

In coming to our eighth study in a short topical series on, The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit, we come to the theme of Grieving the Holy Spirit. Thus far we have seen the Spirit's work in conversion, indwelling, filling, and leading. The Holy Spirit regenerates us, gives us faith and repentance, indwells us, and ongoingly fills and leads us.

Now, I know that I've said this about most of the other aspects of the Spirit's work, but I really believe this aspect of His ministry has been often ignored and misunderstood. And yet, it's obviously intimately related to the other aspects of the Spirit's ministry.

If the Spirit indwells us then we must be careful not to grieve Him. If we need to be constantly filled with the Spirit, then we must not grieve Him. And if we are to walk by the Spirit, that is be led by the Spirit, then we must not grieve the Spirit.

In short, there's a sense in which this aspect of the Spirit's ministry, is intimately related to every other aspect, and some of them, being filled and led by the Spirit, are necessarily dependent upon this (not grieving the Holy Spirit).

- I. How is the Spirit Grieved?
- II. Why is the Spirit Grieved?
- III. Practical Lessons

I. How is the Spirit Grieved?

1. This is obviously where our study must begin—in what way is God's Spirit grieved? Does He grieve just like us?
2. Well the Greek word rendered "grieve" simply means "to grieve or cause to sorrow"—to be grieved is to be sorrowful.
3. Thus, to grieve the Holy Spirit is to sadden or sorrow the Holy Spirit—it's to cause Him to mourn and be grieved.
4. This of course underscores something we've already established—the Spirit is a Person and not merely a force or power.
5. A mere force or power cannot be grieved, become sorrowful or saddened—these are true only of a personable Being.
6. Now, at this point I am forced to spend a few minutes clarifying in what way God the Holy Spirit can "be grieved."
7. (1) The Spirit is not grieved in the same way we are—when we experience grief we are changed from one state to another.
8. Perhaps we were happy or joyful and then some tragedy happens—we go from being happy (joyful) to being grieved.
9. We are actually changed by our circumstances—something outside of us affects us and changes our disposition.
10. There is a real sense in which we are changeable—and we are changed or altered by things beyond our control.
11. For example, if our puppy runs out into traffic and is killed, this will change our disposition from joy to grief.
12. This event affects us—it imposes itself upon us—our emotions are helpless before it—we are controlled or changed by it.
13. Perhaps a simple way of putting this would be—we are helpless or powerless before external influences that change us.
14. We go from one state to another depending on our circumstances—we are happy in the morning and sad in the evening.

15. Simply put, grief or sorrow in the strict sense in a change effected within the soul by circumstances beyond our control.
16. But all of this is very unlike God—He never changes—He is not changed by anything outside or inside of Himself.
17. God isn't like we are—He isn't pushed around by His circumstances—what He is He always is, and always will be.
18. God is immutable—He is unchangeable—He isn't reactionary—He isn't a slave to the actions or movements of men.
19. Thus, whatever it means that the Spirit is grieved, we must rinse our minds of any notion, God is grieved as we are.
20. God is not a man—He is not bullied by His circumstances—His disposition isn't dependent upon external events.
21. (2) Human emotions are ascribed to God to teach us truth about God—the Scripture describes God in a way that's accommodating.
22. It describes God as having human parts—thus, He is described as having eyes, hands, feet, a nostril, and a back.
23. Furthermore, the same Scripture describes God as having human emotions—He loves, hates, rejoices, repents, and grieves.
24. Now, it must be understood that all of these (human parts and passions), are ascribed to God to teach us about God.
25. Simply put—God is described in human terms in order to help us understand God who is infinitely above us.
26. And so, when the Scriptures ascribe human emotions to God, it does so to assist us in our understanding of God.
27. Gen.6:6-7—"And the LORD regretted (it repented the Lord) that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart."
28. These words describe the Lord's response to man's corruption—"Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth (v5)."
29. His response was one of regret and grief—the Hebrew word rendered "the LORD regretted" is literally "the LORD repented."
30. That is, He changed His mind—He regretted having made man—if He could do it over again, He would have done it differently.
31. Now, surely brethren we must understand this in a qualified sense, for Scripture elsewhere says God never repents or changes His mind (Num.23:19—'God is not a man, that He should lie, nor a son of man, that He should repent').
32. Thus, when Moses says that God repented or changed His mind about making man, He's described God in human terms.
33. We all understand what it means to regret something, and so God allows Himself to be described in this way.
34. Moses then says—"and He was grieved in His heart"—that is, because He regretted making man, He was sad.
35. Again, we all understand what it means to feel sorrow or grief—these are common human emotions we all feel.
36. Thus, the Scriptures use human parts and passions to describe God, in order to teach us something true about God.
37. Thus, my dear brethren, it's in every way right to say God is grieved, but we must understand what this does and does not mean.
38. When Scripture says God is grieved it means that God is deeply concerned with the behavior of His moral creation.
39. God is far from being indifferent to our behavior—when we obey He rejoices, and when we sin He is grieved.
40. This is another way of saying—when we obey He draws near with blessing, and when we disobey He removes that blessing.

