

## 5. Open-minded Humility versus Quenching the Spirit

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### I. Open-minded Humility

#### A. Introduction

#### B. Humility

1. Acknowledgment (of sin)
2. Risk (being wrong)
3. Distrust (of self-understanding)
4. Love (of the family especially and all people)

#### C. Openness

1. First, you must display a comparative spirit
2. Second, you must engage empathetically
3. Third you must willingly dialogue
4. Fourth, you must take on an objective posture

### II. Quenching the Spirit

#### A. General Connections

In your obligation to the Spirit (Rom 8.12-13) the core duties are the imperative clusters of the book of Romans in 6.11-13: **So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.** <sup>12</sup>Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. <sup>13</sup>Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness and the clusters in 12-16 (for example: **Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to build him up** (15.2) and **Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God** (15.7). Our obligation is to build up one another by emulating Christ's welcome. 12.1-2 connects the small cluster of 6 with the large cluster of 12-16.

In 12.2, your duty is to give yourself over to a transformation of your thinking, which is to a sanctifying change from the inside out (**present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God...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**). This is *testing by which you sharpen your ability to discern distinctions and definitions*. In turn, you will learn, in a practical and seasoned way, the holy will of God by which to guide your life of devotion to God and to righteousness. In this context, the principles of open-minded humility apply to the testing process, to sanctification, and to the obligation we have to walk in step with the Spirit *by not quenching Him*.

#### B. 1 Thessalonians 5.19

This is the only text that mentions this subject: **Do not quench the Spirit**. Clearly, it is something that Christians may but ought not do in a personal relationship to the Holy Spirit.

##### 1. Sovereignty of the Spirit

We must understand quenching within the controlling context of the sovereignty of the Spirit who leads the children of God *efficaciously and surely* to the goal of glory in a process in which believers must walk every step. Consider Warfield again on the leading of the Spirit: "It is only when an influence distinct from ourselves determines our movements that we can properly be said to be led" (*BTS* 548). Leading refers to a "controlling power that the strength of the led one is insufficient to withstand" (550) and thus believers "go, not where they would, but where He would; they do not what they might wish, but what He determines. This is what it is to be led by the Spirit of God," but it does not mean that the work of the Spirit is "a substitute for their activities" (552). Indeed, strenuous endeavor is required (558). The Spirit determines the goal and the pathway, but the believer walks on that path to that goal "by his own powers of locomotion" (552). We will have to return to this point to gain more precision. For now, suffice it

to say that quenching the Spirit is a reality that must be understood in its own right *while doing full justice to the sovereignty the Spirit*. We have a duty not to quench the Spirit. This is a matter of personal relationship to God, the Holy Spirit. The subject is important and failure is serious, but, thankfully, even our failings do not remove the comforting assurance that the Spirit determines our pathway and sees to it that we attain the goal to which this pathway takes us.

## 2. Explanation

The verb “to quench” is used for the satisfaction of one’s thirst (Ps 104.11, of animals: **You make springs gush forth in the valleys; they flow between the hills; <sup>11</sup> they give drink to every beast of the field; the wild donkeys quench their thirst**). To quench is to give drink and to satisfy one’s thirst; Thus, it means to satisfy a desire not remove it but curb its intensity.

It often describes the function of water in relationship to fire. Metaphorically, love is compared with a fire from the Lord that cannot be quenched by water: love is like **flashes of fire, the very flame of the LORD.<sup>7</sup> Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it** (Sol 8:6-7). To quench is to drown.

Without the imagery of water, to quench means to put out a fire. In a comforting sense, Jesus is gentle, forgiving, and loving toward us even when our faith burns faintly and we are weak: **a bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not quench, until he brings justice to victory** (Mat 12.20 quoting from Isaiah 42.3: **a bruised reed he will not break, and a faintly burning wick he will not quench; he will faithfully bring forth justice**). To quench is parallel with to break. Thus, the essential idea is to suppress or stifle (as in curbing the intensity of a desire, satisfying thirst, or smothering a smoldering candle).

How can we apply this to the Holy Spirit regarding our relationship to Him? It is something personal and a matter of obedience; this is an obligation that we have to the Spirit. Our conduct has an affect on the Spirit Himself that affects His working in our lives. It does not affect the efficacy of His working, but within that reality, disobedience has two effects: the Spirit Himself is stifled and that must entail a stifling of His work in us.

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

It is the person of God the Holy Spirit that we stifle. Surely, we can connect this with the communion of Spirit. We have fellowship with one another (if we walk in the light, 1 Jn 1.7), with the Father and the Son (1 Jn 1.3), and with the Holy Spirit (2 Cor 13.14: **The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all**). Fellowship with the Spirit is dampened. His desire for fellowship with us is smothered. When we quench the Spirit, we put Him at arms length; He withdraws from fellowship with us. 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

If the Spirit is quenched and fellowship dampened (in some degree broken off) then the Spirit’s peculiar working in us in the application of the work of Christ is stifled in some way. Our fruitfulness (bearing the fruits of the Spirit) will be affected. So, stifling the Spirit is like letting weeds grow in a garden that stifle the productive growth of fruitful plants. Growth will occur in one who is truly a Christian, but the fruit may at times be small and difficult to see or it may come to fruition through much unnecessary difficulty and pain. Perhaps, the Spirit will withdraw to a more distant relationship and allow us to live “at arms length” from Him in a lack of the joy of rich fellowship. This may involve settling for the good but missing the better and the best that comes by love that abounds in discernment and yields fruitfulness to the praise of God (Phil 1. 9-11).