dead" without His energizing and empowering us - cp Jesus' words in John 6:63). As Tony Evans says "to grieve the Holy Spirit is like letting corrosion build up on a battery so that the power of the battery cannot be accessed. In the life of a Christian, when the Holy Spirit is grieved, the charge and power available declines or is lost."

The Spirit can be...

1. **Quenched** - 1Th 5:19-note
2. **Grieved** - Eph 4:30-note
3. **Resisted** - Acts 7:51

Grieving the Spirit is also found in the Old Testament...

But (read the striking contrasting truth in Isa 63:9 and note "Angel of His presence" is almost assuredly a [Christophany/Angel of the Lord](#) - Ex 14:19; 23:20-23; 33:12, 14, 15; Nu 20:16) they rebelled and **grieved His Holy Spirit**; Therefore, He turned Himself to become their enemy (Woe!), He fought against them (Double Woe!). (Isa 63:10, cp Ex 32:9, 33:3, 5, Acts 7:51, Eph 4:30)

Comment - So despite having the presence of [Angel of the Lord](#), they still rebelled! Does that sound familiar? (Are you as convicted as I am?) The Hebrew word for **rebelled** is [marah](#) which means disobedient and is translation in the Lxx with the verb [apeitheo](#) which means disobey, be disobedient or be disloyal and

in essence means to disbelieve. In essence every time we disobey we "disbelieve" the Gospel! Oh, how we need to praise God He provides forgiveness through the blood of Jesus (1 John 1:9)! So clearly the essential feature of grieving the Spirit is disobedience.

J Vernon McGee - I think the Holy Spirit gets rather tired of you and me! But He is patient with us. Thank God for that!

When we're going off course, He sounds the alarm and triggers our conscience (Gal. 5:16-25). We may ignore the warning, but we do so to our own detriment (Isa. 63:10; Gal. 6:8).

John MacArthur adds this comment on Isa 63:10 - In spite of the Lord's loving choice and sympathy, Israel continually turned their backs on Him and spurned His lovingkindnesses toward them (Nu 20:10; Ps 78:40; 106:33; Ac 7:51; cf. Eph 4:30). Here is an illustration of the reality that the Holy Spirit is a Person, since only a person can be grieved.

[Grief, grieving](#) - Baker's Evangelical Dictionary

[Grief: grieve](#) - ISBE

Do not quench - The combination of a negative particle (*me*) with the present imperative suggests that the recipients are being told to stop doing something they have already begun (ie, quenching the Spirit). Note also that the verb **sbennumi** is in the second person plural as are **all** the commands in verses 19-22, indicating that each command is intended for the entire membership of the Thessalonian church. The first two commands are negative (1Th 5:19, 20 - see notes 1Thessalonians 5:19; 20) and the remaining three are positive (1 Th 5:21, 22 - see notes 1Thessalonians 5:21; 22).

The command could be paraphrased something like this...

Stop putting out the fire (of the Holy Spirit). Stop hindering and repressing the Holy Spirit, for in so doing you are preventing Him from exerting His full influence! (Woe!)

There is a parallel warning in Ephesians where in the context of allowing unwholesome words to proceed from their mouth (Eph 4:29-note) Paul commanded the saints...

do not grieve (present imperative + a negative = stop doing this implying that they were doing it or don't begin doing this) the Holy Spirit of God, by Whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. (Eph 4:30-note). (See present imperative with a negative)

Spurgeon - Do not despise His operations, either in yourselves or in your brethren. Do not quench Him by neglect, much less by open opposition. (**Ed**: That is by sin! - cp Ps 19:12-14)

Paul's command to not put out the fire of the Spirit reminds us of God's instructions to the Levitical priest (remember we are now priests to God! 1Pe 2:9-note) -

"The fire on the altar shall be kept burning on it. It shall not go out(Hebrew = kabah = to be quenched, extinguished; Lxx = sbennumi), **but the priest shall burn wood on it every morning;** and he shall lay out the burnt offering on it, and offer up in smoke the fat portions of the peace offerings on it." (Leviticus 6:12-note)

Matthew Henry comments on Lev 6:12-note - By this law we are taught to keep up in our minds a constant disposition to all acts of piety and devotion, an habitual affection to divine things, so as to be always ready to every good word and work. We must not only **not quench the Spirit**, but we must stir up the gift that is in us (2Ti 1:6-note). Though we be not always sacrificing, yet we must keep the fire of holy love always burning and thus we must pray always.

The other passage (alluded to by Matthew Henry) that Paul's command recalls to our mind is his instruction to his young disciple Timothy

"And for this reason (2Ti 1:5-note) I remind you to kindle afresh (**anazopureo** in the **present tense** = keep stirring into full flame, red hot flame) the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands." (2Ti 1:6-note - in 2Ti 1:7 a few versions capitalize Spirit).

Warren Wiersbe comments on 2Ti 1:6 - "Timothy did not need any new spiritual ingredients in his life; all he had to do was "stir up" what he already had. Paul had written in his first letter, "Neglect not the gift that is in thee" (1Ti 4:14). Now he added, "**Stir up—stir into flame—the gift of God.**" **The Holy Spirit does not leave us when we fail** (Jn 14:16); **but He cannot fill us, empower us, and use us if we neglect our spiritual lives. It is possible to "grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by Whom you were sealed for the day of redemption"** (Eph 4:30-note) **and to "quench the Spirit"** (1Th 5:19). (Wiersbe, W: Bible Exposition Commentary. 1989. Victor) (Ed: **God grant that we make the choice to place "fuel" on the fire each morning before the day's activities [by taking in the Word,**

meditating on it, praying it] and yielding ourselves to God [and His Spirit] as living and holy sacrifices! Beloved, are you practicing these simple, albeit fruitful disciplines? Or are you flipping on the computer screen first to check your email or your Facebook page (I am all too often guilty of doing this before I hit my knees! Ouch!)

Quench (4570)(**sbennumi**) means to quench or to extinguish as one does to a light or a fire. Figuratively, as used in this verse, it means to dampen, stifle hinder, repress, or prevent the Spirit from exerting His effect or performing His work in the believer. Clearly the reference is not to the person of the Spirit Himself, for He is eternal God and can never be extinguished. The reference is His activity in our hearts.

John MacArthur writes that "The metaphor quench means "to extinguish, stifle, or retard" the power or energy of something ([MacArthur, John: 1 & 2 Thessalonians. Moody Press](#))

The figure of fire is associated with the Holy Spirit in several passages...

Mt 3:11 "As for me, I baptize you with water for repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, and I am not fit to remove His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. (cf Luke 3:16)

Acts 2:3 And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them. (**Comment:** The mighty wind filling the house and the fire-like tongues reaching each of the company represent the audible and visible signs that the Holy Spirit had come upon them fulfilling John the Baptist's prophecy that Christ would baptize them "with the Holy Spirit and with fire")

Hiebert comments that the figure of **quenching the Spirit**

points to His sudden and vehement activities in human hearts. It implies "His gifts of warmth for the heart, and light for the mind and His power to kindle the human spirit."...

Since fire is always put out by something outside itself, this prohibition is directed against some hindrance to the Spirit's operation in their midst. It is not indicated whether they are quenching the Spirit in themselves or in others. Both thoughts may be included in this general injunction, yet the connection with 1Thes 5:20 seems to indicate that the suppression of prophetic utterances in the assembly was primarily in view

The precise situation in the Thessalonian church calling forth this injunction is not clear. Many interpreters hold that it arose out of the operation of the charismatic gifts in the Thessalonian church. (**Ed note:** but this view is refuted by commentators such as MacArthur)....

The general character of the prohibition would certainly leave room for a wider interpretation. Anything that might be permitted in their assembly, or in their own hearts, which was contrary to the nature and work of the Spirit would quench His operations. **The Spirit's fire is quenched whenever His presence is ignored and His promptings are suppressed and rejected, or the fervor He kindles in the heart is dampened by unspiritual attitudes, criticisms, or actions. Certainly any toleration of immorality and idleness, against which they have been warned** (1Th 4:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12), would quench the Spirits working in their midst.

