

Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God

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[0:00] Last week we were thinking about the work of the Holy Spirit, the person of the work of the Holy Spirit. I'm going to give you two or three slides we had last time, the vastness of the work of the Spirit.

The Spirit of God is in the whole of the Bible from the very first book to the last. He's active in the Old Testament, he's active in the New.

We saw how important it was to understand the Holy Spirit in relationship to Jesus Christ. You cannot understand the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ without understanding that the Holy Spirit was with him.

God, as Peter says, anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power. And that what he did, he accomplished as the man Christ Jesus in the power of the Spirit.

And he says to his disciples as he comes to the end of his earthly life, that he is going to send another comforter. One like him, one like Jesus, will be with them.

[1:08] The world doesn't understand him. But this comforter will not just be with them as Jesus was with the disciples, but will be in them. And they will be deeply cared for.

And so the Spirit, the same Spirit who came upon Jesus Christ, the Spirit who comes into every person when they are born again of the Holy Spirit of God.

Never to depart. Always to be with us. And so it is a relationship to be respected and nurtured. A very close, intimate relationship to be respected and nurtured.

And we saw a little bit of that in that storyline with Douglas Brown. Just hearing of a man who had learnt as a believer to be walking in close communion with God the Holy Spirit.

And knowing what it was to be out of communion, out of fellowship, not hearing the voice of the Holy Spirit. Thinking about this issue of relationship.

[2:20] And just going to go into that particular pathway this morning with this particular heading. Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God.

I wondered about trying to give this some other title. And I just felt constrained that I couldn't give this any other title than exactly how it is expressed in the Bible.

I think you can gauge the weight of this matter just by reading the Bible word here. Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God.

It's addressed to Christian people. But as I start today, I just want to say to anybody here. You're honestly saying to yourself, I'm not in a place where I know God in this sort of personal way.

Maybe you've come to church. Maybe you know a Christian. You're interested. Just exploring a bit. Well, I would say, maybe God the Spirit is speaking to you.

[3:20] And it's very, very important to listen to what God says. And if there has been something in your heart over these last weeks, and you're just feeling, things aren't the same.

I just can't go back to how I was. I need to follow up on this. Well, do follow that through. Because this is the way God works in people's lives.

This isn't just mind games going on. God, by His Spirit, speaks to people, draws them to Himself. So God may be speaking to you at this time.

Don't grieve Him. We're going to be talking about what that means. But I might just say right now, don't reject the voice of God in your life. But as I said, this word is very clearly directed to Christian people who have the knowledge of the Holy Spirit of God in their lives.

It's an astonishing statement. It's astonishing. In the Old Testament, there's actually quite a lot of reference to grieving of God.

[4:37] But in the New Testament, there's not so much. And this is the only place in the whole Bible where this particular phraseology and idea is expressed.

Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God. Grieve. What does this word mean?

The Greek word is *lupio*. And it means to cause pain or grief or distress. It's the word that's used in Paul's letter to the Corinthians.

Please turn this up. 2 Corinthians 2. 1. 2 Corinthians 2. Verses 1 and 2.

You know that Paul had a very tough, troubled relationship with the church in Corinth. In his first letter, he has to write to them about a number of subject matters where he feels that they are dishonoring God.

[5:50] The second letter that he writes, or the second one that we have, is one where he expresses his deep heart.

Although he had to say hard things to them, he found it very painful to do so. Because he loves them. And if you love somebody, it is hard to say hard things.

But sometimes love demands that hard things are said. This is what he feels as he writes to them. 2 Corinthians 2. 2 Corinthians 2.

1 and 2. So I made up my mind that I would not make another painful visit to you. For if I grieve you, who is left to make me glad? But you whom I have grieved.

Grieved. The word grief appears again in that passage later on. It's the same word. Same verb used. *Lupio*. And he felt that they were grieved.

[6:58] And he was grieved. So it's a word that has something of a personal nature to it.

It's about people. We're not talking here about grieving over an animal or an object. There's a place in the Bible where the prophet Jonah, he grieved over the covering.

You remember that story, the end of the story of Jonah when God provided a covering for him to shade him from the heat. And then God took it away.

And it says he grieved over that. But that's not the same territory we're talking about here. No, no, no. It's something about personal.

And I have to say this is the most helpful verse almost in the whole of the Bible to understand the fact of the Holy Spirit being a person.

