



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

6420 Churchill Way | Dallas, Texas | 75230 | t 972.239.5371 | believerschapeldallas.org

The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Miscellaneous Topics

“Quenching the Spirit”

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] For the Scripture reading today will you turn with me first to 1 Corinthians chapter 14? 1 Corinthians chapter 14. I want to read verses 23 through 33 and then just a few verses from 1 Thessalonians chapter 5. Due to the fact that next Sunday I expect to be in Houston at the Woodridge Baptist Church preaching, it is very difficult to start a new series and then be gone the very next week. By the way Dr. Waltke will be speaking next Sunday here. Beginning the week after that or two weeks from today, we want to begin a study of the prophecy of Zechariah in the light of current events, and I think it would be very good for you if in the mean time, you read the prophecy of Zechariah at least once a day. It's only fourteen chapters. Most of them are short, and also it will prepare you for the ministry of the Word and the weeks that follow.

Today I want to give a single message, one of a series, which I hope from time to time to pick up at just odd intervals such as this and complete on great texts on the church, and the subject for today is Quenching the Spirit. So for the Scripture reading lets read 1 Corinthians chapter 14, versus 23 through 33 and then 1 Thessalonians 5:19 through 22.

Now, remember in the context of this 14th chapter of 1 Corinthians the apostle is dealing primarily with some difficulties that existed in the church at Corinth concerned

with utterance gifts, that is speaking in tongues, prophecy, teaching and so on. The Corinthians had a great deal of gift in their local church. Many were able to preach and teach and speak with tongues and prophesy and as a result of this there was confusion and tumult in the local church and the apostle writes to correct it, and we are looking particularly at the section in which he is giving some principles for the regulation of spiritual gifts in the meeting of the local church.

Now if this seems very odd to you as I read it, and seems to have no real application to our churches today, it is because we do not meet as the churches in which the apostles met, met. Verse 23,

“If therefore the whole church be come together into one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those that are unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad?” For example if we were to begin our morning service with a brief time in which several spoke in tongues, I am quite sure that some of you who are in this audience today would think that we were mad and of course you would be perfectly correct in thinking so to, for we would be mad if that happened today. Well remember, and I just say this once and you just remember it, speaking in tongues was a temporary gift designed to authenticate the Word in the early days of the church. It no longer exists according to the New Testament teaching today. Also the gift of prophecy does not exist any longer. For the gift of prophecy was the gift of bringing to the people of God new revelation concerning the will of God. It was not teaching. It was not exhortation. It was the bringing to the people of God of new revelation. Since the word of God is complete, we have no more prophets. We may have men who speak like prophets, in the sense that they are forthright, and firm, and seem to be sure of what they say, and dogmatic as the prophets, but we have no one today who can really say, “Thus saith the Lord” unless he is quoting Scripture, and so we do not have today the gift of prophecy. We do not have today the gift of tongues, but we do have many other utterance gifts such as evangelists. We have teachers. We have pastor teachers. We have the gift of

exhortation, and we have the gift of ministry, so on. So let's be careful to limit our understanding of what the text says to what the New Testament says, at the same time not rule out everything because some things are no longer valid.

“But if all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all: And thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth. How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying. If any man speak in an unknown tongue, let it be by two, or at the most by three, and that by course; and let one interpret. (In other words if someone were to jump up in the meeting and speak gibberish, and no one is there to interpret, to tell us what he has really said, that person should keep absolutely quite, even in the early days of the church when there was such a thing as the gift of speaking in tongues. That means that all ecstatic speech is not New Testament speaking in tongues.) But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church; and let him speak to himself, and to God. Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge. (You'll notice the apostle countenances the speaking of several people in the meeting.) If any thing be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace. (No long-winded prophets in the meeting after they have already finished with their message.) For ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted. 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 churches of the saints.”

It's good to have many speaking, Paul would say, but let them speak according to the rules for speaking. Now turn over a few pages in your New Testament to 1 Thessalonians chapter 5, and let's read beginning with the 19th verse through the 22 verse.

Now this text has direct reference to the passage that we have just read, in the sense that it's context is generally speaking the same. Notice the 19th verse. “Quench not the Spirit. Despise not prophesyings. (Did you notice the connection? “Despise not prophesyings, Quench not the spirit.” This is a text addressed to the whole church.) Prove all things; (That is test the utterances of the prophets and others.) Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. Abstain from (If I may be allowed to retranslate this from the Greek text.) Abstain from every form of evil.” May God bless this reading of his word? Lets bow together in prayer.

[Prayer] Our gracious God and heavenly Father, we thank Thee for the privilege of meeting in the name our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, for the privilege of opening the Scriptures, for the privilege of studying them, for the privilege of having the Holy Spirit as our teacher and guide who knows the Scriptures for he has written the Scriptures. We thank Thee for his infallible instructions.