They must not allow the operations of the Spirit to be suppressed either through yielding to the impulses of the flesh or by imposing a mechanical order upon the services that would hamper the free movements Of the Spirit. ([Hiebert, D. Edmond: 1 & 2 Thessalonians: BMH Book. 1996](#))

Does the context help us discern that might dampen the "fire" of the Spirit? Notice that in the preceding verse (1Thessalonians 5:18) we are charged to give thanks in everything. What would be the effect on the Spirit if we continually grumbled, complained or murmured? (cf Php 2:14-note) In the following verse (1Th 5:20 -note) what might be the effect on the Spirit if we despised prophetic utterances (Click for Ray Stedman's balanced comments on prophetic utterances constitute)? In addition to ingratitude and despising prophetic utterance, clearly **sin** in any form will douse "water" on the fire of God's Spirit. The best preventative to quenching the Spirit is to be continually filled with the Spirit (Eph 5:18-note) and walking by the Spirit (Gal 5:16-note).

David Jeremiah agrees, asking "Do you know what it means to **quench the Holy Spirit**? What do you do when you quench your thirst? You drink some water and the thirst is put away. When you quench a fire, you put it out—you smother it. How do you quench the Spirit of God? You quench the Holy Spirit by not doing something He tells you to do. When you walk in the Spirit and are filled with the Spirit, you don't want to quench Him. When He tells you to do something, you do it. (Jeremiah, D. God in You : Releasing the Power of the Holy Spirit in Your Life. Multnomah Publishers)

F F Bruce feels that "As the context goes on to make plain, the activity chiefly in view here is prophecy. In this respect the Spirit may be quenched when the prophet refuses to utter the message he has been given, or when others try to prevent him from uttering it. A

good example of the former is Jeremiah's attempt to speak no more in Yahweh's name, when the word held back became, as he said, **a burning fire shut up in my bones** (Jer 20:9), which could not be quenched or controlled. An example of the latter is found in Amos 2:12, where the people of Israel are condemned because they "commanded the prophets, saying, 'You shall not prophesy.'" Cf. Micah 2:6 ([Bruce, F F: 1 and 2 Thessalonians. Word Biblical Commentary. Dallas: Word, Incorporated. 1982](#))

Vine writes that "as fire is always extinguished from without itself the meaning seems to be "do not prevent or obstruct the manifestations of the Holy Spirit's power in others." Here the tense is present continuous, hence the meaning is "desist from quenching" rather than "do not begin to quench."...With this injunction may be compared that in 1Th 4:8 (note), which is aimed against any refusal to obey Him as this is against any refusal to listen to Him...The peace, order, and edification of the saints were evidence of the ministry of the Spirit among them, 1Cor 14:26, 32, 33, 40, but if; through ignorance of His ways, or through failure to recognize, or refusal to submit to, them, or through impatience with the ignorance or self-will of others, the Spirit were quenched, these happy results would be absent. For there was always the danger that the impulses of the flesh might usurp the place of the energy of the Spirit in the assembly, and the endeavor to restrain this evil by natural means would have the effect of hindering His ministry also. Apparently then, this injunction was intended to warn believers against the substitution of a mechanical order for the restraints of the Spirit. ([Vine, W. Collected writings of W. E. Vine. Nashville: Thomas Nelson](#))

Vincent feels that "The reference here is to the work of the Spirit generally, and not specially to His inspiration of prayer or prophecy."

John Walvoord writes that "it may be concluded that quenching the Holy Spirit is to suppress, stifle, or otherwise obstruct the ministry of the Spirit to the individual. In a word it is saying, "**No**," and replacing the will of the Spirit with the will of the individual. This, in brief, is the whole issue of morality—whether man will accomplish what he wants to do or whether his life is surrendered and yielded to the will of God. (Bibliotheca Sacra: Dallas Theological Seminary. Volume 130, page 220)

Ray Stedman in his down to earth style feels that verses 19 and 20 give two simple commands **Do not ignore the Spirit's prompting** (v19) and **do not despise the Scripture's wisdom** (v20). The Spirit's promptings always come in two areas: **Stop** doing what is wrong, and **Start** doing what is right. If you are a Christian at all you are familiar with the inner feeling that says, "God wants you to do something," or "God wants you to stop doing something." We all have felt this inner guidance. What the apostle is saying is, "**Give in to those feelings**." When the Spirit prompts you to show love to somebody, do it; do not hold back. I once heard of a man who said, "*Sometimes when I think of how my wife works and blesses me, it's all I can do to keep from telling her that I love her!*" There is a man being guided by the Spirit, but he is **quenching** the Spirit. Do not do that. Go ahead and tell her you love her. You may have to pick her off the floor afterward, but **do not quench the Spirit!**"

Green writes that the verb **sbennumi**

At times ...describes an action that makes something disappear completely, such as a person's very existence when death comes, but elsewhere it carries the more moderate meaning of "to attenuate" or "to restrict" something. The exact nuance Paul has in mind is not easy to ascertain, but the first sense is the most likely in the context of prophecy... Some Thessalonians appear to have attempted to prohibit manifestations of the Spirit in their church. Since the presence of the Holy Spirit in the community is compared with fire (Jer 20.9; Matt. 3.11; Luke 3.16; Acts 2.3; 18.25; Ro 12.11; 2Ti 1.6; and John 5.35), the verb "to quench" would aptly describe the attempts to eliminate these manifestations. On the other side, Paul exhorts Timothy about the Spirit's activity in his life by saying, "Fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands" (2Ti 1.6). The manifestations of the Spirit's presence are for the good of the community and for that reason should not be eliminated...

The "**quenched spirit**" had to do with the cessation of prophecy. The presence of the Spirit in the church was linked inextricably with prophecy among the people of God (Luke 1.67; Acts 2.17; 19.6; 28.25; Ep 2.5; Rev 22.6); so it does not surprise in the least that our author should respond to any attempt to prohibit its use with the exhortation, "Do not quench the Spirit." This was not the first occasion, then, in which the people of God questioned prophecy, even those utterances that were legitimate (Nu 11.26, 27, 28, 29; Amos 2.12; Mic. 2.6). (Green, G. L. The Letters to the Thessalonians. The Pillar New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids, Mich.; Leicester, England: W. B. Eerdmans Pub.; Apollos.)

Here are the 6 uses of **sbennumi** in the NT...

Matthew 12:20 "A battered reed He will not break off, and a smoldering wick He will not put out, Until He leads justice to victory.

Matthew 25:8 "And the foolish said to the prudent, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.'

Mark 9:48 where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.

Ephesians 6:16 (note) in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to **extinguish** all the flaming missiles of the evil one.

1Thessalonians 5:19 (note) Do not **quench** the Spirit;

Hebrews 11:34 (note) **quenched** the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, from weakness were made strong, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight.

In the Septuagint this verb relates to literal fire that is not to go out (Lev 6:13) and figuratively several times of God's wrath which burns like fire and will not be quenched (2Ki 22:17, 2Chr 34:25, Jer 7:20, 17:27, 21:12, Ezek 20:47, 48, Amos 5:6). It is used in Isaiah 66:24 to describe the unquenchable fire of hell. There are 35 uses of **sbennumi** in the Septuagint (LXX) and below are some representative uses...

Leviticus 6:13 'Fire shall be kept burning continually on the altar; it is not to **go out** (Hebrew = kabah = quench, put out, extinguish; Lxx = sbennumi)

2 Kings 22:17 "Because they have forsaken Me and have burned incense to other gods that they might provoke Me to anger with all the work of their hands, therefore My wrath burns against this place, and it shall not be **quenched** (Hebrew = kabah = quench, put out, extinguish; Lxx = sbennumi)."

Proverbs 13:9 The light of the righteous rejoices, But the lamp of the wicked **goes out**. (Hebrew = daak = be extinguished; Lxx = sbennumi)

Song of Solomon 8:7 "Many waters cannot **quench** (Hebrew = kabah = quench, put out, extinguish; LXX = sbennumi) love, Nor will rivers overflow it; If a man were to give all the riches of his house for love, It would be utterly despised."

Isaiah 66:24 "Then they shall go forth and look On the corpses of the men Who have transgressed against Me. For their worm shall not die, And their fire shall not **be quenched** (Hebrew = kabah = quench, put out, extinguish; Lxx = sbennumi); And they shall be an abhorrence to all mankind."

