

Introduction

1 Thessalonians 5:19-22. (gonna want your Bible today)

If you're tracking along closely and you were here last week you might notice that we are hopping a few verses this morning. Last week Garrison stopped at v15, and today we're picking up in v19. We'll circle back and teach on v16-18 next week...

But I wanted to jump ahead this morning to this section for a specific reason. Today across the global church is **Pentecost Sunday.**

Now, in case you're unfamiliar with what that means, let me give you the 30,000 foot version:

- **The God we worship, the Christian God, is what we call a Trinity – one God, 3 persons.**
 - God the Father.
 - God the Son.
 - God the Holy Spirit (who is the focal point of today).
- **Now, throughout the Old Testament (Gen-Malachi), the primary way the Holy Spirit works is by empowering particular people for particular moments.**
 - He will come down and descend upon a select few – prophets, kings, priests – to empower them to fulfill specific purposes God has for them and His people.
- **But, towards the end of the Old Testament, some of God's prophets start to see into a time where the Holy Spirit will not just come upon certain individuals at certain times, but will actually live inside of, or fill, every one of God's people.**
 - **Joel 2:28-29 – And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. Even on the male and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit.**
- **Then you get to the start of the NT, the arrival of Jesus, God the Son comes down to earth.**
 - He calls disciples, performs miracles, heals people – all of that.
 - But even while he is doing that he is telling his followers – “I'm not going to be around forever. I'm going to die, rise again, and then ascend (go back) to the Father.”
 - But here's the good news, **John 16:7 – Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you.**
 - Jesus says when He leaves He will send the Holy Spirit to come down and fill all those who believe in Christ.
 - That no longer will the HS only rest upon certain folks at certain times but that all who trust in Jesus will be filled with the Holy Spirit in an ongoing way.
- **And then it happens...**
 - **Acts 2:1-4 – 1 When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. 2 And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. 3 And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. 4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.**

On the day of feast of Pentecost some 2,000+ years ago, as Joel prophesied and Jesus promised, God the Holy Spirit was poured out upon followers of Jesus, the Church was born – and from that moment on every single person who trusts in Christ is now filled with the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit comes to live inside of every Christian, to...

- Help
- Sanctify (make more like Jesus)
- Teach + Guide
- Convict of Sin
- Empower for ministry

So today is the day we celebrate that beautiful reality and we ask for more of the work of the Spirit in our lives.

Do Not Quench the Spirit

That's the day of Pentecost... and that's why I think it's a very fitting day to look at verses 19-22, because right off the bat we read this...

V19 – Do not quench the Spirit.

So the HS is now given to all who trust in Christ – living within us to empower us, convict us, make us more like Jesus, teach us, guide us...BUT we can, Paul warns, **quench** the work He is trying to do.

That word quench, or as other translations write – stifle, smother, extinguish – Paul uses because while the Holy Spirit is a person, throughout the Scriptures one of the primary images used for the work of the Spirit is that of a blazing fire.

- We saw that in Acts 2, when the HS comes down “tongues as of fire rested on them”.
- Jeremiah 20, Matthew 3, Romans 12.

So to “quench” the Spirit is to extinguish the work the Spirit does as he moves among us like a blazing fire.

- While the HS does not ever ***leave*** a true follower of Jesus, we can block the work He is doing in our lives.
- We can stifle it, cut it off, resist it.

Now there's a whole host of ways we can quench the HS and his work in our lives – sin, busyness, hurry, distraction...just to name a few.

Prophecy 101

Here though, Paul has one specific way he wants to address to the Thessalonians. One specific way they are quenching the Spirit, that I want to focus the rest of our time on together. Here's what he says...

19 Do not quench the Spirit. 20 Do not despise prophecies...

So do not quench the Spirit. Okay, Paul, I'm not trying to squash the work of the Holy Spirit in my life – how would I do that? How would I keep myself from the power of the blazing fire of the Holy Spirit in my life?

