Not Quenching the Holy Spirit
Scripture: 1 Thessalonians 5:19
Code: 52-30

First Thessalonians chapter 5 and we find ourselves at verse 19. We are studying these staccato commands of the apostle Paul as he concludes this epistle, as he draws it to a conclusion. Rapid-fire, he gives some very basic elements of Christian living in command form to the very young Christians in Thessalonica. If it seems that these commands, beginning in verse 16 and flowing down through verse 22, are rather simple, and even somewhat simplistic, we need to remember that while being simple on the one hand, they are profound on the other. And also, we need to remember that this is a congregation of relatively new believers. The church is only a few months old; none of the believers there is older than that, and so they are in need of a reminder and a summarization of the basic elements of Christian living.

All of this, you'll remember, is in a context here in the closing part of the epistle, where Paul is talking about how the Christians in the church are to be related to the Lord. He's been talking about growing a healthy flock, and using the flock metaphor, we have noted that he was teaching about how the sheep are to be related to their shepherds, how the shepherds are to be related to their sheep; that is, pastors and people. Then he talked about how the people are to be related to each other. And now he's talking about how the people or the sheep are to be related to the Great Shepherd, the Lord Himself. Starting in verse 16, some commands with regard to our own spiritual relationship to the Lord.

We come to command number four in verse 19. We've already discussed rejoice always, pray without ceasing, and in everything give thanks, three commands which are the will of God in Christ Jesus. Now we come to command number four, do not quench the Spirit. This is very direct, not difficult, really, to interpret, but needs careful understanding if we are to apply it, living in the time in which we live.

Let me first of all say that there are some commentators – in fact, a quite a large number of them – who have felt that verse 19 is really connected to the next three verses. That it is a reference to some abuses that were going on in the Thessalonian church with regard to charismatic gifts, and that when Paul says "do not quench the Spirit, do not despise prophetic utterances but examine everything carefully, hold fast to that which is good, abstain from every form of evil," he is really offering a corrective, because they were abusing charismatic gifts. Those who hold the view that he is here talking about these charismatic gifts would say that when he says, "Do not quench the Spirit," he means do not stifle the exercise of certain charismatic gifts in the assembly of the church. Particularly,

then, in verse 20, “Do not despise the prophesyings which come by the Holy Spirit,” and then in verse 21 and 22 they would interpret it as saying, “No matter what is said, you need to examine it, and if it’s good, hold to it; and if it’s evil, abstain from it.”

And so they would wrap this whole passage around the charismatic gifts, the gifts of prophesying that occur in the church, or word of knowledge, word of wisdom perhaps, or even the speaking in tongues and interpretation of tongues. They would therefore conclude that in the Thessalonian church there was some abuse, and that this indeed is Paul’s way to try to straighten that out.

All of the commentators who hold that view would connect it with 1 Corinthians 12 to 14, and suggest that the Thessalonians were not understanding the truths of 1 Corinthians 12, 13 and 14, where you have great detail outlining the abuses of charismatic gifts in the Corinthian church. And then, of course, Paul corrects that in very, very careful terms; how those gifts are to be used, how they’re not to be used, how to recognize the true gift, how to tell the false gift, how it is to be used in the service, how it is to be controlled and so forth. There’s tremendous detail about it. He even gives the priority lists of those gifts, and what is more important than all of the gifts, namely love, as he talks about it in chapter 13 of that section.

So they would say that there were problems along the lines of spiritual gifts in Thessalonica, that people were not following the instruction, say, of 1 Corinthians, 12, 13 and 14, not understanding those principles that are given there. And so he is here correcting that problem. However, having read about ten or eleven commentators who take that view, I have to confess that I remained unconvinced. In spite of all of the arguments that they put together, I still remained unconvinced, for a number of reasons.

There is no compelling reason, first of all, to see this passage that way. There is no compelling reason to see in verse 19 that he is saying anything more than don’t quench the Spirit, period, in general. There is no compelling reason to see that he is not simply saying in verse 20, “Don’t despise prophesyings,” that word is used of spoken revelation from the Spirit, and of written revelation from the Spirit, and he is simply saying, “When the Spirit speaks, don’t despise it” – just a very general statement.

In verse 21, again a very general statement. “You need to be discerning. Examine everything. Whatever is good, hold to it. Whatever is evil, abstain from it.” If he was talking about prophesyings, and if he was talking about things that are being spoken, he would say, “Hold fast to what is true, and abstain from what is false.” But here, he says “Hold fast to what is good, and abstain from every form, or every kind of evil.” It has to transcend the specificity of simply some kind of prophetic utterance.

So I see these simply, then, as different commands. Do not quench the Spirit, that’s one issue. Do not despise the revelations that come through prophesying, whether written or spoken. Examine

everything in your life, and when you find what is good, hold on to it and when you come across something that is bad, stay away from it; basic principles for spiritual life. So there's really no compelling reason to read some abuse into the text.

Furthermore, it would seem to me that if there was an abuse going on in the Thessalonian church, such a young church, Paul would have been literally passionate about solving it, because he would have seen the potential for damage; and he would not have been nearly as oblique as this, as general as this, if he was intending to address himself to a major issue in the church. In fact, he would have written to the Thessalonian church what he wrote to the Corinthian church, if the abuse had showed up here first.

