

(1 Thessalonians) Do Not Quench the Spirit

by Brian Brodersen

Brian Brodersen's sermon emphasizes the importance of recognizing church leaders, living in peace, and maintaining a joyful and prayerful attitude in all circumstances.

Duration: 56:37

Topics: "Holy Spirit", "Sanctification"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of surrendering to God and allowing Him to work in our lives. He reminds the listeners that God is faithful and will complete the good work He has started in them. The preacher encourages the congregation to pray for one another and greet each other with love and kindness. He also emphasizes the need to abstain from evil and be thankful in all circumstances, as it is God's will for believers.

Transcript

So we're picking up tonight in 1 Thessalonians, the 12th verse of the 5th chapter, 1 Thessalonians 5, 12. So we're, of course, you know, in the last segment of the epistle here. And as Paul often does, he sort of, you know, as he's bringing these epistles to a conclusion, he takes the opportunity to oftentimes, you know, just throw out a series of exhortations and just some practical things that he addresses with each of the churches.

And, of course, things that probably had a specific relevance to the church at the time, but then, of course, they become exhortation to us today as well. And so we receive that practical instruction as Paul wraps things up here. So he says in verse 12, And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you, or warn you, and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake.

So just practical word of encouragement to the body, to to esteem highly those who are ministering to them. And I think it's interesting that he says those who admonish you, you know, sometimes when a person is admonished, they resent that, they get upset by that, and they're angry about that. And sometimes they, you know, walk away pouting or, you know, I'm never going back to that church.

I can't believe that pastor said that to me or something like that. And Paul says, hold them in high esteem, not become upset with them or angry at them. And as he would say to the Hebrews, he said, because these people are watching out for your souls.

And that, of course, is what the pastor is to be doing, watching out for the souls of people. And so many times there is an admonition. There is, you know, a warning that will come, and sometimes it'll ruffle our feathers a bit.

It'll, you know, sort of get us upset. But that's the Spirit of God wanting to deal with us and wanting to work in our lives. You know, you don't find many people that take any sort of rebuke or admonition really well, at least initially.

Most of us, it's just our tendency, it's our human nature to just sort of chafe against that. But I find that most people, even though there might be an initial response like that, you know, they'll calm down a bit, and the Spirit will deal with them a little bit more, and, you know, they'll come around, say, yeah, you know, that person was right. I've had a number of people over the years that have come to me and told me how upset I made them at a certain point.

I remember one lady years ago in the church, she said, man, the first time I came to this church, the stuff you said, I just, I got up and walked out. I couldn't believe you were saying that, made me so mad. And of course, she was saying it at that point from the perspective of, she was in the church, she loved the fellowship, and she appreciated me as her pastor.

But initially, the things I said really ticked her off, basically. And yet, you know, she responded to the Spirit of God. And that's what we need to do.

We need to respond to that conviction of the Spirit, and we need to remember that those who are in that position and doing that, they're watching out for us spiritually. And so, he says, esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. The work of the ministry is a wonderful thing, pastoral ministry.

It's great, but it has its challenges, and it does have its difficulties. And there are temptations and trials and things that are unique to those who are in ministry that, you know, sometimes the average Christian doesn't necessarily experience or even isn't necessarily aware of. They're somewhat unique because of the position.

And so, it calls, you know, for the person in the body, those in the fellowship, to recognize that. And that's what Paul's talking about here, esteeming them highly for their work's sake. Because what they're doing is, it's the work of God.

Of course, it's a spiritual work. And then he goes on and he says, be at peace among yourselves. So, we need to live peaceably together.

That's pretty straightforward. Now, we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the faint-hearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all. The unruly, the insubordinate, another way to translate it are the loafers.

There are those who come into fellowships and they sort of leech off people, take advantage of people. And, you know, any, whenever they're corrected or somebody challenges them on that, they're rebellious and they're, as he says here, unruly, insubordinate. But Paul says, warn those who are unruly.

You know, there are times when we actually have to give people warnings. We warn people frequently, if you're going to behave like that, you're not welcome to attend the church here. And over the years, we've had to ask many people not to come back because, of course, we cannot tolerate that kind of behavior

here.