John MacArthur writes that "It is that process of progressive sanctification by the Spirit that Paul warned the Thessalonians not to quench." ([MacArthur, John: 1 & 2 Thessalonians. Moody Press](#))

Mills takes a similar approach writing that "quenching the Spirit means nullifying His power in your life, for you manifestly cannot extinguish Him on a universal basis! How do you nullify His power? Well, simply by living an unsanctified life, for if you profane your vessel He, Who is perfectly pure, will not reside in it. But how do I remedy it when I sin and profane my vessel? 1John 1:8-9 answers this, for if I confess my sin God will forgive me. (Mills, M.. The Thessalonian Epistles: A Study Guide to. Dallas: 3E Ministries)

Albert Barnes offers some well reasoned comments on what it means to quench the Spirit writing that...

This language is taken from the way of putting out a fire; and the sense is, we are not to extinguish the influences of the Holy Spirit in our hearts; Possibly there may be an allusion here to fire on an altar, which was to be kept constantly burning. This fire may have been regarded as emblematic of devotion, and as denoting that that devotion was never to become extinct. The Holy Spirit is the Source of true devotion, and hence the enkindlings of piety in the heart, by the Spirit, are never to be quenched. Fire may be put out by pouring on water; or by covering it with any incombustible substance; or by neglecting to supply fuel. If it is to be made to burn, it must be nourished with proper care and attention. The Holy Spirit, in his influences on the soul, is here compared with fire that might be made to burn more intensely, or that might be extinguished. In a similar manner the apostle gives this direction to Timothy

And for this reason I remind you to kindle afresh the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. (see note 2 Timothy 1:6).

Anything that will tend to damp the ardour of piety in the soul; to chill our feelings; to render us cold and lifeless in the service of God, may be regarded as "quenching the Spirit." Neglect of cultivating the Christian graces, or of prayer, of the Bible, of the sanctuary, of a careful watchfulness over the heart, will do it. Worldliness, vanity, levity, ambition, pride, the love of dress, or indulgence in an improper train of thought, will do it. (Albert Barnes. Barnes NT Commentary)

Guzik - We can **quench the fire of the Spirit** by our doubt, our indifference, our rejection of Him, or by the distraction of others. When people start to draw attention to themselves, it is a sure quench to the Spirit... this command is based on the familiar image of the Holy Spirit as a fire or a flame. Though there is a sense in which fire cannot be created, we can provide the environment in which it can burn brightly. Yet a flame can be extinguished when it is ignored and no longer tended, or when the flame is overwhelmed by

something else. ([1 Thessalonians 5](#))

Tim Schoap - Paul has in view the work of the Spirit, in particular the direction and guidance of the Spirit that is given in "prophetic utterances." Paul's point here has especially to do with the prophetic gifts and ministry of the Spirit - the "speaking" gifts: teaching, preaching, tongues and their interpretation, "wisdom," "knowledge," and the like.

How then do we quench the Spirit? When we ignore Him, whether willfully or unconsciously. When we do not listen to what the Spirit is telling us, by not spending time in God's Word or by not putting ourselves under the Word's authority. Can any believer acting in this way be filled with the Spirit? Walking by the Spirit?

Unlike **filling** and **walking**, **grieving** and **quenching** are actions, not states of mind or mental attitudes. **Grieving** focuses on our relationship with other believers. **Grieving** the Spirit is more tightly focused than quenching the Spirit. **Quenching** focuses on our response to the Word of God. **Quenching** the Spirit is a broader sin, more general in nature. **Grieving** is primarily sins of speech and relationships within the body, affecting its unity. **Quenching** is primarily ignoring the prompting of the Spirit to obedience, affecting the believer's purity. Both grieving and quenching are actions which reject the control of the Spirit (filling) and dependence on the Spirit (walking) in favor of the flesh, resulting in sin's mastery.

Is it possible to be filled with the Spirit, yet harbor some secret (or open) sin? No. Is it possible to grow spiritually? Yes - for example, Peter with the Galatians. Our own experience confirms that we grow in some areas while others stubbornly continue to bedevil and beset us. So what? How do we apply this practically so that we know some of Christ's triumph over sin? Think back to the beginning of this lesson for a moment, to those formulaic expressions of the Spirit's ministry.

Campus Crusade's = desire; confess; claim

MacArthur's Eph. 5:18 = Col. 3:16

Chafer's = grieve not, quench not, walk by = filled with

While they are not inaccurate, they are too rote to be complete. They are inadequate to express the core of the Spirit's ministry - **relationship**. They tend too easily toward manipulation: "*Do this, and God will do that.*" Relationships are not defined and built by keeping lists. They are built with one key ingredient: **trust**, which flows from **love**. That ingredient of trust then has real implications for the control we give someone in our life.

How will we act with someone if we trust them? Vulnerable, open, accepting, forgiving, listen to them, talk to them. We must approach the Spirit as a person, as someone we are in relationship with, and trust him.

What does it mean to trust someone? Willingness to give up control. The level of control you grant someone is directly affected by your level of trust. How does it feel to be out of control? Do any of us have it? No, but we all like to pretend.

Prov. 19:21 Many are the plans in a man's heart, but the counsel of the Lord, it will stand. Prov. 20:24 Man's steps are ordained by the Lord, how then can man understand his way?

Control is an illusion, and the need to know "why" is merely to increase our illusion of control. Gal. 5:17 says "the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please." It is almost as if we stand in the middle, and can trust in the flesh of self-effort with the result being sin's mastery, or the Spirit of Life, with the result of putting to death the deeds of the body.

In reality there is no choice but to trust, to yield control, to live in relationship to the Holy Spirit. How do you destroy a relationship? Ignore them, act against them or their wishes, insist on control, distrust. Who do you trust? (**From Tim Schoap's "The Spiritual Life"**)

F B Meyer - There is no limit to the gracious work which the Holy Spirit will do in and for us, if only we will take jealous care of our behavior toward him. Be specially heedful about thy speech! The least uncharitableness hurts him, as frost the spring-blossoms.....Before him the waters part and leave a path for his chosen. All that would cause us to stumble is taken out of the way and we are led as on a level plain. As cattle descend into the hollows of the hills at noon, to escape the sultry heat, so will God's Spirit cause us to rest. Oh, claim that these promises be realized! He is Father, Redeemer, the Eternal, the Lover of souls!

R A Torrey - The Holy Spirit is a Person, the third Person of the Trinity. But—to put it in a more personal and practical way—is He a Person in your thoughts of Him and in your attitudes towards Him?

Timothy Lin - Not quenching the Spirit ("Do not quench the Spirit" 1Th 5:19). This admonition speaks of not quenching any one thing (such as prophetic utterances) or of everything as a whole ("hold fast to that which is good") that the Spirit does (1Th 5:19-21). The word "**quench**" is a command in the present tense that indicates that we should always refrain from extinguishing His activity,

and, as 1Th 5:20 indicates ("do not despise prophetic utterances"), especially when we are enlightened regarding our duty or faith by Spirit-inspired preaching. **Dr. C. R. Erdman** wrote, "*The warning may be against neglect or abuse of our opportunities or abilities to testify for Christ, or against failing to act in accordance with the prompting and provision of the Spirit in the sphere of service.*"⁴⁶

To defuse the danger of quenching the Spirit, there are two things that we must constantly do: obey God's commands and wait upon the Lord's time (**Ed**: But paradoxically we can only do these as the Spirit gives us the DESIRE and the POWER! [Php 2:13NLT] Mysterious? Yes, but Scripturally true!). Doing whatever God commands. God not only desires that we be good children but faithful servants as well. He gives us enlightenment by the Holy Spirit from His Word so that we can accomplish His heart's desire for us to understand His will and to do it. When we believers do not fulfill this responsibility, we both fall short of His glory and lose His blessing. Scripture is full of believers who lost God's blessing upon their lives through disobedience. Moses, God's appointed leader of the Israelites, was full of the Holy Spirit. His meekness exceeded that of anyone upon the face of the earth. He enjoyed direct revelation from God, face to face, and was entrusted to look after God's family, Israel. God Himself praised Moses for his outstanding faithfulness in His service (Heb. 3:2). Yet Moses disobeyed God's Word at Meribah. As a result, not only was God's name not exalted but Moses himself lost the blessing of entering the promised land. Jonah refused to go to Nineveh to be His spokesman when God told him to go. As he fled from God's will he was rebuked by sailors and then swallowed by a great fish. Without God's special grace, Jonah would have lost his life, and a multitude of precious souls in Nineveh would have perished eternally. Any disobedience to God that leads to the quenching of the Spirit produces frightening consequences. Thus, it is very important that the disciple always seek the Lord's way at the Lord's time and never pursue his own way.

