

5/16/21 - 1 Thes. 5:19 - “Quenching and Fanning”

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Preacher: Brenton Beck

[0 : 0 0] We're going to be continuing in 1 Thessalonians, and the sermon title today is Quenching and Fanning. I thought that was so interesting as Youngstown Fire Department came with our wonderful bonfire, getting rid of some trash and wood. So we are going to continue naturally through our series in 1 Thessalonians, and we've arrived at a very interesting section of passage today.

And I'm going to read leading up to this section and possibly a little bit past it, so you can see how this central marker in the passage in verse 19 actually offers a hinge.

So if you could join with me as we read, starting in verse 12. I do have it up on the computer to put on the screen, starting at verse 12, and I'm going to read to verse 19. God's Word says, We ask you, brothers, to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves.

And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle. Encourage the faint-hearted. Help the weak. Be patient with them all. See that no one repays anyone evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to everyone. Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing. Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the spirits.

Next week, we will be continuing in verse 20 that says, Do not despise prophecies, but test everything. Hold fast what is good. This is the Word of the Lord.

[2 : 1 2] It is so interesting that we arrive at a point, and I have spent significant amount of time reflecting, reading, consulting outside sources, and saying, how is this fitting with the whole? We've just come out of a series of commands and exhortations to this church in Thessalonica, and we get to a point where it says in verse 19, Do not quench the spirit. Many commentators have various disagreements, but nothing being an essential disagreement of if this passage in verse 19 is the actual heading of a new section or the tail end of the previous section. And if I found it significantly interesting, and for that reason, we're going to stop right on that hinge today, and we're going to look at exactly what this means. And so today, we will look upon this unique relationship that we have with the Holy Spirit and how that is connected with fulfilling the exhortations, but also on the other end of testing and discernment. And it's quite often, it's quite frequent among discussions concerning the Holy Spirit, and specifically our relationship with such a being, that we become tense at times with such a discussion. Often the mystery and the mysteries and the mishandling determining how the Holy Spirit works in the life of a believer, it's created confusion of what is true and what is false. I know many of our stories that we have here in this church, we have a lot of people who have experienced theological abuse. And when you get to verses like this, it's almost like a trigger of PTSD.

And that is very unfortunate, but I am not ignorant to that fact. This text is no stranger to those who may have been involved in unfortunate circumstances of theological abuse in the past. As unhinged, charismatic sphere of thought weaponizes verses like these in order to condemn rather than to bring clarity as we test various manifestations of what folks claim as the Holy Spirit's working.

And now being on that side of the pendulum as we experience abuses, obviously sometimes we can go to the far other side and resist everything. Being on that side of the pendulum, that's usually where the life and the power of the Holy Spirit may be cognitively acknowledged. Yes, it is an instance. The Bible teaches it, and we have agreement, psychological agreement in our heads. However, but experientially, our relationship with the Holy Spirit is extremely dry when we get on that side of the pendulum. It's as if we might have a tendency of replacing the third Godhead, the Holy Spirit, with the Holy Scriptures as just a list of doctrines and things to believe of what's true and false. But our experience with the Holy Spirit becomes devoid of its life and vibrancy. And so I want to challenge us all today that it is possible to stay true to what has been placed within us while staying true and in line with the word that we have been given in our hands. And so, in fact, when we engage our mind and heart upon the mysterious and experiential power of the Holy Spirit in our lives, we will come to find that this is exactly how God intended His church to be.

What if God intended that His church exist powerfully in a spiritual sense? And it's not a contradiction to say that He wants His church to be existing in a strong doctrinal sense, that those actually don't contradict one another. And through the eyes of God, this is not at all a contradiction. That, in fact, to be people of the book is to be people of the Spirit. To be people of the Spirit is to be people of the book. Could we today find that happy medium as Youngstown Metro Church today? For the sake of time today, I've separated. We're already behind on time, but we will feed you lunch after the service as a little consideration. But for the sake of time, I've separated a long message that I was just like, we're going to be here well afternoon to cover the content within this passage if I continue after verse 19. So I've separated it so that we can hone in upon what theologians call pneumatology, which is the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. And this is to see clearly what Paul is communicating to the church in Thessalonica, but also the church today. And I hope today will serve for us all a time of conviction, personally, a time of correction, a time of encouragement, as we collectively align our lives with God's glorious intention in mind as revealed through His words. May we humble ourselves today, church.

