

Refiner's Fire

Pastor James Richards

02 March 2025

Quench the Spirit or the Holy Spirit, capital S. And so this message will be teaching on the Holy Spirit. The last time I did this, I did a four part message at another church on a Sunday night. I gave the first message and they called me later and said, don't come back. They would have heard the other three messages.

They probably would have been okay. But there's no question, when we talk about God the Father, we almost all agree, don't we? Not much problem there. When we talk about Jesus the Son, we see a little bit of disagreement, really not that much. But when you start talking about the Holy Spirit, people are here and people are there and there and there and there's all sorts of differences.

It's probably what divides the church more than anything else today, the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Quite a few years ago I was reading in John chapter four with the Samaritan woman and you remember that where Jesus stopped at the well and the lady came and give me water and she wanted to know where to worship. And Jesus said, the Father is looking for worshipers who worship in spirit and in truth. Who worship in spirit and in truth. And I found over the years that we tend to kind of go, well spirit, not a lot of truth or truth, and not allow spirit.

And really what that verse is saying is God is looking for this balance of being in the Word, but allowing the Holy Spirit to, to work in and through us to accomplish his purposes. And so we're going to look at that this morning. We've already seen that he's given instructions regarding our relationship with elders, instructions regarding our relationship with each other, and then instructions on coming to the Father.

ShepherdsStream.com

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. And then those are all positive.

Do these things. Now he comes to two negatives. Do not quench the spirit, verse 20. Do not despise prophecies. And so we want to look at that.

What does that mean? Do not quench the Spirit. The NIV says do not put the Spirit's fire out. And the Spirit is equated to a fire. We all know the term he's on fire, right?

That doesn't mean you're literally burning up. Does. Means they're excited, there's enthusiasm, they're ready to go. And that has a lot of value in our lives as far as helping us do what we need to do. And so tells us, do not quench the Spirit.

And we need to look at the Spirit first. Of all the Holy Spirit. And for many, the Holy Spirit is a power or force or, you know, something that allows you to do what you want to do. But we need to see that he is a person, the third member of the Trinity. He's God.

And just like the Father, just like the Son, he is God, and he wants to work in our lives. But what this is saying, because he's a person, we're talking about relationships, aren't we? A relationship with God through Jesus and through the Holy Spirit. And like any relationship, that relationship can be cultivated, it can grow, or it can go the other way. It can be hurt.

And this is saying that we want to be careful when it comes to the Holy Spirit. Don't quench or don't put out his fire. There's several verses that talk about relationship with the Holy Spirit. Ananias and Sapphires lied to the Holy Spirit and they died. It was a serious thing.

Galatians, chapter five says, don't grieve the Holy Spirit. And when you and I are in sin, that grieves him, because he knows the outcome of that, that it's going to hurt us and maybe hurt other people.

And you can even outrage the Spirit. The Spirit can be outraged. It says in Hebrews, chapter 10, if you refuse to give your life to Christ and go on sinning, you have insulted the Spirit of grace. And he is outraged. Imagine that.

God, the Holy Spirit, outraged with people in this world. And so we want to be in that place where we don't quench the Spirit. That means we don't put out the fire, right? That he wants to burn brightly in us, each one of us, so that others can see Christ. As I was working on this, I was reminded of a trip that I took with Jeremy and some of their high school students, a backpacking trip.

We hiked from the Ho river over the Ho Head to Mosquito Beach. That looks like a good place to camp, right? Mosquito beach and Mosquito Creek. And I had plantar fasciitis. And so I walked eight miles, basically on one foot.

And I got there, I just completely exhausted. And I put my sleeping bag on the ground. And most of the sand had been washed out that winter, so there was a lot of rocks. And Jeremy and the other boys went over and built a bonfire. I'm sure that NASA was probably wondering, what is that down there?

It was so big. And just about then, they yelled, dad, dad. And a wave came. A sneaker wave came up and crashed over me. Come back and rolled me over a few times.

And I Ended up going up in the rocks. I was so tired and just slept there. But we know that the bigger, the hotter the fire, the more heat, the more warmth, the more light, the more it's going to affect people. And so we don't want to quench that spirit. And you think about that.

The Holy Spirit is in you. It says, Jesus told his disciples he is with you and he will be in you. I will talk to the Father and He will send them. And that's been the promise for every Christian since Pentecost. When you're a believer in Jesus Christ and you put your faith in him, he is in you.

And think about that God in you. I mean, nothing's impossible for him, right? And yet we're warned. Don't quench him. I think if there's one of the biggest problems in the

church today, any church, is we can quench the Holy Spirit, that he is not free to work in our lives.

And remember, this is written to a group of people. So it's not just individuals, it's all of us together that we don't want to quench the Holy Spirit. And so we ask, well, how. How do we quench the Holy Spirit? How do we put out the Spirit's fire?