David C. McCasland's comment about obedience is instructive: In my daily walk, I'm becoming painfully aware of how often I use my own definitions instead of His. For instance, is my understanding of obedience the same as His? Do I carry out God's commands as given, or do I modify His Word to suit my preferences?

King Saul blatantly disobeyed God's instructions, then told Samuel the priest, "I have performed the commandment of the LORD" (1Sa 15:13). When Samuel challenged him, Saul declared his innocence (1Sa 15:20). God saw it differently and removed Saul from the throne of Israel because of his willful disobedience (v. 23).

When I identify myself as a citizen of God's kingdom, I must follow His definitions without tailoring them to suit my own ideas. That's obedience. ([Fresh Power to Preach the Gospel](#))

Matthew Poole - And, by the figure meiosis, he means, cherish the Spirit. The Spirit is compared to fire, Mt 3:11; and he came down upon the apostles in the similitude, of tongues of fire, Acts 2:3; but the Spirit Himself cannot be quenched. ...there are ordinary gifts and operations of the Spirit common to all Christians, as enlightening, quickening, sanctifying, comforting the soul: men by sloth, security, earthy encumbrances, inordinate affections, etc., may abate these operations of the Spirit, which the apostle calls the quenching it: the fire upon the altar was kept always burning by the care of the priests. Fire will go out either by neglecting it, or casting water upon it. By not exercising grace in the duties of religion, or by allowing sin in ourselves, we may quench the Spirit; as appears in David, Ps 51:10-12 (Ed note: In the OT the Spirit did not indwell believers permanently as in the New Covenant). Not that the habits of grace may be totally extinguished in the truly regenerate, yet they may be abated as to degree and lively exercise. Yet those common illuminations and convictions of the Spirit which persons unregenerate, especially such that live under the gospel, do often find, may be totally lost, (Heb 6:4, 5, 6, -see **notes** He 6:4; 5; 6); and we read of God's Spirit ceasing to strive with the old world, Ge 6:3, and the scribes and Pharisees resisting the Holy Ghost, Acts 7:51 ("*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.*"), which were not persons regenerate. He may sometimes strive with men, but not overcome them. And there is a quenching of the Spirit in others as well as ourselves -- people may quench it in their ministers by discouraging them, and in one another by bad examples, or reproaching the zeal and forwardness that they see in them. (Matthew Poole's Commentary on the New Testament)

Henry Morris adds to Poole's last point (above) writing that "When the Holy Spirit is clearly using a Christian in a ministry to which He has called him, the Christian should be encouraged and assisted, not criticized and hindered, assuming, of course, that it is really the Spirit's work and not of the flesh. The best test for this is fidelity to the Scriptures (Isaiah 8:20). ([1 Thessalonians 5 Defender's Study Bible Notes](#))

Matthew Henry writes that we are to "Quench not the Spirit (1Th 5:19), for it is this Spirit of grace and supplication that helpeth our infirmities, that assisteth us in our prayers and thanksgivings. Christians are said to be baptized with the Holy Ghost and with fire. He worketh as fire, by enlightening, enlivening, and purifying the souls of men. We must be careful not to quench this holy fire. As fire is put out by withdrawing fuel, so we quench the Spirit if we do not stir up our spirits, and all that is within us, to comply with the motions of the good Spirit; and as fire is quenched by pouring water, or putting a great quantity of dirt upon it, so we must be careful not to quench the Holy Spirit by indulging carnal lusts and affections, or minding only earthly things."

Calvin - This metaphor is derived from the power and nature of the Spirit; for as it is the proper office of the Spirit to illuminate the understandings of men, and as he is on this account called our light, it is with propriety that we are said to quench him, when we

make void his grace.

Adam Clarke explains that...

The Holy Spirit is represented as a fire, because it is His province to enlighten and quicken the soul; and to purge, purify, and refine it. This Spirit is represented as being quenched when any act is done, word spoken (Eph 4:29,30-notes Ep 4:29; 30 - "do not grieve the Spirit"), or temper indulged, contrary to its dictates. It is the Spirit of love, and therefore anger (see James 1:20-note), malice, revenge, or any unkind or unholy temper, will quench it so that it will withdraw its influences; and then the heart is left in a state of hardness and darkness.

It has been observed that fire may be quenched as well by heaping earth on it as by throwing water on it; and so the love of the world will as effectually grieve and quench the Spirit as any ordinary act of transgression (cf James 4:4, 1John 2:15, 16, 17). Every genuine Christian is made a partaker of the Spirit of God; and he who has not the spirit of Christ is none of His (Ro 8:9-note). It cannot be the miraculous gifts of the Spirit which the apostle means, for these were given to few, and not always; for even apostles could not work miracles when they pleased; but the direction in the text is general, and refers to a gift of which they were generally partakers.

The **BKC** explains that "The Holy Spirit's working can be opposed by believers. It is this that Paul warned against. The next verse may give a clue as to how the Spirit was in danger of being quenched by the Thessalonians. 1Th 5:20. There may have been a tendency in the early church, and perhaps in the Thessalonian church in particular, to underrate the value of prophetic utterances. The gift of prophecy was the ability to receive and communicate direct revelations from God before the New Testament was completed (1Cor. 13:8). Sometimes these revelations concerned future events (Acts 11:28), but often they dealt with the present (Acts 13:2). Perhaps people who had not received prophetic revelations were teaching their own views of such things as the Second Advent, with the result that prophetic revelations tended to be evaluated on superficial terms (e.g., the eloquence of the speaker) instead of on the basis of their intrinsic authority. By way of application, Christians should not disparage any revelation that has come to the church and has been recognized as authoritative and preserved by the Holy Spirit in Scripture. The temptation to put the ideas of men on an equal footing with the Word of God is still present. ([Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., et al: The Bible Knowledge Commentary. 1985. Victor](#))

J Vernon McGee - To quench the Spirit means that you refuse to do the will of God; that is, you are not listening to the Holy Spirit. You refuse to let the Holy Spirit be your Guide to lead you. You and I quench the Holy Spirit when we take matters into our own hands. This is the same teaching that Paul gave to the Ephesian believers: "And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption" (Ep 4:30-note). You cannot grieve a thing; you grieve a Person. The Holy Spirit is a Person, and He is grieved by sin in our lives. Also, He is quenched when we step out of the will of God. ([McGee, J V: Thru the Bible Commentary: Thomas Nelson](#))

It is written of **Charles Wesley** that "Until the day of his death he exercised the greatest care to have everything "done decently and in order," and to avoid all fleshly excitements, hallucinations, and delusions (cp Ro 13:12, 14, 14-see notes Ro 13:12; 13; 14); but on the other hand he was careful to encourage every genuine work of the Holy Spirit. "Quench not the Spirit" was to him a solemn warning which he scrupulously and conscientiously tried to follow.

Call Of The Chickadees - The black-capped chickadee has a surprising level of complexity in the noises it makes for alarm calls. Researchers found that chickadees use a high-frequency call to warn of danger in the air. Depending on the situation, the "chickadee" call can cue other birds about food that is nearby or predators that are perched too close for comfort.

Studies have also found that chickadees don't sense danger from large predators such as the great horned owl, because they're not likely to prey on such a petite bird. But smaller owls, which are closer to the size of the chickadee and more of a threat, prompt sentinel chickadees to repeat the alarm sound of their calls—the chickadee's distinctive "dee" note.

A similar level of awareness might serve us well. In the apostle Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians, he didn't just condemn the evils of the world. He also focused his attention on the matters of the heart that can do harm to us with barely a notice.

"See that no one renders evil for evil to anyone,
but always pursue what is good."

"Do not quench the Spirit."

"Test all things" (1Th 5:15,19,21)

With the Spirit's help, let's keep attuned to every caution in the Word about our heart. —Mart De Haan [Our Daily Bread. Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

How we need a keen awareness
Of God's voice that is His Word,
Quiet whispers, gentle nudgings,
So we'll make Him King and Lord. —Anon.

God speaks to those who are willing to listen.

Be Safe--Not Sorry! - Two young women lost their lives in a fire that swept through their apartment as they slept. Their home was equipped with a smoke detector that was in good working order, but it hadn't gone off. Why? Fire inspectors concluded that the device had been deactivated for a party the night before. The unit had been disconnected to keep it from sounding off because of the smoke from cooking and candles. In Acts 5 we have another example of two people who apparently deactivated an alarm system that could have saved their lives. Ananias and Sapphira must have quenched the Holy Spirit by turning a deaf ear to their consciences, believing they had plenty of good reasons for doing what they did. But their action cost them their lives.

We need to realize that the Holy Spirit was not given to annoy us like a sensitive smoke detector. He doesn't sound false alarms. When He activates our conscience by bringing to mind a principle or warning from God's Word, it is really His love and wisdom in action.

By weighing the warnings of His love against the cost of our foolishness, we'll soon realize that it's always better to be safe than sorry. —M R De Haan II ([Our Daily Bread. Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Our conscience is a gift from God,
It is a guiding light;
And when aligned with God's true Word,
It shows us what is right. —Sper

To ignore your conscience is to invite trouble.

Oswald Chambers - The voice of the Spirit is as gentle as a zephyr, so gentle that unless you are living in perfect communion with God, you never hear it. The checks of the Spirit come in the most extraordinarily gentle ways, and if you are not sensitive enough to detect His voice you will quench it, and your personal spiritual life will be impaired. His checks always come as a still small voice, so small that no one but the saint notices them.

Beware if in personal testimony you have to hark back and say - "Once, so many years ago, I was saved." If you are walking in the light, there is no harking back, the past is transfused into the present wonder of communion with God. If you get out of the light you become a sentimental Christian and live on memories, your testimony has a hard, metallic note. Beware of trying to patch up a present refusal to walk in the light by recalling past experiences when you did walk in the light. Whenever the Spirit checks, call a halt and get the thing right, or you will go on grieving Him without knowing it.

Suppose God has brought you up to a crisis and you nearly go through but not quite, He will engineer the crisis again, but it will not be so keen as it was before. There will be less discernment of God and more humiliation at not having obeyed; and if you go on grieving the Spirit, there will come a time when that crisis cannot be repeated, you have grieved Him away. But if you go through the crisis, there will be the paean of praise to God. Never sympathize with the thing that is stabbing God all the time. God has to hurt the thing that must go. ([Ref](#))

J C Ryle - Quench not the Spirit. Vex not the Spirit. Drive Him not to a distance, by tampering with small bad habits and little sins. Little jarrings between husbands and wives make unhappy homes, and petty inconsistencies, known and allowed, will bring in a strangeness between you and the Spirit.

D L Moody - In 1st Thessalonians, 5th chapter, we are told not to Quench the Spirit. Now, I am confident the cares of the world are coming in and quenching the Spirit with a great many. They say: "I don't care for the world;" O perhaps not the pleasures of the world so much after all as the cares of this life; but they have just let the cares come in and quench the Spirit of God. Anything that comes between me and God -- between my soul and God -- quenches the Spirit. It may be my family. You may say: "Is there any danger of loving my family too much?" Not if we love God more; but God must have the first place. If I love my family more than God, then I am quenching the Spirit of God within me; if I love wealth, if I love fame, if I love honor, if I love position, if I love pleasure, if I love self, more than I love God who created and saved me, then I am committing a sin; I am not only grieving the Spirit of God, but quenching

Him, and robbing my soul of His power. (D. L. Moody. Secret Power)

Woodrow Kroll - When we fail to yield ourselves completely to Him, we quench the Holy Spirit... Now, do you know what it means to quench the Spirit of God? It doesn't mean that we extinguish Him as you would quench or extinguish a fire. It means that we stifle Him. We stifle His influence in our lives. And it's very possible for us to be cleansed of every sin except unyieldedness. And if this is so, we cannot be filled with the Spirit of God. So, make sure that you unreservedly yield yourself to God for whatever He wants from you. Just be transparent and open before Him. ([The Holy Spirit Fills You](#)) **As an aside Dr Kroll asks a pithy question regarding the active role of the Holy Spirit** - "Is the Holy Spirit a benchwarmer in your life?... I want all of us to remember just how important He is to us. You know, we shouldn't treat Him as some sort of second-string player that we pull of the bench and put Him in the game only when we think we need Him. Truth is we need Him all the time."

Lord light my fire! Light the fire in my local church! Light the fire of Your Spirit in Your Body in America before the day of Your great mercy passes by our land! Do it Father not because we are great or once were great but only because the heathen see the abominations done in "Christian America" and abhor Christianity and ultimately You, O Father of all. For Your Name's sake, for the Name of Christ our Redeemer. Amen.

Spurgeon - If you are filled with the Spirit of God, and wish to retain his gracious presence, speak about him. Note this, "Be not drunk with wine, wherein is riot; but be filled with the Spirit; speaking." That is a curious word to follow so soon. The Holy Ghost is not a dumb Spirit; he sets us speaking. "Speaking to yourselves"; it is a poor audience; but still it is a choice audience if you speak to your brethren. "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." Beloved, when the Spirit of God fills you, you will not only speak, but sing. Let the holy power have free course: **do not quench the Spirit**. If you feel like singing all the while, sing all the while, and let others know that there is a joy in the possession of the Spirit of God which the world does not understand, but which you are feeling, and to which you wish to bear witness. Oh, that the Spirit of God would come upon this entire church, and fill you all to overflowing! May the members of other churches that are here tonight take home fire with them, and set their churches on flame! The Lord bless you, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen. (**From his sermon [FILLING WITH THE SPIRIT AND DRUNKENNESS WITH WINE](#)**)

Quenching the Spirit

Dr. John Walvoord

(1) Definition.

The expression found in 1 Thessalonians 5:19 is nowhere formally explained in Scripture. **Quenching** is often used in the Bible in its proper physical sense, as illustrated in Matthew 12:20, where Christ spoke of not quenching flax, and in Hebrews 11:34, the heroes of the faith are revealed to have "quenched the violence of fire." In Ephesians 6:16, the shield of faith is said to "be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked." In 1 Thessalonians, however, it is used in a metaphysical sense, meaning according to Thayer, "to suppress, stifle."¹ **It is patently impossible to extinguish the Holy Spirit in the absolute sense, or to put Him out. His abiding presence is assured for all Christians. His Person is indestructible. It is, therefore, quenching in the sense of resisting or opposing His will.** Quenching the Spirit may be simply defined as **being unyielded to Him, or, saying, "No."** The issue is, therefore, the question of willingness to do His will.

In the introduction of sin in God's creation by the original rebellion of Satan, Lucifer is revealed to have opposed the will of God by five "I will's" which are summarized in the fifth, "I will be like the most High" (Isa 14:14). All rebellion against God was identified with Satan and the wicked angels who fell with him. With the introduction of sin into the human race in Adam, the field of rebellion was extended to man. The Christian who has been reclaimed from spiritual death and condemnation in Adam faces the crucial issue of yieldedness to the will of God in spite of the weakness of the flesh, the natural tendencies of the sin nature, the power of the world, and the power of Satan. There can be no compromise on the issue if the fullness of the Holy Spirit is to be realized. It is necessary to be yielded to the will of God to have the full blessings of His ministry. The life of yieldedness has several aspects as will be seen.

(2) The Initial Act of Surrender.

Every Christian faces the obvious fact that no man can serve two masters or lords (Matt 6:24). It is impossible to enter into the present joys of salvation without accepting the Savior as Lord, but this is a truth to be apprehended in experience as well as in doctrine. Accordingly Christians are constantly exhorted to yield themselves to God. In Romans 6:13, the exhortation is found, "Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive

from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God." The Greek word for yield is found in two tenses in this verse which illustrates clearly that the appeal is to a yielding to God which is accomplished once for all.

In the first instance, yield is found in the present tense, *παριστάνετε*, meaning, "Stop yielding your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin." There was a constant and abiding experience of sinfulness. In contrast to this, the exhortation is to yield unto God, *παραστήσατε*, in the aorist tense, meaning, "Yield yourself to God once and for all." A Christian is called upon to make a definite yielding of his life to God to make possible its full blessing and usefulness just as he was called upon to believe in order to be saved. The familiar exhortation found in Romans 12:1, to "present" ourselves to God is the same word in the aorist tense, again a definite act of yielding to God. To be filled with the Spirit a surrender of life and will to His guidance and direction is prerequisite. The original act of surrender is a surrender of our wills to God's will. It is not a question of any particular area of conflict of will.

Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer has summed the issue concisely: "A yieldedness to the will of God is not demonstrated by some one particular issue: it is rather a matter of having taken the will of God as the rule of one's life. To be in the will of God is simply to be willing to do His will without reference to any particular thing He may choose. It is electing His will to be final, even before we know what He may wish us to do. It is, therefore, not a question of being willing to do some one thing: it is a question of being willing to do anything, when, where and how, it may seem best in His heart of love. It is taking the normal and natural position of childlike trust which has already consented to the wish of the Father even before anything of the outworking of His wish is revealed."²

(3) The Continued Life of Yieldedness.

It is a matter of experience as well as revelation that the issues of yieldedness are not settled by the initial act. The initial act accepts by faith the will of God before it is known. In facing the actual leading of the Spirit, the plain teaching of His Word, and the providential dealings of God, there is many a struggle with the inner man. It is in this realm that the precise command, "Quench not the Spirit" applies. The word quench (*σβέννυτε*) is found in the present imperative. The thought may be either do not quench, or it may presume that the reader has already been quenching the Spirit, in which case the appeal is to stop quenching the Spirit. It is an exhortation to maintain the same attitude as was adopted in the original surrender to the will of God. It is not a reconsecration, but a call to recognize that the Spirit has the right to rule. We must not resist the one to whom we have given our lives and surrendered our wills.

(a) SUBMISSION TO THE PLAIN TEACHINGS OF THE WORD OF GOD - The continued life of yieldedness to God involves a relationship to the will of God in several respects. The yielded Christian has an unusual relationship to the Word of God. As its revelation becomes known and its application becomes evident, the issue of being yielded to the truth as made known by the Holy Spirit becomes very real. **It is evident that refusal to submit to the Word of God is quenching the Spirit, making the fullness of the Spirit impossible.**

(b) OBEDIENCE TO THE GUIDANCE OF THE SPIRIT - Quenching the Spirit is closely related to His guidance. There are many spiritual decisions for which the Word of God does not give specific instruction. The general truths of Scripture must be applied to a given life and circumstance. In this aspect of the truth, the Word of God gives the principles, but the Spirit of God gives the instructions. This is a very precious portion of the believer's heritage and a mark of his sonship (Rom 8:14). Refusal to follow this evident leading is a quenching of the Spirit. Guidance may take various forms and does not follow a regular pattern. The Spirit may lead one into a field of service and exclude another. Guidance usually relates to service and is essential to it. Man was not created with a self-guiding faculty, but is dependent upon God for direction. The Spirit may prohibit a course of action as in forbidding Paul to preach the Gospel in Asia and in Bithynia, only later to direct his steps to these very fields and bless in the ministry of the word (cf. Acts 16:6, 7; 19:10). It is essential to effective service and wise action to follow implicitly and trustingly the ordered steps indicated by divine guidance. The fullness of blessing awaits only in the divinely appointed path.

(c) ACCEPTANCE IN FAITH OF THE PROVIDENTIAL ACTS OF GOD - An important field of yieldedness is in relation to providential acts of God, which often are contrary to natural desires of our hearts, and may seem outwardly from the human viewpoint to be a triumph of evil rather than of good. The "thorn in the flesh" whatever its character must be accepted in faith in the love and wisdom of God. The child of God who desires to live without quenching the Spirit must know the sweetness of submission to the will of God. It may often be observed that the suffering saint evinces a sweetness of testimony and a fullness of the Spirit which is unknown in others.

Yieldedness to the Spirit includes, then, submission to the plain teachings of the Word of God, obedience to the guidance of the Spirit, and acceptance in faith of the providential acts of God. All of these are a part of the moment-by-moment experience of living in the will of God with an indwelling Spirit who is unquenched.

(4) The Supreme Illustration of Christ. As many writers have pointed out, Christ Himself is the supreme illustration not only of one in Whom the fullness of the Spirit was manifested at all times, but one Who was submissive to the whole will of God. The classic passage of Philippians 2:5-11 reveals not only the glory and victory which belongs to our Lord, but His submission to the humiliation

of the Cross. Christ was willing to be what God chose: "a servant...made in the likeness of men." He was willing to go where God chose, into a sinful world which would reject Him and crucify Him. He was willing to do what God chose: "obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." The garden of Gethsemane with its struggle epitomized by the epical words, "Not my will, but thine be done" (Luke 22:42), has had its lesser counterpart in the lives of all great Christians. The child of God who has "**the mind of Christ**" is one who is fully yielded to the will of God for his life in every particular as Christ was for the will of God in His life. For the fullness of the Spirit, it is absolutely necessary to be yielded to Him. ([Read Dr Walvoord's full edifying article on **The Person of the Holy Spirit Part 10- The Work of the Holy Spirit in the Believer**](#))

A B Simpson has some interesting thoughts (be a Berean - see note Acts 17:11) about what it means to **quench the Spirit** writing that it

has reference, perhaps, mainly to the hindrance we offer to His work in others, rather than to our resistance of His personal dealings with our own souls.

Among the various hindrances which we may offer to the Holy Spirit may be mentioned such as these:

1. We may refuse to obey His impulses in us when He bids us speak or act for Him. We may be conscious of a distinct impression of the Spirit of God bidding us to testify for Christ, and by disobedience, or timidity, or procrastination, we may quench His working, both in our own soul and in the heart of another.

2. We may suppress His voice in others, either by using our authority to restrain His messages, when He speaks through His servants or refusing to allow the liberty of testimony. Many hold the reins of ecclesiastical authority unduly, and thus lose the free and effectual working of the Holy Ghost in their churches and in their work.

There is a less direct way, however, of politely silencing Him by forcing Him out, and so filling the atmosphere with the spirit of stiffness, criticism, and a certain air of respectability and rigidness that He gently withdraws from the uncongenial scene, and refuses to thrust His messages upon unwilling hearts.

3. The Spirit may be grieved by the method of public worship in a congregation

It may be either so stiff and formal that there is no room for His spontaneous working, or so full of worldly and unscriptural elements as to repel and offend Him from taking any part in a pompous ritual. An operatic choir and a ritualistic service will effectually quench all the fire of God's altar, and send the gentle dove to seek a simpler nest.

4. The Spirit may be quenched by the preacher, and his spirit and method

His own manner may be so intellectual and self-conscious, and his own spirit so thoroughly cold and vain that the Holy Ghost is neither recognized nor known in his work. His sermons may be on themes in which the Spirit has no interest, for He only witnesses to the Holy Scriptures and the person of Christ, and wearily turns away from the discussion of philosophy, and the stale show of critical brilliancy over the questions of the day or the speculations of man's own vain reason.

Perhaps his address is so rigidly written down that the Holy Spirit could not find an opportunity for even a suggestion, if He so desired, and His promptings and leading so coolly set aside by a course of elaborate preparation which leaves no room for God.

5. The spirit of error in the teachings of the pulpit will always quench the Holy Spirit.

He is jealous for His own inspired Word and when vain man attempts to set it aside He looks on with indignation, and exposes such teachers to humiliation and failure.

The spirit of self-assertion and self-consciousness is always fatal to the free working of the Holy Ghost.

When a man stands up in the sacred desk to air his eloquence and call attention to his intellectual brilliancy, or to preach himself in any sense, he will always be deserted by the Holy Spirit. He uses the things "that are not to bring to naught the things that are." And before we can expect to become the instruments of His power, we must wholly cease from self and be lost in the person and glory of Jesus.

6. The spirit of pride, fashion and worldly display in the pews, is just as fatal as ambition in the pulpit

Such an atmosphere seems to freeze out the spirit of devotion, and erect on the throne of the lowly Nazarene a goddess of carnal pride and pleasure, like the foul Venus that the Parisian mob set up in the Madeleine at Paris in the days of the revolution, as an object of worship. From such an atmosphere the Holy Ghost turns away grieved and disgusted.

7. The quickening and reviving influences of the Holy Ghost are often quenched in the very hour of promise by wrong

methods in the work of Christ's church.

How often, on the eve of a real revival, the minds of the people have been led away by some public entertainment in connection with the house of God, or its after-fruits withered by a series of unholy fairs and secular bids for money, and the introduction of the broker and the cattle-vender into the cleansed temple of Jehovah, as in the days of Christ.

8. The spirit of criticism and controversy is fatal to the working of the Holy Ghost

The gentle dove will not remain in an atmosphere of strife. If we would cherish His power we must possess His love, and frown down all wrangling gossip, evil speaking, malice, envy, and public controversy in the preaching of the Word.

