



“And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption” (Ephesians 4:30).

Grieving the Holy Spirit

Central Truth: The believer who lives to the flesh brings grief upon God's Spirit indwelling him.

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“Be what you have become!” That statement is the proper summary of Ephesians 4:20-32. The Christians in Ephesus had become a new creation because they were in Christ. That necessitated a change of their lifestyle — attitudes and actions — that their conduct would bear witness to their conversion. And that change in lifestyle is related to the Holy Spirit who lives within each one who is saved.

“Grieve not the holy Spirit of God” is the divine imperative resting upon the heart of every Christian (Ephesians 4:30). To *grieve* means “to distress; to give pain; to hurt.” The text is quite clear that the Holy Spirit is grieved when the Christian's conduct does not agree with the principles of holiness by which he is to live. All sin, any sin, grieves the Holy Spirit when it is permitted in the life of a believer in Jesus.

It is a sin for man to cause harm to man. But what a monstrous sin it is for a man to cause grief to God! This study concerning “Grieving the Holy Spirit” might be one of the most significant subjects in this series, since it relates to living out the new life that Christ has put within.

How does a Christian grieve the Holy Spirit? What things in the life would cause such grief? How can the Christian make sure he does not grieve the Spirit? The purpose of this study is to answer those questions in a call to holiness.

I. BE TEACHABLE

“But ye have not so learned Christ; If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus” (Ephesians 4:20, 21).

Consider the difference between the conduct of the saved and the unsaved. People who know not Christ live a life marked by *“vanity of their mind, ... understanding darkened, ... alienated from the life of God... ignorance..., blindness of their heart, ... past feeling... lasciviousness, ... uncleanness with greediness”* (Ephesians 4:17-19). But the person who knows Christ lives by a different standard.

The *“if so be”* of verse 21 does not indicate doubt as to whether the Ephesians had come to know Christ. It is a grammatical form which means *“As for you, you have heard Christ and been taught the truth which is in Jesus.”* It was a fact that they knew Christ theoretically and personally: they knew of Him and they knew Him by personal faith.

The Holy Spirit is in the world for the express purpose of teaching believers in Jesus about their Lord. Jesus said, *“When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth... He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you”* (John 16:13, 14). How the Spirit rejoices at the receptive heart as He teaches Christians of the Christ.

But how the Spirit is grieved when He finds a person who is not interested in learning of Christ. Are you interested?

II. BE CHANGEABLE

“That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness” (Ephesians 4:22-24).

Three infinitives are placed in the text to indicate the changes to be made in the believer's life as the Spirit teaches him. The believer is “to put off,” “to be renewed,” “to put on.” The old flesh nature is to be “put off” and the new lifestyle in Christ is to be “put on.”

Colossians 3:9, 10 states that believers have already put off the old man and put on the new. Ephesians 4:22-24 commands them to do so. The first speaks of what has happened in Christ and the second speaks of what is to happen in experience. (Remember “positional sanctification” and “practical sanctification” in last week's study.) It is another way of saying, “Be what you have become.”

“To put off” and “to put on” are verb forms which indicate once-for-all

action. It is a death to self and resurrection to Christ-life to which reference is made. "To be renewed" is a different verb form and expresses repeated and continual action. The "spirit" of the mind is the human spirit which can control the mind by an act of the will. It is the change of one's thought patterns which changes lifestyle (Philippians 4:8, 9). Otherwise, the Spirit is grieved.

III. BE TRUTHFUL

"Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another" (Ephesians 4:25).

"Putting away lying" indicates the believer has renounced the principle of deceitfulness in dealing with his fellow man. Nothing relieves them from the obligation to deal truthfully (Zechariah 8:16). Why should the Christian be truthful? It is his union with Christ and his family relationships with all other believers that motivates honesty. Therefore every kind of deception must be banned to be like Christ (I Peter 2:1, 22).

Instead of lying, *"Speak every man truth with his neighbour."* Deal as truthfully with a fellow believer as you would deal with Christ, *"For he is our peace, who hath made both one...Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God"* (Ephesians 2:14, 19).

Lies can be told in speech, attitude, or action. How truthful are you with your peers? There must be no dishonesty in personal relations, wrong practices in business, or corruption in government by one who calls himself "Christian." The Holy Spirit is grieved by anything other than total truth.

IV. BE PEACEABLE

"Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: Neither give place to the devil" (Ephesians 4:26, 27).

There is an anger that is sin and an anger that is not sin. One grieves the Holy Spirit, but the other does not. Jesus showed how "righteous indignation" can be without sin (Mark 3:5). But when anger is selfish, or undisciplined, it is sin.

