

Grieving the Holy Spirit

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[0 : 00] I have to tell you that as I stand here this morning, at the very start, there's a passage that! That would not be strange for a pastor when he stands at a pulpit, right? In fact, I would hope! You'd be a little disappointed.

If that wasn't what was going through my mind. But I want to tell you the passage. Ephesians chapter 3, verse 21. Now unto him who knows it. Here's what it says, unto him be glory in the church.

By the way, that's a good verse. And I can think of several others that are good verses. But unto him be glory in the church. And as we look at this passage this morning, we are looking at one particular text in Ephesians chapter 4. And I want you to put your finger on it for a moment as we read the text together. You follow, and then we will take some time in prayer together. And I trust that as I pray, what you'll do sitting right there is that you will pray. And I want to coach you a little bit on what I want you to pray about. Two things. I want you to pray according to the instruction that we find in Psalm 119 where it says, open thou mine eyes that I might behold wonderful truths of thy law. I want you to open my eyes that I can see what God has. Second thing that you would do is that you'd pray for me. Because it says in 2 Thessalonians chapter 3, it says, pray that the word of God would have free course, that it would not be hindered. And that God would enable me to speak by his power, through his spirit, and that God would be honored by you hearing the word and changing accordingly. Our Father God this morning, for us the matter of prayer is not a habit, but it is the absolute life breath of the believer.

We recognize what it says in John chapter 15, that without me you can do nothing. And so, in keeping with that profound truth, we who are your children acknowledge that we have the right and the privilege to call upon your name and rely upon you to do great and wonderful things that are beyond our imagination for the glory of the cross. We want to hear and understand and be changed by the word of God. And we ask this because of Jesus, in whose name we pray. Amen.

Let me read the passage to you there in Ephesians chapter 4, verse 30. It says, And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

[3 : 37] I want to take just a second to review with you some of the things that we have done in the last several weeks. And I remind you that several weeks ago, I had three little children come up here on stage. Does anybody remember what that question was that I asked them?

I asked them a little question about what man is all about, right? What is the chief end of man? Does anybody remember the answer or do you know the answer? Wave at me if you know the answer to the first question of the catechism. What is it? The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. And I can't help but think when you're thinking about it, in Psalm 16, verse 11, it says what? In Thy presence is the fullness of joy, and at Thy right hand are pleasures evermore. When we get there, it won't be any better than that, right? It's going to be great because we're going to see Him face to face and we will be like Him. And it says in 1 John, and I already recited that, it says that those who have this thought, this idea, it purifies us.

Well, last week, another one of our little children came to me. I actually was out there in the lobby doing that obligatory business of hi, hi, hi. You know how people go by and it's a time when people tell me the most important things of their life and expect me to remember them. You know, it's like, oh, by the way, I'll be dying tomorrow. Don't do that to me. You know, it's like, at least send me a note, okay? But I had this little girl come up to me, and she's right down there, you know, and she says, Pastor, when we get to heaven, will we sin anymore? I tell you, I just got cold chills. You know, I get those occasionally. And I just, I looked at her, I looked in her eye and I said, you know what? When we get to heaven, we won't sin anymore.

But not only that, we won't be able to sin anymore. I like that. And I appreciate that little girl's sensitivity to the ongoing struggle of sin. Do you struggle with it? Do you struggle with it? Go ahead and nod your head because your neighbor already knows you got the problem, so give in. You know, it's like, yeah, you're struggling with it. And here's the truth. I really want you to listen carefully. What we're going to be looking at this morning is profoundly significant in the believer's ongoing struggle and battle with sin. I'm not suggesting that if you get this, it's all over and you're home free. But I am telling you this, that to be well-informed scripturally and to understand what the Scriptures tell us about the ministry of the Spirit of God in the life of the believer is significant in our battle in dealing with sin. I'm reminded of what it says in Galatians chapter 5, verse 16, walk by the Spirit, and you will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh. The unhappiest state of the believer is not in the battles that he has with his health or with other individuals or problems at work.

[7 : 28] The battles that are most significant are always battles with the indwelling sin that we deal with. And this morning, I want you to understand that the Spirit of God is significant and critical in that ongoing struggle. Now, we are looking at a passage here that for some may seem to be a little disjointed.