[8:04] As I was going through the web yesterday looking at various commentary on this particular verse. I came across a comment which was being made by some sect which doesn't believe in the Holy Spirit being a person.

And actually that's the position of the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Christadelphians and the Seventh-day Adventists. They believe the Holy Spirit is like a power in you. God gives you a power. A sort of inanimate, unpersonalized power. And I was astonished. They were trying to translate this particular text and say, don't grieve the power that's in you.

Whoa. Talk about twisting scripture. No, no, no, no. We are to read it in the way that the Bible intends it to be read.

God, by the Holy Spirit, gave Paul this word to write. And he demands that we honour him as a person.

[9:08] The third person of the Trinity. But it's also a word that is relational. It's kind of obvious from everything we've said. But it's relational.

So here is Paul speaking to the Corinthians. And he's talking about his interaction with them has resulted in grief. And so in this particular case, we are thinking about an interaction.

Someone has said that actually this word is most strongly related to the husband and wife relationship. I suppose there's no deeper thing that could go on in terms of intensity of grief.

Either when that relationship is so bad and so poisoned. Or if it is so precious and wonderful that when one of those dies, that this word is rightly used to describe the feeling that results in the living partner.

It's about what you can do to someone or feel about someone that you know well.

[10:34] So we might just simply say at this point, the Holy Spirit of God knows us very, very well. And the Holy Spirit of God loves us so

intimately, so precious.

What more can we say about this word? It's not. It's not anger. Although grief might be expressed in anger from time to time and in different ways.

But it's not essentially about anger. I would take you to other passages in the Bible that talks about God being angry.

Because God can be angry. He is angry. He is angry with sin. And he is angry with sinners. But this isn't actually touching on that point.

And it's more than upset or annoyance or disappointment. All of which again, may be very common experiences for us.

[12:00] It might include all of the above in some way. But in essence, it's something deep rather than superficial. It's all-consuming rather than lightweight. It's overwhelming and heavy.

And it's difficult to shake off. It's because it expresses such a strong and deep reality that in serious conversation, we are careful to use it for only the most serious life experiences.

And so, dictionary definitions say this. A very great sadness, especially at the death of someone. It implies a deep mental suffering often endured alone and in silence, but revealed by one's aspect, by one's face or body language.

Some of you know this. And know this deeply. And you suffer in it. This is this word.

So, Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit of God, uses this word to express this sort of thought. And he does so not in relation to our relationship with one another, but in respect of the Christian's relationship to the Holy Spirit of God.

[13:29] How amazing this is. How amazing this is. Because this effect is ascribed to the God, to God the Holy Spirit.

It's not actually ascribed in this particular instance to Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ was said of him and fulfilled in him.

He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. But one could almost understand that because he is man as well as God.

And as our high priest, it was necessary for him to be able to suffer temptation and feel for the weaknesses of fellow men.

But the Holy Spirit of God is not a man. He's never tasted humanity. But this experience of grief is ascribed to him.

[14:36] We find this amazing because it appears to make God seem fragile. A grieving person may appear to themselves and others to hardly manage to function.

What are we to make of this in respect of the Holy Spirit? This is an amazing statement because the Holy Spirit is so much more intelligently sensitive to everything than we are.

So the grief that is very, very real to us and almost all of us will experience in some measure at some point in our lives is still a grief that comes to people who are, generally speaking, like us, pretty insensitive.

But the Holy Spirit is deeply and intimately, intelligently sensitive.

Perfect in that. It's an amazing statement because it appears to make God vulnerable to our behavior. So last week and again this morning, I'm speaking of that mighty power of God that makes the dead live, makes a hard heart soft, changes the course of a man's life, and that's what he does.

[16:15] The Spirit brooded over the water at creation. The Spirit one day will rejoice with the Son and the Bride at the completion of the work that God planned from all eternity.

And it will be his work and the glory is his. What a mighty, mighty God. And here we read that he could be grieved by our behavior.

Touched, one might say. So it is amazing because it seems in violent contrast to other Bible pictures of the Holy Spirit as wind and fire and the dramatic effect of the work of the Spirit in people's lives.

But this is exactly the wonderful God of the Bible. And brothers and sisters, how unlike the gods that men make and imagine.

We love and adore this God who has revealed himself to be the Almighty and yet says to us don't grieve me.