May we shed a tear at our failings. May we repent of our wanderings and realign our hearts to God today. Let's pray as we begin our time. And in doing so, prepare the soil of our mind and our hearts for the seed of the truth of the Word as it yields fruit in due season. Let's pray.

[8 : 28] Father God, we are coming to you asking for help. As we look upon the scripture today, we pray that this challenges us, convicts us, that encourages us, because it is your inspired, it is your perfect inerrant Word today. And Father, when we come to the text today, we come to the living and the true God. We come to truth. We don't come to error. And so, Father, let us lean and let that truth be made known to us through the power of your Holy Spirit within this church. And may we be equipped to serve you and to glorify you in our lives. And we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.

The first point, we'll get to the point, but the first point is going to be around the personhood of the Holy Spirit. For anybody who's taken notes, that would be what we're going to get at in the first point, the personhood of the Holy Spirit. The text today says, do not quench the Spirit.

Some translations say, do not stifle the Spirit. This week, I have, I already mentioned, I've looked hard upon my own life. I've critically examined my own heart, and that I have concluded that if there is any fire of the Holy Spirit that is quenched, it is directly related to my misunderstanding of the inescapable reality of the personhood of the Holy Spirit. As if I can, my experiences, my abuses of the past and situations that have occurred that have made me swing on the far pendulum on the other end, I tend to ignore the personhood of the Holy Spirit, the actual personhood. And I want us all to grapple with that today. And I'm going to put myself on the chopping block. When I reduce the existence of the person of the Holy Spirit, I find it far easier to ignore his promptings. I find it far easier to ignore the challenges within my inner objection. I find it easier to live in restraining the Spirit's movement based on my own subjective experiences of good or bad things that have happened in the past.

And what we have here today is Paul telling this church, do not quench the Spirit. What we see today is quenching the Holy Spirit is directly related to marginalizing the present and ever-present reality that the Holy Spirit is a person and it's not a thing.

We live in a quite interesting culture today. I'd call it the pronoun world. Watch your pronouns. And God has revealed the Holy Spirit as a he, not an it. That is the pronoun of which God's Word refers to the Holy Spirit. And I have a couple of verses up on the screen. I've lost control.

[12 : 06] Technology is loading. So if you can help me out back there. We got some verses on the screen. Let's look at the pronouns God's Word uses for the Holy Spirit to establish the conviction of the Word. We see John 15 verse 26. It says, But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me. And it continues, And you also will bear witness because you have been with me from the beginning.

We see the pronoun usage in John 16 verse 13, where it says, When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth. For he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears, he will speak. And he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

All that the Father has is mine. Therefore, I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you. And so regardless of the pronoun world that we live in, there is no other way to understand and conclude the Holy Spirit is a he and it's not an it. So the Holy Spirit can be grieved, as Ephesians 4 30 says.

The Holy Spirit can be sinned against, as Isaiah 63 verse 10 says. The Holy Spirit can be lied to. We see that greatly in Acts 5 3 with Ananias and the little lie that laid under the rug. The Holy Spirit must be obeyed in Acts 10 19. And the Holy Spirit must be honored in Psalm 51 verse 11.

The personhood of the Holy Spirit is also affirmed by his many works. He was involved in creation. The second verse of the Bible. He was over the waters. He also empowers God's people. And I'm just going to rapid fire. He guides, he comforts, he convicts, he teaches, and he restrains. All of which requires the involvement of a person, not a force, not a thing, not an idea. So regardless of your subjective experiences in the past, God's word supersedes which. So John MacArthur says, in spite of the Lord's loving choice and sympathy, Israel continued turning their backs on him and spurned his loving kindness towards them. Here is an illustration. He's referring to Isaiah 63 of the Holy Spirit being sinned against.

[15 : 10] Here's an illustration of the reality that the Holy Spirit is a person since only a person can be grieved. Church, the Holy Spirit is a person as scripture defines and reveals. As such, he is to be revered as God and serves in perfect unity with the Father and the Son to lead us in our spiritual lives.

The person of the Holy Spirit is extremely personal to the believer. It's not the annoying yippee dog down the road that you could care less if it's around or if it's gone or if it's fed or if it runs away and never returns. That's not your relationship with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is a person ever close in proximity and ever present for intimacy. And now we live in a culture, you know, sometimes Christian music, it's just, I don't know if it's what they're singing about. Sometimes I don't think that they know what they're singing about. And there's a lot of poor music out there and references that seem to actually misrepresent what God has made known through his word. They contradict his word. Personally, the most annoying and nonsensical remarks made by Christians are people who act as if the Holy Spirit is not indeed ever present in our lives and that he's not always working. You know, you've heard in songs of come Holy Spirit as if you're reliving something, a progressive revelatory aspect in the Bible as if you want it to happen all over again. Well, what's the point in progressive revelation through the Bible as if this pouring is going to keep continuing out?

That's not saying that the Holy Spirit will not continue to fill us and things like that. But when you say, come Holy Spirit, you know, that does not represent God the best. And you are welcome here, Holy Spirit. We invite you to be here. And that's, it's some denominations, they actually say at the count of three, we're going to call the Holy Spirit in. And it's like, what are you reading your Bible? Right? The Holy Spirit is ever present. It just doesn't come and go. And for anybody who needs to know, the Holy Spirit is not a blue genie. These expressions are inconsistent with the word of God and therefore inconsistent with the character and the nature of God as well. And we're going to talk about that more next week. So the main point that I want us to grapple with and understand today and moving forward is that in our, in order to understand our quenching of the Spirit, we must first understand the personhood of the Holy Spirit. And this should change our perspectives in our lives. Because it definitely has convicted and, uh, and adjusted my own life this week. As I reflected in tears and, and, uh, my wife can attest, I was distraught this week grappling with this aspect. The Holy Spirit is always present. He never leaves us. And by that fact, we better, we, we understand better that a verse like this is strictly speaking of our reception or reluctance to align our lives with the service to the Holy Spirit or not.

And now I understand I'm, I'm getting a little bit spiritual today. So maybe you're on the side of, uh, sort of like, this is a touchy topic, you know, let's stick to, stick to the book. And so we will continue, um, but maybe in the fatalistic sense or maybe fundamentalist sense or leaning, uh, we might hold such a revered position that who God is, that this might challenge us to think that us little ants upon this earth and this little, little microscopic instance in the span of the universe, that we can somehow negatively affect an all sufficient, all sovereign, all powerful God.

You might be in that stance of saying, friend, come on, God is holy. He doesn't even need us. Well, that is true. But we get to verses like this, do not quench the spirits and a proper understanding of the personhood of, of the spirit of God really challenges our theology to say, yeah, there's something there and we can negatively affect an all sufficient, all holy, reverent God.

[20 : 02] And so let's look in the second, uh, point today as we'll get to grieving the all sufficient God with a question mark. I put grieving the all sufficient God. We'll add some emphasis on that.

Now, if you're just waking up this morning in the passage, good morning again, uh, simply restating if you're a Christian, the person of the Holy Spirit resides within you and its fire cannot be completely extinguished. We've established that. However, within the decree of God's hidden will, his sovereign will, he has instituted that his relationship with believers is to be one of very personal interaction. And we have this through the Holy Spirit. And at times this can seem paradoxical.

It can seem like, well, God's all sufficient, but apparently there's something missing because we can quench the Holy Spirit. I thought he can supersede everything and he does what he wants.

How does all this fit together? It is simply a paradox. Warren Wiersbe comments on a passage similar to this in second Timothy verse, verse six and chapter one.