Sometimes a single word of criticism after an impressive service will dispel all its blessed influence upon the heart of some interested hearer, and counteract the gracious work that would have resulted in the salvation of the soul.

A frivolous Christian woman returning one night from church with her unsaved husband, was laughing lightly at some of the mistakes and eccentricities of the speaker. Suddenly she felt his arm trembling; she looked in his face and his tears were falling. He gently turned to her, and said: "Pray for me; I have seen myself tonight as I never did before." She suddenly awoke with an awful shudder to realize that she had been frivolously wrecking his soul's salvation, and quenching the Holy Ghost.

And so, public controversy is as fatal to the Spirit's working as personal criticism.

It is when the children of God unite at the feet of Jesus, and together seek His blessing, that He comes in all the fullness of His life-power.

The Spirit may be quenched in the hearts of our friends by unwise counsel, or ungodly influence.

The little child may be discouraged from seeking Christ by a worldly parent, or the ignorant assumption that it is too young to be a Christian, or too busy with its studies, or its social enjoyments, for such things.

The attractions of the world and claims and pressures of business, may be interposed in the way of some seeking heart, and we find in eternity that we put a stumbling-block in our friend's way, from which he fell into perdition.

Let us be very careful lest, in our willfulness and pride, we not only miss ourselves the inner chambers of the kingdom of heaven, but hinder those that would enter from going in.

Oh! if we would cherish the faintest breath of life in the rescued waif that has been snatched from a watery grave, if we could fan the expiring flame of life in a friend's bosom, let us be careful lest we quench the spark of everlasting life in a human soul, and stand at the last, responsible for the murder of immortal beings, and crimson with the blood of souls. "Quench not the Spirit." (A. B. Simpson. Walking in the Spirit)

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Be Safe--Not Sorry! - Two young women lost their lives in a fire that swept through their apartment as they slept. Their home was equipped with a smoke detector that was in good working order, but it hadn't gone off. Why? Fire inspectors concluded that the device had been deactivated for a party the night before. The unit had been disconnected to keep it from sounding off because of the smoke from cooking and candles.

In Acts 5 we have another example of two people who apparently deactivated an alarm system that could have saved their lives. Ananias and Sapphira must have quenched the Holy Spirit by turning a deaf ear to their consciences, believing they had plenty of good reasons for doing what they did. But their action cost them their lives.

We need to realize that the Holy Spirit was not given to annoy us like a sensitive smoke detector. He doesn't sound false alarms. When He activates our conscience by bringing to mind a principle or warning from God's Word, it is really His love and wisdom in action.

By weighing the warnings of His love against the cost of our foolishness, we'll soon realize that it's always better to be safe than sorry. —Mart De Haan ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Our conscience is a gift from God,
It is a guiding light;
And when aligned with God's true Word,
It shows us what is right. —Sper

To ignore your conscience

is to invite trouble.

1 THESSALONIANS 5:19
Do Not Quench the Spirit
Ray Pritchard 6/12/2005

Our text has been translated in various ways:

- “Do not quench the Spirit” (ESV).
- “Don’t suppress the Spirit” (The Message)
- “Do not try to stop the work of the Holy Spirit” (New Life Version).
- “Don’t stifle the Spirit” (HCSB).
- “Don’t turn away God’s Spirit” (CEV).
- “Do not put out the Spirit’s fire” (NIV).

I prefer the NIV translation because it is so picturesque. Fire is one of the most frequent biblical images for God’s presence with his people. The connection is made in such passages as Exodus 3:1-5 (Moses and the burning bush), Exodus 13:21 (the pillar of fire), Leviticus 9:24 (fire from the Lord consuming the burnt offering), I Kings 18:24 (“The god who answers by fire—he is God.”), Isaiah 6:1-8 (coals of fire from the altar in heaven), Matthew 3:11 (“He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.”), Acts 2:3 (“They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire.”) and Hebrews 12:29 (“Our God is a consuming fire.”).

Fire represents several things with reference to the Holy Spirit.

First, it represents God’s presence with His people.

Second, it represents God’s protection of His people.

Third, it represents God’s cleansing of His people.

Fourth, it represents God’s judgment of His people.

Fifth, it represents God’s divine enablement of His people.

Sixth, it represents God’s gracious activity in the assembly of His people.

Consider Isaiah 4:4. “He will cleanse the bloodstains from Jerusalem by a spirit of judgment and a spirit of fire.” The prophet Isaiah, though speaking 2700 years ago, prophesies concerning events yet future to us. Chapter 4 describes the terrible events that will engulf Israel during the tribulation period before the return to Christ to the earth. Those seven awful years will climax with the Battle of Armageddon and the return of Christ to the earth (Revelation 19). So great will be the human slaughter that most men will be killed (Isaiah 4:1). But those who survive will see the Lord as he returns to set up his kingdom. His reign will bring great bounty to the Holy Land and great blessing to Jerusalem (Isa 4:2-3). But the people of Israel still must be cleansed from their sin of unbelief and rebellion against God. And the land itself must be consecrated again because it will be polluted from the final battle. Isa 4:4 speaks of the fire of coming judgment that will cleanse the bloodstains from Jerusalem and purify it in preparation for the coming kingdom of Christ. That “spirit of fire” will be the Holy Spirit cleansing the land from its sin. Once that purification is complete, the glory of the Lord will once again dwell in the land (Isa 4:5-6).

The same “Spirit of Fire” works to purify the people of God today. Before revival must come repentance. Before repentance must come confession. Before confession must come conviction. But conviction of sin is the unique ministry of the Holy Spirit. He must “burn” within us until we are willing to face up to our sin. No one likes to do that. Hiding and denying seem much more comfortable. But a red face and a few hot tears will go a long way to bring us back to God. How long has it been since you felt the “burning” of the Spirit in your heart? If you can’t remember, perhaps it’s time for you to get alone with God and let the “Spirit of Fire” do His work in your life.

Quenching the Spirit

In light of this, what does it mean to **quench** the Spirit’s fire? It helps to know that the word translated “quench” or “put out” generally refers to putting out a literal fire. You might douse a flame with water or you might extinguish it by covering a fire with a mound of dirt. You normally don’t quench a fire by accident. The fire goes out because someone either lets it burn out or takes steps

to put it out. This suggests that the Holy Spirit naturally “burns” within us unless we do something to put out the Spirit’s fire.

How would you put out the Spirit’s fire in your life or in someone else’s life? Disobedience would do it. Harboring sin would do it. Criticizing someone else’s love for the Lord would do it. Harboring bitterness in your heart would do it. But the preeminent way to put out the Spirit’s fire is by saying “No” to the Lord. There is a sense, of course, in which every sin and every wrong attitude is a way of saying “No” to God. But I’m thinking especially of personal obedience to the will of God. When we resist God’s call, we put out the Holy Spirit’s fire. This might apply to something huge, such as answering God’s call to be a missionary or answering God’s call to a new job or to make move to a different city or into a different neighborhood. But it applies just as much to answering God’s call to reconcile with a friend. It’s not exactly right to say that unconfessed sin quenches the Holy Spirit (though it does). The real quenching comes with the repeated refusal to do anything about it.

When God calls, we must answer and then we must obey. A few days ago, I spoke with a man who told me that for many years he had a prosperous law practice in southern California. Besides making a very large salary, he had a nice house, two expensive cars plus an SUV, and he had just purchased a lake home in a ritzy vacation area. Life was good. Then one day God came knocking at the door of his heart. He felt the Lord asking him to lay aside the trappings of wealth, move across the country, leave the legal profession, and begin a ministry aimed at moral and spiritual reformation in America. Not an easy thing to do, especially for a man on top of his game. As he prayed about it, the conviction increased that this was the step he must take even though from a career point of view, it made no sense whatsoever. “Did you face skepticism when you announced your plans?” I asked him. Everyone except his wife doubted him. She joined him in believing this was God’s call. His professional colleagues thought he was nuts. Even his father, a godly pastor for fifty years, wondered if this was the right thing to do.

That was fifteen years ago. He gave up his practice, sold his homes and his cars, packed his bags, moved across country, and started the ministry God laid on his heart. The intervening years have been both good and bad. Losing financial security has put him in a difficult place on more than one occasion. Friends he thought he could count on turned against him. It took a long time to get the new ministry going. “Did you ever doubt God’s call?” I expected him to say yes, but he said no, neither he nor his wife ever doubted what God wanted them to do. That confidence kept them going in the hard times. I could tell from the joy in his voice that he would not go back to his previous life, not for any amount of money. God called, he answered, and then he obeyed. That’s why the Spirit’s fire still burns in his heart.

Death in the Desert

What happens when we disobey a clear call from the Lord? Deuteronomy 1 offers a clear answer to that question. Beginning in verse 19, Moses recounts the story of the children of Israel wandering in the wilderness. When they came to Kadesh-Barnea, Moses chose 12 men to spy out the Promised Land. They came back with this report: “It is a good land that the LORD our God is giving us” (v. 25). The next verse should read, “So the people rose up, marched in, and took the good land the Lord had promised to give them.” But it doesn’t say that. Here is the next paragraph of the story:

But you were unwilling to go up; you rebelled against the command of the LORD your God. You grumbled in your tents and said, “The LORD hates us; so he brought us out of Egypt to deliver us into the hands of the Amorites to destroy us. Where can we go? Our brothers have made us lose heart. They say, “The people are stronger and taller than we are; the cities are large, with walls up to the sky. We even saw the Anakites there” (vv. 26-28).

I pause here to comment that this is not a false report. Everything the spies said was true. It was a good land flowing with milk and honey. And there were many walled cities filled with powerful people. Though God had promised the land to the Jews, they would still have to fight for every inch of it. To make it even clearer, they would have to fight, and some of them would have to die in the process. God’s promises never cancel the need for nitty-gritty obedience in the details of life. The Jews could have the Promised Land, but if they were unwilling to fight for it, it would never belong to them. God wasn’t going to drop the keys from the sky and say, “Here. I’ve wiped out the bad guys. Go in and make yourselves at home.” No, if they wanted the milk and honey, they could have it, but they would have to believe God enough to fight the bad guys and drive them out of the land.

You know the rest of the story. The people grumbled against the Lord. They made every excuse in the book why they shouldn’t have to go and fight. The desert started looking pretty good to them compared to those “Anakites” who lived in the Promised Land. What are a little sun and dust and a few sand dunes compared to the “Anakites”? Moses appealed to them to remember all God had done for them in the past:

The LORD your God, who is going before you, will fight for you, as he did for you in Egypt, before your very eyes, and in the desert. There you saw how the LORD your God carried you, as a father carries his son, all the way you went until you reached this place (vv. 30-31).

Kadesh-Barnea was the turning point for an entire generation. Despite seeing the mighty miracles of God in Egypt, and despite having walked across the Red Sea on dry ground, the people chose not to obey God. Notice how Moses puts it:

In spite of this, you did not trust in the LORD your God, who went ahead of you on your journey, in fire by night and in a cloud by day, to search out places for you to camp and to show you the way you should go (vv. 32-33).

Did you get that? God appeared to them “in fire by night.” Every night when they went to bed, they had only to look at the fiery pillar to be reminded of God’s special care for them. How could they possibly lose with Almighty God on their side?

But they chose to disobey anyway. As a result, an entire generation wandered in the wilderness for forty long years. Think of what that meant ...

Lost time.

Lost opportunity.

Lost life.

They chose the desert with its scorching heat, the burning sand beneath their feet, endless days and weeks trudging through the Sinai, with flies buzzing around them and scorpions hiding under the rocks. Meanwhile their trail was easy to spot because they left graves wherever they went. Because they would not obey God, they kept burying people left and right. A whole generation died because of unbelief.

They took the long way and the long road. Many people can look back over the course of life and see the same thing. Foolish choices in the past cost you dearly. For some, your sin cost you your marriage and your family. It may have sidetracked you for years. In some cases, rebellion may have landed you in prison. That’s what happens when we disobey the Lord. Life goes on, but everything now becomes difficult.

Riding With the Wind

Yesterday I took a long bike ride from Oak Park to the North Branch Trail. By the time I came home, I had ridden about 37 miles. It was extremely hot yesterday and I didn’t have any water with me so the last few miles were very difficult. Here’s what I have discovered about long bike rides. You need to check the wind before you leave because you want to ride into the wind on the way out and you want the wind at your back when you are on your way home. The two experiences are entirely different. When you ride into a stiff wind, everything becomes more difficult. Hills that should be easy become a challenge. When the wind is howling, you have to pedal with all your strength just to go seven or eight miles per hour. And here’s the most unusual factor: When you ride into a strong wind, the noise can be almost overwhelming. You can hear the wind as it rushes past you.

Everything changes when you turn around and begin to ride with the wind at your back. For one thing, pedaling becomes easy. Hills require minimal effort because the wind carries you along. The strangest thing I’ve noticed is that after riding into the wind, once you turn around, the wind itself seems to disappear. The roaring sound is gone. Often you’re not even aware that the wind is blowing at your back. But when you look at your odometer, suddenly you’re flying along at 15-20 mph. How did that happen? Having the wind at your back makes all the difference. What once was difficult now becomes easy because the wind helps carry you along.

“I Feel God’s Pleasure”

So it is with the spiritual life. When we walk in the Spirit, we are “carried along” and things that once were difficult now become easy. And when we disobey the Lord, suddenly we are riding into the wind and everything in life becomes difficult. Do you remember the story of Eric Liddell from the movie Chariots of Fire? The fleet Scotsman won a gold medal in the 400-meter race at the 1924 Paris Olympics Games. When he was a young lad, his sister asked him why he loved to run so much. His reply became the motto of his whole life, “When I run, I feel God’s pleasure.” This week I spent a day in Dallas teaching at the Global Proclamation Academy. Ramesh Richard, a professor at Dallas Seminary, brought together 23 young Christian leaders from 23 different developing countries for three weeks of intensive training. I flew in on Wednesday, taught them on Thursday, and flew back to Chicago that night. Nearly all of the men are under 35. I met a young man from Zambia who has started 42 churches. I met another young leader from Sri Lanka who oversees 450 churches. I met young pastors from Egypt, Mongolia, Vietnam and Bangladesh. Every day a different Christian leader comes in to do the teaching and mentoring. Ramesh told me it cost \$6000 per man to bring them to the US, house and feed them for three weeks, and then send them back to their home countries. Since this was the first year, the amount of work was staggering. Why do it? “Because when I help train these young men, I feel God’s pleasure,” Ramesh said.

After I preached this sermon, a man came up to me and said, “Pastor Ray, I know exactly what you’re talking about. I used to be Mr. America. I won the title in 1990. For years, Gary Olson and I lifted weights at the high school. Even though we were covered with sweat when we were finished, we loved it because when we lifted weights, we felt God’s pleasure.”

Those who obey God feel his pleasure.

Those who quench the Spirit don't.

A few days ago I picked up a book by Lloyd Ogilvie in which he asks this question: "If you could pick one word to summarize what you want the Holy Spirit to do in your life, what word would you choose?" I think I would choose a word like open or willing or ready. I want to be open to what God intends to do in my life. I want to be willing to go where he wants me to go. I want to be ready at a moment's notice to drop what I'm doing and answer his call. I want to be ready for anything, anytime, anywhere. I want the Spirit's fire to burn in my life without any hindrance from me.

Let the Fire Fall!

talk a lot about being "on fire" for Christ. You don't hear that phrase much nowadays but it's a perfectly biblical image. The supreme need of the church today is for men and women on fire for Christ.

For many years Yosemite National Park in California was the scene of a spectacular evening show. Near sundown the crowds gathered at Camp Currie, located by a lake below a large cliff called Glacier Point. Once the sun had gone down, the rangers built an enormous bonfire on Glacier Point. Once darkness had completely enveloped the valley, the call came piercing the night: "Are you ready?" The crowds shouted together, "Let the fire fall." The rangers pushed the burning embers over the cliff, creating a spectacular "fire fall" into the lake below. One writer described it this way:

High up at Glacier Point, the living embers slowly begin to fall and continue until they become a blazing stream of red and gold swaying in the wind while sparks fly off like stars. The stream grows smaller and smaller until it becomes a mere thread of gold drawing the curtain of night, and darkness descends.

I believe God calls to America today, "Are you ready?" And he calls to Chicago, "Are you ready?" And he calls to Oak Park, "Are you ready?" And he calls to Calvary Memorial Church, "Are you ready?" And he calls to me, "Pastor Ray, are you ready?" And he calls to each of us, "Are you ready?"

Let the answer ring out to heaven: "Lord, we are ready. Let the fire fall!" Amen.