[17:47] It is the reading of the Bible that brings us in front of divinity where things like this are found in this passage which no man would dream up to say.

Because the gods of the nations are not like this. They are the gods who are separate from people. They are not affected by people's behavior except angry. They are in total control.

The gods of the nations never reveal themselves in a way that says don't grieve. But our God does because he's amazing.

He's amazing. He's amazing. So what causes grief to the Holy Spirit of God?

Many things no doubt but in this one single place in the Bible where grief to the Holy Spirit is mentioned we need to pay careful attention to the words and imagery surrounding this phrase.

[19:14] So I start with this particular point. Please open your Bible to Ephesians chapter 4. Look at that verse and you notice we only read the first part of the verse.

Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. This is our first and our major clue as to what Paul has in mind as he's writing these instructions and encouragements to Christian people and he suddenly introduces this phraseology.

So it's good for us that we don't have to flounder around and think what may be causing a grief to the Holy Spirit because we have the clues here and this is a major clue here.

With whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. What do we need to know about the Holy Spirit in the context of his being grieved? It's something which is about the day of redemption.

Now what is this day of redemption? With whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. In this same letter Paul has already spoken about the Holy Spirit sealing people.

[20:30] It's like a mark of ownership. What is this day of redemption? redemption. If we're a Christian people we are a people who can be rightly called redeemed.

So you could say we have already had a day of redemption. The day came when we received Jesus Christ and we knew the burden of sin rolling away.

The price that he paid being put to our account. But it's not referring to that day in the past. It is referring to another day. And it is a day.

A day is coming which can be rightly called a day of redemption. A day when it's going to be completely manifest what Jesus Christ did when he died upon the cross and why he did it.

It's a day when Jesus himself will come not in poverty and as a baby but in glory and kingship with all those who have been gathered to him.

[21:38] And there will be a great assembly. It's a day when a day of judgment when there will be a separation between those who have experienced the redemptive work of Jesus Christ and those who have not.

Those who have known their sin forgiven and those who have not. and all who have known their redemption of their sins will be present upon that day. A vast number that none of us can compute from every tribe and tongue and nation.

And on that day all will be receiving the glorified bodies which Jesus himself inhabits now. and on that day may it be so that we are all found in that place.

Fully recognizing and fully realizing for the very first time in our lives just how amazing the work of Jesus Christ has been for us.

Praising the Lamb of God upon the throne. Paul writes about that day in his letter to the Philippians where he says I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.

[23:07] He's on a journey he's on a pilgrimage He's moving out of the darkness of this world and he knows there's coming a day and he's looking forward to it a day when he's going to see his saviour face to face and he is going to be able to take hold of the very thing for which Jesus Christ first took hold of him when he was noted before time began and Jesus hung upon the cross bearing Paul's sins Jesus coming again and with open arms saying to Paul welcome welcome welcome welcome you've known me from afar you're going to know me face to face what glory and in John's letter we

read this everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself just as he is pure looking forward to that day what's the right reaction for each one of us oh great goody goody that's okay that's good that's fine but here's a very serious significant statement

I'm going to meet this holy lamb of God the one who has died for my sin that I should one day be sinless no more troubled by that because the world we're going to is a world where there is no sin so we shall not contribute sin and no one else will contribute sin sinless and on that day sinlessness will be our beautiful experience beautiful experience so Paul and his other early Christians were saying I'm going to get ready for that day I'm going to prepare myself for that day I'm going to demonstrate that I am indeed bought by the blood of Jesus Christ by being ready for that day and making every effort that my life should be pure and ready and wholesome and acceptable and agreeable to him because I'm going to meet the bridegroom and he wants his bride to be spotless this is the