It reads, for this reason, I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you. And Wiersbe says, 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 letter, do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you. Now he added, stir up, stir into flame the gift of God.

[21 : 54] And Wiersbe concludes, the Holy Spirit does not leave us when we fail, but he cannot fill us, empower us, and use us if we neglect our spiritual lives. It is possible to, quote, grieve the Holy Spirit and to, quote, quench the Spirit as we see in our passage today.

It is within the realm of our personal interaction or rejection that an all-sufficient God has allowed us to please him or grieve him. This is our relationship we have with a holy, all-sufficient God through the Holy Spirit. And think, the all-sufficient God, who exists completely holy, perfect, blameless, without blemish, has allowed our efforts or laziness to cause him grief or pleasure.

God is truly a relational God. And we are found into that relationship through the ongoing relationship we have with the person of the Holy Spirit. And now this isn't talking about the quenching the Holy Spirit as if we're losing our salvation either. One commentator said, 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. Church, our assurance in salvation are embers that never cool. They never die down in salvation. This is not what this passage is insinuating.

But a word like quench and stifle, as some different translations say, this should indicate to us a very gripping truth in our lives today. Because that which can be quenched can also be fanned. Think about that. If Paul is telling this church not to quench the Spirit, that's also doubly insinuating that what can be quenched can also be flamed. You understand what he's getting at. Or what can be stifled can actually be grown. Church, there is much human responsibility at play in light of how God has ordained and organized believers to interact with him. And by way of our response to his leading.

That's not putting us on the throne of God. This isn't making us little gods. This is essentially making us obedient believers as we're following his lead or not. Yes, the Holy Spirit is going to do what it's going to do, but it's allowing us to make a choice if we follow or not, simply saying.

[25 : 10] So how do we know if we're dampening the Spirit's fire in our lives? Trust me, anybody who was at the bonfire yesterday, you know I'm pretty good at dampening that fire and putting that out. Youngstown Police Department or Fire Department doesn't think so. But think about that for a moment.

Just quenching in our own lives a bonfire or fanning that flame. Are we hosing it down or are we fanning that flame? How do you know if you are dampening the Spirit's fire in our lives?

Well, I think context is key as it much often is. And I believe context speaks a lot in informing that. Looking back in the text around, we call this a literary context. So if you still have your Bibles open, you should, as we look before verse 19, as we read today, it said things like, we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle. Encourage the faint-hearted. Help the weak. Be patient with them all. See to it, no one pays evil for evil, but seek to do good for one another and to everyone.

Rejoice. Pray without ceasing. Give thanks in all circumstances. This is the will of God and Jesus for you. Do not quench the Spirit. Could it be that our inaction in all of those things is actually how we quench the Spirit? That if we want to actually evaluate our lives in line with God's Word and what God's truth says in our lives, if you're following the Holy Spirit or if you're dampening the Holy Spirit, could it be that he's given us quite a few checklists and remarks to check our lives? Spurgeon says, do not despise his operations, either in yourselves or in your brethren.

Do not quench him by neglect, much less by open opposition. Church, it is simply a paradox that a holy God has established in the reality of a believer's life and the unique personal relationship that we have that it is either fanned or dampened by our inaction or action. We have to understand that and that that is simply a paradox. And so as we kind of get into the closing aspects of our time today, I want us to understand something. I hope that today has been a time of personal reflection of who we actually believe the Holy Spirit is. You know, whatever happened in the other church or the other instances, they can be in the past. But what is happening now in your life as a believer is simply of the utmost importance because you're either grieving the Holy Spirit or you're pleasing the Holy Spirit. And a lot of that rests within our action or inaction. Truth is, we often need spiritual renewal in our lives from time to time, right? Look through that wedding album, we'll say.

[28 : 24] As I reflected on this passage, it reminded me of that of a marriage, that when we're thinking, we don't often think of the person of the Holy Spirit in that of somebody that's always present around us, that is uniquely bound to us, that doesn't leave and doesn't come and go as they please, as the Old Testament illustrates. But what the Holy Spirit is, is I believe is that relationship is united to us, similar to marriage. And think of that wedding day of when you come to your spouse, you meet your spouse and the sparks are flying, the fireworks are going off, you're all googly-eyed over, you know, what's going on and this person. And so it leads you up to an altar similar like this where you exchange vows of saying, I do. And how often our relationship with the Holy

Spirit's relationship with God as he's come into our lives is similar to that. But unfortunately, how many of us actually look at that as an ongoing project, an ongoing progressive nature in our lives called progressive sanctification, that we have the power to quench or to fan. And it's almost as if, like even in marriage, how marriage can turn into like this contractual agreement where there's no intimacy. On paper, according to the IRS, you know, you would be acknowledged as married. But if anybody were to evaluate your life, they're seeing, are you roommates or are you husband and wife?

There's a disconnect often sometimes that can happen in marriage. And wouldn't it be considered almost abusive if there's that overcommitted spouse that is there, that is listening, that is always there to speak to, that is there to encourage. And then that spouse who just, the other side who's just like, ah, you know, I'm only going to come to you when I need something or maybe when I'm in trouble.

How many of us have ever experienced maybe that temptation of treating the Holy Spirit as that? That if it was a personhood in our relationship with God, it's an abusive relationship because we're quenching the Holy Spirit in our lives. There would be no pleasure in that. There would be no intimacy in that. God has called a unique relationship. He's not calling for Christians to just be contractual believers. That the record has been wiped clean, your sins have been wiped white as snow.

And you are forgiven through the blood of Jesus Christ. Amen? But it's not only that. Just as a marriage is not equated to a document that you sign at a courthouse, it's a covenant that you make with one another. You have that with the person of the Holy Spirit. And when you begin to look at your life through that personhood of the Holy Spirit, you're going to see something.

[31 : 39] And if you're anything like me, you're going to see a lot of neglect. Of the person of the Holy Spirit. And for that reason, if you're looking to me for answers of how do you preach like that? Because I'm broken throughout the week as I'm grappling with the Word of God in my own life. Because the text has to change me before I can ever expect it to change other people. And so we are in this together in progress. And so we have to evaluate our lives according to the Word of God. Just as a marriage can be renewed in a sense of looking back over that wedding album, remembering the time you found your first love. Thinking back to the days when the Lord filled you with His presence and gave you the person of the Holy Spirit to reside with you, to guide you, to comfort you, to encourage you. Thinking back to that moment. Just as a marriage can fan in the flame of affection, so can our reflection back upon the intimacy that God desires in our lives. This will naturally create a longing for God if you're a Christian. So if you're a believer with us today, and a lot of agreement with the remarks today, if you are a believer, are you living under the Spirit's control? Romans 8, 5, it should be on the screen. It says, for those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh. But those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the

Spirit is life and peace. For the mind that, excuse me, for the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law. Indeed, it cannot. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. I will say it again. I will say it again, and we need to evaluate our lives just as I evaluated this week. Are we living under the Spirit's control? Am I living under the Spirit's control? The second challenge today is, are you experiencing that intimacy with Him? Romans 8, 15 says something like that.

You have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, Abba, Father. Over the last several weeks, we've been discussing Paul's encouragements to the Thessalonian church.

It's a very corporate instruction. It's a very corporate sense, as he's telling the group of believers of how they ought to obey commands according to the Word of God. Very corporate in nature for the collective church. In the last several weeks, we've been evaluating if there's anything missing in rejoicing and praying and things like that within our midst. It has a lot to do because we're thinking that we can flip a switch on on Sunday morning, that we can say our amens and we'll be good for the week. And then when we leave, we forget what the sermon was about. And sometimes that's my fault.

But we sometimes forget very easily of how God tries to align our Monday through our Saturday. And our corporate community will be quenched or flamed depending on our level of engagement or lack within our week. Could you imagine? I don't think there's any John Susie's or Bob's here today, but if there is, I'm not talking about you. But consider John, Susie, and Bob all being lumps of coal. Simply just lumps of coal. You know, they have their own responsibility of having some sort of flame. You know, that's why coal exists, you know, especially for barbecuing.