We realize Lord that that we are not infallible, that we are fallible, faulty, sinful, that our best utterances contain chaff within it, but we thank Thee for he him who teaches, and may as we study today our minds and our thoughts be subject to him. May we listen to the word of God with intentness and openness, and may we desire to be taught of the things that concern the plans and programs, which thou has for us in this day.

We think Lord of the tremendous events that are happening in the Near East with the Nation Israel and the nations about them, the things that are happening in China, which presage great things in the future, and we know Lord that the hope of the Christian is in the word of God that the comfort that comes is the comfort of the Scriptures, and so we pray that Thou wilt enable us to know this word in a deeper way and in a closer way and in a more practical way. We thank Thee for each one present. We thank Thee for the problems of life, which draw us to Thee. We thank Thee for the blessings of life, and

pray oh God that they too may draw us to Thee as well. We pray for our country. We pray for the preaching of the Word wherever it may be going forth at this moment. And we pray that Thy purpose for us as a local church may be accomplished, and also as an individual. So we commit our meeting to Thee and this gathering of the people of God and our friends, and pray that the Holy Spirit may work in our hearts to the glorification of Jesus Christ. For it is in his name that we pray. Amen.

[Message] Our subject for today, as I mentioned before the Scripture reading in his great texts on the church, Quenching the Spirit. There are some biblical texts so commonly misused that the error has become established as truth in most of our minds. For example if many of us were to turn to the Old Testament and read the third chapter of the prophecy of Malachi and the 10th verse, “Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in mine house, and prove me now herewith saith the Lord of Hosts, if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you a blessing that there shall not be room enough to receive it.”

Most of you would probably say, well perhaps not in Believer's Chapel but many of you would say in the ordinary Christian gathering, “That is the text that has to do with the New Testament teaching concerning the tithe.” Because you see this text has often been used to support the practice of tithing in the local church. It is overlooked of course that this is an Old Testament text, furthermore it is overlooked that the Apostle Paul has some New Testament chapters devoted to giving in the local church that the tithe is not a New Testament principle at all, that the apostles would not have known anything about it whatsoever in the gatherings, which they had in the early days of the Christian church. But it is a text and an ideal that is so ingrained in our minds that to even question it in many of our churches is regarded as immediately classifying that person as a fanatic or a fool or someone who wants to be a maverick in spiritual things.

If I were to read to you the 2nd Psalm in the 8th verse in which the psalmist speaks about the fact that there is a promise given to the Son of God that he shall have the nations for his inheritance it would probably be thought by many that this is a perfectly valid text on biblical missions, or it is often quoted in the context of biblical missions, and that that text is first of all written for that reason. As you study the Old Testament and particularly that Psalm of course you realize that that is not true, that that text does not have anything to do with biblical missions, missions of the New Testament church. If I were to read to you the Lord's prayer in Matthew chapter 6, verses 9 through 13, you would immediately think that this is the prayer that the Christian churches repeat Sunday after Sunday, and that there is absolutely nothing in this prayer that would tend to suggest that that practice is not according to the Scripture itself. And yet if you remember immediately before the saying of the Lord's Prayer, so called Jesus had said,

“But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions as the heathen do, for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not ye therefore like unto them, for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask him. After this manner therefore pray ye, our Father which art in heaven.”

And so what do we do? We repeat it Sunday after Sunday in spite of the fact that Jesus has said two verses before that we should not use vain repetitions as the heathen do.

Now I am not going to talk about the question of whether we should pray that prayer. As you know Matthew says, “After this manner therefore pray you.” I am quite convinced in my own mind, I would not make this a text of orthodoxy of course, that the Lord Jesus never intended that they should just pray this prayer. As far as we know the apostle's never prayed the Lord's Prayer. No one else so far as we know ever prayed the Lord's Prayer. It was designed to be a model prayer. It was designed to show us how to

pray for example you can say this prayer in about thirteen seconds, that means be brief in your prayers, don't pray like so many long-winded preachers pray, and so many long-winded layman and laywomen too pray. It also means that you should pray concerning the interests of God first because he says, “Our Father which art in heaven hallowed be the Thy name.” But we have become so ingrained in error that we think that the church that does not repeat the Lord's Prayer on Sunday morning can hardly be called a standard Christian church, and yet the apostle's would not have felt in the other at all.

Now the text that we are going to study today, Quench not the spirit is also almost universally misunderstood by present day evangelicals. Now this is due to three things. It is due first of all to the historical situation. That is the early churches organization was so different from the organization of the early churches today that the text does not come within the purview of the average man's thought. He does not even consider the possibility that it might have reference to something else. The only thing that he can think of is that it must have reference to him personally. It has never come into his mind that it might refer to the church as a whole because he has not been in a situation in which there might be need for this prohibition, which the apostle mentions here.

