

Series: Characteristics of Spiritual Growth

Keeping the Fire Burning - 1 Thessalonians 5:19

Introduction: For the past few weeks, we've been looking at what a growing Christian looks like. I hope you've not just been taking these as just sermons, but rather as spiritual check-ups. I hope you've allowed God to deal with your hearts in your relationship with Him, and see how you measure up in these areas. Let me remind you of the six other Characteristics of a Growing Christian we've already covered in this series:

A spiritually growing Christian is Confident in their relationship with the Lord; Knows and Obeys the Word of God; Loves the Church; Demonstrates Constant Joy; Prays Persistently; and Lives a Life of Thanksgiving.

This morning, we'll add a final characteristic to our list. Paul says in 1 Thess. 5:19, "*Do not put out the Spirit's Fire.*" In other words, a growing Christian will keep the Spiritual fire alive and burning in their lives, because he understands that his spiritual growth is directly related to the Holy Spirit's impact in their lives.

Every Christian should want to be spiritually powerful. By that, I mean, we should want to have God at work in our lives, conforming us to the image of Christ. Why do we need to be spiritually powerful? Because there are some things we just cannot do in our own power. Without Spiritual Power:

We can't keep the commands of the Lord.

We can't love the unlovable.

We can't forgive the unforgivable.

We can't minister to the miserable.

We can't persevere under persecution.

We can't overcome temptations.

We can't avert our anger.

We can't share our faith with the sinner.

We need spiritual power to keep on keeping on.

There is no substitute for spiritual power in our lives. That's why the growing Christian must keep the fire of the Holy Spirit going in their lives. I want us to look at this verse in three different ways, and see why we must keep the fire burning. First, there is:

1. The Identity

Before we can go any further, we must correctly discern what Paul means when he identifies the Spirit in

this verse. What Spirit is he is talking about? **Eph. 4:4 (NIV)** says, “*There is one body and one Spirit...*” This is not just any spirit. This is the Holy Spirit. There are three distinct characteristics of the Holy Spirit that make Him unique. First:

A. The Holy Spirit is Personal. The Holy Spirit is not an “*it*.” Jesus said in **John 16:13 (NIV)**, “*But when He, the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on His own. He will speak only what He hears, and He will tell you what is yet to come.*” The Holy Spirit is personal because He can act and He can be acted upon. He taught the apostles. He bore witness of Christ. He guides Christians. He convicts the world. He sent some into service. He intercedes for Christians. He searches the things of God. Peter obeyed Him. Ananias lied to Him. He can be resisted, grieved, blasphemed, and quenched. So when we speak about the Holy Spirit, we are not talking about an “*it*” or a force. We are talking about someone who is personal!

B. The Holy Spirit is Deity. The Father is God. The Son is God and the Spirit is God. We can’t explain how, but we don’t have to. We just need to believe the Scriptures.

Jesus said, “*And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever.*” (John 14:16 NIV). The word “*another*” means “*of the same kind.*” Jesus is Deity and in order for the Holy Spirit to be “*the same kind*” of Helper He too must be Deity. This means the Holy Spirit is eternal, omniscient, omnipresent, and omnipotent. He is truth. He is Holy. He was involved in creation. He is inspiration of Scripture. The Holy Spirit is everything God is, so it’s impossible to know God without knowing the Holy Spirit. Third:

C. The Holy Spirit is our Helper. God the Father designed the plan of salvation. The Son carried out the plan by becoming flesh and dying on the Cross. But the Holy Spirit completes the plan by helping those who accept God’s plan of Salvation.

You see, we’re not in this battle alone. We might fail one another, but the Holy Spirit will always help us out. But He doesn’t do it for us. He does not force Himself on us. He doesn’t make us worship. He doesn’t make us come to Church, or study our Bible, or pray, or love one another, or give sacrificially. In fact, He doesn’t make us do anything. He is our helper.

We read earlier in John 14:16 that Jesus referred to the Holy Spirit as a Counselor. The word translated “*Comforter*” is “*Paraklete*” which literally means “*called to one’s side for the purpose of aiding.*” It also means “*one who pleads another’s cause before a judge, a counsel for defense, legal assistant, and advocate.*” This means, if you are a Christian you have someone on your side to will stand with you when others might

abandon you. He will comfort you when others would tear you apart. He will plead your case when you're under a fiery trial. He will help you understand the Word. He will help you grow in the knowledge of our Lord. He will help you during the storms of life. He will help you walk in the light. But He will not do it for you. God knows we need some help!