The text recognizes the fact of human anger. Two limitations are set on it to keep it from being sin. (1) It must be carefully guarded to keep it from passing on to sin (verse 26). (2) It must not be kept in the heart and permitted to carry over from one day to the next (verse 26). When anger is not dealt with by proper control and immediate disposal, it will take root in

the heart and give the devil room to act in the life. It might not be possible to settle the cause of anger before one sleeps, but his own heart can be reconciled with God, whether the problem is settled or not (Psalm 4:4).

A Christian's testimony can be lost by a bitter spirit of uncontrolled anger. How that grieves the Holy Spirit!

V. BE PRODUCTIVE

“Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth” (Ephesians 4:28).

Conversion does not immediately erase the habits of the old life. Some who were thieves come into the ranks of the Christians. They must be taught to change such ways.

But the problem is very much with us today. How many Christians steal through income tax reports, insurance claims, examinations in school, poor quality of workmanship, or giving less than full measure? That grieves the Holy Spirit.

But the command is more than that stealing cease. The command of God is that each person is to engage in productive labor. He can supply his own needs that way and even have some left over to help people who are in need. (There is no biblical basis for one to expect to be supported without working, whether the support is from church or government.) The fourth of the Ten Commandments says, in part, *“Thou shalt labour, and do all thy work”* (Deuteronomy 5:13).

A lazy man or a thief grieves the Holy Spirit.

VI. BE HELPFUL

“Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers” (Ephesians 4:29).

How the Christian talks will please or grieve the Holy Spirit. *“Corrupt communication”* can come out of the mouth, *or “that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.”* Which would the Holy Spirit approve coming out of your mouth?

What is “corrupt communication” which grieves the Spirit? It is any kind of foul-mouthed talk: ribald jokes, harmful gossip, unspiritual singing, curse words, lies, or even seemingly innocent speech which does not profit

another. James 3 is a classic discussion of the use and abuse of the tongue. Read it!

The command is not negative, but positive. Let your speech be such that people who hear you will be built up. *“Exhorting one another”* is the Christian principle of speech (Hebrews 10:25). *“Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt”* (Colossians 4:6).

Is the Spirit grieved with your speech?

VII. BE IDENTIFIABLE

“And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption” (Ephesians 4:30).

“Ye are sealed unto the day of redemption” by the Holy Spirit of God. His sealing is internal. No one can see the “seal” because it is the Spirit himself living in you which seals you. As the rancher places a brand on his cattle to identify them as his own, so God has given the Holy Spirit to identify you as His own. The sealing within must be manifest before men. One is not manifest as a child of God by lying, resentment, theft, and the use of filthy language. Men can know the Spirit lives within only as the believer manifests His presence by a different style of conduct. Christians are identifiable as they are *“blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; holding forth the word of life”* (Philippians 2:15, 16). That pleases the Holy Spirit.

VIII. BE GENTLE

“Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice” (Ephesians 4:31).

The entire course of harsh speech, thought, and conduct must be abandoned by the Christian. *“Bitterness”* is resentment of heart. *“Wrath”* is a furious outburst of temper. *“Anger”* is a settled spirit of harshness. *“Clamour”* is loud outcry in violent arguments. *“Evil speaking”* includes all words which injure another. Such words are to be *“put away”* once and for all from the life of the Christian.

Kindness is to replace harshness as the Holy Spirit leads the believer to fuller spiritual maturity. The imitation of Christ's nature is to mark the one who belongs to Christ. Behold the gentleness of Jesus and follow His example if you would please the Holy Spirit.

IX. BE CHRISTLIKE

“And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you” (Ephesians 4:32).

Behold your Savior! He was tender, sympathetic and compassionate, patient and understanding of others, always ready to put kindness into operation. He was so forgiving that He prayed for His murderers just before He died. And He is our example!

“Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that we should follow his steps:... Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself unto him that judgeth righteously: Who his own self bare our sins in his own body” (I Peter 2:21-24).

Kindness, tenderheartedness, and forgiveness are to mark our lives, *“even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you”* (Ephesians 4:32). The Holy Spirit is never grieved with that lifestyle, for that is what He produces in the life of the Christian.

Questions

1. What does it mean to “grieve the Holy Spirit”?
2. What did Jesus say about the Spirit in John 16:13, 14?
3. How does one “put off” and “put on” as the Bible commands?
4. What is it to “be renewed in the spirit of your mind”?
5. Why should we be truthful with one another?
6. How is peace a sign of the Holy Spirit within?
7. Why should Christians engage in productive labor?
8. Why is pure speech so important to a Christian?