[36 : 02] You know, being on their own, you don't see that flame blazing as much, but the flame is still there. But when that coal gathers with a bunch of other coals, that's when things get hot. That's when things get flaming. That blazing fire is kindled. And it actually, any coals that are not lit yet will ignite other unlit coals. Could you imagine what the world would think if John, Susie, and Bob came together and they witnessed something blazing, something that is not of themselves, that is only through a gift of God that they have been diligent in keeping lit throughout the week through their own personal engagement, through prayer, through rejoicing, through praying without ceasing, through ceasing, without, with giving thanks, with not repaying evil for evil. What if their lives were marked down by that fire? So evidence of pleasing God in our lives, obviously it can be experienced through those commands that I just kind of listed. You see them starting in verse 12. It can also be that evidence of that flame, that evidence of that flame can also be seen through bearing spiritual fruits. Looking at your life, according to Galatians 5, 22, of having joy, having peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

That could be evidence of pleasing God throughout your week. Maybe your love for one another. Maybe showing concern for weaker believers rather than just passing them off as foolish. Or maybe having concern for striving for holiness and obedience. If you're a believer today and you're evaluating yourself and you're just like, man, I don't know, I just feel disconnected from God. Well, maybe you're a maybe something on paper says that, yeah, you have received the freedom from your sin. It's paid for by the cross, but it's left there at the altar. You've left the altar. You forgot your spouse.

This has challenged me this week. Maybe you seem to have that disconnect with that intimacy. Well, I got to tell you that there is hope. When you view your relationship with the Holy Spirit in terms of a person that you cannot escape, you cannot tell them to go, you cannot welcome them in. They're here. Whether you like it or not, if you're a Christian, they're there. They're within you.

And so it can change your entire perspective. It'll drive you to cooperation with the Spirit's leading. It'll drive you to longing for meditating upon God's Word. It'll drive you to pray for your spouse.

It'll drive you to spend time with God. And people will probably think you're nuts because you're going to be speaking in a plural sense. I don't know, God. You know, you'll be talking to God all throughout the day as the watching world is like, do they have an imaginary friend? Oh, in fact, that they do. It lives within them. They are not crazy. Let me tell you about the gospel, right? It'll also lead you and drive you to endure tests and trials that the Holy Spirit that resides within the believer can be stripped of this body and bones and flesh. And still the Spirit would be intact because at that point it would be united with the Father in heaven. Maybe you're not a believer though today. Maybe this is something that, boy, you've been taught that the Holy Spirit's this force and this thing that you got to work into a frenzy and get into this realm of spiritualized sense and sensation and imagery and all these things. Maybe you are disconnected with the Holy Spirit completely.

[40 : 10] And something within you at this very moment and something that was mentioned within the Word of God is calling you to have faith. And to believe in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins in which the Holy Spirit is calling to reside within you this very morning. Well, your wedding album starts today. This is the time. And God is already doing a work within you. He will bring it to completion.

If that is you today, we'll pray in a little bit. And if you respond with God's call today through your faith and you give your life to Him today, today's the day where your sin is exchanged for pardon. Your rebellion is exchanged by your submission. Your hardness of heart will be exchanged with a soft heart.

Your blindness will be exchanged for sight. Place your faith in Jesus Christ today. It's not always about the amount of faith that you have in Jesus, but the object of that faith that you have. Allow the amount of that faith and the increase of that faith be up to God through the leading of the Holy Spirit in your own life. He will help you grow in relationship with Him through the power and leading of the Spirit in your life as you learn God's Word and God's truth. And I pray that Youngstown Metro Church is blazing for God. I pray that we, being simple lumps of coal, will be united into a fire that makes a significant impact upon this city that so dearly needs Jesus Christ. As we recognize much of that, much of that end rests in our very hands, Monday through Saturday, of quenching or fanning the Spirit of God. Let's pray as we reflect upon that truth.