As pastors, as shepherds over God's flock, we have a responsibility to watch out for God's people. You know, sometimes guys will come around and they're here for one main reason, and that's to scam on the girls. And the minute we recognize that that's what's going on, we give them a nice little escort right off the grounds, because that's not what this place is about.

But many have come with those kinds of motives, and those are the ones that we have to warn, and sometimes we have to remove from the fellowship. But then there's the faint-hearted, and Paul says, comfort the faint-hearted. You know, there are some Christians who are just sort of faint-hearted by nature.

I think the older translation reads the feeble-minded. Feeble-minded, faint-hearted. You know, there are those that, for whatever reason, they just are, they're fainting all of the time.

They're always feeling like they're not going to make it. They kind of just live under sort of a cloud of condemnation. And I've had, over the years, many different experiences where, you know, there's just these people that you find that every time you see them, you have to just come alongside and gently encourage them, and let them know that God loves them, and tell them again that they're going to go to heaven, and you know, no, don't worry about it.

God loves you, and no, the devil's not going to be able to snatch you out of his hand, because they're just sort of faint-hearted. You know, they just are always looking at that negative side, and somehow the enemy's done a good job at ripping them off. And yet, you know, rather than come down hard on them and say, hey, listen, you know, get it together, or get out of here, you know, I can't be doing this anymore.

Paul says, no, you need to comfort them. And there are some that that's just the nature of their experience with the Lord, and you kind of spend your whole pastoral life doing that, but that's part of the ministry. Uphold the weak and be patient with all.

That's really the operative word there, patience, because sometimes, quite honestly, you know, it can be a bit testing, but that's what a shepherd is to do, to uphold the weak. See that no one renders evil for evil to anyone, but always pursue what is good, both for yourselves and for all. Paul said this in his epistle to the Romans as well, let no one repay evil for evil.

Of course, that is the natural tendency. If somebody does something wrong to me, then my first inclination is to do something wrong back to them, to pay them back, to get even with them. But that, of course, is not to be the way the Christian handles evil directed toward them.

Remember in Romans 12, Paul reminds us, vengeance is mine, says the Lord, I will repay. And so if your enemy is hungry, give him food. If he's thirsty, give him a drink.

And Paul's saying the same thing here, not rendering evil for evil, but always pursue what is good. Verse 16, rejoice always. Philippians 4, 4 says, rejoice in the Lord always.

And again, I say, rejoice. And of course, that's what Paul is talking about here as well, rejoicing in the Lord. Now, rejoicing is not the same as being happy necessarily.

Rejoicing is something different because it's connected to joy. And there is a difference between joy and happiness. There are many things that can make a person happy.

But joy is something that goes deeper than happiness. Happiness is a very, you know, it's a very surfacy kind of thing. And, you know, happiness can switch to sorrow in a matter of moments.

You know, you see your girlfriend and you're so happy to see her. And then she says, I don't like you anymore. And suddenly you're not happy.

So, you know, your happiness is fleeting. But joy is a deeper thing than that. And it's joy that God has instilled in our hearts.

And as Paul said to the Philippians, rejoice in the Lord. Now, I can't always find joy in my circumstances. I'll tell you a quick way to get rid of your joy.

Read the newspaper. That'll usually do it for me real quickly. So I try to, you know, do that as infrequently as I possibly can.

You know, I have to read it to some extent. But I find that more these days, I'm just, you know, give me a little bit of news just to kind of keep me in touch. But I don't need too much of that because it just, the joy goes.

But of course, if we keep our eyes on the Lord. And I think that our joy is directly related to our fellowship with the Lord. If we're spending good time with the Lord, if we're really in fellowship with him, then our joy is flowing.

It's full. Because the scripture tells us in the Psalms, in his presence is fullness of joy. So as I take time and I spend time in the presence of the Lord, that's going to result in a joy in my life, which will then lend itself to me rejoicing always.

But if I let the cares of this life and the desire for other things come in and choke out that fellowship, then although I might very well indeed be a child of God, I'm not a joyful one. But yet God's ideal for us is that we would be full of joy. John, in writing this first epistle, he said, and these things we have written to you that your joy might be full.