Now, what I mean by that is that if you have been following the book of Ephesians, you know that the first three chapters are profoundly theological and lay out the issues of the work of God in salvation and in placing the believer into a body for the sake of the glory of Christ. And then in chapter 4 and on through to the end of the book, we have the exposition of, okay, since the believer is saved by the grace of God, empowered by the Spirit of God, how is it that we are to act?

And we find one thing after another given to us clearly, explicitly. Those who are the children of God are to live, endeavoring to maintain the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace.

We are to remember that there is one God, there is one baptism, one Savior, one Lord, one faith, and we are together. And then we find out that we're a body of believers that are organically under the headship of Christ, working together for His glory. It's an amazing passage.

[9 : 06] And then following that, we pick up there later in the part of chapter 4, and it talks to us about, and don't act like the unbelieving world. And Paul then goes on and explains, here's what the unbelieving world acts like.

You, believers, are to be different. You're to speak the truth with one another. You're not to let anger fester in your life.

You're not to steal. You're not to use your lips as a means of causing heartache and grief. Your lips are to be a resource of blessing.

And then suddenly, out of seeming nowhere, comes this little statement, and don't grieve the Holy Spirit.

If you're tracking on the logic of it, you probably say, what's that there for? In fact, in doing some studies earlier last week, I was struck by the fact that there are some commentators that say, this verse seems to be just a little disjointed and doesn't fit.

[10 : 11] I think that's far from the truth. I think the verse fits perfectly. However, it does kind of rattle our cage and make us think a little bit about the subject of sin in a different way than we sometimes do.

We're all dealing with sin on a regular basis, sadly. And often when we're thinking about sin, we are thinking about it from a very personal and humanistic perspective.

In other words, what I mean by that is we're thinking about sin about, oh, well, if I do that, then this is going to happen to what? To me. That's bad news.

Sin's bad. Sin hurts. Sin causes problems. Sin causes problems. And our thoughts about sin are centered most of the time upon ourself. And there, seemingly out of nowhere, the Scriptures say this, and grieve not the Holy Spirit.

Listen to me. The purpose of preaching is to change the way you think.

[11 : 34] Do you understand that? Now, that does not mean that Tim Knoyer has the right or the responsibility of changing the way you think.

My thoughts are no more noteworthy than yours are. But preaching is speaking explicitly and clearly what God has to say, and that ought to change the way you think.

And if the preaching of the Word of God this morning, through the power of the Spirit of God, does its job in the future next week, when you start thinking about sinning, you will say to yourself, I don't

want to grieve the Spirit.

Amen. That's the test. I don't want to grieve the Spirit.

In this flow of the passage, we find Paul addressing issues that could be justifiably identified as sin.

[12:50] It's wrong to be angry. It's wrong to lie. It's wrong to steal. It's wrong to say things that are harmful.

But then Paul steps it up and he says, and do not grieve the Spirit of God. With this passage in mind, I want to address three things that we find in the text.

First of all, when we sin, it is against the person of the Holy Spirit. When we sin, it is against the person of the Holy Spirit.

I do want to recognize that our text speaks in the imperative, and Paul commands us. It's not kind of like, oh, by the way, I think you probably ought to work at this a little bit.

It's a statement. It's an obligation. It's something that the Spirit of God speaks explicitly to a believer and says, this is what you are not to do. You are not to grieve the Spirit of God.

[13:57] And behind the idea of grieving the Spirit of God is a recognition that sin has some significant consequences, not only in the life of the believer, but to the Spirit himself.

There's more at stake when we sin than just our personal comfort or dignity. Or honor. And the truth of the matter is, is that every sin has an effect on the Holy Spirit who indwells each believer.

And the sin's impact on the Spirit of God is not something that is easily managed in our own thinking, apart from humility. I'm going to use a word that, and not for the sake of showing a vocabulary, but I can't think of another way to say it succinctly, but there are a number of antinomies in Scripture.

Ante means what? Against, nomos, law. There are seemingly opposing principles in Scripture.

Namely, I'll give you a couple of illustrations of it.

Probably the classic one would be the absolute sovereignty of God and the absolute responsibility of man. That's an antinomy. They're hard to fit together. The deity of Christ and the humanity of Christ would be another illustration.