The second reason that this text is misunderstood is because the average evangelical church today does not know very much if anything about the New Testament teaching on spiritual gifts. They do not realize that every Christian has a spiritual gift. Every single one of us, and that we are responsible before God to recognize what our gift is and to use that gift in the local church for the building up of the whole body of Christ. They do not even understand the concept of the church as a body of believers in which each one contributes to the general benefit and edification of all, and that each of us has our place. Regardless of who you may be, if you are a Christian you have a spiritual gift. And you are responsible to know that spiritual gift and to use that spiritual gift. Most do not know even know that they are supposed to have it, so how do they even begin to

investigate what it is, and then how to apply it and use it for the glory of God in the local church. That’s another reason why this text is neglected.

A third reason is that this text has been given some very erroneous interpretation by some of our popular Bible teachers. Fortunately the commentators on the Greek text, for the most part, have understood the meaning of this text. Generally speaking they look at the historical situation and they write out of that historical situation. It’s rather surprising. If you go to the commentaries, as I do in my study, I go to the commentaries on the Greek text and I notice that they discuss the historical situation and out of the historical situation interpret the passage. When I go to my commentaries written by Bible teachers who did not know Greek, and who did not read the commentaries of men who did, they are inclined to make a general application of this text and say that the quenching of the spirit has to do with the doctrine of the filling of the spirit.

Now what I am going to say, I want to preface by saying that Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer has about as much influence on my life as any other men. I revere him as one of the great saints of God. I think that his teaching was fine and clear, but it was not infallible, and furthermore I think that there were some things in which Dr. Chafer was wrong about, and this is definitely one. Dr. Chafer when we were in theological seminary used to tell us that the way to be filled by the Spirit was grieve not the Spirit, quench not the Spirit, walk by the Spirit.

Now that is not, I may say in an aside that is not the way to be filled by the Spirit. Those injunctions represent the results of the filling of the Spirit. A man who is filled in the Spirit, or by the Spirit will not grieve the Spirit. He is will not quench the Spirit and he will walk by the Spirit, but obviously that is the kind of injunction addressed to a man who is lost to say, “Save yourself.” It represents a kind of self-help, kind of synergism, which Dr. Chafer would not have himself countenanced at all.

Now it is sometimes said, and I can remember Bible teachers saying to me, that grieve not the Spirit, and to do with such things as unconfessed sin in the life, whereas quenching the Spirit has to do with the refusal to do God's will.

Now all of this is very needless and contrary to the teaching of the word of God. As a matter of fact the New Testament tells us that there are three closely related words descriptive of resistance to the Spirit's activity. Will you let me say that again? The New Testament says that there are three closely related words descriptive of resistance to the Spirit's activity. They are number one, the word resist itself. In Acts chapter 7 in verse 51, Stephen when he was preaching in the synagogue said in the 51st verse of Acts chapter 7, “Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised and harden ears ye do always resist the Holy Spirit, as your fathers did so do ye.”

Now that word resist was a word that Stephen used in order to describe the reaction of unbelievers to the word of God. If you are in the audience this morning, and I am sorry in one sense that you have come this morning because the message that I have this morning is addressed primarily to believers, but if you are here this morning and you are not a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ let me say very briefly and very pointedly for you the gospel of the Lord Jesus. It is of course that you are under divine condemnation. That you have displeased God, that you are a sinner, that Jesus Christ has died for your sins by shedding his blood for you upon the cross at Calvary, that God has loved you and desires you to become a Christian, and that you may become a Christian, a child of God, by simply believing in the one who died for you. You do not have to join the church. You do not have to be baptized. You do not have to pray through. You do not have to be a good citizen. The thief on the cross was not a good citizen. You do not have to be educated. You do not, and the New Testament says that you must not reform in order to be saved, though you should of course after you have been saved become a new person. The New Testament says you simply accept the message concerning Christ, and when you accept that in your heart and say, “Lord thank you for Jesus Christ who

died for me.” That moment you become a Christian. You are born again. God gives you a new life.

Now if you resist that message and if you say, “I don’t believe that salvation is that simple.” Then you do that which Stephen said that his heroes were doing. You resist the Holy Spirit. It is a word that applies to unbelievers. A few months ago my daughter was in this congregation. She was attending Southern Methodist University. This was before she graduated last year. She brought a very good friend of hers, a very fine young girl into the meeting.

Now this young girl was a Jewish girl, and she is a very fine person and we love her very much, and hope to win her to the Lord ultimately. This was the first time that she had come in the meeting. My daughter was kind of concerned about how she would respond, and didn’t even bother to say anything other afterwards, just wanted to see how she would respond. That afternoon they were together, and without any questioning from Grace, Karen turned to her and said, “Grace, I enjoyed hearing what your father said, this morning. I like his southern accent, but of course I do not accept anything that he said.”

