

Carl Hagensick - Staccato

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I don't know if you noticed we sang a little bit wrong. The last three words of the lines, Christ for me, have accent points over them, if you notice them in the hymn book, little dots under the notes to be clipped notes, what is called "staccato" notes. And when you sing it staccato, you notice that those three words just pop out. They sort of stick out from everything else. That's really the function of staccato in music.

Staccato is when a composer will write a song in basically flowing lines, and then all of a sudden, he'll hit a few short punches. That's what you remember, these staccato lines. Staccato is used not only in music. Staccato is used in prose as well. In prose it has the same function it does in music.

A writer may write in long, flowing sentences, and then you'll come to a certain place, and he'll just hit you with a few short punches, and you may forget all the prose leading up to it. But those punch lines you remember.

We're going to talk about staccato as used by the Apostle Paul. The Apostle Paul uses this very effectively in 1 Thessalonians 5. Our study is going to be primarily verses 18-22, although we're going to look at verses 16-22. In the 5th in chapter of Thessalonians, and if you'll turn to it, it would be good, you'll find that Paul was writing in his usual style. In fact, Paul uses rather longer sentences than most of the other New Testament writers, probably because of the amount of his education. But all of a sudden, at the end of 1 Thessalonians 5, he drops in a group of these little staccato exhortations:

- Rejoice evermore
- Pray without ceasing
- In everything give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you
- Quench not the Spirit
- Despise not prophesyings
- Prove all things
- Hold fast that which is good
- Abstain from all appearance of evil

and then he goes back to his general sentence structure. But these series of admonitions are all short, to the point. You'll notice when you look at this that verse 18 is just a little different in that it starts going back. He adds a phrase to sort of lengthen that, as though he is breaking the series of staccato into two sections.

We're going to look very briefly at the first section because we think these are two sections of admonitions, and that these are not just isolated things that he's saying, but they're very closely related and can be diagrammed. For instance, the first one, "Rejoice evermore" is the heading, and then picture two legs coming down from that. Rejoice evermore by...praying without ceasing. Rejoice evermore by...in everything, give thanks.

What is the source of the Christian's joy? Is it not the fact that we have a heavenly Father who is all wise, who is all powerful, who is equal to any need that we have, so that at any moment when there is a need, we can immediately go to Him and that need is supplied? This is the greatest single source of joy we have.

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The Christian is a little bit like that bird you heard about in the picture. The bird that was sitting on the very spiny branch of the dead tree over a turbulent waterfall, singing away to its heart's content. The branch could break, but it had wings. So it is with us. We may be perched in a turbulent society, ready to collapse and crash. The branch may break, but we have the twin wings of faith and prayer. Prayer for our own strength and comfort during the trials; faith that society will collapse, but that beyond the collapse is a far better society, a far more permanent society, a far more just society.

So the first leg of "rejoicing evermore" is this attitude of prayer. Constantly being able to go to the Father and knowing whatever our problem, there is a greater source than the problem itself holds. But frequently, prayer can become very selfish. It can become something that we want so very, very much. We pray for it very, very diligently, and then when we get it, we say, "Thank you, Lord," and we use it and then we forget. It becomes a routine.

It's sort of like a child who begs and begs for a toy, and when he gets this toy, he takes it and he says, "Oh, thanks, mom," and he takes it, he plays with for 10 minutes, and it goes with all the other toys and never to be used again for another few months. He expressed appreciation verbally, but true appreciation is expressed by continuous use.

And so the gifts that we get from the heavenly Father, our appreciation must be shown not merely by a thank you prayer when we receive the gift, but the greatest thank you prayer that we can give God is the constant use of the gifts for the purpose they're given. Notice how Paul ends that exhortation about giving thanks: "For this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you."

Now, in just the previous chapter, in chapter 4, I think it's verse 3, he tells us what the will is of Christ concerning us. "This is the will of God, even your sanctification." We might ask Paul, what is the will of God—thankfulness or sanctification?