Well here's one example – ***don't despise prophecies.***

Okay so that means we gotta get clear on prophecy. I don't want to quench the spirit by despising the prophecies – so first, I gotta understand what prophecy even is. So...

What is Prophecy?

Now, Paul doesn't give us a whole lot of background knowledge on prophecy here in 1 Thessalonians, so we've got to zoom out a bit to some other places in the NT to see what prophecy is.

What prophecy looks like in the NT, comes up most prominently in Paul's writing to a different church, the church at Corinth in **1 Corinthians 12+14**. So turn over there with me, let me highlight some things for us and try to build out a working definition of prophecy from this text.

1 Cor 12:1-3 – 1 Now concerning spiritual gifts (more literally – “the stuff of the Spirit”), **brothers, I do not want you to be uninformed. 2 You know that when you were pagans you were led astray to mute idols, however you were led.**

- Before – you were pagans who worshiped false gods.
- And you know they were false because they were mute – they didn't speak.
- And that's very different from our God who is a speaking God.

1 Cor 12:7-11 – 7 To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. 8 For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, 9 to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, 10 to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. 11 All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills.

- This is a list, and it's not exhaustive, but a list of the kind of stuff the speaking Holy Spirit does now as a result of Jesus' resurrection, through ordinary, average, followers of Jesus like you and me.
- Part of how the Spirit empowers and works among God's people is through **prophecy**.
- For what? For the common good. For the building up of the church, like we addressed last week – helping one another look more like Jesus.

He goes on to address how we shouldn't look down on other people who have different gifts than us, all of them are useful...chapter 13 he talks about how while spiritual gifts are great they mean nothing without love. He mentions this future day, the day the “perfect comes” he calls it when prophecy will be no more. But for now, he says, we prophesy in part, in a mirror dimly lit.

That's why we get it wrong sometimes – more on that in a second.

1 Cor 14:1-3 – 1 Pursue love, and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy. 2 For one who speaks in a tongue speaks not to men but to God; for no one understands him, but he utters mysteries in the Spirit. 3 On the other hand, the one who prophesies speaks to people for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation.

- What was the point of spiritual gifts? To build up the church. So why should we eagerly desire to prophesy? Because prophecy *builds up the church*.
- Encouragement, consolation – it's one of the workings of the Spirit by which he empowers us to help one another look more like Jesus.

He goes on to talk a lot more about proper use of the gift of tongues – promise we'll cover that in a future sermon...Skip to to v29, where we get a bit more specific on what the gift of prophecy looks like...

1 Cor 14:29-33 – 29 Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others weigh what is said. 30 If a revelation is made to another sitting there, let the first be silent. 31 For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn

and all be encouraged, 32 and the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets. 33 For God is not a God of confusion but of peace.

- Three more keys here:
 - (1) Paul calls prophecy a “revelation” – meaning some sort of internal voice of God speaking to an individual within the church, that they have to then choose to share.
 - (2) Once they share, the community of believers then “weigh” or test what is said (more on that in a bit)
 - (3) There’s an expectation that the first one who is prophesying can then sit down and be quiet, and the one who gets the next prophecy can wait their turn.
 - So it’s not some out of mind, out of body like maybe you’ve seen or experienced where folks look like they’re totally losing it.
 - It’s very much an orderly – in control – use of the gift.

Here’s how I would summarize 1 Cor 12+14 in relation to prophecy:

Prophecy is a manifestation/outworking of the Holy Spirit, where God gives a revelation to someone, which they are to share with someone else, who is to test/weigh what was said...all for the purpose of building up of Christians and convicting the non-Christian.

Or even more simply – **Prophecy is God speaking through you to someone else in a supernatural way.**

Four Parts:

- 1. Revelation** – God speaks to you
- 2. Communication** – you share it with someone else
- 3. Interpretation** – What you and the other person believes it means
- 4. Application** – Conviction, encouragement, belief, repentance, etc. (“building up”)

Revelation

Let’s talk for a little bit more about *revelation*. Because that’s where I think a lot of folks can get hung up. Paul says in 1 Cor 14:30 describing prophecy – *If a revelation is made to another sitting there...*

Now, when I’ve talked about this in the past, folks often wonder, “How am I supposed to hear God? What does that revelation sound like? Because I’ll hear folks say – “God told me” – but how do they hear Him? Does God have a weekly email subscriber list? Or an automated text message?