So as we meditate on the word of God, as we get close to him, as we experience him, as we have that encounter with him, you know, through the word, it causes us to be joyful. Which results in an attitude of rejoicing. And you know, when you stop and think about it, there's so much to rejoice over.

Sometimes I just stop and think about how good God has been to me, how much he loves me, how he saved me from my sins, how he has this glorious plan for the future that I'm going to go to heaven and be with him forever. Those are the things that will get your joy filled up. So rejoice always.

And now he says, pray without ceasing. Pray without ceasing. Now, of course, this isn't an exhortation to, you know, just stop everything in life and spend the rest of your life in prayer.

It's not the call to the monastic life, heading off to a convent somewhere or a monastery somewhere. But what Paul is referring to here, and it's a beautiful thing really, is to have an attitude of prayer that just permeates our life. You know, prayer is truly one of the greatest privileges that we have as God's people.

That we can pray anytime, anyplace, about anything and everything and know for certain that God is listening. And we have that absolute assurance. You know, other people don't have that.

Other religions do not guarantee their adherence, adhering with the Almighty, whoever that might be. You know, they've got to go through all of the ritual and all of the gymnastics, whatever they might be. And yet, in the end, there's still no guarantee that anyone's heard anything you've said.

But we have that promise over and over again, that the Lord's ear is open to the righteous. That we are the children of God, so we can pray our Father who art in heaven. It's our Father that we're talking to.

And Paul says to pray without ceasing, and he's talking about the possibility and the potential to have an ongoing communication with the Lord. That's what he's referring to. That we would just cultivate an ongoing communication with the Lord.

Just as often as, you know, we think about it during the day. We just lift our voices in praise to God. We just lift our request to the Lord.

Anything and everything we're doing. We just, you know, we see something, oh Lord, I ask you to do something about that. Oh Lord, help those people.

You see, maybe you drive by, you see a car accident or something. Oh Lord, be with them. Sincerely, we can speak to God like that.

Whatever situation arises, Lord, work in this situation. Oh God, help here. That we would just become a people who are so inclined to prayer.

You know, that prayer would just become that thing. You know, a lot of people in, you know, outside of the faith, when something goes on, they have an inclination to do something. And most of the time, if it's anything bad, of course, the initial inclination is to swear.

You know how that is? You know, I, that's what I did before I was a Christian. Something happened, you just, you know, come out with a swear word. That's how you respond to it.

Well, just as that flows out so naturally from the unbeliever in response to difficulty or frustration or things that don't go our way, prayer ought to flow out of the believer. We ought to just, that would just be the natural inclination of the heart, just to go right to the Lord in prayer about this. Now, that's maybe not your experience, certainly not mine.

As often as it ought to be, but that's the possibility. That's what is actually the ideal. That's what Paul's talking about here.

You know, there, there are possibilities for us as believers that we quite often, we just live so far below the possibility. God's got all of this sort of up on this level that we could be experiencing, but we're groveling down here, you know, in all of our frustration and misery and we don't have any peace and we're upset, but all the possibility is there, but we just don't enter into it. So we've got to learn to develop ourselves in these areas.

So how do we cultivate prayer? You know how we do it? We pray. You just get yourself in the habit of praying. And the more you get yourself in the habit of doing it, the more it becomes eventually, it just becomes the natural thing that you do.

It just, it just becomes your inclination. That's the blessing that we have as God's people. We have free access to Him anytime, any place, under any circumstance.

And there's not a single thing in the world that God can't deal with. There's not a single problem that God can't deal with. And so pray without ceasing.

In everything give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. In everything give thanks. You know, a lot of times people come and ask the question, what is God's will? How do I discover God's will? You know, the Bible of course has a lot to say about the will of God in, you know, in a general sense.

And occasionally it speaks very specifically about the will of God. I can only think of three places. There might be a few more, but I can only think of three places that were specifically told what the will of God is.

In John's gospel, Jesus told us that it's God's will that everyone who hears His words and believes in the one who sent Him would have everlasting life and He would raise them up on the last day. So we deduce from that that God's will is for men to be saved. Back in the fourth chapter of this epistle, you remember Paul said, for this is the will of God, your sanctification.