41. Brethren this is very important to understand—God is not unresponsive and uncaring with regards to our behavior.
42. And this is why the Scriptures ascribe to Him the human emotion of grief, as if to say, our disobedience saddens Him.
43. Just as our obedience gladdens Him (or rejoices His heart), so our disobedience saddens Him (or grieves His heart).
44. Thus, we must maintain two truths—first, Scripture describes God with human emotions to help us understand Him.
45. Secondly, while these human emotions are not properly true of God, they teach us something essentially true of God.
46. And what is the point of describing the Spirit as grieving but to underscore His love, kindness, and tenderness toward us.
47. The fact that the Holy Spirit is grieved when we sin is simply another way of saying, He is deeply concerned for us!
48. For example, this can be easily illustrated—How do you feel when one of your children roams from the path?
49. You are deeply grieved! Why? Because you deeply love them! And thus, your grief is merely an expression of love.
50. Thus, let me be very clear on this point—the Bible ascribes grief to God because He loves His sinning people.
51. Observation 1—Behold the gracious condescension of God—God reveals Himself in terms of human emotions.
52. In fact, the entire Bible is a condescension of God, as within it, God stoops to speak to man in man's language.
53. O brethren, what an amazing truth! God condescends to speak to man in terms and with language he understands!
54. And, if that wasn't enough, He reveals Himself with language and imagery that's actually true of His creation!
55. The distance between God and man is so great, that the only way we can grasp God is for Him to stoop down.
56. Thus, when God describes Himself in human terms, that itself is an expression of God's desire to be known by us.
57. Observation 2—Behold a powerful motive for holy living—few things should influence us as the grieving of the Spirit.
58. This is true with regards to human relationships—for example, one reason children should obey their parents is because disobedience grieves them.
59. That is a very wretched child who can continually disobey their parents, full well knowing, the grief it causes them (for example, when I was a teenager I was a very wretched child, etc.).
60. And so too, what a tremendous thought, that Scripture describes God as grieving over the disobedience of His people.
61. We should obey God for many reasons, one being, because He loves us, and to disobey Him grieves Him (Can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?).

II. Why is the Spirit Grieved?

1. Here I want to answer the question—What grieves the Holy Spirit? Why does the Spirit become grieved (in the sense that we've already defined)?
2. Well, the answer is found in Eph.4:30—"and do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption."
3. (1) Because of who the Spirit is—"do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God"—because He is holy He is grieved by all that's unholy.
4. And thus, if we took the time to read the extended context (vv25-32), the particular sins mentioned concern the tongue.

5. Brethren, surely, we know that the Scriptures speak often about the sins of the tongue—lying and unkindness.
6. V29—"Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification"—by "corrupt word" is meant "destructive word."
7. The word literally refers to something rotten—perhaps we could translate the phrase—"Let no rotten word proceed from your mouth."
8. The idea is that of nourishing each other with good words—words that build people up instead of tearing them down.
9. V31—"Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice." The opposite of all this is found in v32—"But be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you."
10. I fear we think the Spirit is grieved by big and notorious sins (and He is), but He's also grieved by sins of the tongue and heart.
11. Simply put, unconfessed and undealt with sin is what grieves the Holy Spirit—sins of the heart, mouth, and life.
12. It grieves the Holy Spirit not to diligently and consistently gather with God's people to worship in Spirit and truth.
13. It grieves the Holy Spirit not to spend time in the word of God, and call out to God in humble and believing prayer.
14. It grieves the Holy Spirit to spend all of our time on the things of this life, and spend little time pondering the world to come.
15. It grieves the Holy Spirit not to share with others around us, the hope that we have within us because of Christ.
16. It grieves the Spirit to trust in ourselves, and not to look to Him for power to love God, our neighbor, and enemy.
17. (2) Because of what the Spirit does—"and do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption."
18. The purpose of this phrase has been a matter of debate among the commentators—why does Paul mention the Spirit's sealing in relation to His grieving?
19. Well, I think the answer lies in first of all, understanding what the "sealing ministry" of the Holy Spirit entails.
20. If you remember I've suggested an order of salvation like this—the Spirit regenerates, converts, and then indwells.
21. And it's when the Holy Spirit takes up His residence within the heart, He then also seals that heart for the day of redemption.
22. In olden days a king or prince would place a seal upon His documents—this meant the document belonged to him.
23. Thus, fundamental to the sealing of the Holy Spirit is the idea of possession—the thing sealed belonged to the king.
24. In this case it isn't a document that's sealed but our souls, and we are sealed—"for the day of redemption" (our glorification).
25. And so, the sealing work of the Holy Spirit is something that happens to every Christian when they receive the Spirit.
26. And yet, the Holy Spirit ongoingly reminds us of this fact—He continually assures us that we belong to God.
27. Thus, while every Christian has been sealed, the Holy Spirit ongoingly presses that seal deeper within our souls.
28. And this is why, in part, we should not grieve the Spirit, because it's His task to ongoingly assure us we are His.
29. Perhaps I can put it this way—we should not grieve the Holy Spirit because of the work He does within our hearts.
30. We have had a lot of construction recently around our home, and for more than a year our exit was closed off.