Maybe you’re asking – Why doesn’t God speak to me audibly?

That’s a great question, and there’s no simple answer to that question, but one reason is, **God doesn’t need to. He has direct access to your mind, imagination, and your heart.**

Think about this – *What is communication? Communication is guided thought.*

- If I say to you right now – “Imagine a sunset.” What’s in your mind right now? A sunset.
- I am controlling your mind. Which is a bit creepy, I know.
- But that’s what communication is – you are guiding another person’s thought where you want it to go.

God doesn’t need to speak in an audible voice to guide our mind; he can reach directly into our mindstream and direct our thoughts, feelings and ideas and images and perceptions and memories and desires by the Spirit.

We often have a thought come to mind, and we think, “Is that God? No, it’s just in my head.”

- Of course it’s “in your head!” Where else would God speak to you?
- He lives inside of you through the HS – he has direct access to your inner life, and can speak as He wants to and when He wants to.
- The question is are we willing to listen?

To help us with this, here’s how I think God tends to speak to us (both from Scripture and anecdotes)...

Examples of Prophetic Revelation:

- **Scripture** – “Had this Scripture come to mind...”
 - **TT Folk:**
 - Praying over someone – had Matt 11:28-29 come to mind
 - Jesus’ posture was not an angry boss demanding more, but a compassionate Lord who knows the weight of labor.
 - Had no idea the guilt and disappointment they had been feeling about some recent ministry failures – letting God down.
- **A Word/Phrase/Feeling** – “Faith, courage, go, stay”
- **A picture/short film** – imagination
 - A little while ago I spent a week away at a guided contemplative retreat for pastors up in Hickory, NC.
 - And I remember going into the retreat the team leading it had encouraged us to think about how we would describe our current spiritual/emotional state leading into the retreat.
 - And the language I remember having for it was **scattered**.
 - There was just a lot that had been happening over the prior 6 months or so, and I just for lack of a better phrase felt like a puzzle – like a hundred scattered all across the floor.
 - I hadn’t said that to anybody, said anything even resembling that language.
 - And then on the 2nd night, one of the leaders of the retreat was praying for me, and she said during her prayer “I’m getting this image of you being broken and crumbled into 100 pieces, and God like a puzzle putting you back together and making you whole again.”
- **Dreams**

Prophecy is one of the many things the Spirit does – and Paul says eagerly desire it. All of you...eagerly desire that you might prophesy.

How do we despise prophecy?

Now tragically some people don’t eagerly desire it. In fact, they actually look down on it, and that’s what Paul is dealing with here in 1 Thessalonians 5.

His command is – don’t quench the Spirit. Okay, how? Well don’t despise prophecies.

- Don’t look down on them. Don’t mock them.
- Don’t just blanket reject them.
- Don’t devalue prophecies or push them off to the side.

The warning Paul gives the Thessalonians is not like the warning he gives to the Corinthians. To the Corinthians he’s like – okay you guys, getting a bit out of hand with the prophecy thing. Here’s how we might put in some order to your worship gatherings.

To the Thessalonians he says – “Why are you rejecting this way the Lord wants to use to build you up?”

And I think, church – he would say the same thing to us today. **Do not quench the Spirit by despising prophecy.**

There are all sorts of reasons that you might despise/neglect/ignore prophecy...

Fear of man

- You've got all sorts of experience and desire and gifting around prophecy but you've been hiding it.
- You're in the back of the gathering and you've got prophecies for like 10 people in here
- And yet you're afraid to step into that – what are people going to think?
- You're quenching the spirit by despising prophecy.

