

1 Thess. 5:16-22 (WCF 17:3) “Quenching the Spirit”

For the Children: When we are sick we often take medicine – perhaps a spoonful of liquid, or a tablet or an injection. Some children don't like to do that. They close their mouth or push the medicine away. That is not a good idea if it helps you get better, or even keeps you alive. The Lord has given His children help to keep us spiritually alive: the Bible and sacraments; prayer; the work of His Holy Spirit, who also creates attitudes and fruits in us that help us greatly. We should use those helps, rather than pushing them away. For that is how the Lord enables us to keep being His children. **Questions:** Can a true child of God stop being His completely? If that cannot happen, why do we have to use the helps He gives us? What are some of the ways that the Holy Spirit could be “quenched” or “grieved”?

Introduction:

First Point: Help for Persevering

- 1) Sanctification and Perseverance: V.23 shows that the context in this chapter involves sanctification and perseverance, in contrast to those who will be “asleep” when the Lord returns. Perseverance is essentially sanctification that keeps on going until it is complete. Like sanctification, it involves God's gracious help and our cooperation with His Spirit. That view of it prevents a fatalistic approach. God uses *means* to preserve us, so we must use those means to cooperate with His Spirit.
- 2) Means of Preservation: The “means of preservation” (WCF 17:3) are the same as the “means of grace”: God's Word; the sacraments; and prayer. The Holy Spirit also creates certain fruits/graces within us to aid us.
- 3) Prophetic Utterances: In NT times, God's Word was often delivered by prophetic utterance. These were not to be despised. They were a form of special revelation. Today, our only form of special revelation is Scripture. If we read it, hear it preached, meditate on it and seek to apply it, the Lord will use it to preserve us in the faith. The sacraments are also a form of the Word that especially appeals to the senses.
- 4) Prayer and Thankfulness: Continual prayer (praise, thanksgiving, confession of sin, intercession and supplication) brings us back to God's sovereignty, goodness and grace – along with our dependency upon Him. These reminders motivate us to persevere. Thankfulness is singled out in v. 18. It, too, motivates us to persevere in serving the God who is so good to us.
- 5) The Fruit of Joy: V.16 commands us to “rejoice always.” Joy is a deep sense of the rightness of God's will, coupled with a delight in the blessedness and goodness of it. It is an attitude that can remain even in the midst of pain and grief. That is essential if we are to persevere through pain and grief.

Second Point: Hindrances to Persevering

- 1) Despising the Word: Though true believers will ultimately be preserved, despising God's Word does damage to our relationship with the Lord and dishonors Him. It does harm to us as well. A true believer may not settle into a final rejection of God's Word, but we do fall into disobedience at times; also neglect of the Word (read and preached). The same may be true of our participation in the sacraments. Such behavior undermines our enjoyment of God's preserving grace.
- 2) Despising Prayer: The same is true of the neglect of prayer. If we are neglecting prayer, we are probably also neglecting to express our thanks as we should.
- 3) Lack of Cooperation with the Spirit: We need the work of the Holy Spirit in us to enable us to benefit from the Word, to offer acceptable prayer, to maintain gratitude to God and to display the fruits of the Spirit – including joy. It is therefore a hindrance to our enjoyment of God's preserving grace to “quench the Spirit” (v.19). See also Eph.4:30. The Spirit cannot ultimately be quenched by men – He is sovereign. The term means that He will partially withdraw from us, removing some measure of grace and comfort, give us over to a partially hardened conscience (WCF 17:3). We may then also be open to temporal judgements and bring hurt to others. Since no believer should desire any of these problems, we should all seek the help of God's Spirit and apply ourselves to the means He uses.

Conclusion: