

"QUENCH NOT THE SPIRIT"

– *1 THESS. 5:19.* –

IN THE SCRIPTURES light is used as a symbol of the illuminating power of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God is symbolized, not only by the oil with which the priests were anointed and which represented the indwelling power of the Spirit, but also by the light of the golden candlestick which stood in the Holy. After we had been favored with the knowledge of the Truth and had consecrated ourselves, the Lord accepted our consecration and gave us the Holy Spirit, which became the illuminating power of our hearts. All down the Gospel Age the Church has been the light of the world. This our Lord intimated would be true when He said to His disciples on one occasion, "Ye are the light of the world." – Matt. 5:14.

As there are various ways by which a light may be extinguished, so there are different means by which this light of the Holy Spirit may be quenched in us. A light will go out if the supply of oil or gas which feeds it be cut off, or if the oxygen of the air be shut off from it, whether because the supply is exhausted or because something is placed over the light to extinguish it. So it is with us. The light of the Spirit may be permitted to die out for want of replenishing, or it may be quenched by contact with some outside force.

In order to have the Holy Spirit in large measure, we must keep near to the Lord; for if we get away from Him, the light will go out. If we neglect the privilege of prayer or of study of the Scriptures or of fellowship with the Lord through failure to think of Him, the illumination of the Spirit will grow dim. On the other hand, it will become brighter in proportion to our realization of our own imperfections and to the degree of our consecration to the Lord. This we manifest by the zeal with which we study His will as expressed in His Word, and with which we practice that will in the affairs of life.

These are the means by which we may supply the oil to keep our light burning brightly. But while we are endeavoring to do this, we must see to it that we do not [R5129 : page 344] come into contact with anything which will tend to extinguish the flame of sacred love in our hearts.

The world, the flesh and the Devil are all in opposition to the light of the Holy Spirit. To whatever extent they are brought into contact with the light, to that extent they smother it. If the spirit of worldliness come into our hearts, it will extinguish the light of the Holy Spirit. If the spirit of selfishness or of thoughtlessness enter our hearts, it will cause the light to grow dim and finally to die out. Weariness in well-doing will produce the same result. If we indulge in pleasures of the flesh, these will tend to quench the Spirit. *Sinful pleasures* should, of course, be shunned by *everybody*. But there are pleasures which are *not sinful* and which are proper enough for the natural man. Yet to whatever extent the consecrated indulge in these and thus gratify the longings of the *flesh*, proportionately the *new nature* will suffer.

Christian fellowship is thought to be one of the very best aids to maintaining the light of the Spirit. Yet even in this there is a danger-line which is not always recognized and which, if crossed, will produce the opposite effect. A visit to the seashore and a bath in the ocean may in some cases be very profitable; but in others it may be carried to such an extent that it becomes dangerous to the new nature. Those who become weary in well-doing are usually those who have found something attractive in another direction to take their attention away from the things of the Spirit.

ACCURATE KNOWLEDGE OF THE PLAN MOST ESSENTIAL

Amongst the various arrangements which God has made for the New Creatures in Christ is the assembling of themselves together in order to *maintain* their light and to *let it shine*. The Apostle Paul exhorts the Church not to forget the assembling together wherever it

is possible to do so. (Heb. 10:25.) Where the assembling *is not possible*, the Lord makes up for the lack in some other way; and so we sometimes find a dear brother or sister who has not had the opportunity to meet with others in the Truth, but who seems to be very clear and to have a deep appreciation of the Lord's Plan. Not having the privilege of fellowship with others, such a one has done so much the more reading and studying.

Those who have this opportunity for fellowship and who do not appreciate it, seem to be in a very unsatisfactory condition. In such cases, the oil is not burning brightly, else that one would delight to be with fellow-pilgrims in the same way, marching toward the same goal. **[R5130 : page 344]** We should be as careful of our spiritual condition as of our physical. If we have a bad taste in our mouth and no appetite, we conclude that we are not well; and if we do not care to go to meetings, we may know that we are not in good spiritual health. When we find that we have not the desire to meet with others of "like precious faith," it is an indication that we should go to the Great Physician, that He may help us.

In some cases, however, the individual would do better not to go to meeting at first, but to read and study for awhile. Many have been hindered in their spiritual growth by getting a smattering of the Truth and then attending meetings. Such become stumbling-stones to themselves and to others. If they have not the time to read as well as to attend meetings, it would be better to read until they have become established, and then to assemble with others of like precious faith.

Many, even of those who are leading classes, are not so clear in the Truth as would be desirable. Some of these seem not to know what they are talking about, although they think that they do. There are various means by which one may redeem the time for study. One may take a book with him and read while on the car, going to and from his daily task. We know a dear brother who read the entire six volumes in this way.

The right course is to exercise the spirit of a sound mind on this subject, as well as on others. Our first thought should be for the glory of God; our second, for our own profit; our third, for the benefit of others. In this matter we owe it to ourselves to put ourselves first; for if we fit ourselves for service, we then have larger opportunity for helping others. Here *self* comes first, by *Divine command* – "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness"; "This is the will of God [concerning you], even *your* sanctification." – Matt. 6:33; I Thess. 4:3.

As each one comes to know for himself after receiving the Holy Spirit, He is authorized to teach what he has learned for himself. So we may all be taught of God and be used in teaching others, in proportion as we learn the lessons and apply them to our own hearts. Each one's conscience should decide for him what is to the glory of God in respect to attending meetings.

A flame might be revived, even after having been wholly extinguished. Many of us have seen a candle extinguished, and yet there was a bright, warm core which a quick breath of air might rekindle. So with us. There might be something in our lives to extinguish the flame, but the light would not go entirely out; the breath of the Lord might rekindle it. We have seen people who apparently had been zealous for the Lord, but who seemed to lose their love and zeal; but later it has been rekindled. In other cases, the light has seemed to die out altogether. We should ever be on guard lest we allow anything to dim or to extinguish our love for the Lord, for the Truth or for holiness and Christ-likeness.

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