By the way, it is also true that the Thessalonians couldn't have known what was in 1 Corinthians 12 to 14, because it hadn't been written yet. And the reason it hadn't been written yet is because the church at Corinth hadn't been founded yet, and they weren't even Christians in that city yet. So, we would have to assume, then, that if there was a problem along this line, this was the first time it came up – in the Thessalonian church before the Corinthian church was ever founded – and he would have addressed himself to it with the same seriousness, and the same length, and the same concern that he did in the case of the Corinthians. Therefore, we conclude that there was no such problem there. There was no such corrective needed, and there are no compelling reasons why we should make this address itself to that. Simply stated, he gives you several commands here, in the same flow that we saw starting in verse 16, that are summarizing the basics of the Christian's relationship to his Lord.

Here, verse 19 stands alone as a general command. "Do not quench the Spirit." Now obviously, the next statement assumes that the Spirit is behind prophetic utterances, but it, too, stands on its own. So let's just take this as a statement in and of itself. "Do not quench the Spirit" – a general command. The metaphor here is very graphic. The word "quench" means to extinguish. It means to stifle, to retard, or as it's translated, to quench. It is used in Mark 9:48 for putting out a fire. It is used in Matthew 25, verse 8, for putting out a lamp. That's what it means, to extinguish, to quench, to stifle, pouring water on a fire.

You, I'm sure, are very much aware that the Holy Spirit throughout Scripture is depicted as a fire. You find that in the book of Acts, chapter 2, when the Spirit of God came upon the church, there appeared cloven tongues of fire. The Spirit of God is seen in a number of places as a fire. In fact, you remember that in Paul's letter to Timothy, he told him, "Kindle afresh the gift of the Spirit that is in you." In other words, the fire is there – throw some more wood on it, get it started again, it's so low. So the Spirit is on a number of occasions seen as a fire, a flaming fire. And the apostle is saying, "Don't pour water on that fire. Don't put retardant on that fire. Don't stifle the work of the Spirit."

Now, the Holy Spirit can be quenched, obviously, or he wouldn't have to command us in this regard. We shouldn't be too surprised by that. The Holy Spirit can also be grieved. In Ephesians 4:30, it says,

“Grieve not the Holy Spirit.” The Holy Spirit can also be resisted. In Acts 7:51, we read about resisting the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit can also be blasphemed. Matthew 12:24 to 32, Jesus condemns the Pharisaical leaders of Jerusalem because they blasphemed the Holy Spirit.

Now just dividing that up, unbelievers can blaspheme, and unbelievers can resist the Holy Spirit. Believers can quench the Holy Spirit, and grieve the Holy Spirit.

You say, “Well, what is the difference between quenching and grieving?” Quenching is what you do to the Spirit; grieving is how He responds to what you did. Grieving speaks of the personal anguish of the Holy Spirit when a believer quenches the holy fire that He has kindled in the heart. You do not quench the Holy Spirit without grieving the Holy Spirit, and you will not grieve the Holy Spirit unless you quench the Holy Spirit. There simply two sides of the same problem; one describes what you do, the other describes what He does. You quench, He grieves. He grieves because you quench. So as sheep wanting to be rightly related to the Great Shepherd, we must not quench the Holy Spirit.

Now, in order to understand this we need to talk for a minute or two about what is the Holy Spirit’s work, and how do we quench it? We have to get very practical about this, and I think we can do that. You remember when our Lord was coming near to His death and His crucifixion was imminent, He promised to send another helper, the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth, who was one exactly like Himself. His promise was that “the Holy Spirit is going to come after I ascend to the Father. I’ll send the Holy Spirit, and He will assume the role with you that I have had. He, the Holy Spirit, being another member of the trinity, God of very God, He will come and fulfill the role that I have filled in the lives of the disciples.” In effect, He is saying, “I have been your teacher; He will be your teacher in the future. I have been your friend; He will be your friend. I have been your guide; He will be your guide. I have been your resource; He will be your resource. I have been your helper; He will be your helper. I have been your comforter; He will be your comforter.”

In other words, “the Holy Spirit will step into the role that I have had. I have done it alongside of you; He will do it in you. I have been, as it were, the fire around you; He will be the fire in you.” And so the Lord Jesus promised, and sent, on the day of Pentecost, and consequently to every single believer that ever comes to Christ, the Holy Spirit to live within that believer. All Christians are indwelt by the Spirit of God. And He is there like a fire, not to be quenched, but to be fanned to full flame.

It is, I believe, common – not only in the life of believers, but on a wholesale scale in the church of Jesus Christ – to quench the fire of the Spirit. Let me speak in a general sense, first of all. As I have recently pointed out in my book on *Our Sufficiency in Christ*, I believe the Holy Spirit is being seriously, significantly quenched today, and therefore is deeply grieved by what is going on in the church.

First of all, I believe that the mysticism of the charismatic movement, while promising and purporting to exalt the Holy Spirit's work, really quenches His sanctifying purposes. And that's a very difficult thing to say, I know, and to hear, and perhaps even to believe, because if there would be anything we would assume to be true about the charismatic movement, it would be that they, above all others, exalt the Holy Spirit. They're always talking about the Holy Spirit. They're always talking about the gifts of the Spirit. They're always talking about the power of the Holy Spirit. They're heavy into that kind of Holy Spirit theology which they have highly developed, but the fact of the matter is no matter how much they talk about the Holy Spirit's work, they are in fact quenching the true sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit by misrepresenting it, and offering a counterfeit substitute for the real thing. It is a quenching of the Holy Spirit of severe proportions.

The charismatics have reduced the Holy Spirit to some sort of divine genie, who does only things that are seen, felt or heard. If they aren't seen, felt or heard, He didn't do them, and He does them on demand. And so, while the charismatic movement has an obsession with the Holy Spirit, it is at the same time a quenching of the true sanctifying work of the Spirit. And when you establish a false standard of sanctification, a false standard of spirituality, you quench the Spirit.

I also point out in the book that the current obsession with psychology also quenches the work of the Spirit, by again substituting a false operation for the real thing. They substitute human wisdom, human resources, human power packaged in human techniques, as the path to solving spiritual problems. They reject the only true power, the only genuine problem solver, the Holy Spirit, who alone can heal the sins of our lives, and make us holy. And we have to ask the question, do we need a therapist, or do we need the Holy Spirit? Much of the contemporary church, while affirming its belief in the Holy Spirit, would say we need a therapist.

In my book, I say, "Psychological sanctification has become a substitute for the Spirit-filled life. What point is there in seeking the Holy Spirit's comfort if, after all, deep-seated emotional problems can be addressed only by a trained psychologist, or if people can come to grips with their lives only by getting in touch with their childhood, or if the answers to our deepest hurts are buried deep within us? If those things are true, we don't need an advocate, we need a therapist." And this is precisely the route many in the church have chosen, and it is a quenching of the Holy Spirit.

I recently received a letter from a listener to the radio program, and I included this letter in the book, but I'll read it to you, just to remind you of the attitude that is out there. This woman has, of course, been influenced by the mass of Christian psychology and secular psychology that has come across her path and this is what she wrote. Think this through. She said, "I have never agreed with your view of psychologists, and how you lump them all together, Christian and secular. A recent awareness of past events has made this all the more disturbing. I wonder if you realize the harm you are doing as you turn people who have deep emotional problems away from seeking the help they need. If you came from an ideal family situation, you may well have difficulty understanding how deeply the spirits

of some people have been wounded, and how it has warped the very fiber of their being. Oftentimes, the incidents have been sublimated by the youngster, only to surface as an adolescent or adult. Recommending only Bible study and prayer can be like putting on a Band-Aid when you need surgery. Just becoming a Christian doesn't solve the dilemma either – I used to think it does – because the troubled person may just consider their past life experiences fairly normal, having sublimated the deep hurt of their spirit. Then, because these matters have never been dealt with, they carry them on into their marriages, and then begins another cycle."

Now, let me stop here and say this: the thesis of this lady is that Bible study, prayer, the ministry of the Spirit, is a Band-Aid; psychology is deep surgery. You see what this is saying? What in effect it is saying is the reverse of the truth – the absolute reverse of the truth. Psychology is the Band-Aid, and the Word, prayer, and the power of the Spirit is the deep surgery. But that is the mindset that is rampant in the church.

Further, the letter says, "The simplistic answer is that it's due to sin." Is that simplistic or is that true? She says, "Ask God to forgive you, forgive others, read your Bible and pray, ask God to help you do better; but you also have to address what the sin has done, and if the person is not aware of the problem that has become so deeply buried in their sub-conscience, how are they going to go about correcting it? A man with a broken leg isn't helped by rubbing ointment on the hurting area. Until you discover the underlying cause of the pain you can't bring about healing."

Again, the thesis appears. The Bible, prayer, the ministry of the Holy Spirit, rubs ointment on the problem, it does not correct it. To correct it, you must go deeper than what spiritual resources can take you. That's an amazing thing. Furthermore, it reflects nothing more than evolutionary, atheistic Freudianism, which says that people are the way they are because they have sublimated a whole bunch of junk into their id. It's all hidden under the surface, and somehow it's got to be regurgitated up, and they'll be healed, which, of course, is foreign to biblical data, and has no correlation whatsoever with the work of the Spirit.

The lady goes on, "The Christian psychologist has been trained, and is better able to get at the root of these serious problems. A friend or good listener isn't of much help because the matter is too deep, and a minister has an entire congregation to minister to; how in the world could he justify the time it would take to deal with just a few in his congregation? Life is becoming more complex, relationships more fragile because of it, and you don't think Christians should seek professional counseling – question, question, question, question.

"I wonder how many other needy people have been persuaded not to seek professional help they desperately need. I shudder to think of the responsibility that is yours as your voice travels the airways, discouraging people from getting the help they need. I sincerely hope that we have misunderstood the real meaning of what you meant. To make my point very clear, I do not agree with

you that Christians should not seek professional psychological counseling. If the need is there, they should avail themselves of the help." And she said some other things in the letter which do not bear repeating.

But the point that I make to you is this is a common perspective, that the Bible deals with things superficially, and until you can peel back the layers, psychologically and therapeutically, to see what's hidden underneath, you're not going to get to the deep healing that someone needs. And I would simply say to a woman like this, or to the rest of the people who would follow in this pattern, is she seeking answers from the right source? Is she really in tune with the real answer? Is there actually someone better equipped than the Holy Spirit? Are we saying that, had God known what we now know now, rather than plant the Holy Spirit in us to lead us to the path of perfection, He would have given us our own personal psychiatrist? Did God somehow suffer greatly because He happened to be on earth incarnate prior to Freud?

So many people have bought into this, and it's not new; it goes all the way back to Galatians chapter 3. In Galatians chapter 3 and verse 3, he says, "Are you so foolish, having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?" Have you found some human agency technique, methodology, therapy, or whatever, that is going to do the real deep stuff, because the Spirit can't do it? I mean, is this ridiculous? "You began in the Spirit; do you think you'll be perfected by the flesh?" What does he mean by that? Think about it. Do you believe that the Holy Spirit can do the saving work, the transforming work, the justifying work? The Holy Spirit came into your life, and in the power of the gospel translated you from death to life, from darkness to light, from heaven to hell, from sin to holiness, from Satan's child to God's child. The Holy Spirit did all of that, but He can't do the sanctifying work?

You believe that the Holy Spirit was powerful enough to convict you of your sin, including making you weary of your self-effort to please God on your own? That the Holy Spirit was powerful enough to make you repent from a sense of shame about your sin, and a fear of the wrath of God, to turn from your sin and follow Christ? You mean that the Spirit was powerful enough to energize the gospel so that it could come to you as truth in your spiritual deadness, and that the Spirit of God was powerful enough to regenerate you, create you all new, plant the very seed of the life of God within you, and He did all of that, but He now can't handle your problems? It seems to me the hard work is done. And when you were saved, at the moment of your conversion, the Spirit of God effected a complete reversal and renewal of your heart. There was a radical transformation, miraculous and supernatural. It set you apart from sin to God. It placed you into the body of Christ. The Holy Spirit took up permanent residence within you. He gifted you for spiritual service. He secured you and sealed you unto eternal glory. He poured out the love of God in your hearts, making you into true worshipers of God and lovers of men. He did all of that at the time of your salvation.

And Paul says to the Galatians, and anybody else who comes along with this same kind of folly, “Are you telling me that He did all of that, and now you can’t trust Him for the rest? And you’ve turned to some human resource, and you now think that for the problems of life the Holy Spirit is a Band-Aid, and psychology is deep surgery?” That’s absolute folly – folly. Look at what the work of the Spirit is. Let’s consider it. Now, we talked about the fact that in the Christian culture in which we live today there’s a quenching of the Spirit, through psychology, through the mysticism of the charismatic movement. And I added in the book another section on pragmatism. There are people who are quenching the Holy Spirit by replacing powerful preaching with manipulation; powerful teaching, powerful exposition of Scripture with entertainment; who think that the church grows not by the power of the Spirit, but by the cleverness of creative entrepreneurial activity.

Now, what about the personal life? Let’s get away from that big picture down to you and me. What does the Holy Spirit want to do in me that I can quench? Very simply stated, He wants to move you along a path to ever-increasing holiness. Do you understand that? He wants to move you along a path to ever-increasing holiness. What does holy mean? Separate. He wants to separate you further and further from sin, and the further you get away from sin, the closer you get to God. It’s just a process of separation. He wants to produce in you the decreasing frequency of sin, the decreasing frequency of sin, the decreasing power of temptation, the decreasing preoccupation with the world, the decreasing victimization to the flesh, and increase your longings for God. That’s the progress of sanctification. That’s a movement toward holiness. That is His work.

And the goal of that, of course, the perfect goal of that is Jesus Christ. “I press toward the mark,” right, for the prize, and it’s Christ Jesus. I want to be like Christ. David, the psalmist, said, “I’ll be pleased, I’ll be happy, I’ll be satisfied when I awake in Your likeness.” That’s my goal. Paul said, “I have pain until Christ is fully formed in you,” Galatians 4:19. And Colossians says, “We work preaching, teaching, warning every man, that we may present every man perfect in Christ.” We want them like Christ. We want you to be Christlike. We want you to come to the fullness of the stature of Christ, Ephesians 4:13. So the Holy Spirit wants to move you from where you are to being like Christ, along a path of ever increasing holiness – that’s sanctification. It’s just a separation process, further and further separation. That’s what He wants to do. Holiness was like a seed planted at the time of your salvation that grows. And as it grows, it bears more, and more, and more, and more fruit, and that’s the working of the Holy Spirit.

John Owen, the great Puritan writer, had some rich insight. He said this: “Sanctification is an immediate work of the Spirit of God on the souls of believers, purifying and cleansing of their natures from the pollution and uncleanness of sin, renewing in them the image of God, and thereby enabling them, from a spiritual and habitual principle of grace, to yield obedience unto God according unto the tenor and terms of the New Covenant, by virtue of the life and death of Jesus Christ.”

It's a work of the Spirit on your soul, purging, purifying, cleansing from the pollution of sin, as you move more and more toward the image of God. Or more briefly, he said it this way: it is the universal renovation of our natures by the Holy Spirit into the image of Jesus Christ.

Now, that's what the Spirit desires to do. Psychology can't do that. Human wisdom can't do that. Nothing can do that but the Holy Spirit. The only agency that can do it is the Holy Spirit. You can quench the Spirit in the progress of that sanctification by substituting ecstatic experiences, emotions, feelings, methodology, therapeutic methodology, gimmickry, formulas, whatever – pragmatism, mystical, intuitive, self- authenticating experience, psychology, emotions, feelings. All of that will never do what the Spirit is to do, and alone can do. Now, in this holy progress, there's a handful of things the Spirit is doing in you, and you need to know. They're the components of this process. They make up this process.

Number one, He illuminates the Word – He illuminates the Word. First Peter 2:2 says, "As babes, desire the pure milk of the Word that you might grow thereby." You grow through the Word. Now, if you're going to move along this path of sanctification, separated more from sin and unto God, that growing process, that moving ahead process is generated by the Word; you take in the truth. "A man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God." You feed on the Word, and as you do you grow. Now, the Spirit is the agent of the Word. The Spirit, you remember, is the author of the Word. Second Peter 1:20 and 21 says, "Holy men of God wrote as they were moved by the Holy Spirit." The Spirit is the author of Scripture. And so He wrote the Scripture. Not only that, 1 John 2:20 and 27 says that dwelling in us, He is an unction, He is an anointing, so that we don't need human teachers.

In other words, the Spirit not only wrote the Word, but He dwells in us as the illuminator of the Word, as the interpreter of the Word. That's so essential. He opens it to us. That's why in John 14:26, John 16:13, Jesus said, "I'm going to send you the Spirit; He's the Spirit of truth. He'll lead you into truth. He'll show you the truth. He'll bear witness to you of the things that come from the Father concerning Me." Go back to 1 Corinthians for a moment, and I just show you verse 9 of chapter 2, and a couple other verses. First Corinthians 2:9, a very important statement is made here. "Just as it is written," says verse 9, and he's quoting out of Isaiah 64 and 65, "things which eye has not seen, and ear has not heard, and which have not entered the heart of man, all that God has prepared for those who love Him." Stop at that point.

For those who love God and know God, God has prepared some marvelous things. They're all related to that process of sanctification – blessing and glory. God has prepared these things. But would you please notice there are two ways in which they cannot be known? You can't see them or hear them. That's the first way. So we conclude, then, that great spiritual reality, great spiritual truth is not known empirically. Empiricism is simply the methodology of observation, objective observation. You can't find them in your world. You can't see them, you can't hear them. These great spiritual

realities are not discoverable to the human mind by any scientific method. No objective, calculated, scientific, sensible method can yield these things. Do you hear that? They are not available to human intellect through human scientific process; they are not empirically discovered.

Secondly, they haven't entered your heart, either. They are not, therefore, available objectively, and they are not available subjectively. You cannot know them empirically, and you cannot know them intuitively. You do not come to the truth of God by having a feeling. You do not come to the truth of God by having an emotion. You do not say, as so many people say, "Well, I just know what I believe." That has no correlation with truth, necessarily. You cannot know the truth of God – which makes you grow, which is the very food of your life, which sanctifies you, which moves you in that separation process closer to holiness, more like Christ – you cannot know it through external observation, and you cannot know it through internal intuition. It's not available. The only way you can know it, verse 10, "For to us God revealed it through" – whom? – "the Spirit." The Spirit of God not only wrote the Scripture, He illuminates the Scripture, and He quickens it to us. There is no legitimate experience, spiritual experience, no legitimate Christian spiritual experience that is not an emotional response, at one end of the scale or the other, to truth revealed in the Word, and quickened to the heart by the Spirit.

For example, if you are in a time of unusual, abnormal, what I would call transcendent joy, you're overwhelmed with joy, you're exhilarated, you're singing psalms and hymns, and perhaps shedding tears of joy; you are overwhelmed with the sense of well-being. Your emotions have reached the peak, as it were, in rejoicing that you're saved. The reason is not because some intuitive thing flowed up from within you, but because you know the truth that relates to your responses, and the Spirit of God has quickened those truths to your mind, and that has exhilarated your emotions. That does not happen in a vacuum. And the kind of emotional experiences that are nothing more than emotions in a vacuum are not truly Christian spiritual experiences.

On the other hand, looking at the other end of the scale, if you have times of deep sadness, and sorrow, and crying, and tears, it is because you know there's something in your life that is not right, and the Spirit has quickened that to you, and your emotions have run to their limits trying to deal with the quickening of the Spirit of God along those lines of conviction. And so, the Spirit of God wrote the Word. The Spirit of God, as the unction, interprets the Word as we faithfully study it, and the Spirit of God quickens the Word, which produces in us everything from deep anguish over sin to transcendent joy and praise, because of the exhilaration of truth. This is His work, and this is how He moves us along. And it's the Word at the heart of it all.

In Psalm 19, it says that the Word transforms the whole person. The Word makes the simple person wise. The Word rejoices the heart. The Word enlightens the eyes. The Word endures forever. The Word produces comprehensive righteousness. It does it all. It is given that it might teach us, instruct us, correct us, train us that we might be thoroughly furnished unto all good works. The Spirit then

moves into the Word as the author, moves into the Word as the interpreter, moves through the Word as the applier, and quickens our heart. That's what He's doing to move us away from sin toward holiness by quickening the Word to us. That's His work.

But you can quench it. How? Fail to study the Word to show yourself approved unto God. Mishandle the Scripture, don't rightly divide it. Don't receive it with humility, as James 1:21 says. You can quench the Spirit by not applying it in your life, so that you become a hearer and not a doer. You can quench it by not hiding it in your heart, by not searching it diligently, by not desiring it; and you can quench it by not letting it dwell in you richly, as Paul said in Colossians 3.

