

**“Don’t Put Out the Fire”  
1 Thessalonians 5:19 – 22**

Who here is absolutely reliant on your calendar?  
Like, if you don’t put it on the calendar, you’re lost?  
Who has one on the wall?  
Who has navigated to the digital realm?

We here have a collective calendar, a Christian calendar or Church calendar, that marks different seasons and different Christian celebrations.

We have Lent. Lent is the forty days leading up to Easter.  
We have Advent; Advent is the four Sundays leading up to Christmas Day.  
These are about preparing ourselves for significant times in the year.

For Pentecost – the celebration of the giving of the Holy Spirit – there is no lead in.

However, in the good Protestant tradition of breaking with tradition, today *is* a lead in to next Sunday, Pentecost Sunday.

And so I have a short passage from 1 Thessalonians to share with you; 1 Thessalonians 5 verses 19 to 22:

“Do not quench the Spirit.  
Do not treat prophecies with contempt but test them all;  
hold on to what is good, reject whatever is harmful.”

This verse is very similar to another that Paul wrote.  
In Ephesians chapter 4 Paul says, do not *grieve* the Holy Spirit.

Here he says do not *quench* the Holy Spirit.

What’s the difference?

Well, one has to do with the *person* of the Holy Spirit; *who He is*.  
You see, the Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of God, is a person; He is not an impersonal force.  
He has mind, will and emotions  
And as feeling Person he can be saddened; he can be pained by what we do.  
He can be grieved.

Here when it talks about not quenching the Holy Spirit it's talking about *what He does* – the *activity* of the Spirit.

This verse is also translated as, “Do not put out the Spirit’s fire”.

In other words, when He comes into our lives the Holy Spirit isn't passive.

He goes to work; He is active.

He takes up residence in our individual lives.

There is a Gift-giver. He brings about life-change and transformation.

He gives new life, with new desires and new habits and new purpose and meaning.

The Holy Spirit takes all that Jesus has accomplished and makes it real in our own lives.

He is the Spirit by which God adopts us as His children so that we can truly call Him our Father.

That means in practice, on a Sunday morning for example, the key agent at work in the worship service isn't the preacher (as good as he or she might be) or the musicians (as great as they may be) – it is the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit through His presence and all His different workings can *put a fire in your life* – a fire to bring light and heat and warmth, fire in eyes, passion in our hearts and zeal in our bellies.

We also know this isn't always our experience because *this fire can be doused*.

We're told, “Do not put out the Spirit’s fire”, “Do not quench the Spirit”.

The Holy Spirit, who is the Lord who acts in these amazing ways, His activity in our lives can be dampened.

So here's my question: how does this happen?

***“How is the Holy Spirit quenched?”***

***“If the Spirit’s fire can be put out, how does that happen?”***

Tell the person next to you.

We're told one here in the text – “Do not treat prophecies with contempt...”

Prophecy is a gift of the Spirit.

By the Spirit people seek to know and speak God's mind and will to God's people.

It can be predictive but more often it addresses the present.

Preaching is a prophetic act.

A preacher seeks to hear what the Spirit is saying to the church through Scripture.

There is also prophecy that is spontaneous, Spirit-inspired and understandable.

There is significant difference between the two though.

Scripture speaks to all people, in all places and in all times. It tells about faith in God, salvation through Jesus alone, the hope we have and how we live as people of the King.

It governs the whole of Christian life.

What the gift of prophecy does is that it speaks to the particular or specific circumstances we are facing.

Both are communicated in a way that people are built up, encouraged, comforted and even, at times, convicted.

And of course there are always those who are... off centre....

Like the woman who stood up in the middle of a service claiming to have a word prophecy. She stood in a trance-like state and spoke with an unnatural heavy voice. Everyone waited in anticipation when she said boldly, "Thus saith the Lord... even as Moses led the animals in the ark, even so shall I lead My people to safety if they trust in Me."

And sat down.

But then people started whispering – "Did she say *Moses*, led the animals into the ark?"

Then the woman stood up again, in a trance, and belted out, "Thus saith the Lord... it wasn't *Moses*, it was *Noah*!" and sat down.