So we know that God wills that people be saved. We know that God wills that saved people be sanctified, that their lives be purified. And now here we're told another thing that's God's will, that in everything we would give thanks.

You know, this is such a small thing to us, but such a big thing to God. You know, I can kind of, you know, maybe at the end of the week, I could sort of take a survey of my life throughout the past week and I can look back and think, yeah, I did pretty good this week. You know, there's no major sin in my life.

There's nothing blatant or, you know, any of that. But, you know, if I look closely, I look back, I think, oh, but I did murmur quite a bit about this, didn't I? And I did complain a lot about that. And I certainly wasn't thankful for those things that came along.

And sometimes, you know, those things that don't seem to be that big of a deal, we sort of just easily let them slip by. But those are the things that end up robbing us of that joy and that blessed experience that we're talking about. God doesn't want us to be a grumbling people, a complaining people.

And there's many, many places in Scripture where we are reminded of that. You remember back in the Old Testament, the children of Israel, that was sort of their besetting sin. They just could not stop complaining.

And there was that point where God was so fed up with their murmuring that He sent serpents into the camp, and the serpents struck them, and they began to die. The New Testament, Paul's epistle to the Corinthians, he said, those things were written as examples to us that we would learn not to murmur like they did. God doesn't want us murmuring and complaining about things.

He doesn't want us to have that attitude where we're walking around griping about this and that and the other thing. He wants us to be in an attitude of thanks. And again, like I said, if we really stop and just ponder all that God's done for us, it ought to evoke thanksgiving because He's blessed us.

And He's done it all just simply because He's good and just out of His grace, not because we deserved any of it. So in everything, give thanks. This is an area, I'll be honest with you, this is an area that I had

really a lot of growth needed in, especially as a young Christian, because I just had a tendency to complain a lot.

And over the years, and I had a tendency not only to complain, but even to sort of, you know, not necessarily be unthankful, but to never really express thanksgiving. I remember years ago, you know, people would do things for me and I just, well, that's great. They did that for me.

I'd never say thank you. And I remember one time a lady made a comment, you know, that she was hurt because I didn't say thank you. And I thought, well, of course I'm thankful.

What do I have to say it for? You know, I'm kind of thick-headed. I don't know. Maybe you don't have these problems.

But the Lord used that, though, to begin to show me how important it is to be thankful and to express thanks. And that would, of course, apply to our relationships with one another. But then, of course, beyond that, it really has application to our relationship with God.

It's interesting, in Romans chapter 1, where Paul talks about the wrath of God being revealed against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. And he goes through the list of things that men do that results in God's wrath being poured out. He says there, interestingly, he says, and they were not thankful, but they became vain, and their foolish hearts were darkened, and professing to be wise, they became fools.

But it started with an unthankfulness. You see, that's the point. Unthankfulness is the doorway into all kinds of greater sin.

Sin starts off small. But in reality, there is no small sin, because all sin is deadly. But it can start off so small, just an unthankful attitude.

And pretty soon, all you can see is the negative side of everything. And pretty soon, you're full of bitterness. And pretty soon, you're just, everything you say has an edge to it.

And you're, you know, you're just condemning of everything. And pretty soon, you just say, you know, I'm not even going to go to that church anymore. And everybody over there makes me, they're a bunch of hypocrites, and all of this kind of thing.

And then you're out of the church, and then you're back out in the world, and then you're back out in sin, big time. And it started with an unthankful attitude. We have to be careful.

And everything give thanks. So much to be thankful for. And boy, we of all people, we of all people, you get out around the world a little bit and see the contrast between the life that we experience here in this land versus what so many other people are living under.

And it's just, we don't have a single thing to complain about, really. Because so often, our worst conditions are superior to the best conditions you find, you know, some people experiencing. So God wants us to be thankful.

And everything give thanks. This is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the spirit.

Do not quench the spirit. Do not put out the spirit's fire is another translation. Quenching the spirit, the idea is to put out a flame.

The Holy Spirit is often symbolized in scripture by fire, by a flame. And so the warning not to quench that. Now, what does it mean to quench the spirit? It means to dampen the spirit's work, to, you know, sort of suppress it.

Just as you would throw a bucket of water on a fire. What does that do to the fire? It puts it out. There might be a few little embers still smoldering here or there, but the flame itself has gone down.