There's a second thing the Holy Spirit does. In moving us along this path of separation to holiness, He brings us into intimacy with God. This is an essential component in our spiritual growth. We need time with God. Now, I need, if I'm going to move closer and closer to God, if the relationship is to be sweeter, and sweeter, and richer, and richer, and richer, and fuller, and fuller, then I have to spend time with God. And so it's the Spirit's work to draw me that way, to pull me that way. It is the Holy Spirit, Romans 8 says, who leads us to cry, "Abba, Father." It is the Holy Spirit who leads us to the conviction that we are the children of God. Paul says again in Galatians 4:6, "It is the Holy Spirit who makes us cry, 'Abba Father.'" That means papa or daddy; that's a term of endearment, a term of affinity, a term of intimacy. The Spirit wants that. The Spirit wants us to draw into prayer, into communion, into fellowship with God, to run there as loving children with a loving Father.

In fact, the two texts that teach us about Abba, Father are interesting. In the text of Romans, the Spirit wants to draw us to intimacy with God for the sake of assurance, that we might be secure in our salvation; that we might enjoy the wonderful, exhilarating confidence that we are the children of God, and He loves us so much. The text of Galatians doesn't emphasize assurance. In Galatians, the Spirit wants to draw us into intimacy with the Father not for the sake of assurance, but for the sake of resources. We need to go in there, not just so that we can enjoy His company, but so that we can tap into what we need. We cry, "Abba, Father," on the one hand, because we just want to celebrate the relationship. We cry, "Abba, Father," on the other hand, because we so desperately have needs. That's not unlike your children. Sometimes they come to you for no other reason than just to enjoy your affection. And there will be those times when they come to you to ask you for what they desperately need; and we cry, "Abba, Father," in either case.

And what is it the Spirit wants to do? It is the Spirit who, moving in our hearts, Paul says, makes us cry, "Abba, Father." It is the Spirit who gives us that affinity for communion and intimacy with God, who takes God from being a distant God, as He would be in the religions of the world, and making Him a God of love, and compassion, and care, understanding, a God who wants to enfold us in His love. Intimacy with God is an essential part of our growth. How can we ever become a spiritual father? Three levels of spiritual growth: spiritual babies, spiritual young men, spiritual fathers. Spiritual babies know the basics. Spiritual young men know doctrine; 1 John 2:12 and 13 explains this. And

spiritual fathers know Him who is from the beginning. I can't have a deep knowledge of the eternal God unless I've spent time with Him, right? So in this process of spiritual growth and sanctification, as I move toward holiness, I have an ever-increasing knowledge of God. Paul cried out for that, that I may know Him. That's the longing of my heart. I want to know Him better, know Him better, know Him more. And the Spirit moves us that way. He desires, He works, He leads us into ever-richer, intimate fellowship with God. That's why He allows difficulty in our life – because it's difficulty that drives us into that communion, isn't it? It's so essential.

You can quench it by not accepting the difficulties of life, being bitter and angry, by not being prayerful, and not enjoying the communion of God. You can quench that work of the Spirit by not being worshipful, by not being willing to cast your care upon Him. You can quench that work of the Spirit by operating on your fleshly power, by sticking with your human resources, and saying, "I'm not going to go to God for anything, I've got all I need, I can handle myself." You quench it by feeling inadequate, by not trusting God's love, and saying, "If I go, He doesn't love me." Or not trusting His supply, "He doesn't have what I need." Any of those and more would cause you to quench that work of the Spirit.

There's a third thing He does; in moving us toward Christlikeness, He glorifies Christ to us – He glorifies Christ to us. You say, "Why does He do that?" Because the goal of our holiness is to be like Christ, right? As I said, in Galatians 4:19, Paul says, "I have pain until Christ is fully formed in you." To be like Christ is the issue. When we awake in His likeness, when we see Him as He is, we'll be like Him as He is. That's the goal. That's the prize, that's the mark of Philippians 3 that Paul moved toward. And if I'm going to be like Christ, I've got to know what Christ is like. If we say we walk in Him, 1 John 2:6, then we ought to walk as He walked. If we say we abide in Him, we belong to Him, we're His, then we ought to walk the way He walked. If we're going to do that, we have to see how He walked.

So what does the Spirit do? He shows us Christ. He makes Christ glorious to us. In John 15:26, and in John 16:14 and 15, Jesus said, "When the Spirit comes, He will bear witness of Me. He will show the things of Me to you. That's what He'll do. He'll show you Me. He'll reveal Me to you." Jesus said, "I have come to reveal the Father." Jesus said, "The Spirit's come to reveal Me. He'll show Me to you." He always leads people to ascribe glory to Jesus Christ. "No man" – 1 Corinthians 12:3 – "ever curses Jesus by the Holy Spirit, but no man ever calls Jesus Lord except by the Holy Spirit." He is always ascribing Lordship to Christ. He is always giving glory to Christ. And so He wants us to gaze on the glory of Christ. He wants us to see the one who is the goal of our spiritual progress.

Look at 2 Corinthians 3:18 – absolutely magnificent verse – often overlooked, and so I write it under my name some times when I sign someone's book. Second Corinthians 3:18 says, "We all" – that is believers, Christians – "have an unveiled face." He's been talking about Moses, and when Moses got the glory of God on his face. You remember he went up in the mountain, he saw the glory of God, got

all over his face, and he veiled it? He says, “We don’t have any veil. We don’t have anything that gets between us and the glory. We don’t have anything hindering.” The veil is off in Christ, and we are looking as in a mirror and seeing the glory of the Lord. That’s a great statement. What is the mirror that reflects the glory of the Lord? It’s this – this is where we see it. So as you study the Word of God, the reflection of the glory of Jesus Christ comes blazing off of it. I don’t care whether you’re talking about the Old Testament or the New Testament, Christ is the theme everywhere. And as you gaze into the Word of God, with the blinders off, with the veil off, because you’re in Christ, and you look in this glass, which reflects the glory of the Lord into your face, as you do that – look at this – you are being transformed into the same image.

You see, as we study the Word of God, and the glory of the Lord, our Lord Jesus Christ is exposed to us; comes flaming, as it were, off the mirror of the Word, almost blinding us at times. Like Moses, who went in the rock and got the glory all over Him, as we gaze into the glory of Christ revealed in the Word, we are transformed by that glory. Then he says, “From one level of glory to the next level of glory.” From glory, to glory, to glory, to glory, to glory; who’s doing this? End of the verse, “The Lord, the Spirit.” It’s the Spirit’s work. It’s His work. Would we want to quench that? We want to retard that?

The Spirit is transfiguring us. The word “transformed” is actually the same word translated in Matthew 17 “transfigured,” and it describes Jesus when He was on the Mount, you’ll remember, and He was transfigured before them. That was quite remarkable. The glory of the Lord had appeared on the face of Moses, that’s the outside. But Jesus showed His glory that was on the inside. And what Paul is saying here is quite remarkable; he is saying, “You, as believers, are more like Jesus than you are like Moses, because the glory is not on the outside, but the glory is on the inside.” You’re being literally transformed on the inside, transfigured on the inside into the same kind of glory that Jesus displayed, by the work of the Holy Spirit.

So in this process of the Spirit moving you in the path of sanctification, He wants to illuminate the Word, which makes you grow. He wants to draw you into intimacy with the Father, which pulls you along the path of intimacy, which makes you grow. And then He wants to reveal Christ to you in such blazing glory that you see clearly the image of where you’re going, and as you focus on that image and are lost in wonder, love, and praise, you will find the Spirit of God moving you inexorably along the path to Christlikeness. What a thought.

You can retard that, too. You can quench that, too. Just don’t bother to study the Word. Just don’t see the beauty of Christ. Just use the Bible as a means to solve all your problems, and don’t let it just reveal Christ to you. Don’t be humble, and admit that you’re so far short of the glory of Christ, that you desperately need to see His glory, and to be moving to a new level of glory. Spiritual pride will hold you back, lack of humility will hold you back – all those things will quench, retard, hinder the work of the Spirit, and grieve His heart.

Fourthly, in the process of this movement in your life, He wants to guide you into God's will. He wants to move you into God's will. What do you mean by that? Two-fold – first of all, it means obedience to the will of God revealed – obedience to the will of God revealed – that which is in the Scripture. He wants to move you to be obedient. He wants to prompt your heart, prompt your conscience, convict your mind, stir you. In Jeremiah 10:23, it says, "I know, O Lord, that a man's way is not in himself, nor is it in a man who walks to direct his steps" – Jeremiah says, "One thing I sure know, I can't run my own life." And he was exactly right. He was saying, "I can't direct my own life, I can't direct my own steps." And then he cried out to the Lord, and he said, "Lord, You've got to do it. You've got to guide me in the path of Your will. I cannot do that on my own."

Ezekiel 36:27 talks about the first dimension of that, the promise of God in the new covenant, "I'll put My Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances." There's the answer. "I'm going to give you My Spirit in the new covenant through Christ; I'm going to give you My Spirit and He will lead you to obey Me." That's what He said. He'll lead you in obedience. He'll prompt you to obey what the Word says.

Psalm 143:10 – this is fascinating. "Teach me to do Thy will, for Thou art my God." Then this: "Let Thy good Spirit lead me on level ground." On the one hand, then, the Spirit teaches us to obey the Word. On the other hand, the Spirit leads us on level ground. You say, "What does that mean?" That's the subjective work of the Spirit; that's not necessarily related to the Scripture. The Spirit leads us, prompts us, impels us, compels us, convicts us to obey what we know out of the Scripture. But the Spirit also goes beyond that, and leads us through the circumstances of life in areas that are not revealed in Scripture. The Bible doesn't tell me where to minister. The Bible doesn't tell me where to preach, doesn't tell me what to say when I preach in a certain place. There are many things in my life that the Spirit has to lead me into. He provides a level path for me. So there is the objective leading of the Spirit, as He prompts us to obey the Word, and there is the subjective leading of the Spirit, as He, through circumstances, and providence, and as He speaking to us in our hearts, challenges us, and moves us along a path of circumstance, opportunity, responsibility. That is beautifully stated. And I love the words of this particular statement in Isaiah 30 – let me read you two verses, 20 and 21. "Although the Lord has given you bread of privation and water of oppression" – in other words, though you've had it tough – "He, your teacher, will no longer hide himself, but your eyes will behold your teacher." Then this: "Your ears will hear a word behind you, 'This is the way, walk in it,' whenever you turn to the right or the left." That's a subjective leading of the Spirit. You're going to have a voice saying, "Do this, don't do that." Not an audible voice, but a strong compelling. As you're in the Word and faithful in prayer, the Spirit of God is whispering to your conscience, whispering to your mind, "Do this, don't do that, do this, go this way, this is what I want." And He does it through your desires, your spiritual desires, your pure desires. He enlightens your mind, He stirs your heart. "Commit your way unto the Lord and He shall" – what – "direct your path." He'll move you around the obstacles, and over the hurdles, and make it a level ground.

The process of sanctification, then, involves progress, and it means I have to do God's will. That is, first of all, the Spirit prompts me to obey the Word of God, by convicting, and sometimes chastening me if I don't. And then the Spirit of God orders the providences of my life, the events, and circumstances, and whispers in my conscience, through my desire, and sends me in the direction He wants me to go. All of that is moving me in the process of sanctification.

You can quench that, too. Selfishness – I want to do what I want to do, and I want to do it the way I want to do it. I don't want to obey that command. I'm not interested in doing that ministry. Self-will, stubbornness, pride, or apathy, indifference, and insensitivity to His leading, I don't even check in with Him. I really am not interested in it. Those things will quench the Spirit.

Lastly, He strengthens us inwardly. All of this progress requires inward strength. As we just noted, it's not in a way of a man to order his own steps; I don't have the strength. As Zechariah says, "'Not by might or by power but by my Spirit,' says the Lord" – I can't do it on my own. And that is why Paul, in Ephesians 3, prayed this: "I pray that you might be strengthened in the inner man by the Spirit," Ephesians 3:16. The only way you're going to do God's will, the only way you're going to experience God's love, the only way you're going to see beyond what you can ask or think, the only way you're going to be glorifying to Christ in the church, is when your power is coming from the Holy Spirit. That's why, 2 Corinthians 12, Paul says, "When I am weak in my human strength, I become powerful, because when I've run out of human resources, I cast myself on God." Strength comes from the Spirit. And so He's infusing us with strength as we are in the Word, as we are praying, as we are obeying. Even when we go through trials, we cast ourselves totally on Him, because He's all there is that is left – the strength is there.

You couldn't witness without His strength. Jesus said, "You will receive power after the Holy Spirit comes upon you, then you'll be a witness." You couldn't have victory over sin without His strength, because you can't do it in the flesh. The flesh cannot overcome the flesh, only the Spirit can overcome it. You could never have victory over Satan, for the weapons of our warfare in that battle are not fleshly, but mighty spiritual weapons given by the Spirit. You could not have security, for salvation is only vouchsafed to you through the sealing of the Spirit. You could not serve effectively apart from the power of the Spirit. You cannot praise God in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, and sing and make melody in your heart to the Lord, unless you're filled with the Spirit. And you cannot have right relationships in a marriage, in a family, or anywhere else unless you are so filled with the Spirit. It's the Spirit's power that enables us to do everything.

You can quench that, too, by being proud, not being humble, not recognizing your weakness, not recognizing your need, not recognizing your dependence. You can quench this work of the Spirit by being confident in your own flesh, your own ability. Any kind of sin retards this whole thing. Now, why should you deal with sin in your life? Because the alternative is quenching the Spirit of God, retarding

your spiritual process of sanctification, and grieving the heart of the Spirit, bringing down chastening and the forfeiture of blessing in your own life.

The Spirit is doing a great work. Illuminating the Word; bringing you into intimacy with God; showing you the glory of Jesus Christ, the goal of your life; guiding you into God's will; strengthening you for spiritual ministry, and service, and battle. He does all that. He is a powerful Spirit. I guess the sum of His ministry is no more beautifully stated than it is in Isaiah 11. Just listen to this – Isaiah 11:2, the prophet describes the Holy Spirit this way. He says, "He is the Spirit of the Lord, He is the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and strength, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord." This Holy Spirit will bring you wisdom, understanding, counsel, strength, knowledge and cause you to fear and worship God. It is the Holy Spirit who does everything you need done. What more do you need than wisdom, understanding, counsel, strength, knowledge, and the fear of the Lord? You don't need any more than that; that's His work. That's what He wants to do in your life.

But you will stifle it if you are not filled with the Spirit, Ephesians 5:18, if you are not walking in the Spirit, Galatians 5:25, they just describe the same thing. Being filled with the Spirit means He fills me up, controlling everything. Walking in the Spirit simply means I've put my feet in the path that He sets. And when you walk in the Spirit, the Spirit will do His sanctifying work.

We don't want to quench the Spirit in the church today, but we're doing it on a large scale. We don't want to quench the Spirit in our own individual lives, but we're doing it if we do not allow the Spirit of God to accomplish these five things as He moves us toward Christlikeness. May God help us to be faithful not to quench or grieve the Holy Spirit; let's pray.

We know, Father, that the only way to override the residual sinfulness in us, our evil desires and temptations, is to walk in and be filled by the Spirit. We know that not to be filled with the Spirit is to fall back into the deeds of the flesh, immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like that. We know that we don't even have to consciously choose to do those things; if we are not living in the control of God's Spirit, they'll just happen. And the sole defense against the negative power of temptation, sin, and Satan, is the positive power of Your Spirit. Lord, help us not to quench the Spirit, but to give Him full power to operate in our lives, to move in the way that He alone can move, to accomplish our sanctification, and make us like Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen.

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