However Paul says we have a God who wants to put a fire in our hearts and we have to be attentive to when He is moving and speaking.

For me, one of the most powerful examples comes from a guy who had a powerful ministry of song and speech where he would call people – Christians more often than not – to get their lives right with God, to confess their sins and receive the forgiveness offered in Jesus and give their lives over to God in a fresh way.

One time he was given the opportunity to speak and play music at a prestigious Christian University. He was given one night that became three.

So in weeks leading up this guy and his team fasted and prayed asking that God would move and speak. And each night of ministry a grew in numbers, intensity, and deep conviction of sin. This was bigger than they could imagine.

It was obvious that God was moving deeply on people's hearts. This guy was worshiping and silently pleading with the Lord to have His way. The presence of the Spirit was stunning.

The third night of ministry was bathed in fasting and prayer again, and there was a sense of holy fear and hopeful anticipation bubbling beneath the surface.

At the altar-call on the third night the crowd was again moved by God, and one by one they filled the stage and the aisles, on their knees. But this night it was different.

These students spontaneously stood and lined up at a microphone(!) to openly repent before their peers.

(So that's what we're going to do this morning... no that would be inappropriate☺).

The thing was, the presence of the Lord was almost tangible. The confessions were candid.

But then, without warning, a university administrator took the microphone to bring a word of "caution".

And with that the auditorium went flat.

You could hear a pin drop.

God's presence withdrew so abruptly it stunned everyone. There was nothing anyone could do. It was over.

The fire has been put out.

If the Lord is speaking to you – whether it be here or in your quiet time or through a prophetic word - don't dismiss it, don't cast it aside.

The Spirit of God is wanting to do something great in your life.

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Of course it's limited to simply prophecy.

When it comes to the Holy Spirit, I think there are expectations.

For one, it's about what the Holy Spirit must do!  
There's a presumption.  
The thing is, *what God does sometimes He doesn't do all the time.*

The other side of this is there are some people who say there are things the Holy Spirit *must not do*.  
They say for instance, prophecy was for then but not today.  
Healing was for then but not now.  
God is not doing that anymore.

Now Paul does say, test everything.  
God always works in accordance with character and what is revealed in Scripture.  
But the Spirit is also the Lord and God.

I think a better word, and I've talked about this before, is expectancy.

This belief that the Holy Spirit recorded as being active in Scripture is the same Holy Spirit active in the church today.

It's this anticipation that the Holy Spirit would be present is will do new things in our lives.

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So that's about our response.

What I've also found in my own life, and others can probably attest to this, is we have to monitor what is going on in our own lives.

Two weeks ago during our service here, I had the word 'lumbered'.  
And last week I had the sense that God was saying the same.

To be lumbered is to move under a heavy, awkward weight.  
It's be encumbered. Weighed down. Burdened.  
And what I've experienced, what I've is when we're weighed down, lumbered with a weight too heavy to carry, it douses the Holy Spirit's fire in us.

By the way, do you what the signs are that you're burdened?  
That you're carrying stuff?  
They come in all shapes and sizes:



Some are old and tatty. Some are brand new.  
Some we've been carrying for too long.

So for yourself,

***"How do you know if you're burdened?"***

Do you know the signs; can you pick them?

If you feel comfortable, tell the person next to you.

Okay, get your checklist out:

You don't sleep well.

You may wake up in the middle of the night thinking about an issue or issues or it may even invade your dreams.

Here's one and I want you to hear this: you sigh a lot.

*\*sigh\**

We all sigh at times but when you're burdened it's constant.

Another: you feel it's weight almost physically.

A weight on you mind becomes like a weight on your body.

The shoulders slump.

So you feel it's weight.. and it also takes your focus.

As a consequence, the Spirit's fire is dimmed.

And if that's you, the question is, *what cooled things off?*

Is it a disappointment you're still carrying?

It is an insolvable predicament that you can't see your way out of?

For some it could be need to hear the word of forgiveness.

Or it could be the need to offer forgiveness.

Is there a need to get before the Lord and unload your burdens?

Do you need help?

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So as we come into Pentecost next week, how's the Spirit's fire in your life?

Is there something burning in your heart or is it embers this morning?