[15:21] And here's another one. How can the Spirit of God be inside me? How can the Spirit of God, who has the nature of God, also be affected by me?

The fact that sin has an effect on the Holy Spirit is really a challenge to our understanding, our theological understanding of the nature of God.

What does it say in Malachi 3, verse 6? I'm going to recite it for you. It says, I am the Lord. I do not change. Let me go over that slowly. I am the Lord.

I, what? I do not change. Aren't you glad He doesn't change? He doesn't change. He never changes. And it is because, as He was reciting there in Malachi, it says, I am the Lord.

I do not change. And it's because I do not change that you, O nation of Israel, are not consumed. It is because of His unchangeableness that my salvation is secure in His person and in His promises, and it is completed work.

[16:33] God doesn't change. And yet, and yet, we read here that our sin grieves the Holy Spirit. Now, the idea here is that it really affects Him deeply.

And so here we have that kind of conundrum, that difficulty of saying, okay, an unchangeable God, however, is affected deeply by the things we do. It changes His feelings.

And the statement reflects the sobering thought that when we sin, and in the context of the passage in Ephesians chapter 4, when we honestly are not endeavoring to maintain the unity of the Spirit, when we're not loving the brethren, when we are less than edifying or honest in our words, we are grieving the Spirit.

We also grieve Him when we indulge in secret lusts, when we covet, when we're embittered towards others. And beloved, I think that the Scripture wants us to recognize that grieving the Spirit is a profoundly significant thing.

The fact that we're told this here is instructive, for it points to the principle that every sin we commit, let me put it this way, the principle crime of every sin is its offense against God.

[17:57] Do you follow that? When we sin, the most significant thing about the sin that we commit is what it does to God.

While it's true, and it is a sub-point that is worth remembering, His commandments are for our blessing, and when we sin, we harm ourself.

The larger and more significant truth is not what sin does to us, but what sin does to the character, the name of God.

And for a believer to be dominated by his thinking exclusively about how sin affects himself is to have a low view of God and a high view of himself.

And here is the unintended consequence of not having a God-word focus when we're dealing with the subject of sin. It is that we are often overwhelmed in the battle with sin, and we don't know what the solution is because as it says in the Scripture, you have given up the streams of living water.

[19 : 28] Let me bring two classic texts to your mind to help you understand that sin really is against God. I think about the one in Genesis chapter 39, verse 9, where Joseph was tempted by Potiphar's wife.

Very familiar passage. I think the thing that is most significant in that text is that Joseph, as he is reasoning with this perverted, wicked woman who is tempting him sexually, he says, listen, your husband has given me these tremendous responsibilities and respect, but then he concludes by saying, and how can I do this great sin against God?

When was the last time you concluded your argument in your own thinking? How many of you realized that sin in most cases is not something that just kind of creeps up on us and kind of strikes us, and boom, we do it?

I've had people say to me, I didn't mean to say that, and I would agree, you probably didn't think carefully enough, but you did mean to say it. We've all had those little arguments in our mind after a conversation, well, I should have said this.

How many of you done that? Yeah, well, the next time they say that, I'm going to say this. You know, it's like, God forbid, stop me. We think, we think, we think, we think, we think we've got the math figured out, we know how it's going to work out, and then lo and behold, when was the last time when you were kind of weighing whether or not you would commit that offense against God, when was the last time you said, you know, and if I do this, this is supremely, this is supremely offensive to God.

[21 : 17] Psalm 51, verse 4, David, when he walks out in public and hands a brief song to John Kroll and says, would you sing this Sunday?

And John Kroll helps us with music here, so, but if you looked at Psalm 51, by the way, you know that the Psalms were the songbook of the Old Testament, and this is a song that David wrote, and songs that were written were used in public worship, and so David hands it to the choir director and says, listen, next Sabbath, I want to get on record with what God's been teaching me about my wicked, despicable heart, and so I want you to sing this, and so here we go in verse 4, King James, bear with me, against thee and thee only have I done this, all right?

Hey, what had David done? He had murdered a man. He had been involved in adultery with a woman. He had then, for two years, it is estimated by Bible scholars, had been kind of carrying on as if everything was okay.

He had played the game. And finally, when he is convicted, he says, it's only against you that I've sinned. A practical use of this Bible truth would be the next time that you find yourself entertaining temptation and weighing Satan's lies.

The next time you find yourself entertaining temptation and weighing Satan's lies, stop and think, if I yield to this temptation, I am going to grieve the Holy Spirit that indwells me and is so incredibly involved in helping me with every part of my spiritual life.

[23 : 21] Second thing that I want us to see in the passage is that when we sin, it is against the work of the Holy Spirit. Look at the passage. Because the logic of the outline does not come from my thinking, but from the word itself.

Don't grieve the Holy Spirit. It's against the person of the Spirit of God. But then secondly, by whom you were sealed. The text tells us more, for it speaks of the Spirit's work in sealing the believer. I want you to keep your finger there in Ephesians chapter 4 and turn back just for a moment to Ephesians chapter 1 verse 13. By the way, the book of Ephesians is one that is riddled.

It's shot through with recurring emphasis upon the ministry and the significance of the Spirit of God. This summer, earlier on, and I'm going to take a tangent for a moment, but this summer, in the evenings, we did a series, a theological series, and I preached for two weeks upon the ministry of the Spirit in the believer's life.

[24 : 43] And if you were to ask me, what are some of the things that in the last 30 years God has been at work changing in my thinking, one of them, I think, I pray, is evident to you, and that is a

growing affection for the Lord Jesus Christ and a dominant thinking that He is supremely worthy of my affection and my interest.

But another is a greater dependence upon the Spirit of God actively engaged in my life, and I have no hesitation to admit I desperately need His work every day.

The Spirit is significant in the book of Ephesians, and there in verse 113 it says this, In Him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in Him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit.

The genuine convert is sealed with the promised Holy Spirit. I'm going to have to take the time, I will not take the time this morning to take you back to the book of Romans and chapter 8 in particular where it argues, I think very persuasively, that every believer is indwelt with the Spirit of God.

If you're a child of God, you have the Spirit of God in you. A companion passage would be over in 1 Corinthians chapter 6 where Paul is arguing that the believer should not be involved in immorality because when the believer involves himself in immorality, he drags the Spirit along.

[26 : 21] That's offensive. Hey, Holy Spirit, come with me. I want to look at some pornography. That's offensive.

Not right. And so, in Ephesians, Paul says, you need to understand that you were sealed with the Holy Spirit.

I want you to understand that as this passage is played out, the thing that we need to recognize is that one of the blessings of our salvation is not just that we have a promise of where we will eventually spend eternity, and that's good news.

we also have the promise that we don't have to stay the way we used to be, and the reason we can be certain of that, now listen, if you're here today and you know Christ, you won't stay the way you are.

And one of the reasons I can guarantee that is not because of me, it's because the Spirit of God is in you, and the Spirit of God will not let it keep on going. Recognizing that the ongoing battle with sin is pretty difficult, however, you can understand why we would be concerned about having assurance of where we will end up someday.

[27 : 57] and one of the things that we receive early on in our spiritual life is assurance of our eternity, and that assurance does not come through our own accomplishment, but it comes through the ministry of the Spirit of God, namely this business of sealing us.

and we find it over and over again that you're sealed, you're sealed, you're sealed, and what that is talking about is that guarantee that you have, how do I know I am saved?

How do I know that I will spend eternity in heaven? How do I know that God has done a miraculous work in my life? I have received the Spirit of the living God.

That's proof. And yet we live with our daily frailties, do we not? We struggle. And Paul encourages us over and over again through the book of Ephesians to understand that the Spirit is at work, He is at work, He is at work, He Himself as the guarantee of our salvation and here's how we see that He is at work.

For one, He is reminding us of the promises of Scripture. And just as our salvation was a work of grace, so our eternal destiny rests on His power to save and the Scriptures stand clearly to make that evident.

[29 : 30] Second, we find stirring in our hearts with a desire for godliness and growth over in Philippians chapter 2 verse 12 and 13, a passage that I would hope every believer knows. It says what?

It says, that you are to work out your salvation, what, what, help me, with fear and trembling because it's God. Now listen to this. I don't think we appreciate this enough because it's God who is working in you, now track this, both to will and to do His good pleasure.