And Paul's answer is simple. Both. The gifts that we are to ask for in the 5th chapter are not temporal gifts, not gifts of health or gifts of prosperity. These we have included in our covenant of sacrifice. We've said that we're going to give these up. But they're spiritual gifts. They're gifts of wisdom, of patience, of strength, or of any of the other fruits of the Spirit. They are the gifts that when we show our appreciation by use, will sanctify.

So, this is the will of God concerning us, that we express our appreciation through utilization of His gifts for the purpose of sanctification. That's why in the previous chapter, after saying, "Even your sanctification that ye abstain from fornication," he is going right on into the utilization of the spiritual fruits and how they are to be used in correcting the spiritual life.

But we want to spend more time on the second series of staccato exhortations, and these we have diagrammed here on this chart. We're going to call this section Paul's Formula for Spiritual Health, and we put the formula down: C equals O over D, and H equals C plus P. But we'll talk about that later. We're going to come to what that formula means by Paul's exhortation here.

In the meantime, let's come down to this part on the next series: Quench not the Spirit. Despise not prophesyings. Prove all things. Hold fast that which is good. Abstain from all appearance of evil. These are the way we have them listed in our Scriptures.

Of all the gifts that we have ever prayed for, going back to our first part, and of all the gifts that we should show appreciation for, there is none to the Christian that is greater than the gift of spirit

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begettal. Without spirit begettal, he wouldn't be a Christian. It is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit that gives that unique relationship that makes everything else possible.

But the responsibility comes in receiving it, to maintain it, and that's what Paul is getting to. Once we receive the Spirit, I'll take you not to just this series of admonitions, but all of Paul's writings.

There are apparently two basic ways we can injure the work of the Spirit in our life. One of these is mentioned in Ephesians, the 3rd chapter, and that is "grieving" the Holy Spirit. And then we have the one mentioned here, "quenching" the Spirit.

We grieve the Spirit when we use a spirit-begotten life for purposes other than that for which it is intended. When we take the blessings of a spiritual life and we begin using these blessings in temporal matters, we begin using these in selfish ways. We begin establishing any of the fruits of the flesh—sectarianism, lack of compassion, pride, greed. If we use it to any of these, these are grieving to the Holy Spirit because they are taking the benefits that we have and using them the opposite of the way that they are intended.

Quenching the Spirit is somewhat similar, but yet different.

When you quench the spirit, you actually put it out. Quenching the spirit is basically hurting the Holy Spirit by not using it at all. It's basically the lack of use of the Spirit for its intended purpose. So that in grieving the Spirit we see particularly the injury to the Holy Spirit by **sins of commission**. In quenching the Spirit, we see particularly the sins against the Spirit and **sins of omission**, things that we're not doing.

And that's why this is stated basically in the negative: quench NOT the Spirit. To quench is to put out like you would quench a fire. In fact, that illustration, I think, is called to our attention by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5 where he says, starting in verse 14, "Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick, and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father, which is in heaven."

A candle under a bushel has two problems. First, the bushel limits the radius in which the light can shine. It does no good for the purpose it's intended of lighting any area other than the area under the bushel. And second, eventually it goes out because it's deprived from oxygen.

Why a bushel? What is a bushel? It's a container; a container that is used for holding wheat. Wheat is a basic symbol of the Christian.

What are the containers that hold wheat? Are ecclesias, our class arrangements, these are little containers that holds so much wheat. But if we only let our light shine within the ecclesia arrangement, the only time we talk about the Lord is when we come to a study meeting or come to class, two things are going to happen.

First, nobody else will know. We're going to be limiting the area of our light within that bushel, and second, it will go out because the strength of it comes from meeting challenges. In witnessing, we meet challenges. We meet people who've got a different viewpoint. We meet people who say the opposite of what we believe. We have to listen. We have to say, is it right? We have to go back to the Scriptures and prove whether or not we have the truth. That gives strength to our fire, that keeps the fire bright, that not only permits our light to shine to others, but that permits our light to

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keep shining. Otherwise it will not.

But that is not Paul's approach in Thessalonians, so let's go back. We deviated.