Furthermore we know the Holy Spirit is our Helper because what Paul said in **Rom. 8:26 (NIV)**, "*And in the same way the Spirit helps in our weakness...*" We all have weaknesses. But we also have a helper. The word "*helps*" means "*to take hold of the opposite together.*" That means when the burdens get heavy and our faith becomes weak; the Holy Spirit gets on the opposite end of our weaknesses and helps us lift them. What a wonderful and faithful helper we have in the person of the Holy Spirit! Secondly, I want you to notice:

2. The Indictment

When Paul told these Christians not to "*put out the Spirit's fire.*" apparently, he knew there were some professional fire fighters in this church who were experts at extinguishing the work and influence of the Holy Spirit in the lives of others. Sadly, there seem to be some in every church.

Some fires need to be extinguished. House fire and wildfires, for example, need to be extinguished. But there are some fires that never need to be extinguished. The Prophet Jeremiah said, "*...His word is in my heart like a fire, a fire shut up in my bones...*" (20:9 NIV). The fire of preaching and teaching should never be extinguished. The fire to worship God in Spirit and in truth should never be extinguished. The fire for spiritual renewal should never be extinguished. The fire for walking in the Spirit should never be extinguished. The fire for serving the Lord should never be extinguished. The fire for living godly and holy lives should never be extinguished. But sadly, when these fires are quenched in the church, it stops growing.

How do you know if you have quenched the Spirit? Quenching the Spirit will be evident in many ways. Every aspect of your spiritual life will be hindered. Quenching the Spirit will result in lifeless, powerless, aimless, meaningless, and fruitless Christians. This is a serious matter. The Holy Spirit is God in us and if we quench His influence in us, the results will be devastating in the life of the church.

One indicator of "*quenching the Spirit*" is fruitlessness. Paul said in **Gal. 5:22-23 (NIV)**, "*...the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control...*" A lack of spiritual fruit means you have quenched the Spirit. I read from a black preacher who put it this way: He said the Spirit has been quenched:

When your **love is lost.**

When your **joy** has **jumped ship**.

When your **peace** has **parted**.

When your **patience** has **puttered** out.

When your **kindness** has gone **ka-put**

When your **goodness** is **gone**.

When your **faithfulness** has **faltered**.

When your **gentleness** is has **galloped away**.

When your **self-control** has said “*so-long*.”

Another indicator of “*quenching the Spirit*” is that your mind will be controlled by sin. Paul said in **Rom. 8:6 (NIV)**, “*The mind of sinful man is death; but the mind controlled on the Spirit is life and peace.*”

Christians whose thinking is controlled by sin will seek to please the flesh rather than the Spirit. They’ll do everything they can to silence the Spirit. They don’t want to hear the Spirit because their minds are set on the things of the flesh. They’d rather stay home than worship in the Lord’s house. They’d rather play than pray. They’d rather sit than sing. They’d rather read the paper than read the Bible. They’re more concerned with their career than their condition. Why? Because the Spirit of God has been quenched in their lives.

And when this happens, they tend to become firefighters in the Church. They stand ready with their fire hose to extinguish the influence and impact of the Holy Spirit. They’re miserable and misery loves company. So they don’t want anyone to be on fire. They’re distracted, so they become disruptive. They’re fizzled out, so they find fault. They’re offended, so they hold back on their offering. They’ll disagree with everything, complain at nothing, and blow up like a bullfrog over anything.

These are all fire fighting techniques. But the only reason they want the fire extinguished is because they’re afraid of being burned themselves. Paul said in **1 Cor. 3:13 (NASB)**, “*Each man’s work will become evident; for the day will show it, because it is to be revealed with fire; and the fire itself will test the quality of each man’s work.*” Some don’t want to see others on fire for the Lord because it makes their work look like wood, hay, and stubble. And when this happens, watch out! You’re walking on dangerous ground because you’ve quenched the Spirit. But finally, we see:

3. The Imperative

When Paul says, “*Do not put out the Spirit’s fire,*” he’s also saying be a keeper of the flame. Be the kind of Christian who allows God to be in control. Keep the fire burning because great things happen when God is in

the driver's seat.

Don't be afraid of the Spirit of God in your life! Don't fear the consequences of walking in faith. Don't run from the fire of God because fire cannot burn God's people. Look at Shadrach, Meshak, and Abednego. They were thrown into a fiery furnace for their faith. But the fire didn't hurt them. They didn't even smell like they had ever been in the fire. The fire was seven times hotter than normal and it killed the man that put them in the fire. But they were not harmed because God was with them in the fire!

So whenever we are in the fire of life, we should not fear because the Holy Spirit is with us. Peter said, *"That the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ"* (1 Peter 1:7).

Conclusion: So Christian, Keep the Flame Burning! Church, Keep the Flame Burning! Be confident in your faith! Love the Church! Rejoice always! Pray persistently! Live a life of thanksgiving! Keep the Spiritual Fire Burning, and God will honor and reward your righteousness.

Keep the Fire Burning! Be filled with the Spirit. Grieve not the Spirit. Walk in the Spirit. Be led by the Spirit. Walk in the Light. Keep the Fire Burning!