

Quenching the Spirit

Call to Worship: Psalm 47

Hymn #718- *Leaning on the Everlasting Arms*

1st Scripture: Ephesians 4:1-16

Hymn #676- *More About Jesus*

2nd Scripture: 1st Thessalonians 5:19

Hymn #492- *Take My Life, and Let it Be Consecrated*

Introduction:

Our God is one God in three Persons; the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. We don't comprehend the mystery of the Trinitarian nature of our God, anymore than we comprehend eternity, but we know this to be true, because the Word of God clearly teaches this through and through.

One of the ways, in which, we find ourselves better able to distinguish among the Persons of the Godhead, is by the way in which each Person functions with respect to this creation. For example, while we know that each Person is fully God, containing everything that defines Godness, we can also say that only the Son of God, the Eternal Word, took on flesh, dwelt among us, was crucified on behalf of sinners, tasted death, was raised from the dead, and ascended up to heaven in a physical body. God the Father and the Holy Spirit did not do what the Son of God did, in any of these respects.

And likewise, there are roles, which each Person of the Godhead fills (with respect to this creation), ordered in accordance with the will of the Father, which are unique to each Person. At times, there is certainly overlap, but there are significant differences as well. And to this end, at times, human beings are said to relate specifically to one individual member of the Godhead, when they act, in any way, which would put them into contact with a specific role, designated to any individual Person of the Godhead. For example, the forgiven and redeemed sinner, is said to have believed *into Jesus, the Son of God*. Generally speaking, we are called to pray *to the Father*, and *in the name of Jesus*. Sin is put to death *by the Spirit...etc.*

Well, this morning, in continuing on with the next exhortation that Paul gives to the Thessalonians, we find that Paul issues a command, which addresses our relationship to the Holy Spirit. "Do not quench the Holy Spirit." Our task then, is to do our best to open up the meaning of this warning, particularly within the context of what we know about the Holy Spirit's role in

the life of the believer. We can narrow our study in this way, because obviously Paul is speaking to Christians and not unbelievers. And so, while there is so much that can be said about the Holy Spirit, concerning His role in Creation, His role in dealing with unbelievers...etc, our text gives us some reasonable parameters to work within, for the sake of time, and for the sake of not losing the main point, in such a deep realm of theology. Quenching the Spirit is something that *believers* can do, particularly, in how they relate to the Holy Spirit, who indwells them. [Unbelievers can *resist* the Holy Spirit -- His conviction of their consciences -- but they cannot, while in an unregenerate state, *quench* the Holy Spirit]

I. What does the Word "Quench" Mean?

We begin then by seeking to get a definition and understanding of the word "quench" given in our text. I believe that doing this will help us pinpoint precisely what is being indicated here, especially as we relate this to the work of the Holy Spirit.

The Greek word here used, which is translated "quench," is only used eight times in the New Testament, obviously including Paul's usage here, when he exhorts, "Do not quench the Spirit." Listen to the other seven usages of this word (the Greek word, "Sbennumi"):

1) Matthew 12:20, speaking of our Lord's gentle and tender treatment of the weak and weary, states, "A bruised reed He will not break, and smoking flax He will not **quench**, till He sends forth justice to victory..." The sense of the text, obviously means that our Lord will not put out the flickering flame of the weary, overwhelmed believer. He will not extinguish/quench/put out their remaining light, which hardly flickers because of their present state of weakness.

2) Matthew 25:8, speaking of the parable of the wise and foolish virgins, states, "And the foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are **going out**.'" The word "going out" is our word here, and again, it gives the idea of their flame/fire, beginning to grow dim, flickering, and ready to go out, because the oil is running low.

3, 4, & 5) Mark 9:44, 46 & 48, carry the next three uses of our word, speaking about the very same thing. In these texts, Jesus's stern warning about dealing radically with remaining sin, leads Him to repeat the following Old Testament quote three times, "where 'Their worm does not die and the fire is not **quenched**.'" The power behind this thrice repeated warning lies in the fact

that the agony and torments of hell are eternal, because the fire, which burns the indestructible bodies of the unbelievers there, will never go out. It will continually burn, on and on, without end. It will never be extinguished, quenched or put out.