Now she was resisting the Holy Spirit. That was her attitude to the word of God. She resisted the Holy Spirit. The word was given. She resisted it. She did not respond. That’s the word the New Testament uses for unbelievers. They resist the Holy Spirit.

Now the New Testament has a word for believers. In Ephesians chapter 4 in verse 30, the Apostle Paul says, “Grieve not the Holy Spirit or the Spirit of God, whereby you are sealed unto the day of redemption. Grieve not.” Now grieve is a love word. Only those who love can be grieved. If I didn’t love you in the Lord, I wouldn’t care what you did. If you went out and displeased the Lord and I didn’t love you, I wouldn’t have any reaction one-way or the other. What you do is your own business, but if I love you in the Lord I am grieved when you displease the Lord. Let’s bring it our own families. We really don’t care a whole a lot about what Mr. X’s children do over in Oak Cliff or Mr. Y’s

in North Dallas. It doesn't really affect us if we read of the most outlandish things that some of our kids do, but if one of our children does it, there's a great deal of difference, and if one of our children disobeys the laws of the land, we are grieved because we love.

Now the New Testament says, “Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God whereby you are sealed unto the day of redemption. Now when we disobey God, whether it be by a sin of omission or a sin of commission, we have grieved the Holy Spirit. That's the word that the New Testament uses of believers. They do not resist the Spirit. They grieve the Spirit according to the New Testament.

Now then the third word is the word of our text. “Quench not the Spirit.” Now this is a word that applies to believers because this text was written to a Christian assembly. But it applies to believers as a collective group. In other words, this is a word that applies to believers who are gathered together as a church, and who refuse the freedom of the exercise of spiritual gifts in the local church. “Quench not the Spirit.” This is a word addressed to the assembly as a whole as the context indicates. Did you notice the next clause? It says, “Despise not prophesyings.” Prophesying was a spiritual gift, which was exercised, in the local assembly. To quench not the Spirit then is to allow the local church to hear the gifted men in the meeting of the church. Do not put your foot down upon someone who is trying to prophesy, or someone who is trying to teach because you are displeased with what they are saying. “Quench not the Spirit” then is a word that applies to the church as a whole. Resist is a word that applies to unbelievers. Grieve is the word that applies to believers individually. “Quench not” is the word that applies to the church as a whole. In other words, here then we are exhorted by the Apostle Paul to allow the exercise of spiritual gifts in the meeting of the local church.

Now you see things are quite different. Not so long ago, I was teaching a home Bible class and in one of the discussions after the meeting one night, we had been studying God's plan of the ages and the Bible was beginning to make sense for a family, and the wife of the family said to me, “We had an interesting discussion around the table

the other night with our children.” They have been going to their church in which they have been just largely taught the kind of things that they hear in most churches. That is they are given a little book and they are taught things about the birds and the bees and the flowers and so on, and in the course of the Bible reading at home the little child had been read Bible stories, and had come to realize that the Bible contains some very, very interesting things. In the course of the family discussion the little boy looked up at his mother and said, “Mommy, I didn’t know the Bible contained stories. I thought that all it contained was verses.”

Now I think there are a lot of people really like that. They do not realize that the Bible is a connected book. And consequently they take texts out of the context and they misuse them for that reason. No one ever looks at the text to see what a text like “Quench not the Spirit” might really mean. After all when an authoritative preacher tells us what it is, what do we do? We say Amen to what the preacher says. We are not expected today are we to study these things for ourselves, even though the apostle says in the context, “Prove all things. Hold fast to that which is good.”

Now I say this because I think it’s very, very important. Now you see Believer's Chapel was begun as an independent church. This church does not have connection with any other church in the whole wide world, except in so far as we may agree in spiritual things, and in this sense we’re united with every Christian church to the extent that we agree with the Bible teaching contained within it. Therefore this church is under the Lord entirely. We have no ties. We are not a Plymouth Brethren Church. We are not a Bible Church. We are not a denominational church. As a matter of fact the Independent Bible Churches began because of two things. They began because of apostasy in our established churches, not all of them, but in many of them and in a great way in some of them. They began also because some became convinced that the very idea of denominationalism was unscriptural, that the church is one body, and consequently to take a name was in itself unscriptural because that divided the body of Christ. Hence we

should have an independent church, not independent of others when we agree doctrinally, but independent in the sense of independent of an earthly organization an earthly control. That is one reason why I for one could never be a part of a church that has a name, which is a name like a flag that they wave because I cannot do that. I believe the church is one, and I must in my meeting meet in such a way that I recognize the oneness of the body of Christ, but the independent movement came ought of these things.