Essentially two ways. One, you can pour water on it, right? Or throw sand or do something to kind of knock the fire down. And when you and I sin, when you and I are not obedient to God's commands, when you or I are not making it our desire to worship and serve God, we're quenching the Spirit. We are keeping him from working.

That's one way. The second way is you don't put any fuel on the fire. We had the fire here this morning, and Jeremy loaded it up with wood and kind of warmed things up. But you got to keep putting wood in it, don't you, to keep it going. And the same way is true in our lives that we have to keep sowing to the Spirit.

Over in Galatians, chapter five, chapter six, verse seven and eight, Paul tells us, says, do not be deceived. God is not mocked. For whatever one sows that will, he also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption. And of course, all of us before Christ, that's what we did.

We were sowing to our flesh what's best for me. How can I make things work out for me? All about me? And he says that ends up in destruction in one way. But then he says, the one who Sows to the Spirit, will from the Spirit reap eternal life.

And so our responsibility, if we're not going to quench the Holy Spirit, is, how do I sow to the Spirit? How do I keep that flame bright in my life? How do I keep it burning? And we do that by sowing to the Spirit. The Phillips translation interpreted this verse, said, fuel the flame of the Holy Spirit.

Fuel the flame of the Holy Spirit. And so go on in Galatians said, and let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap if we do not give up. So then as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone and especially those of the house of the

faith. And in the context of that verse, sowing to the Spirit, he's saying, don't get weary, don't give up. I think all of us have faced that in our walk with Christ, haven't we?

We are in contact with a pastor in Honduras, and Jeremy and I met 25 years ago. The Lord put him on our heart and we've contacted him and want to help him in his ministry. But his ministry was really struggling. They had no income coming in, people are poor in Honduras. And he started feeling like God, have you forgotten us?

Have you forgotten us? And it's easy to grow weary, isn't it? Prayers aren't being answered, we're not seeing victories whatever. But he said, don't give up. Do not give up.

And one of the ways that we sow to the Spirit is we keep moving ahead in our faith. We keep doing the things that are going to allow the Spirit to work in our lives. Second thing, he said, so then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, especially those who are the household of faith. And that word, opportunity. God's not asking every one of us to do everything we couldn't.

We don't have the resources. What he is asking us, if there's an opportunity that comes to you to do good to someone, do it. And when we do that out of obedience, that's sowing to the Spirit. And there will be results in that. A lot of other ways.

We know that coming here this morning, and all of us had to get up this morning, some of us earlier, some of us later, but we had to make a conscious decision whether we go and worship the Lord, didn't we? And we could have sat in bed or we could have watched no football now, but we make a conscious decision, no, I'm going to go worship the Lord. I'm going to go fellowship with other Believers, I want to hear God's word. And that's sowing to the Spirit. It's adding fuel to the fire of God working in us.

And then he says, look for opportunities. And I think one of the problems we have as Christians is, and I know it happens to me, the opportunity comes and then the opportunity goes. And then I think, I missed it. Why didn't I do something? And that means we have to consciously be looking and be asking God, if you give me an

opportunity, help me to act on that.

And every time we do that is sowing to the Spirit. It's saying, holy Spirit, I want you to work through me. I'm open, I'm willing, I want that flame to burn bright so that you will be glorified. And so it's a conscious decision. It's a command, do not quench the Spirit.

And again, he wouldn't write that if it wasn't something that's possible. It's possible for us to quench the Spirit. And when we do, we're going to sow into the flesh and from the flesh will reap destruction. We have to put God first. We won't look at it this week, but next time he talks about, do not despise prophecies.

And that means don't despise spiritual things. Sometimes we see excesses that people go crazy and it's a clown show and ah, I don't want to stay away from that. We'll just do truth. No, we have to realize it takes both to do that. The truth makes sure that the spirit doesn't go crazy and the Spirit makes sure that the truth doesn't deaden us.

And so that's why he's telling us this. We might ask the question, well, how do I know whether or not I'm quenching the Spirit several ways? Number one, you probably won't be experiencing God's love in your life. You're not going to feel loved by him, because that's one of the jobs of the Holy Spirit, is to express God's love for you. Number two, there'll be no joy in your walk with Christ.

And there's a sense as far as sowing to the Spirit, not quenching the Spirit, you get out of it what you put in it. Number three, a lack of assurance. Satan, our enemy. When we're not really feeling God's presence in our life, we're not experiencing that joy. Satan comes alongside and says, are you sure a Christian?

You sure don't look like one. You don't Sound like one. And we'll lose that assurance that we have that, no, I am a Christian through Jesus Christ. I'm trusting in his sacrifice, his blood that was given for me. I know that God loves me and that he's working for my good.

The fourth thing, you won't be experiencing any intimacy with God. You suppress the Holy Spirit and He gets further and further away in a sense, or you get further from

him and you're not going to feel close to Him. And to me, that intimacy is such an important part of life, isn't it? We're all looking for that. It's one of the reasons you get married, isn't it?

It's another reason you have friends that you like and you love being around. You can share things with them and they share things with you. In the same way, if we're sowing to the Spirit, there should be an intimacy with God closer to him and enjoying his presence. And then the fifth, and I think the worst of all, if you're not sowing to the Spirit, you're not exalting Christ in your life. And that's why we were created, to exalt Jesus Christ in our life.

And so he gives us his command. Jesus talks about this back in Luke and kind of close with this. And this passage is in Matthew and Mark also, But Luke chapter 11 gives us a little more info on it.

And it's just after he told him how to pray. He says in verse nine, and I tell you, ask and it will be given.

Seek and you will find. Knock and the door will be opened. And then explaining this, he says, what Father among you? If his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent? Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion?

And then he says, if you then who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the Heavenly Father. That's interesting, what he wants to give. We as individuals, parents, husbands, wives, friends, we know how to give gifts to people, don't we? We don't want to give them a rock or a scorpion instead of what they need. And so Jesus is saying, how much more will our Father in Heaven give us what we need?

And so he says, how much more will the Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him? How much more will the Holy Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him? Now, going back, we know that every Christian has the Holy Spirit, so he's not talking about that. Over in Romans 8, he says, you can't be a Christian unless the Holy Spirit is in you. So what is this verse saying?

Do we have to ask the Holy Spirit to come in our life? No, not to become a Christian. When you put your faith in Jesus Christ, he comes into our life. But it is saying we can ask for more of the Holy Spirit in our lives, for more of the Holy Spirit in our life. And that will express itself in a lot of different ways.

It might express itself in joy and worship, but it might express itself in a desire to come alongside someone and help them in their time of need. And the point being is that if we want God to work in our lives, it's only going to happen through the Holy Spirit. There's nothing. I don't care if we were the most exciting church in the world and growing like crazy and look on the surface like successful. If the Holy Spirit isn't working in people's lives, nothing's happened because he's come.

He's the Holy Spirit. He's coming to make you holy, set apart for God to do his will. And so I just challenge us as a church because we can come and oh, this is great. This is fun. I love this.

And we should. But we need to be praying, oh, God, pour out your spirit in each one of our lives so that we can have that intimacy with you, so that fire can burn bright in our lives, so that we'll reap eternal life and all the benefits that go with that. And so he's telling us to do that. It's something we can do. He wouldn't ask us to do it if he wasn't telling us.

And so I'd just really like to encourage us and into the service you can be praying, but I find that the times that are most meaningful is when I'm alone with the Lord. And that doesn't mean I'm on my knees praying, but it means that I'm communicating with him. I'm thinking about him, I'm wanting him. And during those times, I think it pleases the Holy Father when we ask him to fill us with his Holy Spirit so that Jesus will be glorified. We'll get into this next time.

As far as some of the ways the Holy Spirit expresses itself, but the Holy Spirit always exalts Jesus Christ. That's why he came. He does not exalt himself. And if we're in a service where seems spirit filled but Jesus isn't being exalted, then that's a false fire. But we'll get into that later.

I want to close with just the words of a song. Refiner's Fire I want to do the whole thing. Purify my heart, let me be as gold and precious silver Purify my heart Let me be as gold, pure gold Refiner's Fire My heart's one desire is to be holy set apart for your Lord. I choose to be holy. Set apart for you, my Master.

Ready to do your will. Let's pray.

Father, I thank you that as Jesus was preparing to leave this earth, and his disciples and God, they were really worried, what are we going to do now? Jesus isn't here. And he said, it's better for you that I go, because I will send the helper who not only be with you, but in you. And we thank you for that, Father and God. We recognize in our own lives that it's easy to quench the Spirit.

The flesh gets in the way of the Spirit. Well, we're told not to do that. And I pray that you would open up our eyes to see how we can sow to the Spirit and allow the Spirit to work through us and do more than we could ever imagine. And your will would be accomplished in our lives and through our lives. And so I thank you for the Holy Spirit that He's real, that he desires to have a relationship with us, that he's working in our lives.

And we pray that he'd have the freedom to exalt Jesus Christ through us. In Christ's name. Amen. Okay, we're going to share communion now.

Matthew says, now, as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it, broke it and gave it to the disciples and said, take, eat. This is my body. And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you, I'll not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom. And again, just going back to the Holy Spirit, one of the things he's doing is the Holy Spirit.

He is setting us apart to God. He is preparing us to be with Jesus for all eternity. No spot, no wrinkle, no blemish, but holy through Christ. And as we take the element, we're reminding ourselves of that. That, yes, we celebrate Christ's death, giving his

body, shedding his blood, we're also preparing ourselves, we're nourishing ourselves to live the Christian life.

And even though these are elements. It's not the real body of Christ. He's still there working through that. Our commitment to him and his blessing for you and I. So we'll go ahead and open the communion table, and when we all have our elements, we'll take them together.