Now what does it mean to will? It means to want to. Lord, Lord, how many of you would like it for the Spirit of God to help you be diligent and persistent in exercise?

You know? I mean, five days a week, minimum of 30 minutes at a time, and you don't need to look like Arnold Schwarzenegger, but you need improved health. Right? We could all do, well, maybe not, but most of us could do if the Spirit of God would give us the will, right, to exercise.

I'd take that. Spiritually speaking, it says that the Spirit of God is in the believer working to make you want to do the right thing.

[30 : 49] Do you see the evidence of that? Oh, I am blessed! Now I wish he'd gotten it done sooner and he would keep at it harder. Now you're thinking, that's a theological conundrum.

Bear with it, okay? I just, I wish that I'd been smarter younger. How many would join me in saying that? Everything I've learned, I've learned through heartache and challenge because of my insufferable stubbornness and my disobedient spirit and my arrogance.

And I'm thankful, I'm really thankful that he never quits. He enables every step of our growth.

Colossians chapter 1 verse 29.

Let me come to one other point. Ephesians chapter 4 verse 30, it says this, when we sin, let me read the passage, you were sealed for the day of redemption.

When we sin, it disregards the completion of his work. there's one more jewel in Paul's statement here, and it draws our attention to the future, and it speaks of the day of our redemption, and it's talking about that wonderful day of the consummation of all things, when this present life and the difficulties and heartache, the troubling rain that we see in the world that faces us, that is pervasive in its wickedness, is going to be wiped away, and the king of kings will reign forever.

[32 : 22] I find myself, I struggle with listening to too much news. I stopped a number of years ago receiving the newspaper, because I would read the newspaper and somewhere in the process of getting from the front to the back, I would find my sanctification reaching a boiling point.

How many of you understand that? I know of a dear brother in the Lord that calls himself a news junkie. Well, I am not a news junkie, and I'll tell you why, because I just can take about so much of what's going on in the world before I find myself saying, even so, come Lord Jesus.

Right? It's like, Jesus, you need to be a stomping on down here, and you need to put the smack down on those people. And then I think to myself, okay, and you're part of the problem, Tim.

Paul, in this last little part, lifts up our heart and lets us know that the end is good. When we sin against the Holy Spirit, we sin against the one who has sealed us for the day of redemption.

Sin is such a short-sighted thing. It tempts us to live with an eye on the moment. We steal, thinking only of the moment.

[34 : 00] We lie under the pressure of the moment. Every act of sin that we commit, whether it is drunkenness or anger or violence or sex or whatever it is, it's all the promise of the moment, and Satan is a liar.

There's no lasting benefit or consequence. Scripture wants us to think way into the future of where things will be perfect, and things will be blessed, and we shall see him as he is, and we will be, what?

Do you know the passage? And we will be like him. And so Paul says this, he says, listen, don't grieve the Holy Spirit. When we sin, we offend the Holy Spirit who has sealed us for the glory to come.

We who are his children, we who are his children, are not going to spend all of eternity as subjects to the frailty and frustration of this life.

Do you understand that? And it would do us well to think more often of how things someday will be. and that is what this passage reminds us of.

[35 : 36] The day is coming when every one of you who are here will enjoy the glory and the presence of Christ forever.

And do you know what? When we sin, we are saying to God, I don't care about tomorrow.

I don't care about what you have made for me. I don't care about my future blessings. I don't care about seeing Christ.

And the Holy Spirit pens these words for the believer. He says, don't grieve me. Don't grieve me. So let me close. Preaching aims to change the way you what? What?

[36 : 45] Think. God's love. And this passage intends to instruct the believer that when we find ourselves struggling with the battle of sin, the thought is, I don't want to grieve the Spirit of God who indwells me.

And God's people cried out and said, Holy Spirit, convict us. that we don't sin against you.

Let's close in prayer. Oh, Holy Spirit, this morning we are so desperate for you.

We are frail, easily distracted, far too comfortable with sin, and most often thoughtless of your presence and ministry.

we ask that you do whatever is fitting to give to us a greater sensitivity to your presence, that we who are your children would know the sweetness of communion and relationship, that the sin that

does so easily beset us would grow to be less of a struggle and a battle, that Christ would be seen preeminent in every thought and every action.
[38 : 44] And we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.