And when we as Christians quench the spirit, that's what we do. That work of the spirit, that activity of the spirit, that free flow of the spirit, like a flame, lighting up our lives and lighting up the world around us and all that, it's brought down to its lowest point. So we're not to quench the spirit.

Now, how does one quench the spirit? Well, I think one way is to be unthankful, right there in the context. But you know, the way the spirit is quenched is by disobedience to the spirit. You see, we have a relationship with God that is very personal.

Each one of us have a relationship with God that has many similarities but also many differences because we're each one of us different. And so there's a way that God works in all of our lives in a very similar fashion, but then there's a way that God works in our lives that's different because of our differences. And when it comes to our individuality and when it comes to specifics, this is the area where the Holy Spirit deals with us individually.

And so the Holy Spirit will speak to our hearts. And you know that there's an impression that we get. There's a sense that we get that the Lord's saying this or he's, you know, urging me in that direction.

Or sometimes you can describe it as, you know, I sort of have a check in my spirit. You start to go in a certain direction. You almost feel like somebody puts a hand up and, you know, don't go there.

That's the spirit of God. Now, to quench the spirit is to ignore that, to just brush that aside, to say, oh, well, that doesn't matter. And if you do that often enough, what happens is you come to a place where the spirit is quenched to the extent that you no longer have that kind of experience.

So you come to a place where you're a Christian still, but it's, you know, where's God? I don't sense any of his leading in my life. He's not speaking to me, it seems. And now you're kind of drifting back into little areas of sin, and it's not that big of a deal anymore.

But boy, used to if you tried to even go there, you'd, oh, no, I can't do that. But now, well, I can do that a little easier. Why can you do that a little easier? Because the spirit's been quenched, and there's not that sensitivity anymore to that conviction of the spirit.

That's a dangerous place to be. Those are the first steps back down into the pit of sin, if not turned back from and, you know, repented of. We're not to quench the spirit.

In Ephesians chapter 5, Paul speaks of grieving the spirit. And there's a whole list of sins there that he mentions. And he says, you know, do not grieve the spirit.

In other words, these things grieve the spirit. Do not grieve the spirit. And there's a similarity between grieving the spirit and quenching the spirit, but I think there's a definite difference as well.

You can quench the spirit by, you're just simply not going to let the spirit move. You know, in many churches that are otherwise good churches, the spirit is quenched because the position of the church

leadership is that the Holy Spirit doesn't work today like he worked in biblical times. And if anybody tries to, you know, have a prophetic utterance or if anyone ever thought about speaking in tongues, we would immediately cut that off.

No, that's of the devil. We're not, you know, boy, talk about quenching the spirit. That quenches the spirit right there.

And there have been many times over in the history of the church where God begins to do a work and church leaders will stand up and say, no, that can't happen here. We don't do that. That's not part of our tradition.

We don't tolerate, we don't allow that sort of thing. And so the spirit is quenched back in the Wesleyan revival. That's exactly what happened.

They, as they began to preach the gospel, the Westleys and Whitfield and people began to respond and they began to get emotional, they were getting saved. They were getting convicted of their sin and they were responding to it visibly. And the Anglican church leadership stood up and said, that's enthusiasm.

We don't allow enthusiasm back out, out, get out the doors. We won't let any of that happen in our churches. And so those guys went out to the open fields and began to preach the gospel in the open fields.

And the revival that God brought, the awakening that he brought, it had to go on outside of the church because the church leaders wouldn't tolerate it inside. And that's happened many times over. They quenched the spirit.

You know, I've seen some times where there's a young Christian all excited and zealous and the spirit of God's working and moving. And somebody comes along and says, oh, that's not the Lord. You know, you shouldn't pay attention.

Oh, that's and discourages it. They quench the spirit. Oh, we need the full flame of the spirit burning in our lives.

Don't quench the spirit. Be responsive to the spirit. Obey that prompting, that inclination, that check.

Don't push beyond that. Stop and say, oh, okay, I'm not going to go in that direction. If you're not sure if it's the Lord, give it some time and pray about it and seek counsel about it.