6) In Ephesians 6:16, speaking of the precious armor of God, which we are to put on daily, so as to contend with spiritual enemies, Paul exhorts us most of all to lay hold of the shield of faith, "with which you will be able to **quench** all the fiery darts of the wicked one." Our enemy seeks to harm and cripple us, so that we are made ineffective and useless in the work of the kingdom. And He is said to shoot fiery darts at us, which will hit us in our consciences and then burn on, unto spiritually crippling us. But, by faith; in our continuing to lay hold of Christ (all that He is, and all that He has done and will do), we are able to extinguish, quench, put out those fiery darts, so that the fire does not spread, and we can continue forward in the battle.

7) And finally, Hebrews 11:34, speaking about the Old Testament examples, who have overcome by their faith, mentions some, who by faith, "**quenched** the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens...etc." We think of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego here, whose faith in God led them to be tossed into King Nebuchadnezzar's fiery furnace. And they were not burned. Even their clothing did not so much as have an aroma of smoke or burning upon it. In this sense, they are said to have quenched *the violence* of fire. The flame, were as if it were extinguished, because it had no power to harm them, whatsoever.

And so, these are the seven other texts, which use the same Greek word (for "quench") that is used here in our main text in 1 Thessalonians 5. And hopefully, we have a sufficient picture of what the word "quench" means, which will help us identify how we can do this to the Holy Spirit, particularly, when we consider it in the context of how the Holy Spirit functions in the life of the believer.

At the very basic level, we find in these texts the commonality of "fire" always being present when the word is used. And so, obviously, we don't want to miss this, in the breaking down of our main text. To "quench" then, is to put out or to extinguish a fire, in some sense. How then does this relate to the Holy Spirit?

II. Quenching the Spirit

"Do not quench the Holy Spirit." Having gotten a good, Biblical understanding of the word, "quench," what then is the relationship between the Holy Spirit and fire, which would suit to help explain what Paul is seeking to convey in our main text. We turn to a few other texts, which will help us gather this information:

1) We recall John the Baptist's words in Matthew 3:11, " I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire." Here, John speaks of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, which Jesus would perform, and we notice that John designates this baptism of the Spirit, as being a baptism with "fire."

2) In Acts 1:5, Luke quotes our Lord, who speaks of the fulfillment of John's prophecy, as that which would take place, beginning at Pentecost, "...for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

And then, when we look at the events that take place at Pentecost, we observe that the baptism of the Holy Spirit there, came with a rushing wind, and tongues of fire appeared over the heads of the Apostles, as they proclaimed the Gospel to the multitudes. And the gathered Jews, from all over the world, miraculously understood the message in their own native tongue.

And so, we see in these examples, a very clear association between the work of the Holy Spirit and fire. And from that point on, while there is not a recurring of the fiery tongues, we find the baptism of the Holy Spirit, directly related to His gifting every individual believer unto the edification of the body/church of Christ.

3) Read Ephesians 4:7-16. Again, here we find that following the resurrection and the ascension of Christ, Christ gifted His people, through the Holy Spirit, to serve in various capacities in His church, until we all come "to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."

Having these things in mind, brethren, I believe that we can now draw out the true meaning of our main text in 1 Thessalonians. When Paul says, "Do not quench the Spirit," what exactly is he then saying?

In light of what we have gone over, what Paul means by this is, "Do not be the cause of extinguishing/putting out/quenching the gift/s of the Spirit, which Christ has deposited in you and/or others for the sake of His church." "Do not render ineffective what the Spirit has gifted you (and others) with, unto the edification of Christ's church." "Do not put out the blessed flame, which has been supernaturally ignited in your heart for the most glorious purpose of serving Christ and His church." To quench the Spirit then, is not to literally extinguish the Spirit Himself, which of course is impossible and would be a preposterous notion, but rather, it is to extinguish what the Spirit has wrought in us (that which suits us to serve Christ and His church).

And so, brethren, the presumption here is, that Christians can serve to render themselves ineffective in the service of Christ's kingdom. And Paul cautions us against doing this very thing. And brethren, by logical deduction, we find something very profound revealed here. We are responsible for taking care of, exercising and utilizing what God has supernaturally deposited in us, by His Spirit. In other words, we are involved here, even as we are involved in the working out of our salvation, and in the process of our sanctification. And so, by our contraction or our inaction, we can actually serve to quench the Spirit in this sense. [Ex: The parable of the talents-- the responsibility given us, to invest what God has put under our charge]

III. Conclusive Applications

By way of conclusion then, brethren, let us consider a non-exhaustive list of ways that we can quench the Spirit. If we are to benefit from this exhortation, then we must trek from the realm of the theoretical into the realm of the concrete, asking the question, "In what specific ways can we quench the Spirit, and hinder our usefulness in the kingdom of Christ; thwarting the very purpose for which we exist and have been redeemed?"

1) At the very basic level, if we are not using or exercising our gifts (if we neglect them), then we can presume that we are quenching the Spirit. Every single Christian, being indwelt and gifted by the Holy Spirit, is suited to serve some edifying purpose in the church. We saw this in Ephesians 4 (every part doing its share, causes the body to grow). But sadly, we can get so distracted by other things; we can get so caught up in the things of the world; in the affairs of every day life (not even necessarily sinful things, in and of themselves), that we can actually hold

down and quench the fire, which the Spirit has ignited in us. Are you a Christian? Then it is not a matter of whether or not you are gifted, you must be. And so, the question is begged for each one of us then, "In what specific ways are you using what God has deposited in you, for the edification of the church?" You see, our individual gifts are not primarily given for our own benefit, but for the benefit and edification of the church. And so, if you are not exercising your gift/s, then you may be quenching the Spirit.

2) Another way, in which, we can certainly quench the Spirit is by continually grieving Him. [See Eph. 4:29-32] We not only quench the Spirit when we fail to exercise our gifts unto the edification of the church, but on the other side of the spectrum, we quench the Spirit when we tear down or destroy His church, by creating contention and division in the body. In one vein, we fail to positively do what we ought to do, and in the other vein, we negatively do what we ought not to do. Both quench the Spirit. Not building up and/or tearing down are both extinguishers.

3) We quench the Spirit when we resist the conviction of the Holy Spirit, and continue on in sin. There are times when we can so acquaint ourselves with sin that we virtually numb our conscience to the convicting graces, which the Holy Spirit lovingly brings upon us. We harden ourselves, as it were, and render ourselves useless for the work of the kingdom. And thereby, we quench the Holy Spirit.

4) We can quench the Holy Spirit by failing to avail ourselves to the means of grace, which the Spirit uses to convict, enliven, guide, empower, sanctify and grow us. If we are careless in our gathering with the people of God regularly, if we neglect our devotional and prayer lives, then no doubt, we disconnect ourselves from the oil resources of the Spirit, which He uses to keep us burning afire for the glory of God. In Galatians, Paul calls us to walk in the Spirit, so that we will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh. One can only walk in the Spirit, by being in the place of the Spirit's blessing, which is to avail ourselves to the means of grace.

5) We quench the Spirit when we hinder others from using their gifts, by despising, discouraging or even failing to encourage them. [Ill. Coals joined together make a larger fire; to the contrary, when they are too far apart, they go out]

6) We quench the Spirit when we despise prophecies, which we will address next time, Lord willing.

This is not an exhaustive list, brethren, but I think you get the critical sense of the text, at this point.

[Note: What to do when we have quenched the Spirit. Is there a remedy? The Gospel-- Christ can reignite that flame!]

Amen!!!

Benediction: Jude 1:24-25