31. How foolish it would have been, had I daily harassed the workers, which would have hindered and delayed their work.
32. This is similar to what Paul is saying—be careful to grieve the Spirit because it would be counterproductive for you.
33. The Holy Spirit has sealed us as God's holy possession—He's the One who continually assures us of our acceptance.
34. He is given to us as the Spirit of adoption—the Comforter—the One who comes alongside to help and encourage.
35. Eph.1:13-14—"In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory (2Cor.1:21-22)."
36. Notice the order of this passage—they heard the message, believed it, and were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.
37. They received the Spirit as a sealer and guarantee—these are necessarily related—He seals us by assuring us of our inheritance.

III. Practical Lessons

1. Here I want to address the consequences of grieving the Holy Spirit of God—Paul's warning is not without reason!
2. If the Holy Spirit of God can be grieved by the behavior of Christians, then this teaches us three important lessons.
3. (1) We learn why many Christians lack power—that is, they lack the power of the Spirit to mortify sin and obey God.
4. We often hear about the power of the Holy Spirit—but what does the Spirit empower us to do? We don't need power to raise the dead and perform miracles.
5. What we need more power for is to hate, mortify, and forsake our sins, and love, cherish, and obey God's law.
6. Paul warned Timothy, 2Tim.3:1—"But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come. For people will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, etc."
7. And then says in v5—"having a form of godliness but denying its power"—that is, he's been describing professing Christians.
8. They have a shell or appearance of godliness—they may attend the meetings, own a Bible, and call themselves Christians.
9. And yet, for all this—"they deny the power of true religion"—that is, they deny their need for the power of the Spirit.
10. At the end of the day, they are not indwelt or lead by the Spirit, thus they are walking and working in the flesh.
11. How does one know whether they are in the flesh or Spirit, but because to be in the Spirit is to walk in the power of the Spirit!
12. The Spirit enables or empowers us to put to death the deeds of the body, and to walk in harmony to God's law.
13. And thus, there are people within churches who profess to be Christian and yet deny the power of the Holy Spirit.
14. And yet, that's not what I am here referring to—such people as just described do not grieve the Spirit but resist Him.
15. Acts 7:51—"You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you."
16. But in contrast to this, Christians grieve the Holy Spirit, and when they grieve Him, they hinder His ministry within them.
17. This is why many Christians lack the power to put away certain sins and walk consistently in the ways of God.

18. Now, don't get me wrong—I am not suggesting that any Christian can live above the struggle of indwelling sin.
19. All Christians, regardless how mature and holy, will struggle with various sins and succumb to their temptations.
20. But brethren, as we look around us at the state of things in the church, isn't there evidence that many lacks power.
21. It's my humble opinion that one of the things the church needs must is Holy Spirit given power—not power to perform miracles but power to love our wives.
22. Power to love our enemies—power to live differently than those around us—power to keep our hearts and lives pure.
23. (2) We learn why many Christians lack intimacy—it's the Holy Spirit who makes us aware and assured of God's love.
24. The Holy Spirit creates within us a flame that warms our hearts, and assures us we are accepted and loved by God.
25. And yet, dear brethren, this flame is fragile and delicate—it can be quenched and lessened by grieving the Spirit.
26. This can be illustrated in David—if you remember he sinned against God in committing adultery and murder.
27. For almost a year he attempted to hide his sins and not confess them, which of course, grieved the Spirit of God.
28. What was the results of this grieving? Well, we find out, at least in part, from Psalm 51, where he confesses his sins.
29. Ps.51:11—"Do not cast me away from Your presence, and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me"—this is a result of grieving God's Spirit.
30. The felt-awareness of God's loving presence is eclipsed—the intimacy and closeness we have with God is broken.
31. Remember brethren, it's the task of the Holy Spirit to assure us of God's love and our acceptance, and this ministry will be hindered if we grieve Him.
32. (3) We learn why many Churches lack unity—the Holy Spirit can be grieved by individuals and by local churches.
33. It's very possible that a church can collectively grieve the Holy Spirit, and hinder His gracious work among them.
34. Thus far, I haven't mentioned that this phrase "do not grieve the Holy Spirit" is actually a quotation from Isaiah 63:10.
35. Isa.63:9-10—"In His love and in His pity He redeemed them; and He bore them and carried them all the days of old. But they rebelled and grieved His Holy Spirit; so He turned Himself against them as an enemy, and He fought against them."
36. This passage of course, recounts Israel's deliverance from Egypt, and God's gracious care for them through the wilderness.
37. And yet, as a people they rebelled—they wanted to return back to Egypt—they failed to appreciate who they were.
38. And this grieved God—and then notice what happened—"so He turned Himself against them as an enemy, and He fought against them."
39. From this we learn an important principle—when God's people grieve God's Spirit, they forfeit many blessings.
40. Now, obviously God will never fight against His people in the same way He fought against OT rebellious Israel.
41. But OT Israel was His OC people, and as such, they form a picture or shadow of God's NC people (the church).
42. Rev.2:16—"To the angel of the church in Pergamos write...Repent, or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth."