

# Quench Not the Spirit

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] We're going to turn back then to 1 Thessalonians, 1 Thessalonians chapter 5, and our text is found in verse 19, Do not quench the Spirit.

And so, obviously we're going to think simply about this exhortation, quench not the Spirit. This is really a follow-up to what we've been looking at concerning the work of the Holy Spirit, both him as the fully divine person within the being of God, within the Trinity of God, and his personalness and so on, and how he operates.

And in this particular section in 1 Thessalonians 5, Paul is exhorting Christians to act in certain ways, and to avoid attitudes and actions that are contrary to the Word of God.

He's bringing things to a close at this stage in his first letter to the Thessalonian church. And as we look at this particular verse, quench not the Spirit, it's important, because it's a difficult verse to understand properly, it's important to let the Bible speak in the first place about what quenching or not quenching is about.

And actually the word is used sparingly in the New Testament itself. And one key reference that's helpful to us was actually spoken by the Lord Jesus himself, found it in Mark 9, verse 48, where he's talking about a very solemn subject.

[ 1 : 5 6 ] He's talking about eternal perdition. He's talking about hell, Gehenna, where those who believe not, and where the forces of darkness will be confined forever.

And he says in that passage, where the worm dies not, and the fire is not quenched.

And it is the fire is not quenched that there we find the word quenched used. The same word as here, quench not. Don't put out, don't dampen, don't stifle the fire, don't stifle the Spirit.

Quench not the Spirit. So we get a good illustration of the point of the word itself in that reference that Jesus gives.

Another one, perhaps quite a helpful one too, is found in the Old Testament, in the Greek version of the Old Testament, the Septuagint, which, as you know, was put together by Jewish scholars.

[ 3 : 1 0 ] And it reflects the Hebrew, and of course the words they use in the Greek convey the meaning of the words in the Hebrew.

And there's a useful reference with regard to this quenching or quench not in the Song of Solomon in chapter 8 and verse 7, where we read the words, I'm sure we're familiar with, many waters cannot quench love.

Many waters cannot quench love. And that is, of course, figurative, but it conveys the idea clearly to us that many waters can quench many a thing, can certainly put out fires, but cannot quench love.

So you have there the whole idea of putting out, of stifling, of dampening. And this usage, just even in those two references, I think they help us to understand something at least of what Paul is saying here when he says, quench not the spirit.

And it follows from this that we've got to look at this subject and consider who or what spirit is Paul referring to when he says, quench not the spirit.

[ 4 : 41 ] And there shall we begin to have some difficulties because there are different views of Bible-believing scholars of the Greek New Testament from an evangelical standpoint as well as others.

Who or what is Paul referring to when he says, quench not the spirit? What are we to understand by this quenching of the spirit?

And how are we to respond to the teaching that's given to us? We'll look at these questions slightly modified for convenience.

But the first and the obvious one is, who or what is the spirit referred to? Now, I say again, this is not straightforward. We have to take cognizance of what good, prayerful Christian scholarship has understood of this.

I remember once, I'm sure I've told this story before at some point, I remember once years ago as a student of divinity in Edinburgh, sitting under Alistair Ross's ministry in Bucklew, Great Friars.

[ 5 : 56 ] And Alistair was an excellent expositor of the word. And he had somewhat august men in his congregation who were retired professors.

And one, at least, was a principal of the college. And he was a first-rank New Testament scholar. And then there was the late Professor Philillison.

And Alistair Ross was preaching on this text, Quench not the spirit. And it was Professor Philillison's custom when he didn't agree with Alistair Ross's exegesis.

You're smiling. But it's absolutely true. He sat quite near the front, sort of down here, in the middle, quite near the pulpit, directly opposite the pulpit. And when he didn't agree, he'd put his head down and he'd shake it from side to side like that.

So, on this occasion, Alistair Ross was just getting up his steam into the text. And he was expounding the text in a certain way.

[ 7 : 08 ] And the Professor didn't agree. So, when the minister saw what the Professor was doing with his head, no, no, no, no. He said, Oh, oh, oh.

He said, Professor Philillison's at it again. He doesn't agree. But we're carrying on regardless. And off he went. So, I'm saying that simply because here's an excellent theologian, Professor Philillison, and he simply took a different view.

So, I want to look at the view that this reference is to the spirit of the prophets. in the New Testament. And I'm going to not agree with that view, but I'm recognizing that good men, even in our own free church, have taken that view, that the reference is to the human spirit of the prophets of the New Testament who were expounding or revealing things from a New Testament light, from a post-resurrection and ascension of Jesus.

They were coming as prophets of the New Testament while the scriptures were still being completed. And that is not as far away as it appears because, if you look at the next verse, despise not prophecies.

Despise not prophecies. So, you can see where the view came from. Quench not the spirit, despise not prophecies. It's easy enough, you would say logically and connectively with verse 20 to say, well, this must be the understanding of it.

[ 8 : 58 ] And that's strengthened, that view is strengthened, actually, by thinking about there were issues in the church in Thessalonica on prophecy, on the whole question of the last things, of Christ's return, of the believers that had died.

Where were they in the return of Christ? At the end of chapter 4, you have it there. And again, at the beginning of chapter 5, where we read about Christ's return.

So, that's the gist of that view that says, well, quench not the spirit as reference to the ministry of the word through the prophets.

Don't quench the spirit of these men who come among you. But, it seems to me that what we've got to do to understand this in the most biblical way, what Paul is actually saying, or shall I say what the spirit of God is saying through the apostle.

We've got to understand Paul's usage of the two words the spirit, tonnuma in the original. And when we look at Paul's use of tonnuma, the spirit, we see on every hand that he refers to the spirit of God.

[ 10 : 29 ] He refers to the Holy Spirit. We read in Galatians in chapter 5 about the contrast between those who live according to the principles of this world, according to the fallen nature, the sinful nature, they live according to the flesh, contrasted with those who bear the fruit of the spirit and who live according to the spirit.

And clearly the reference there is to the spirit of God. Galatians 5 22 The fruit of the spirit is contrasted with the works of the flesh.

The fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, and so on. The works of the flesh are these, and we read of them. And therefore, the fruit of the spirit is undeniably the reference to the fruit of the spirit of God in the life of a true believer, a true follower of Christ.

But the words the spirit to enuma are the same as used here, quench not the spirit. Secondly, in Galatians 6 and verse 8, the reference is to the Christian living life in terms of a sowing.

Our life is like a weaving between my Lord and me, said somebody. But our life is also like a sowing. Our lives are like sowing seeds.

[ 12 : 09 ] And Paul says in Galatians 6 verse 8 that those who sow to the flesh, that is, to the sinful nature, who live according to the principles of the world, shall of the flesh reap corruption.

Whereas those who sow to the spirit, there's it again, to enuma, the spirit, shall of the spirit reap life everlasting.

That to me is a peach if I can put it that way. Because it's so clearly a contrast between sowing to the flesh and sowing to the spirit, that is, the spirit of God.

And so the story goes on. Go to one of the great passages in the New Testament. Go to Romans 8, the opening part of Romans 8, and you've got condemnation comes to those who walk after the flesh and mind the things of the flesh.

But no condemnation from God comes to those who walk according to the spirit. And there you have it again.

[ 13 : 33 ] And clearly in that passage in Romans 8, the reference is to the spirit of God. They walk according to the spirit. And the story goes on and on.

The whole mystery of God's purpose in bringing not only Jews into a living relationship with himself, but Gentile nations too, which we are part of.

the whole mystery was about to break upon the nations with the completion of the work of Jesus. Well, with the beginning of it and the completion of it in this world.

And the proclamation was to be to all nations. But this was revealed to the apostles and prophets by the spirit.

you go to Ephesians 3 verse 5 you have the same thing. It was revealed to the apostles by the spirit. And there you have it again simply to pneuma the spirit.

[ 14 : 42 ] So what we're doing here is we're demonstrating in some key places in Paul's use of the spirit. But he uses the spirit to pneuma to refer to the holy spirit.

The spirit of God. And if we go back before we leave this for a minute to Galatians which we read. At the end of Galatians chapter 5 we read in verse 25 if we live in the spirit or by the spirit let us also walk conduct ourselves by the spirit or in the spirit.

Simply to pneuma the spirit. And it's undeniable he's referring to life in the spirit of God walking by conducting our lives by the spirit of God.

But I say again there's a simple usage of the spirit. Paul uses it to refer to the Holy Spirit of God.

And last time we were looking at the work of the spirit in Ephesians 4.30 grieve not the Holy Spirit of God. And here in this text we're thinking therefore about resistance to to the work the gracious ministry and influence of the spirit of God upon our soul.

[ 16 : 20 ] When we resist his work when we push away the claims of Christ upon our lives. And that is so relevant to us all you see.

We can push it away. I remember Callum Matheson telling a story about a close shave he had when he went to the London Free Church in the days of Murder MacLeod whom they called Murder the Jew.

And he was talking, he was giving his testimony and he said that he had a close shave one night when the preaching was going on. And he wasn't saying it in an arrogant way.

He was saying it with shame of face. That he escaped. He pushed away what the Spirit was saying to him in the Word.

And my friends, we can do that. And it quenches the Spirit. It grieves him, certainly, but it quenches him. It stifles his ministry. Now, let's not forget, of course, the Spirit of God is utterly sovereign in salvation.

[ 17 : 29 ] He is invincible when it's his mind to be invincible. But in his ordinary operations on us, he allows himself to be grieved because he can be grieved.

He allows himself to be stifled, to be quenched. My Spirit will not always strive. So, it's important to see that we don't offend him in this way by pushing away what he's saying to us.

David himself was concerned lest he lose the benefits of the ministry of the Spirit. Don't take your spirit away.

That leads us to the second question we want to ask. Can the Spirit of God really be stifled by people?

Can he really be quenched? Well, we've anticipated that a little, I know, but we need to look at it more carefully because it's a serious question. Can he be stifled or quenched by mortals, by men?

[ 18 : 44 ] And the answer has to be, in keeping with what we've said a moment ago, simply yes he can. And yes he can be stifled or quenched because he allows it to be that way.

Not for our good, but for our ill. If you go back to the reference I gave a moment ago, Genesis 6 verses 1 to 3, in the pre-flood stage in world history, we're told that people corrupted themselves.

Now, arguably they didn't know a lot, maybe not much at all, about the Spirit of God. But they knew about God.

They had the preaching of Noah for a hundred and twenty years and all the time that the ark was being built, he was a preacher of righteousness.

And population wise, it wasn't huge by any means. And people heard about God and they heard about his salvation. And we're told because they resisted and fought against and they corrupted themselves in all sorts of abominable behavior, we are told, my spirit will not always strive with man.

[ 20 : 17 ] And the reference there, when you examine it, is not just about man generally, because man is only flesh, but more concerned was God that his own people, small group through the were in those days, were also corrupting themselves.

The godly line was polluting itself. It was marrying out, it was marrying into the world, the sons of God, took wives from a man, the sons of men.

And they offended, and they grieved, and they quenched the spirit of God. He will not always strive. You move into the New Testament and you get similar teaching in the book of Acts, in chapter 7, verse 51, when Stephen was being accused by the Jewish authorities of blaspheming God, and so on.

He put it to them, he gave a wonderful thumbnail of the history of God's dealing with the world and with his people, with Israel in particular.

and he says, you are like your fathers, you always resist the Holy Spirit. They were pushing away the message that was for them first, and is always for them first.

[ 21 : 55 ] They were resisting it. They were stifling the word. Do you remember? They put their hands over their ears, and they yelled, lest they would hear any more.

They were suppressing and stifling the ministry. The fact that Jesus had come as the promised Messiah, that he was the one who would offer himself up as sacrifice for sin, they would have none of it.

That he should die in the room instead of his people, that he should be made righteousness, a right standing for the people, they would have none of it. Righteousness comes by the law, they said.

And they resisted, and they quenched the Spirit who was striving with them. But to return, more particular to the specific point, this reference has to do with the Lord's people, with those who profess the Christian religion.

And it's possible for us to put away from us what the Spirit is saying in the Word. When God is saying this is the way, walk in it, this is the way of faith, and not in belief, and we resist what he's saying, we are quenching the Spirit, we are stifling his ministry to us, we are suppressing the truth.

[ 23 : 38 ] After an all, you see, if you think about it, the Spirit of God is the Spirit of faith. And anything we think and do and say that is not of faith is sin.

and it offends him, it grieves him, it stifles his ministry, it quenches his ministry to us.

And therefore we are to be wise and recognize this can happen, and recognize we can be guilty of it, and recognize the importance of submitting ourselves to his teaching in the Word.

Lastly, and again, we've anticipated a little bit, let's look at it in the form of a question. How are we to respond to the Spirit's ministry?

Well, the first thing must be that we have a lofty view of him, that we have a jealous regard for his rights and, dare I say, feelings.

[ 24 : 51 ] it's not that he's touchy like some of us. He has a right to be touchy in a holy way and a sinless way.

God is touchy about is when people resist him and they don't take hold of the word he gives.

He is grieved by that. He is stifled by that. He is quenched by that. He allows it to be that way. therefore, we must regard highly his ministry to us and among us.

It is always a ministry of grace and power. And we are to receive it like that from him. And it's a word of grace and power, a ministry of grace and power, because it's his business to lift Christ up to us and to present Christ to us and to draw us to him.

And to make us feel we must have him. We must know we have sins forgiven and we are right with God. The Spirit loves to bring these things to us.

[ 26 : 13 ] And he loves that we receive them meekly. You see, the false teaching that sprung up in the church in Thessalonica did so because folk weren't listening.

And when you read about the heresies of the ancient church, it's all about that. It's about folk not listening. It's about folks who don't fancy that and start to reinterpret.

You think about the Judaizers who infiltrated the churches of Galatia. and others too. But in Galatia, they came up from Jerusalem.

They were claiming to have come from James. They weren't from James. They had come with another package, another deal, a man-centered deal. And the fact is they weren't listening to the apostles in Jerusalem.

They went off with new doctrine and tried to peddle it here and there. And that offends the Spirit of God.

[ 27 : 27 ] It grieves him deeply. It quenches the Spirit. You see, the Spirit of God is not a minister of confusion.

confusion. Confusion comes when we don't like what we hear from the Word. And we don't want to take it on board.

the ministry of the Spirit is not a ministry that's designed to generate a dread, a hopeless despair.

His ministry is a ministry of love and of power and of a sound mind. It makes the mind sound. It helps us to think God's thoughts clearly and accurately and to rest upon them, to embrace them.

He brings out the best in us by the Word, if we will have it. And Paul exhorted the Thessalonians there, quench not the Spirit.

[ 28 : 40 ] Be careful how you treat his ministry. And then he says, don't despise prophecies.

Take them seriously. Take them as from God, as from the Spirit. And you see, there's an interesting reference here with regard to how we use the ministry of the Spirit of God.

Paul said to Timothy when Timothy was setting out in his ministry, fan into flame the gift that is given to you.

And the Spirit of God comes as a gift from God to us. He's free. That's the glory of the gospel. We don't pay for him coming in.

He comes freely. And when we recognize that we receive him freely, on his terms, and we're responsible for looking after him as it were within.

[ 29 : 51 ] Fan into flame the gift that he gives. And of course there's an allusion to the Old Testament practice of keeping the fire burning night and day on the altar of sacrifice.

And there's an important message in that I think that we should seek by the means of that very Spirit to maintain a healthy attitude to him in our lives.

A healthy attitude to him when we hear the word preached. That we guard his ministry among us and to us.

And you see that protects us from succumbing to the ways of the world. it protects us from heaping rubbish in our hearts upon his ministry.

Quench him not. And in my mind, sorry, the picture is of somebody that had a nice fire going and it's time to go on in a different direction and they kick the ashes over to stifle, to quench the fire.

[ 31 : 10 ] It's only an illustration, but it's an interesting point. We can do that by being careless about our spiritual life, by not benefiting from the word we hear.

By not going away home and praying about this, that this is important to me, that I want the benefit of the ministry of God's Spirit upon me.

well, the news is that I have quite a bit more to say, so the time is gone, so we're going to really bring this to a close.

And the point is, I think, we need to see is that we need him to guide us through the word so that we're not enmeshed merely in traditional views of things.

If they're biblical, we hold them. And that we're not influenced and drawn away by the ways of the word just because the flow is going that way.

[ 32 : 15 ] No, we are to seek the Spirit of God's ministry in the word. Jesus said about him, your heavenly Father knows how to give you the good gift, and will he not give the Holy Spirit to those who ask for him.

And we need to keep on asking in order that we benefit from his holy ministry in our lives, that we may be filled with his gracious and loving influence, and that we guard how we treat him, lest we quench his ministry in us.

there's an interesting reference in the Song of Solomon, verse 16 of chapter 4, sometimes the Spirit is spoken of as the wind, come, O north wind, come, O south, and blow upon my garden, in other words, upon my inner life, that the spices may flow out.

That's a lovely picture of a Christian believer wanting his or her life to be fragrant, like a garden of spices, with a Spirit working, blow out these spices, a fragrance of the Lord Jesus Christ to others.

let us consider, and let us be stirred, to resolve by the grace the Spirit of Christ gives, to quench him not.

[ 34 : 04 ] Amen.