What is the object of the Spirit in our lives? Jesus put it very well in that last sermon of his on the way to Gethsemane. He said, "the comforter will come, and when he (it) comes, he (it) will guide you into all truth." The object of the Holy Spirit is spiritual direction, spiritual guidance. The quenching of the Spirit is preventing the Spirit from accomplishing that object of guiding us, and in effect, putting it out in our lives.

And so we think that the next admonition he gives is a subheading of quenching the Spirit: Despise not prophesyings. This word, prophesyings, can have any one of three distinct meanings:

1. It could refer to the prophecies of the Old Testament.
2. It could refer to that miraculous gift of prophecy that was given at Pentecost along with all the other gifts.
3. It could refer, as in Ephesians 4, to the talent of speaking forth truth.

We believe that because the word is "prophesying" and not "prophecies," that the logical, the most easily acceptable of these definitions is to take the second, that he's referring to that miraculous gift of the Spirit that came at the time of Pentecost. This is really what he is telling that church. Now, to notice the function that that gift of prophecy played, we need to go to Paul's discussion of the gifts in 1 Corinthians 12 through 14.

It takes three entire chapters to go over the role of the gifts in the early church, and we want to start our discussion in the 14th chapter, the first three verses.

After telling that the preeminent gift of all is the gift of love, he said, "But once ye get love, follow after love, add to love and desire the other spiritual gifts. But rather, or above all, that ye may prophesy. He that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God. For no man understandeth him, albeit in the Spirit. He speaketh mysteries, but he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification and exhortation and comfort."

Notice that the early church prophet was not a foreteller, but a "forthteller." He was a speaker, proclaimer of truth. His jobs were three: 1. to edify, to build up the new creature, 2. to exhort or correct, and 3. to comfort when there was problems and ailments there. These were the three roles that the prophet played.

Why was that gift so necessary? I think we have to try to place ourselves in the position of the early church. During the lifetime of Jesus, they had been very dependent upon him. It was an almost easy dependency, because when there was a problem, there was a known authority to go to. You went to the Master, and he spoke in a way that you knew that what he said was words of truth.

But when he died, there were no known authorities left. Oh, yes, you say, there were—there were the 12 apostles. They were known authorities to us. But in their own day, they had their own set of problems.

Remember in Galatians 2 when Peter and Paul confront each other? They disagreed. When one inspired apostle who disagrees with another inspired apostle, whose inspiration is stronger? You don't have a case of a recognition in their own day. They, too, were feeling towards the ground of truth, and so it was found necessary in the early church to give some a gift of insight into what truth

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was and ability to proclaim it.

These were often new things, new concepts, ideas that hadn't been there before, or if they had been there, they hadn't heard them before, and so Paul was saying, if you want the Spirit to lead you, you've got to listen to it. The Spirit is going to talk through the office of these prophets that will be among you. Therefore, what he is saying is really, as you go forward in the church, the first thing that the Lord is going to use to direct that Spirit to you is the mouth of certain of your brethren that have a certain gift for telling you certain things.

Jesus noted this in his own day when he talked to the scribes and Pharisees, and he said, you've thrown away the key of knowledge. Not only do you not listen, but you prevent others from listening. What he's really saying is, the key of knowledge was an ear that was open to new thoughts.

Jesus was proclaiming new thoughts, thoughts that were radically different to the concepts of the Law as had been presented to that time. They had been presenting prosperity through obedience. He was presenting persecution through obedience. They were presenting a growth through letter of the Law. He was saying growth comes through spirit of the Law. They were proclaiming a judgment based upon your actions. He was proclaiming a judgment based upon your heart. It was different. It was new. The scribes and Pharisees had every reason to think this is heresy! This is different than we have been taught to believe.

He said, yes, it may be different, but you aren't even listening to see if it's right. Being different doesn't make it wrong. You have taken away the key of knowledge. The key of knowledge is being able to listen to something you haven't heard before to see whether it is right.