But we want to be sensitive to those things, because if we're not, then we end up quenching the spirit and then we end up having an experience, again, that's far below the possibilities. The possibilities are so much greater. He says, do not despise prophecies.

And this is, I think, definitely connected to the previous warning, despising prophecy. There are those, there always have been, and there are certainly many today that want to gut Christianity of the supernatural element of it. They don't want anything supernatural.

Let's just keep it all very tidy and neat and subdued. We don't want any, you know, supernatural stuff going on. That's a sad, sad position, because the heart of the Christian faith is supernatural.

Prophecy. Do not despise prophecy. Prophecy is speaking God's Word by the immediate influence of the Holy Spirit.

And this happened quite often in the apostolic church. It wasn't just that there were prophets, but the Christians had the gift of prophecy. The Bible talks about the gift of prophecy, and there's nowhere that I believe the Bible teaches that the gift of prophecy was going to cease at any particular period.

I believe the gift of prophecy is with us today. Turn with me over to 1 Corinthians 14. Let's just look for a moment at this gift of prophecy.

Chapter 14 of 1 Corinthians. Listen to what Paul says in verse 1. He says, pursue love and desire spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy. Now look at verse 3. He who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men.

Now look down in verse 29. Here's where he gives a practical instruction for prophecy. Let two or three prophets speak and let others judge.

And if anything is revealed to another who sits by, let the first keep silent, for you can all prophesy one by one that all may learn and all may be encouraged. And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets, for God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints. So notice, first of all, to the Thessalonians, Paul says, do not despise prophecy.

Here to the especially that you may prophesy. Why? Because the person prophesying is speaking encouragement. They're speaking edification, exhortation, and comfort to men.

But then he gives the practical instruction. Let two or three prophets speak. And if someone sitting by has something revealed to them, that's the secret to understanding prophecy right there.

A revelation comes, a direct word from the Lord comes to a person, and that person communicates that word to the others. Now, of course, even as you look at the context of 1 Corinthians 14 here, you realize that the atmosphere that Paul is describing is one where there had to be somewhat of an intimacy, somewhat of a smaller kind of an atmosphere for this thing to be able to happen. The difficulty in a large church and in a large congregation is that it makes it hard to experience some of these things.

I mean, if we all just stopped right now and said, OK, let's just wait on the Lord for a prophetic word. You know, if somebody in the back corner has the prophetic word, only two or three people are going to hear it. That's the difficulty of, you know, trying to experience these things in this kind of an environment.

That's why it's so important to have, you know, when you have a large church like we do, to have home fellowship groups, to have smaller gatherings like we, you know, with the men's study, we have not only a study, but we have a group setting where they gather in groups afterwards. The ladies do that. I want to encourage you to be involved in something a bit smaller, something like a home fellowship or a small group so you can have the experiences that we're reading about here in the scripture so we can have those prophetic utterances coming to us as God would bring them to us.

But notice he says, despise not prophesying. And like I said, there are those that just want they don't, the supernatural frightens them. And so they just, you know, we don't want to go, no, we don't want to do it.

We don't allow for that sort of a thing to go on here. And that's tragic because God wants to move among us supernaturally. All of the gifts of the spirit are available to us today, and he wants those to be functioning in and through our lives as his people.

And that's so much powerful, beautiful ministry goes on when those things are happening. But if we have an attitude that we can dispense with that, we don't need that. That was for another generation.

Well, you know, that's kind of messy and we don't want to deal with it, then we are going to be severely deprived of something glorious and something wonderful that God wants to do in our lives. A prophetic word. If someone is sitting there and something is revealed to them, you see what happens is God just speaks a word to a person and then they share it.

And then sure enough, you know, someone knows that that is the very word I needed to hear. Many times that will happen from the pulpit ministry as well, but we can't just leave it there. We have to, we have to be open to having it experienced by the larger body of Christ.

You see, the Christian faith is not a spectator activity. It's something that every single believer is to be a participant in. We're not merely to, you know, just sort of sit in the bleachers and watch a few people use their gifts.

We need to realize that God wants to work those gifts through all of our lives. And so we're told not to despise prophecy, not to put it down or belittle it. I heard some years ago, one of the very well-known Bible teacher with an international radio ministry.