Holy Spirit's work in us now to bring us safely and securely home to that day God is at work every day and in every way that the bride of Christ should be ready for the bridegroom so who is this Holy Spirit of God who we are in danger of grieving it's the one who has sealed us for the day of redemption and that's his work in us that's his purpose for us that's what he likes to do is to making us more and more fit to meet the bridegroom so we then look for our second clue at the wider context of this passage and this is what we can say and I want you to look at this passage now we'll just read it and I want you to see how the everyday mundane jostles with deep spiritual realities so Ephesians 4 25 to 32 therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor for we are all members of one body in your anger do not sin do not let the sun go down while you are still angry and do not give the devil a foothold he who has been stealing must steal no longer but must work doing something useful with his own hands that he may have something to share with those in need do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs that it may benefit those who listen and do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption get rid of all bitterness rage and anger brawling and slander along with every form of malice be kind and compassionate to one another forgiving each other just as in Christ God forgave you look at how mundane and everyday this is you might think that such a powerful and deep hurt to the Holy Spirit of God would need some awful premeditated sin like murder or adultery or perjury in court but no it appears to be the stuff of everyday the kind of things that each of us knows about because we've done them or thought them and do them now perhaps even today perhaps even in this building so if I was to list them up there this is only just a summary of what we've all just read deceitfulness anger stealing cutting corners unwholesome conversation bitterness rage slander and malice and perhaps not doing this not speaking the truth not sharing with those in need not building others up by your words not being kind and compassionate not being forgiving that's what the word says and these are stated because they are directly related to some massive spiritual issues which are the danger of giving the devil a foothold do you notice that verse 27 anger unconfessed undealt with anger gives the devil a foothold it does you have an unbridled spirit which just flops into anger that is really giving a foothold for the devil to operate in your life and the life of others it's massive isn't it it's just a bit of temper

[30:30] God says gives the devil a foothold or forgetting that God has forgiven you you've seen verse 32 be kind and compassionate to one another forgiving each other just as in Christ God forgave you if you forget that God forgave you you will have difficulty forgiving other people you just will that's why Paul gives this motivation to Christian people motivation to Calvary Church says if you want to know what it is to be a forgiving people you're going to have to remember that God has forgiven you how much has God forgiven you this much it's vast isn't it it's vast but because of that we forgive others and grieving the Holy

Spirit of God our small behaviours affect our relationship with the Holy Spirit of God that's the context of this particular word that's why it's so so applicable for us isn't it I'm not talking here about subject matters like sinning against the Holy Spirit the unforgivable sin and stuff like that I'm just talking about the everyday because this is what this is about and this is why it really affects every one of us in our spirits and how we are living in relationship to the Holy Spirit of God being reflected

in the way that we live with one another so here are some implications the first thing to say is the Christian life is relational the

Christian life is relational it's fundamentally relational because we have a relationship with God Father Son and Holy Spirit and we are into bad and rocky territory when the Christian life becomes something other than that in Romans 14 verse 17 Paul writes the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness peace and joy in the Holy Spirit if our Christian life is on the slide and it becomes morality then we have lost our way haven't we Ephesians 4 30 is a very big and strong reminder to us that what should count in our lives is this idea of not grieving God he's not interested in tick boxes but he's very interested in his relationship with us that small behaviors do matter never think that small behaviors don't matter we all play a game of balances the good outweighs the bad so the bad doesn't really count we do it subconsciously we just do it every day that was good that was good that wasn't so good that was good that was good okay how many marks out of it's not been a bad day small behaviors do matter think about the churches who were addressed in the book of revelation in chapters 2 and 3 always intrigued by that when

Jesus says there isn't Lord Jesus says to them pleased about that you've done well in that way well done for that well done for that but I have this against you I just have this against you and then he lists what he has against them normally one point one point but it's so serious that he says about that one point be careful because if you don't deal with that I may remove the candlestick it matters Jesus Christ doesn't play the game of balances he actually wants the whole of us not a compromised part of us but the whole of us welcome the glorious truth that every moment of every day is rich with opportunity to please the

Holy Spirit of God to prevent the devil getting a foothold and responding to the forgiveness of God isn't that beautiful that's the other side of this coin every day has that opportunity 1 Corinthians 10 31 says whether you eat or drink or whatever you do all to the glory of God you have your cup of tea afterwards for the glory of God you have your conversations afterwards for the glory of God you do your travelling you face your work tomorrow and all the things that seem so tiny there could all be fraught with rich potential to please God to bring him glory and to take us one step nearer to our heavenly home so it's Paul who says in Ephesians 5 15 live carefully be very careful then how you live not as unwise but as wise making the most of every opportunity because the days are evil but you don't have to be overwhelmed by evil days you can live wisely by the power of the spirit with the grace of the

[36:49] Lord Jesus Christ and the love of your heavenly father you can live wisely you can take good choices you can bless your brothers and sisters you can help the weak you can care for your soul you can make yourself ready for the coming saviour amen that's that's that's not right we're going to sing number 815 815 take time to be holy speak much with your Lord a night