But that does present a problem. It presented a problem in the early church. Those who had this miraculous gift of prophecy, those who Paul cautioned the church at Thessalonica not to despise when he said, "despise not" these prophesying; they were not the only ones in that early church who were boldly, strongly, dogmatically speaking forth new ideas. There were also men who sought those having itching ears to develop followings after themselves.

There were those who spoke just as boldly, just as strongly, just as dogmatically—not words of truth, but words of error. This is the problem with an open ear. When you listen, you not only take in truth, you can also take in error. This becomes the great difficulty, and so he follows, said, "despise not prophesying, but prove all things." Take the next step. Once you hear these prophesying, now put them to the test to see whether they're true or not.

Continuing in the study of the gifts of 1 Corinthians 12:14, we'd like to notice the catalog of gifts as given in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10, and what we like to notice as we go through this is we like to notice that these gifts are listed in a particular order. There are nine gifts listed, and I'd like to suggest that really there are four pairs and one isolated gift all by itself.

The first two gifts he lists, he says, "to one is given by the Spirit," This is verse 8, "the word of wisdom. To another, the word of knowledge by the same spirit."

Have you noticed the similarity? Now, I don't know precisely what these gifts were. I wasn't back there, not quite that old. But I recognized that there was a distinction because it said, to one was given this, to another was given this.

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My guess is that to one was given a miraculous insight into the “what's” of God's plan, into just what was going to be happening. They were given knowledge, but not to the same individual, but to another individual was given the insights into the application of that plan in character development. They were given the word of wisdom. That these were gifts to go in tandem, not a gift to go along by itself. That's why one was given this and one was given this, and he said, now get together and use these.

The third gift appears to be a gift standing all by itself, a complete and whole gift. “To another it's given faith by the same spirit.” There doesn't seem to be a parallel with it.

Then the next two are very closely parallel to another. “The gift of healing by the same spirit, to another, the working of miracles.” Notice the similarity between these gifts. These both are in the realm of the spectacular. They're also both in the realm of the physical. These are gifts that dealt with almost a public witness gesture to impress outsiders that, hey, there's something here. These people got a power we don't have.

But he says, I'm not going to give you both healing and miracles. I'll give one of you healings and one of you other types of miracles, so that together you complement each other. Then he comes to the next two, “To another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits.” Here again he teams these two up. We'll come back to it.

“To another diverse kinds of tongues; to another, the interpretation of tongues.” Now, in the 14th chapter, Paul tells us how those two work together. These are the two that we know how worked. He says that when they got together in the early church, that they should speak one in tongues and the other to interpret. (Trying to find that verse, suddenly can't find it.) Here we are, in verse 27:14: “If any speak in an unknown tongue, let it be by two, or at the most by three, and that by chorus, and let one interpret.” But these were two dependent gifts. One without the other was not a whole gift. You needed to have a speaker in tongues, but you needed to have someone who told you what he said after he said it in tongues.

The two had to go side-by-side. The same thing is true with the two that we just touched lightly. The gift of prophecy was given in tandem with the gift of discerning of spirits. The gift of the discerning of spirits, I would suggest, was the gift of miraculous insight in order to determine which speaker was speaking truth and which was error; which one was using the true gift of prophecy in foretelling new truths, and which one was one having itching ears, seeking a following of himself. These two need to go in tandem. There needs to be an accompanying of the gift of prophecy with discernment.

It's an important lesson on how those gifts were given; important to us, because it shows that the church is dependent, each one upon the other. Remember what Paul said in Ephesians 4. “The church is knit together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth.” There is a need by each member of the church of each other member of the church, because together they form a unit.

Jesus taught the same lesson in Matthew 10:2-4, when he sent out the 12. Notice how he sent them up two by two, pairing them in opposites. Let's go back to Matthew 10 and notice the pairing arrangement:

You had Peter the impetuous sent out with Andrew the conservative. You had Philip, who was known as a slow, methodical thinker, sent out with Bartholomew the quick thinker. You had James the young sent out with John the old. You had doubting Thomas sent out with Matthew, a hero of

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faith. You had James the one who was the advocate of works sent out with Lebius, or Jude, the advocate of doctrine.

