

**Quenching and Grieving**  
**1 Thessalonians 5:16-24 and Ephesians 4:25-31**  
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The Christian life from start to finish is all about grace. And it is all about grace, it is all about God. Paul puts it this way in Romans 11:36, “For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be glory forever. Amen.” “Him” is God as He makes Himself known to us through His Spirit on the basis of the work of His Son for our justification, sanctification and ultimately for our glorification. All of it is grace. All of it is God. The Christian life begins through the awakening that comes to us as a gift of the grace of God. The Holy Spirit comes to us through the proclamation of the Word of God and awakens us to how holy and righteous God is and how sinful and ugly we are as He calls us to trust the only one who can save us from God’s wrath and our sin. The Holy Spirit convicts us and gives us all that is needed to trust Jesus. And we do. That is grace. That is God. And as we trust in Jesus alone for salvation God declares us to be fully and absolutely right with Him not on the basis of anything in us or about us but on the basis of the sacrifice of His Son through the shedding of His blood on Calvary. We are declared forever right with God. This is Grace. All grace. This is God. All God. “It was grace that taught my heart to fear, and grace my fears relieved.” And the Holy Spirit who changes us also seals us up as a person and a people who belong to God and He begins to work in us to shape us toward the image of Jesus to make us as we live our lives among the people of God all that He wants us to be. He is making us holy. He is sanctifying us. He is changing us as He grows us. This is grace. This is God. And at last either by way of the coming of Jesus or the coming of death we are transported home on the wings of grace. The Christian life begins and ends in grace. **AND THE SUPREME GOAL OF THE ENEMY IS TO WORK TO FRUSTRATE THE WORK OF THE GRACE OF GOD IN US AND AMONG US.** The Bible has two apparently different images for what this looks like and we are going to look at them today.

Let me set before us now the content of these two images and then set them in their context before looking at the two texts where we find these images and where we see what Satan is seeking to accomplish when he gets us to quench and to grieve the Holy Spirit. The first image is found in 1 Thessalonians. I am calling it the first image only because it appears first chronologically. It is the

image of “quenching.” The word that is used is found only six times in the New Testament and is used both in a positive and a negative sense. It is used in Mark 9:48 to describe eternal judgment in the image of a “fire that is never quenched.” It is used by Paul in Ephesians 6:16 of the shield of faith by which we quench the fiery arrows of the enemy. The word simply refers to the erection of a shield in order to protect us from the flames of fire. The second word is found in Ephesians so that the first word is found in the first letter that Paul wrote and the second word is found in what could easily have been among the last letters that he wrote. This word is found twenty-two times in the New Testament with eleven of these occurrences being from Paul. The term refers to an emptiness and an absence due to loss. Something or someone who should be present is not and we grieve because of the emptiness that is caused by the loss. In fact, it may interest you to know that the pagan Greeks used this term in direct connection with the delight and pleasure that the “gods” have for us that does not come to us because we choose other paths down which we travel to find pleasure and delight. Now these are two images but they communicate one central reality. Quenching the Holy Spirit is our putting barriers in our lives or our churches that retard the fire; keep it from being fanned into a full flame. Grieving the Holy Spirit is our building barriers that keep us from experiencing the fullness of the presence and power of God in our lives. These images speak of what believers do either in attitude or in actions that keep us from experiencing the fullness of the presence and power of God in our lives. And we do this because we get confused about who we are and why we are here. Let’s look at this reality in these two texts.

We will begin with 1 Thessalonians. This is perhaps with the exception of Galatians the first letter that Paul ever wrote. It was written to a young church filled with young believers. Keep that in mind. It is more than a little important. He comes near the end of the letter and just prior to a very critical benediction, he gives them seven imperatives that are to characterize their lives and the one that is in the center and thus the pivot is “do not quench the Holy Spirit.” Now from that center we look to both sides and we see on the one side why that was a danger and on the other what was present in the church and what is present in any church that is evidence of the quenching of the Holy Spirit. And the key to all of this is the benediction. Listen carefully to verses 23-24 for what are the two primary emphases: “And the God who makes us whole Himself will work to make us wholly whole in Spirit and in soul and in body to guard us and to grow us until

the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. The God who called us through His Spirit is faithful and He will do it.” The two emphases are complete consecration to God by God and for God that God will do. But the struggle now in Thessalonica is that some are in danger of quenching the Spirit. They were on fire for Jesus. They were consumed in their commitment and it was costing them so they are now scaling back their witness. We love Jesus but not that much. We want our hearts strangely warmed but not on fire. We want to be faithful but not fanatical. We are quenching the Spirit. So, what is happening when this is going and what does it look like individually and corporately?

Verses 20-22 show us the three characteristics of people who are quenching the Spirit. One, we despise and treat with contempt the teaching and preaching of the Word of God. We are going to believe what we are going to believe and nobody not even the Holy Spirit is going to change us. We are entrenched and our song of choice is “I shall not be moved.” I believe what I believe and I have believed it this way for forty years and even that ought to be a hint to us about what a horrible place that person is really in. Two, we become so entrenched that we don’t test what we say we believe against what the Bible declares or what God says but we test only for the purpose of conflict with others or confirmation of our own position. Stay in church long enough and you can do this kind of thing without a lot of Bible-reading or study. Just google the topic. Third, we begin to nurture sin in our lives in a way that creates comfort. What we are doing or thinking or saying is not as bad as . . . . We become at best depressed and at worse disruptive of the body and destructive of others because the fire has been reduced to a flickering flame. Now Jesus says that He will snuff out that flame but what He wants to do is blow Spirit breath on it and set it on fire again. Will you let Him?

Verses 17-18 show us what is in the lives or not in the lives of those who are quenching the Spirit. One, we lose our joy. We rejoice when things are going great and we are able to be as we desire and to do as we want but we don’t rejoice when things are going poorly. We don’t with Paul in the midst of the pains of life say “Rejoice in the Lord, always and again I say rejoice.” Two, prayer is either virtually absent from your life or it has become your communication system with God to get what you feel like you and those near you need and want. John Piper says that prayer was designed by God as the walkie-talkie system for the soldiers in God’s army to call down heaven in our war against Satan as we go

forward into the world to storm the gates of hell and we have turned it into a downstairs intercom system where as we sit in our comfortable churches and cushioned pews we call upstairs for God to bring us down a snack or to help our cold to heal. We have quenched the Spirit. Three, we become grumblers and complainers about everything and anything that we don't like. We want the Baptist Church to be Burger King or worse we want to wear the crown and ascend the throne. Because when we quench the Spirit, it is because life has ceased to be about Him and it has become really about us. We want God on our side and have forgotten that that is not the issue. The issue is, "are we where He is and doing as He desires?" You see, more of us quench the Spirit than we really care to know. But this is what we need to know; this is what I need to know: when joy evaporates and prayer deteriorates and gratitude in all circumstances dissipates there is a fire just waiting to fall on me and to fall on us if we would but open our lives to Him completely: Have thine own way Lord, Have thine own way; Thou art the potter and I am the clay. Mold me and make me after your will, while I am waiting, yielded and still.

The other image that Paul uses is the image of grieving the Holy Spirit. It is no accident that both teachings from Paul about quenching and grieving the Holy Spirit come in the section of his letters that are entirely practical, where he is teaching us about how to live the Christian life. What we have here is a different image in the context of a different structure. The teaching about not quenching the Holy Spirit comes in the context of seven life-style imperatives; the teaching about not grieving the Holy Spirit comes in the context of a narrative about how critical it is that we see that our conversation and our conduct is either shaped by or not shaped by the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. Grieving the Holy Spirit happens when we say that our lives are shaped by the Holy Spirit but our lives at the level of what we say and do show something entirely different. This is the lie.

This is where Paul begins this passage in verse 25. Put away the lie. The text is very specific. It points us to a passage in Zechariah 8:16 where the focus is on God's design that His people be who He has called them to be and do what He has called them to do. He is not establishing some kind of ideal but is showing us who we are to be and what we are to do as His people because of the presence and power of His Holy Spirit. So, what is this life to look like? One, we are to speak "The Truth" to each other. We are to speak the Truth of the Word of God

to each other. We are to speak the Truth of Jesus to each other. We are to exhort and encourage each other. Two, we are to be angry about sin and how it ravages our lives and the lives of others but we are not to act out of that anger in a way that is destructive of others. Words spoken in anger that rip up others may reveal our hearts where we are in fact grieving the Holy Spirit; we speak that way to others because the One we most need has been closed out. Three, don't give the devil an inch. Close the door on what he wants to do. Four, Let each person do his work with joyful responsibility. We are to do as the people of God what we are called to do and five we are to relate to one another in such a way that we encourage each other as we grow together in the grace of God or six, we are not to grieve the Holy Spirit and then comes this seventh reality that shows us how we live in relationship to each other when we are filled with the Holy Spirit: we do not speak destructively of each other but we deliver grace to one another because of what God has done for us in Christ the result of which is that our lives are filled with the Holy Spirit.

Now look with me back at verse 30: The Holy Spirit of God assumes the work of God in salvation. We have received the Holy Spirit whose presence in our lives is a sure sign of our salvation. He has sealed us until at last we are taken home. And what matters most is what is in between: what He is doing in us to make us more like Jesus. Now friends I want us all to listen carefully: we do not really want to know the numbers of people whose reluctance to the Gospel and the good news of salvation is tied directly to what they have seen or haven't seen in us. Satan has been quite successful at getting individual believers and bodies of believers to quench the fire and to grieve the Holy Spirit. And it is because we are too allured by the kind of relationship with God that lets us define the content and the contours of that relationship. We are in control. Who would be willing to let go today? Who would be willing to say: Set my soul on fire Lord, set my soul on fire. Someone said years ago that only God could know what could happen in the life one single soul fully surrendered to God. D.L. Moody heard those words and set the whole course of his life to become that man. Would there be someone here today who hears this word and begins today to become that person?