And he was talking about the gifts of the spirit and he was actually talking about the gift of tongues. And he said this, and it astounded me. I couldn't believe that I heard him say it.

Heard it with my own ears. He said, I don't want to say, now he comes from a theological camp generally that just completely denies the existence of the gifts. And some people even go to the extreme of saying, if anybody's speaking in tongues today, they're actually under the influence of the devil, not under the influence of the Holy spirit.

He didn't go that far, but he, when he talked about tongues, he said, well, you know, tongues, I don't know about that. Sort of dismissed it a bit. He said, I don't know about it, but all I know is this.

I'd never been weak enough to need anything like that in my life. I was astounded to hear that. Never been weak enough.

Well, that's tragic because his experience of God's power is quite limited then because the power of God upon our lives is in direct proportion to our weakness. If I'm real strong, then I'm going to have a limited amount of God's power in my life. It's when I'm weak.

Paul said that I'm strong, but that I tell you that story because that's the mentality. That's the attitude that, that many people hold today when it comes to this whole topic of the gifts of the spirit and the working of the Holy spirit in the body of Christ today, they just dismiss it as it's not for us today. Many of them and then others who will agree that, you know, theologically at least that it is for us yet.

Well, we just don't have room for that here or time for that, or we just can't do that. I say we need to make room. We need to make time.

We need to realize that this is not dispensable stuff that you can just start. Well, we don't really need that. This is stuff we need.

We need the spirit of God working in all of his fullness among us. We need that gift of prophecy. That's where that edification, that exhortation, that comfort so often will come.

Now it doesn't have to be an environment where you only have a few people sitting there waiting on the Lord. I mean, you know, sometimes it can happen in a very natural, supernatural way as well, where somebody will just approach you and just say, you know, I just, I don't feel like the Lord just has something for me to share with you. And then they'll, they'll speak out a scripture maybe or something like, and your, your heart, you bear witness with it.

You embrace it. You, you know, that is the Lord. That's prophecy when that happens.

So if you have a sense that God's putting something on your heart to share with somebody, don't be afraid to do that. Step out and do that because that could be the very word of encouragement that they need. But we have to also be aware of the fact that sometimes there are people who get it wrong.

Sometimes there are people even with false motives. They're coming to prophesy, you know, hate to be on the guy girl thing all night, but you know, see a cute girl and hi, what's your name? The Lord told me that we're supposed to be married. You need to wait for confirmation for that, if that happens to you.

When, I'll tell you a good way to, to kind of sense when it's, it's genuinely a word from the Lord, you will bear witness to it. It's, I think that so often prophecy is really, it's not the, when, when the prophetic word comes, it's not the first time you've had these thoughts. It's actually more of a thing that comes along to confirm what you've already been sensing the Lord is telling you, but you weren't quite sure it was actually him.

That's a prophetic word. So you receive it, you know it. If somebody comes up to you and says, thus says the Lord, brother, let me tell you what God's saying to you.

You know, he's going to judge you and, you know, blow up your house and, you know, you're going to be dead in three days. People do, you know, we used to have this guy around here and he drifted all around Southern California and he thought he was Elijah and he would come into the church and he would pronounce doom and judgment and, oh, wrath. And I mean, he literally grew his beard out.

He had leather, you know, he thought he was Elijah. And he'd come around and you'd see him coming and you'd say, oh great, here he comes again, you know. And of course he wasn't a prophet, but he thought he was, but it was always judgment.

It was always wrath. And sometimes people come and that's what they, God's called me to pronounce judgment upon this sinful church and this sinful generation and all that, you know, rubbish. You're going to bear witness to it.

You're going to sense that, man, this is the Lord speaking to me. But we've got to be open to that. That's what he says, despise not prophesying.

Test all things, hold fast what is good. Remember even back in 1 Corinthians, Paul says, let two or three prophesy and let others test. So test these things.

Don't just take what somebody says is directly from God. And many people's lives have been ruined practically by just taking at face value without any testing or whatever. Hey, this guy told me that this is what God had, you know.

And so that's what I did and now their life is a mess. And you know, there are, you have two camps when it comes to this. You have the camp that I've already talked about who just say, no, we're not into the supernatural.