Now when Believer's Chapel was established we might well have just said we are going to be another independent church. That would have been rather pointless. There are independent churches about, and good independent churches. We felt that there were some truths in the word of God that were still not being applied. We do not want to be critical of others in so far as we attack them. We do not, but in so far as we follow the teaching of the Bible, and in so far as others may not, and by the way we can be mistaken. That's why you should prove all things. “Hold fast to that which is good.” We do not want to take a belligerent attitude, but at the same time we wanted to proclaim the truth that the word of God sets forth it sets it forth, we must follow it. Is not that the right attitude? Is not that the kind of attitude that you would want us to have? Would not you want us to believe that whatever the Bible says we must follow, regardless of what it may mean? I think that is what we must all say really, and so out of this has grown a conviction from the study of the Scriptures, that the early church met in a certain way and they met in a certain way in order to proclaim truths that were important to them. The oneness of the body of Christ, the integral part that each one plays in it, and the exercise of each spiritual gift, the observance of the priesthood of every male believer in the meeting of the local church, for the women are to keep silent in the churches as you know, and also the fact that there should be no human head of the church.

That is I am not the head of this church. I am only serving as an acting elder. I hope I have the gift of teaching. If I do not, I should not be here teaching you. But I am

not the head of this church. Do not come to me and say and expect me to be the head of this church. This church is ruled by elders who rule under the one elder, the one shepherd our Lord Jesus Christ. He's the head of this church. We desire this church to be under Him, and we desire it to be organized in a way in which we may serve him most effectively.

Now a church that is organized properly may fall flat on it's face, and I am ashamed to say that we have fallen flat on our faces often. This is not a perfect church, not at all. There are some things in this church that I would like to change. There are some things in this church that some of the other elders no doubt would like to change. We must gather together and seek the mind of God. Subordinating our own desires to the will of God, so this is not a perfect church, and what we say and proclaim is simply a stumbling attempt to say what we think the word of God teaches. Therefore we organize in a particular way because we want to proclaim certain truths, and this is one of them.

Now you can see that what I am getting at this morning is I think we need this lesson. Now the reason I think we need this lesson is because this past week I had occasion to have a very fine interview with a person who is present in this auditorium this morning and I do not want to reveal the identify of the person, but during the course of the conversation it turned out that this person had another friend in the congregation and that they were very close, but that the friend who was a regular attender of Believer's Chapel had never really made clear to her friend exactly why we meet as we do.

Now I don't think that's an isolated case. I think that's probably general. I think if I were to talk to you in the congregation today, possibly not very many of you would know why Believer's Chapel is different. I sat in this morning and one of the young boys here on the front said, “It's been painted, Dr. Johnson. Are you going to make any comment about that?” I said, “What do you mean?” He said, “Well you said we were a maverick church, that is that we are different.” And he said, “We've had the auditorium painted and it's different.” He said, “That seems to me to fit in with the kind of church

we are.” I said, “That’s a good point.” I hope it’s always freshly painted with the doctrine of the word of God. So this morning I want to point you to 1 Thessalonians chapter 5 in verse 19 and tell you why we believe what we believe because I think it’s important that you understand the foundations upon which this church was established.

We believe first of all in the authority of the word of God. We believe in salvation through Jesus Christ. We believe in the inspiration of the Scriptures. We believe they are the only infallible rule, for faith a practice in the local church. We feel that if it can be shown from the word of God we must follow it or try to follow it, and we feel that this is the secret to the greatest effectiveness in the proclamation of Word. If we are organized according to the Scriptures and our hearts are not right before God, we shall fail. If we are not organized according to the New Testament as many churches I know, but if our hearts are right before the Lord, and we’ve not yet learned these things God will bless us. That’s why some churches which are not organized according to the word of God are still blessed by God, their hearts are right before him, and that is more important than right order of meeting, but if we can have both together, if we can have our hearts right before God, and if we can meet as he intends the church to meet, then we should have the greatest blessing from God, and that is our desire.

Now very briefly let’s look at our text. I wish I could talk to you for an hour and a half this morning. I think it’s that important, but I am going to ask that you yourself study the Scriptures for a little. The 19th verse contains Paul’s general admonition. “Quench not the Spirit.”

Now this is a prohibition against suppression of utterance gifts in the meeting of the local church. He has spoken above about order, about disciple, about joy, about thankfulness. He has given words addressed to the elders, and words addressed to the congregation, and now he says, "Quench not the Spirit". He is now going to talk about the special manifestations of the Spirit. No one of course can give thanks always, if he does not do this by the help of the Holy Spirit, and so the Spirit’s activity has been

presupposed in all that is said previously. But now he is talking about special manifestations of the Spirit in the meetings of the churches, speaking in tongues, prophesying, teaching, giving out a psalm, a hymn as 1 Corinthians church 14, in verse 26 indicated. "Quench not the Spirit. Quench not" as Calvin says. You are surprised that Calvin agrees with me, aren't you? Well he does, "Quench not the totality of the extraordinary operations of the Holy Spirit." Is his exposition?

James Frame, professor of New Testament or biblical exposition at Union Theological seminary a generation or two ago, says that this text should be translated, "Quench not the gifts of the Spirit." And he is right, "Quench not the Spirit" The Spirit who gives gifts, as the next verse says, "Despise not prophesyings." A gift of the Spirit.

Now I think you are going to be surprised at something else. In spite of the fact that this is something that is rarely ever followed in the local church, it is very generally agreed to be the teaching of the Apostle Paul. May I read to you the comments of one of the outstanding Presbyterian Theologians from Scotland, a man who I have quoted a number of times, James Denny? Denny was one of the great men of his day. This is what Denny has to say on this text. "When the Holy Spirit descended on the church at Pentecost there appeared unto them tongues parting asunder like as a fire, and it sat upon each one of them and their lips were open to declare the might works of God. A man who has received this great gift is describes as fervent. Literally boiling with the Spirit." So you remember that Apollos was a man who was fervent in Spirit. The new birth in those early days was a new birth. It kindled in the soul thoughts and feeling to which it has hither to been stranger. It brought with it the consciousness of new powers, a new vision of God, a new love of holiness, a new insight into the Holy Scriptures and into the meaning of man's life, often a new power of ardent passionate speech. Oh that we could recapture some of the newness of the new birth in the churches of Jesus Christ. Then he says in the first epistle to the Corinthians, Paul describes a primitive Christian congregation. There was not one silent among them.

Now this is a Presbyterian theologian, the outstanding theologian of his day and still a great influence in the Church of Christ. In the first Epistle to the Corinthians Paul describes a primitive Christian congregation. There was not one silent among them. When they came together everyone has a song, a revelation, a prophecy, an interpretation. The manifestation of the Spirit, has been given to each one to profit with all, and on all hands the spiritual fire was ready to flame forth, conversion to the Christian faith, the acceptance of the apostolic gospel was not a thing, which made little difference to them. It convulsed their whole nature to its depths. They were never the same again. They were new creatures with a new life in them all fervor and flame. "Quench not the Spirit".

What does Paul then mean? Well Paul says in the local church there are spiritual gifts. There are three classes of spiritual gifts. There are those that are confirmatory, gifts of healing, gifts of tongues. These were gifts given in the early days of the church to confirm the gospel message. That is to indicate that it is true by the miracle that was performed. That was God's testimony that the word spoken was true, the second-class, supervisory. There were gifts of governments, gifts of helps. Many elders had gifts of government, gifts of helps. They were men who were qualified by the Holy Spirit to exercise oversight in the local church, and so we have gifts of governments, and gifts of help. And then there were gifts that were revelatory. There were utterance gifts. Gifts of prophecy, gifts of speaking in tongues, gifts of teaching, gifts of exhortation. Over twenty gifts are listed specifically in the New Testament, and so this latter class is the class referred to here. "Quench not the Spirit. Despise not prophesyings." "Quench not." Don't throw cold water on the manifestation of the Spirit.

You see in the early church they gathered together in an open meeting. Mr. Denny goes on in that same chapter in that book to say that the one crying need of the church today, the modern church is to have an open meeting in which there is an expression of freedom of the spiritual gifts that God has given to the local church, not

every meeting, but at least one meeting, in which there is freedom to exercise spiritual gifts, and so what this means is that the Thessalonians were coming together and some of the wiser brethren perhaps, who had more knowledge of things were a little disturbed because some of the new Christians were standing up in the assembly and saying things that to them seemed quite immature. To them seemed quite beside the higher knowledge that they possessed, and so they were in effect saying contain yourself now. Don't go out of your way to have this strange fire. You ought to keep quite in the meetings of the church, and so finally no doubt some said, what we ought to do is to have Stephanus or to have Paul or to have someone else as the minister of the local church then we won't have to listen to these immature people at all. And unfortunately that is the attitude that persisted in the church, and instead of that Paul says, "Quench not the manifestation of the Spirit" "Quench not the gifts Spirit".

There is one thing that is true of fire anywhere. Fire smokes when it is newly kindled, and when you get a new believer you have immaturity of necessity. Every new believer is bound to be immature. And so in the meetings of the assembly you are bound to have some who are immature. You are going to have some that are more smoke than fire, it seems. And smoke gets in our eyes, and we don't like it, but the way to put out a smoking fire is not to throw water upon it. That gives more smoke. The way to get rid of the smoke is to let it burn clear and that is what Paul is saying. He is saying that in the local church there are men who have gifts and sure their gifts are not like the gifts of Paul. Their gifts are not like the gifts of Peter. Their gifts are not like the gifts of Stephanus and Apollos, but there are gifted men gifted by the Holy Spirit and while there is a lot of smoke in what they are saying there is also some fire, and "Quench not the manifestations of the Holy Spirit." "Quench not the Spirit," he is saying.