Apathy/Lack of knowledge

- It's not so much that we're against prophecy, as we just don't really have a category for it in our lives.
- We haven't really cared to take the time to study what the Bible teaches on it.
- We don't really know what it means as a spiritual gift or how we're supposed to step into it.
- We are busy, and we're trying to focus on a million other things, and we struggle just to read our Bible and pray – this feels like some add on thing we'll get to when we have more time.

Majority of us...

Past Experiences

- We've seen this go really poorly in our own lives or in the lives of others.
- Ways that prophecies were mishandled or misused to justify certain actions or behaviors.
- Or maybe someone spoke something over our lives that caused a great deal of damage and hurt.
- Or maybe this stuff kind of freaks you out because you've seen (either firsthand or online) some extreme, non 1 Cor 14-like versions of this with people doing backflips and somersaults and shouting profanity (those are all real examples of things I've seen).

I would argue bad past experience or fear of what we see “out there” is the biggest reason folks despise prophecy and in so doing quench the Holy Spirit.

But listen to me on this, I've been excited to say this – Yes prophecy can be abused. But the antidote to abuse is what? **Proper use!** You don't throw out the baby with the bathwater!

In fact, you want to talk about a gift abused way more than prophecy in the NT, with catastrophic repercussions? A gift that is often misused and abused that has dramatic, terrible ripple down affects within churches?

The gift of teaching! What I'm doing right now. And yet here you are listening to me!

In fact, many who would despise prophecy would do so by claiming “prophecy” in the NT is just a fancy way of addressing teaching.

We don't just throw it out. In fact – it's the very thing Paul is trying to correct here. We find out in 2 Thessalonians 2 some specific bad ways prophecy is being used in the church, and Paul doesn't say – “we maybe should stop doing this”.

What does he say? What is the solution to misuse of the prophetic?

Test Prophecies

21 but test everything; hold fast what is good. 22 Abstain from every form of evil.

Don't despise it. Don't look down upon it. Receive it – and then test it, take what is good, leave what is evil. Take what is from God, leave what is not from God. Because there are ways this can absolutely not go smoothly. And that's okay.

Remember – every prophecy has 4 parts:

1. **Revelation** – God speaks to you
2. **Communication** – you share it with someone else
3. **Interpretation** – What you and the other person believes it means
4. **Application** – How do I put this into my life (think/believe/love differently)

Now – Revelation is always true. God does not make errors. What He speaks is always correct. Where it can go wonky, and this is where testing comes in is receiving it, and then communicating, interpreting, and applying it.

Like a really serious version of the kids telephone game.

The revelation is always true and perfect – we just don't always do the best job hearing it nor do we do the best job communicating, interpreting or applying it.

Wayne Grudem – “Remember that what is spoken in any prophecy today is not the Word of God but is simply a human being, reporting in merely human words, something which God has brought to mind. So prophecy has truth and error in it. Truth from God and error from humanity.”

This is why we have to test – because we can mess up the right and true revelation with our faulty best attempts at interpretation and application.

The goal is not to swallow it whole or to despise it/ignore it/treat it with contempt...instead...Test it.

1. Does it line up with Scripture?

- God will never contradict Himself
- “Go with Jesus over Sarah”

2. Does it lead the other person towards Christ?

- 1 Cor 12+14 – “For the common good.”
- Does it lead you more towards Jesus and build you in holiness?
- Even if mixed with conviction that makes it hard to receive. Truth can be hard and can still be truth.

3. Does it confirm or correct what God is already stirring in your heart?

- Already speaking to you in your own time of prayer.
- *Call to CLT.*

4. Does the community affirm it?

- 1 Cor 14 – “The others should weigh carefully what is said...”
- 1 Thess is a plural command – “You guys all together test everything...”
- CG, close friends, pastor, etc.

And then after you test – *Hold onto what is good, and reject what is evil.*

We Want This

Here's how I want to close...

We, as a leadership, want prophecy to be an active part of our church life here at Citizens.

We long for and pray that **1 Cor 14:1** would be true of this church – **Pursue love, and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy.**

And to be honest, just a confession – we've been slow rolling this out the past year or so. If you're on our prayer team you know this – when we train our prayer team for our time of prayer after the teaching, we train them in prophetic prayer. We've been leaning into this more in worship, as a staff, as pastors.

We want this. We want a church that earnestly desires all that spirit wants to do in us, through us, and for us – ***especially prophecy.***

We want this all over the place in our church...

When we're in our **Community Groups...**

- We want the power of God to come down and speak. To move in ways we cannot explain.
- We want you guys to prophesy over one another.
- We want there to be space when you gather in these communities, to be silent, to listen to the HS, and to speak what God shows you – Scripture, images, words, phrases.
- Test it! Obviously! But let's start with speaking it and let's lean in.

When we're here on **Sundays...**

- We want you to take the prayer time – it's there for you every Sunday.
- Go prophesy over one another.
- Ask the Lord on your drive to church, during the gathering, during the teaching, during the time of response – do you have something you want to say through me to someone else.
- Get the revelation, go tell them, and y'all figure out how to interpret and apply it together.

You can do this! Embrace the discomfort – new things are hard, and awkward, and feel strange. BUT...

We believe the Scriptures when it says this manifestation of the Spirit is available to all of us who trust in Jesus.

YOU, if you have the HS, can prophesy. Doesn't matter if you've been following Jesus for 5 minutes or 5 decades – you have the Holy Spirit inside of you and you can prophesy.

AND according to the Scriptures – you should want to do this. Eagerly desire to prophesy. Do not quench the Spirit by despising prophecy and its place in the church.

We want the living God, the living Holy Spirit, to move and to speak!

Invitation

So here's the invitation for you depending on where you find yourself...[chart back up]

Some of you are not in on this stuff.(past experiences)

You don't think prophecy is still active in the church today. And that's okay – again it's a 2nd tier issue for us, you're welcome here.

Here's my invitation – would you wrestle with this view?

- Would you ask the Lord – did I land here because I really see this theologically in the Scriptures or because of fear or inexperience?
- Wrestle with the Scriptures on this.
- Talk with myself, or Garrison or Dan or someone else in your group who has experience with prophecy.

Be curious – see what the Lord does.

Some of you have been waiting for this sermon (Fear of Man)

In fact, you're like patting yourself on the back because you think you prayed it into being. (that's a charismatic joke).

You have all of these manifestations of the Spirit in your private life with God – and it's time to bring them into the Church. It's time to lean in. Here's your official invitation to lead your church family in this.

We'll hold the rope of discernment. We are gonna do this well and Biblically – we're going to test everything.

But please – hear this invitation as your pastor – we believe in these gifts, we want these gifts. We need you to step in and step up.

Make some folks uncomfortable in the best way. Prophecy! Let's GO!

Majority:

To others of us who maybe just have never really given this any thought...(apathy/lack of knowledge)

I want to invite you to practice 1 Cor 14 – Will you eagerly desire all manifestations, all stuff the spirit does, especially prophecy?

It'll be tough at first...but it's something we can learn to step into. IDK maybe some of y'all have the gift of prophecy, and the HS has been waiting to bless us in some incredible ways through it – but you won't know unless you try.

Babies crying.

- Jordan Seng – “You discern the voice of the Lord by getting used to the voice of the Lord.”
- John 10:27 – 27 My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.

PRACTICE:

- Close your eyes and voice out loud – let's all do this, a simple prayer.
 - “Come Holy Spirit” or “Speak, Lord”
- Open your imagination to God asking Him this simple questions:
 - Is there something you want to say to someone in this room through me today Lord?
- **Revelation** – Wait to see if a word or phrase or line from the Bible or a picture or short film begins to play in your mind.
- **Communication** – Go find the person + tell them – “Here's what I sense from the Lord”
- **Interpretation** – Here's what I think it means
- **Application** – Now how does this move you towards Jesus