You had Simon the Canaanite, or otherwise known as Simon the Zealot, sent out with Judas Iscariot, who was the economist or the treasurer of the group. He sends them out in a pairing so that two of them make one whole man. That's why we have ecclessias, because we need each other, because of that element of need. That's why the gifts were given one to one and one to another, and not each one having all the gifts. So, they couldn't say, "I am a whole Christian," but each recognized I am a Christian, dependent upon you as a Christian to supply that which I lack. And so when you despise not prophesying, he said, have a discerner of the Spirit prove all things.

You find the same pairing of thoughts in the book of Acts 17 when Paul arrives at a place that is so famous to us all. Berea. The Bereans were noble for two basic reasons. Acts 17:11: "These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, and in that they received the word with all readiness of mind." We could just as well translate that in that they despise not prophesying, and they searched the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so. They took the second step of proving whether or not the prophesyings they heard were of God or of men.

Now, in that passage, we find the key as to how to prove all things. They searched the Scriptures daily. There is only one arbiter of truth, God's word, the Bible. It's by taking whatever we hear and going back to this one arbiter of truth. This is the touchstone upon which every doctrine, every character application must be rubbed to see if it harmonizes. If it does, then we are "proving all things." The prophet Isaiah said it well, Isaiah 8:20, "To the Law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no truth in them." This is the foundation upon which things are to be accepted.

This is the second thing to make sure that the prophesyings we heard are really prophesying of God. But we can't stop there. He says, "After proving all things, hold fast that which is good." In 1 Timothy 3, after talking about the perilous times that will come, he says, "Then men would be ever learning and never coming to a knowledge of the truth. Always the seeking and never the having found," and so he's saying here that after you have opened your ear to a new idea and thought, after you have tested it by the word of God as being true, then take the next step and believe it. Have the conviction of mind to say, "This I now believe I'm not wavering—maybe, maybe this, maybe that, maybe it doesn't make any difference—but rather, that there is a truth and that to the best of my knowledge, I have arrived at it now."

And yet the idea of holding fast that which is good does not mean a dogmatism that does not realize the fallibility of the one holding it. We realize, I hold this; I am convinced of it. This is my belief based upon the amount of information I have at the present time. If new information comes in that scripturally shows I have not considered something, then there needs to be an adjustment. If we don't have that, then we come right back full circle and we're despising prophesying. We're not listening again to the thoughts the Lord may give us as "the light shines more and more unto the perfect day."

So, he's saying that have a conviction, but in this conviction realize also the fact that I must listen to what God is speaking to me through whatever source. Maybe it's a book I read, maybe it's a discourse I heard, maybe it's a piece of fellowship I had. Maybe it's providential overruling. Whatever these means of the Spirit speaking, that we listen to them, then test them, and if we find they don't square with the word of God and with that which we previously held fast, the word of God we know was accurate. That which we previously held fast we believed to be accurate.

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But then we need to say it does square with the word of God. What is there which I previously believed that doesn't square? And it comes back again to a rechecking; a looking at the basic rules. Am I reading the Scripture in its context? Am I applying this Scripture in harmony with other Scriptures? Am I consistent in my use of this text in its own day with its use in my day? And all these various rules of interpretation that you know so well and that we don't need to go into right now.

If we don't do these three things, we will be quenching the Spirit because we will not be giving the Spirit the opportunity to transform our minds, to change our thoughts into something different. We'll have a "concrete" opinion—all mixed up and thoroughly set. We need to have an opinion that is malleable to the heavenly Father's instructions.

Otherwise, the Spirit can't work, it can't lead, it can't guide. It can only guide if we keep the ear open to what it's saying to us and then test it to be sure it's the Spirit speaking and then working and acting upon what we believe.

But there's still another way we can quench the Spirit. We've looked at mainly intellectual or doctrinal things, how the Spirit works. But the object of the Spirit is not to transform the mind to make an intellect like Christ. The object of the Spirit is to transform the mind so the mind can properly rule the life, and that's why he says, on the other hand, don't quench a spirit and abstain from all appearance of evil.

I think we all appreciate the Manna comment and text on this verse, that the verse does not really say "abstain from all appearance of evil." The verse really says "abstain from every form of evil," and that is certainly the meaning of the verse. Certainly, we don't want to go out and court appearances of evil, and therefore it is generally wise to abstain from every appearance of evil as well.

And yet we must be careful in applying that mistranslation that we don't accuse Jesus of Nazareth. Because Jesus did NOT abstain from every appearance of evil. That was the big problem that the scribes and Pharisees had in accepting Him. He gave the appearance of evil. He was known as a glutton and a wine bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. They said, you're spending entirely too much time at the harlots' houses.

He was there for the purpose of helping them, and that's why he said in answer, he said, it isn't the whole that need a physician, it's the sick. But his associations gave him, in his own day, among his own contemporaries, an appearance of evil. But one thing we can be 100 percent sure of, that although he associated with sinners, he never participated in their sin. He abstained from all forms of evil, any type of evil.

He didn't look as one evil as being, well, a little more acceptable than another type of evil. But it was across the board. It was that where an evil was, that was something to be kept clear from. Even though at times his ministry of becoming a sympathetic high priest brought him in contact with that, which to his contemporaries gave an appearance, and there will be times, if we are faithful to the Lord's word, where others may look down on us.

He made himself of no reputation. It doesn't say he permitted himself to be made of no reputation. He made himself of no reputation. It was an action part by Jesus. There comes a place where in our service of truth, we make ourselves of reputation. We take the act that we know will lower the reputation. But in doing it, are we careful that we're abstaining from all forms of evil? Because if we

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let evil come in, then to that extent we are preventing the Spirit from changing our lives. To that extent we are quenching the spirit.

So, we can quench it through action as well as through our thought processes. Paul spends more time when the thought processes because there is more need for modification. He realized if you just stop here, you're likely to take an error as well. Therefore, you need to go to steps two and three. Here it's a black and white situation. I have told you what is evil: abstain from that.

Now, when we look at this from the standpoint of Paul's staccato, his quick exhortations, we notice something that he uses a lot of negatives. Quench not, abstain from, despise not. Couple positives after that. But these are positives that work upon the negative, so they're again related to the negative. So now we'd like to translate this into a positive form of action.

That's our chart on the right. The positive of quenching not the spirit is having a healthy spirit, a growing spirit. To have a healthy spirit, we need to have on the one hand an open ear, an ear that will listen not only to a rehash of what you've always believed, but an ear that will listen to anything that comes from a source that might show what God's will is in our lives. The old saying is so true that when you talk, you repeat what you know. When you listen, you just might learn something.

That we need to listen to take in with readiness of mind that which the Lord may be presenting to us. But we need to go beyond that. We need to have a discerning mind. We need to take what we have taken into the ear and now very carefully put it to the touchstone of the Bible. Is this really true? I've listened, I've tried to comprehend why this person thinks this way. Now I want to go and see, is it right? This requires one of the hardest fruits of the Spirit for any Christian: intellectual honesty, a willingness to honestly check: Is it true? To go back and see, have I rightly interpreted what I believed for all my life? And generally, we'll find we have, if we've done our research well, laid our foundations well. But if we don't do these two steps, you may have the truth, but it won't be your own. It'll be that which has been spoon fed.

To make the truth our own requires these two steps, and then it requires the third step after testing it: I believe it. Here I stand. You may disagree; I'm sorry. I have to believe what my conscience and honesty in the Scriptures tell me to believe. If you believe differently, I will try to be open to listen to you now, to bring you back to the old ways. But first it must be through these steps.

If we did not apply these steps, if the church had never applied these steps, there'd be one thing—you'd have one church today, one Catholic church. Somewhere down the line, somebody had an open ear to leave that church, think of new ideas. Luther had an open ear. The Reformers had an open ear, and to the best of their ability, they had a discerning mind, and they tested it and then they acted upon it. Here I stand.

If from that time on all ears were closed, you would never have what we like to call the Harvest Church. The writings of Pastor Russell and others would have just gone totally unheeded. It took an open ear. It took somebody to say, Is that new thought that I'm just hearing right? And then the discerning mind said, "Oh, that new thought's not new, it's an old thought. It goes back to our Lord. It's in the Bible," and then there was a conviction acting upon it.

But the open ear must never stop. It must always be there to that which the Spirit is telling us through the sources it gives. Otherwise, why have a meeting, why have a study, why have a discourse, why have fellowship if it is only to rehash? But it is to listen to what the word of God has in its depths. And that hymn is true: "'Tis a mine, aye, deeper, too, than can mortal ever go." There

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will always be new mysteries to plumb, and these mysteries will not be out of square with previously things that are held fast, but they may expand and lead on to greater insights.

But all of that is fruitless for a healthy spirit if we don't have a principled life, if we don't let our life be governed by principles of righteousness, if we don't take the sum and substance of what we learn from these steps and take it up here and apply it in living. Then and only then can we say that the Spirit is healthy in our actions.

So really, what Paul is doing in this staccato is he is giving us a formula for our Christian spiritual health: If convictions are equal to an openness modified by discernment, then spiritual help is our convictions plus our principles in action. This is really what he's saying that we need to first have convictions through an open mind divided by a discerning mind, and then we need to take those convictions, put those into our life and add them into realities and make them living verities.

And then we will not have the danger of worrying about a spirit going out. Though we'll have a bright spirit, a spirit that can burn as a flame, that can be as a candle, not under a bushel, but a candle that is like that city that is set on a hill that cannot be moved.

When you go to Israel and you go to the Mount of Beatitudes, if you got a good guide, one of the things he'll point out to you is what that city is that was set on a hill that could not be hid. It was a very literal city. It's a city that from about 45 miles away, when you're sitting at the side of the Sea of Galilee, you can see, especially at night when the lights are on, it's a city way high in the mountains between you and the Mediterranean Sea, a city called Safed, Israel.

Today, it's just an artist colony, but it's interesting that the city that Jesus was talking about became a city whose spiritual life was set on a hill in the few generations that followed Jesus. When the troubles came against Jerusalem in AD 70 and Jerusalem was wiped out, there's only one reason that Judaism survived the destruction of Jerusalem, and that is, one rabbi was sneaked out of the city in a casket, alive, who made a proposition to Titus, who was then the general leader to become the emperor, and said, "I know; I'm here to predict that you're going to destroy Jerusalem, but when you destroy Jerusalem, I would like the privilege of maintaining Judaism as a religion." And Titus said, "If I become emperor, you'll have that."

When he became emperor, he was given that, and he moved to that city, Safed, and there he organized the rabbinical schools. And it was from there that he took everything that was destroyed by Titus in the army, and he just reincorporated it in other forms. He took the Sanhedrin that had been wiped out and made the Council of Seventy. The Torah and all the writings connected with it became to be organized, and that became the beacon light for Judaism.

But we're not talking Judaism now, we're talking Christianity. We're saying that if we are going to be the light of the world, the light that will play the role that Safed played in the second and third centuries, if we're going to be that light for the millennium to come, we'll only be that light if we don't quench the spirit, if we give the spirit full sway to guide, to direct, to transform us, to put into action that admonition of Paul in Romans 12:2, "Be not conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind to prove what is that good, what is that perfect, what is that acceptable will of God."

Thank you, Brother Carl, for pointing out to us how the short, staccato phrases of our brother Apostle Paul can convey just as much meaning as his long, eloquent, logical statements in other books, and we'll ask Brother Carl to lead us in prayer.

Carl Hagensick - Staccato

Our heavenly Father, we come now to Thy throne to ask that we may have more of Your spirit, and we may give it the room in our lives to operate, to correct and to guide and direct us until we can in fact come into the goal of Christ likeness. To that end, we ask that presence in our continuing midst as we go into our period of fellowship, this may also be edifying, and that as we talk one to another, we may do so with an open ear and a discerning mind. In Jesus name, we come to Thee. Amen.