Now I say I wish I could go on here. I just want to say one thing. As you know, Sunday night we meet and we try to carry out this. Very feelingly, very falteringly I am sure. But a few years ago we had a person in our meeting who was here for a while. It's

kind of interesting to me. It was a she. No offense ladies because I am sure that there have been some males who would react the same way, but she left the meeting. I asked her why. She said I couldn't stand to listen to those seminary students. I said, what do you mean?" "Well the things that they said were not edifying." "Well I am quite willing to grant that some of the things that seminary students say are not edifying in our meeting. As a matter of fact some of the things that seminary professors say are not edifying too, and not only this seminary professor. The very fact that we are men means that there is a good bit of chaff in the wheat that we may give forth. In the best of us there is something of self.

Now you see what she was doing was saying in effect, I am going to quench the Spirit, because I want only one man to speak in the meeting. Now that was guilt of transgression of this text. "Quench not the Spirit." She did not understand it. I spoke to her about this text. She said, "I think that text applies to the individual." I said, "What about the next verse? 'Despise not prophesyings.' That makes it very plain what this text has to do with." No answer.

Now Paul continues, I must finish. I have five minutes according to my watch. I hope yours is not fast this morning. [Laughter] Verse 20, "Despise not prophesyings, the special admonition. Now this is a prohibition against contempt of prophecy. Do you know why? Well I am just going to take a guess now, and you must be careful to recognize when I am guessing, inferring from what the text says and what the book says, and what the Scriptures directly say. Watch out for a little chaff you see in something not, but one of the things that the Thessalonians had difficulty with was this. They were told that Jesus Christ was coming soon. The Apostle Paul had told them that, and unfortunately some of them took that message so literally, and it should be taken literally. He may be here before we meet tonight. But they were taking it in such a way that they quit working, and so the apostle had to exhort them now to stop being busy bodies, to get out and work with their own hands, that he had worked with his own hands when he

came in among them. In other words he didn't come in as the Reverend Dr. Paul, evangelistic speaker for the week, and afterwards a love offering taken up for him. I will tell you if the Apostle Paul spoke in a gathering like this, and they took up a love offering it would be a mighty small love offering in my opinion because we wouldn't like some of the things that Paul would say to us, and most of the things that he would say would hurt him quite a bit when the love offering was taken up. So what they were saying was this in Thessalonica, some of them were standing up in the meeting. They were prophets. They had been given the gift.

You see the New Testament was not written then and they had to have direct revelation from God, and no doubt stood up in the meeting and said, "I believe the Lord's coming next week." We have a seminary student who believes the Lord's coming in 1992. He has put that down on paper. "The Lord's coming in 1992." Well now that's twenty-five years from now, and I can't check his computation at the moment. We cannot prove him right or wrong, but it was like this. They were making foolish prophecies, and so some in the assembly would say, "Why do we have to listen to little pipsqueak get up and make those ridiculous prophecies?" But you see in the midst of the chaff there was also some wheat apparently and apparently they had a genuine gift of prophecy. And while there was some chaff, nevertheless, there was some wheat and the apostle wants to be sure that there is no despising of the fact that a man may get up and prophecy in the meeting. So "Despise not prophesyings." This is something special.

Now I have another friend. I have another friend with whom I have had little conversation about 1 Corinthians chapter 14. We have discussed the 26th verse quite a bit, and in that text you remember it says that when the whole church comes together everybody has a psalm a hymn and so forth, as Mr. Denny says, everybody spoke in the local meeting. They spoke in order, but everyone had something to say, had some contribution to make.

Now my friend says, Dr. Johnson you said to me that the gift of prophecy was temporary, and the gift of speaking in tongues was temporary.” And of course I said, yes. Well then if those gifts were temporary, then apparently this kind of meeting was temporary too.” Now wait just a minute. That’s illogical. That’s a piece of female reasoning because you see also in that text, no offense ladies, no offense I was just trying to see if you were really awake and following me. And I can tell by the frowns on your face that you were. [Laughter] Males reason the same way, for her husbands believed her. [Laughter] And she said to me, “If these gifts were temporary, then perhaps the type of meeting was temporary.” That’s kind of logical really isn’t it? But yet in that verse it also says everyone has a psalm. Everyone has a word of praise. That’s not gift. That’s exercise of priesthood. It also says everyone hath a doctrine, a teaching. You wouldn’t say teaching is temporary would you? No it’s permanent. And so you see the gifts in that chapter were also permanent. And also the way of meeting was permanent. So “Despise not prophesyings.” Do not reduce to not. Do not make nothing of it. Do not listen to people who say let’s stop all of this listening to these immature people in the assembly and lets have Dr. Johnson for our minister, then everything will be edifying. Will not. And furthermore you’ll just become a copy.

I go in churches all over the country, as you know. It’s very interesting to me to go in these churches. Many of them very fine churches, and by the way doing a better job than we are of really seeking the face of the Lord in some instances too, and that’s why God is blessing them. That’s why we ought to have some prayer meetings in which we fast in prayer and confess our sins as an assembly of God. With the light we have we should be useful to God in a great way, but I go into these churches and they are often carbon copies of the minister. And they know the truth that the minister knows, but if he does not give them a certain line of teaching, they do not know it. They are handicapped and do not know it, unfortunately. The local church was never intended to be that way. I was never intended according the New Testament to be your only minister, your only

teacher, your only pastor, never. The reason that I have taught you for five years is in order that you may understand that Scriptures and that you may find your gift in the local church and some of you will have utterance gift, some of you will not, some of you will have government, helps, some of you will have simple ministry just helping out in various ways, but a few of you will have utterance gifts that are worth while, and as they are developed. You should have your opportunity to contribute to the local church, for you have something to contribute, every Sunday night, almost every Sunday night that I am here, I think I am prophesied and benefited by the things that are said. So don't lounge around. Don't fidget. Don't build a new home on your house. Don't cut out a new dress, ladies, in the meetings of the assembly when someone is speaking who is kind of immature. Listen to what he has to say. Probably there is one truth there that is particularly applicable to you.

Now Paul says in verse 21, “Prove all things.” What does he mean by this? Here is the guideline for response to the gifts of the spirit and their manifestation. “Prove all things.” Do you know what that means? That word in the Greek text is a word that was used of the assaying of metal. In the days of the west when men went out and discovered gold, they came in and brought it to an assayer, and he would test the metal to be sure that it was pure and genuine gold or silver as the case may be. That's the word that's used here. In other words, they are to listen to what is taught and they are to prove it. They are to pass it under their test. Do you know what that means? As a congregation that means that there is no such thing as a person sitting passively and listening to what the preacher says and whatever he says is the truth. No such thing. No such thing. That means that every thing that I say should pass under your test. “Prove all things.” Test it. Is it of God? That's why Luke the Evangelist speaks so highly of the Bereans, when the apostle was there they examined those Scriptures daily to see if the things the apostles were saying were true. They passed them under their supervision. No passive listener in the church of Jesus Christ.

Now if you are to prove what I am saying, what must you do? You must study the Scriptures. If I am four miles ahead of you, the chances are the you are not going to find much in what I say that you can prove contrary to the Scriptures, can you? But if you are up with me, you are much better able to tell what I am saying, whether it's right or wrong. Prove all things. Hold fast to that which is good. But that which is not good pass it by. Come and talk to me in the meeting. Occasionally in our meetings on Sunday night someone has gotten up and said something that was wrong. One of the elders has stood up and has gently and lovingly corrected the Scripture. “Prove all things. Hold fast that which is good.” And I want to tell you we are sitting on the edge of our chairs when something like that has happens too, and we learn some truths.

Instead of having roast preacher for Sunday dinner, as most people do. You should criticize the preacher at that time. If you find that I have said something that is contrary to the word of God don't wait until 12:30 when you get home and sit around the table and say, “I think that Johnson was way off today in what he said.” Come and tell me know. Better yet, tell me in the meeting of assembly. I hope I have the grace to listen to you and to say, “Yes, you are right. In that point I was wrong. You can show it to me from the Word.” “Prove all things.” The early church was like a family. They didn't mind some correction. Do you mind it in your family? My sisters corrected me constantly. They're still correcting me. I went home and they still have some words of advice for me, but you see the church of God is like a family. We should love one another, be this close to one another, and consequently when we express what God has given to us, it should be subjected to it.

Well I must close. Time is long gone. The apostles believed in the male freedom of utterance in the church meetings. They believed that all must know the truth, for all must test the truth. They believe that all can speak in the local church but that all should not necessarily speak for the tests of utterance were not only the possession of gift, but does it edify? If it doesn't edify, keep quite. Does it minister to tranquility, Peace? The

assembly should not be tumult. It should be peaceful, orderly. It should be décor ace, and it should be systematic. All things must be done decently and in order. And it should be under divine guidance. But if these things are used as limitations, and gifts been exercised, then the church meeting will really be the kind of church meeting that it ought to be. This is one of the things for which we stand in Believer's Chapel. If you like it, if you believe it's Scriptural, we hope you will unite with us and fellowship with us and enjoy the Lord with us, and one another. If you don't like it, if you don't believe it, then I hope you'll come to me and tell me why, so I can convince you because the Bible says I should convince the gain-sayers. [Laughter] But if you just cannot be convinced, then find a church with which you are in sympathy. And I say that hoping of course you'll come back here ultimately. Week after next the Prophecy of Zechariah in the light of current events. Be reading the prophecy then you can prove some of the things that I say. May we stand for the benediction?

[Prayer] Now may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, the fellowship and communion of the Holy Spirit who desires to lead the worship and fellowship of the church to Christ. Be in abide with all who know him in sincerity. For Jesus' sake. Amen.