

5. Open-minded Humility versus Quenching the Spirit

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I. Open-minded Humility

II. Quenching the Spirit

A. General Connections (Rom 8.12-13; 6.11-13; 12-16; 12.1-2)

B. 1 Thessalonians 5.19

1. Sovereignty of the Spirit

Quenching the Spirit is a reality that must be understood in its own right *while doing full justice to the sovereignty the Spirit.*

2. Explanation of “to quench”

The essential idea is to suppress or stifle (as in curbing the intensity of a desire, satisfying thirst, or smothering a smoldering candle).

a. We may stifle His desire: our disobedience to this command affects Him

It seems to be the opposite of “draw near to God and He will draw near to you.”

b. We may stifle His working: our disobedience affects His activity

Stifling the Spirit is like letting weeds grow in a garden that stifle the productive growth. Fruitfulness may come through much unnecessary difficulty and pain.

C. Context of quenching the Spirit

1. Therefore (5.11)

This logical connective reaches back to 5.1-10 and forward to 5.11-24. Because we are destined for salvation and not for wrath at the coming of Christ and because He died for us that in life or death, we are to live for Him (1-10; **For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,** ¹⁰ **who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we might live with him,** 9-10), *therefore*, the exhortations and a benediction with promise of 11-24 apply to our living for the Lord Jesus Christ.

2. Orientation of the exhortations of 5.11-24; two main foci:

Toward one another: **Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing,** v. 11; toward laborers in the church: ¹² **We ask you, brothers, to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you,** ¹³ **and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work** 12-13a. These exhortations are recapped, expanded, and slightly generalized. Thus, 11 goes with 13b to 18 and 12-13a goes with 19-22 (our context of interest).

Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing, v. 11; **Be at peace among yourselves.** ¹⁴ **And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all.** ¹⁵ **See that no one repays anyone evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to everyone.** ¹⁶ **Rejoice always,** ¹⁷ **pray without ceasing,** ¹⁸ **give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you,** 13b-18.

¹² **We ask you, brothers, to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you,** ¹³ **and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work** 12-13a; ¹⁹ **Do not quench the Spirit.** ²⁰ **Do not despise prophecies,** ²¹ **but test everything; hold fast what is good.** ²² **Abstain from every form of evil,** 19-22.

3. Implications from the structure of the text

a. One anothering love

The mutuality of family members has the goal of building up in the faith in practical application. It includes study of the word (up building, cf. you received the word with joy of the Holy Spirit, 1.6. you received the apostolic word as the very word of God, 2.12-13).

b. Connection with open-minded humility

Receiving the word in the Spirit involves critical thinking (test everything, looking for the good, to live a holy life, 21-22).

c. Quenching the Spirit in the life of the church under pastoral care

Note the structure: the two negatives and the contrast fill out the meaning of quenching the Spirit.

From the negatives, quenching is parallel with despising prophecies. For us today beyond the apostolic foundation laying time, despising prophecy refers to despising the apostolic word of Scripture, which is preached and taught by the laborers in the word. To despise is to reject or treat lightly; mistreat along with mock in Lk 23.11. In the OT, it has contexts of lack of submission to authority; it refers to one's attitude toward discipline in contrast to the fear of the Lord which is the beginning of knowledge (Prov 1.7; fools despise wisdom and knowledge).

The contrast (**Do not...do not...²¹but test everything; hold fast what is good.** ²²**Abstain from every form of evil**) refers to discovery of the will of God by the transforming word (Rom 12.1-2, **I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.** ²**Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect**) by testing to discern the things that differ to choose the best (Phil 1.9-11, **And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment,** ¹⁰**so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ,** ¹¹**filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God**). This argues that the testing is for holding the good instead of the evil, which puts the open-minded critical spirit in an important place in the Christian thought life and walk.

The mutuality extends from family member to family member, from family member to the pastor, and from the pastor to the family. The pastor is included in the general call to one anothering, and the duties of the flock to the pastor entail duties of the pastor to the flock, *mutata mutandis*.

So, how do we quench the Spirit per this context?

By failing to test all things by not comparing with empathy looking for the good to avoid all forms of evil; that is, to put it one way, by failure to practice humble openness of heart in dialogue with the brothers and sisters of Jesus, our elder brother.

Do not quench the Spirit by despising the word that comes by laborers in the word (consider that some people cannot even address their pastors as pastor because it indicates respect for and a heart of submission to another person, another sinner; contra Calvin on this).

Do not quench the Spirit by despising the word that comes by one-anothering love

Ultimately in view is the dynamic of the Spirit working by the word in the relationships of members to each other and members to pastors. Humble submission to others in the life of the church is vital to walking in step with the Holy Spirit. Practical remnant autonomy (keeping the family and pastor at a distance) is surely the opposite of drawing near to God. Maintaining good relationships with the Christian family is a way to draw near to God and have God draw near to you in the fellowship of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in the communion of the saints.