But then you have this other camp over here that everything is a prophecy meeting and everybody prophesies and everybody goes, hey, you got a word for me? I've got a word for you. And you know, that's not realistic. You know, that's fanaticism.

I'll never forget a guy who had a word from the Lord that he was to go to another country and he was going to be a great evangelist and he was going to lead the whole nation to Christ and all of this. And he packed up his family and he moved over there. And nine months later, he was home and he was broke and he was upset and he was confused because it was the exact opposite experience of what he expected.

But it was a foolish move in the first place. You have to test these things. So test all things, hold fast to what is good, abstain from every form of evil.

Very similar to some of the exhortations in the latter part of Romans. In Romans, Paul says, abhor evil, cling to what is good. So he's saying here, abstain from every form of evil.

Now, the King James Version says, abstain from all appearance of evil. That is not really the best translation. The word is form, abstain from every form of evil.

It means abstain from evil, real evil, abstain from it, stay away from it, don't go anywhere near it. Now, you see, the idea to abstain from every appearance of evil. Now, there are other passages that also speak to us about, you know, not doing things that could stumble another person.

But the whole idea of abstaining from every appearance of evil, you can take that and I think you can misapply it. You can carry it too far. Jesus, of course, what did they say about Jesus? They said he's a drunkard and he associates with tax collectors and winebibbers.

He's a friend of sinners. Well, how did Jesus get that reputation? Well, he was with those people. Now, you see, some would say, oh Jesus, you didn't abstain from an appearance of evil there.

But you see, that's not, that would be taking it beyond. We are called to abstain from real evil, every form of what is truly evil. But there are times when something might appear one way, but in actuality, that's not the case at all.

And, you know, I don't think that that's something God's restriction is from. When we went into Eastern Europe in the earliest days of our ministry there, and there were no Christians that we knew, and everything we were doing was just, you know, street evangelism. And a lot of what we did was were in bars, discos, and pubs.

And this is where the people were, and this is where God opened the doors. And we would go in, and, you know, everybody would be smoking and drinking and doing all the things that you do in a bar or a pub or a disco. And we'd be up on the stage singing worship songs and preaching the gospel.

Now, some people might have thought, well, you know, you should abstain from the evil. You shouldn't go in that place. Well, again, that's where I think it's a misapplication and an unfortunate misinterpretation of the word.

We weren't going in there to sin. We were going in there to reach out to the sinners. And that, of course, is legitimate, and that's something that God would have us to do as He would lead us.

So what He doesn't want us to be involved in is in evil. Anything that is actually evil, we are to abstain from that. Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I love that. God Himself, the God of peace, sanctify you completely. God is going to do that in our lives.

He's, as we just yield ourselves to Him, He's going to sanctify us, and our whole spirit, soul, and body, He will preserve us blameless. God's going to keep us. He'll keep you from sin.

He'll keep you from evil. That's what He does. What's my role? What do I do? I yield to Him.

I surrender to Him. And He does that sanctifying work in my life, and that's what He goes on, He says in verse 24, He who calls you is faithful who also will do it. God's going to do it.

He that has begun a good work in you will complete it. Brethren, pray for us. Greet all the brethren with a holy kiss.

J. Verna McGee said, a warm handshake will do. I charge you by the Lord that this epistle be read to all the holy brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.

Let's pray. Lord, thank you that you speak to us, and Lord, that you want to be moving among us through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, and Lord, that you want to bless us with prophecy, and Lord, that you want to be speaking into our lives, and you want us to be sensitive to that. You want us to hear your voice, so Lord, help us not to quench the Spirit, and if we've done that, Lord, please soften our hearts.

Give us a fresh sensitivity and tenderness to the voice of the Holy Spirit so we're not quenching the Spirit in any way. But Lord, that we're experiencing that full work of the Spirit in our lives. Lord, do a fresh work of the Spirit among us, we pray.

Lord, that we might truly be people who are full of joy. Lord, that we might find our days are taken up with the things of the Spirit, with praying, and Lord, that we would be a thankful people. Thank you that you are preserving us blameless until your coming, that you're faithful.

Lord, we know that you delight to bless your people, and we receive that blessing tonight, and we thank you for it. In Jesus' name, amen.

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