



So be with us now, Father. Guide us and keep us during this time. Pray these things in your heavenly Son's name. Amen. Amen. One of my professors in seminary was memorable for saying lots of things.

There were lots of things that Jack Collins was known for saying. The class where he was most famous for saying famous things was Covenant Theology.

It was the introductory course that all first-year students at Covenant Seminary take. And it was the class where the professors, it was four of them, they taught it together. And they took these entering students who were on top of the spiritual world.

[ 4 : 29 ] They thought they had it all figured out. And they put their theological world totally out of balance. They took everything that you thought you knew, and they pointed out your presuppositions.

They pointed out your weaknesses. And they ultimately pointed out all the things that you didn't know. They were there to knock you down a notch. One of the things that Jack Collins was famous for saying was, Don't hear what I'm not saying.

Don't hear what I'm not saying. I think it originated from his impatience. I think it came out of some of his disgust from students who would take giant leaps from one thing he said about a particular passage and draw all kinds of other conclusions.

Don't hear what I'm not saying was the warning from Jack Collins all the time. It was a reminder to us to stay focused, to remember what we knew to be true about the subject at hand.

Don't start drawing all kinds of crazy conclusions. Don't hear what I'm not saying. Dr. Collins knew from working with young seminarians that it was the habit of our eager hearts and minds to want to believe things that weren't actually in the text, that weren't actually there.

[ 5 : 43 ] And if I may, I believe that Paul would probably be saying the same thing to us this morning as we consider verse 32 about the Holy Spirit. Don't hear what I'm not saying would be the warning of Paul.

He says, Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption, but stop. Do not hear what I'm not saying. As we consider the passage this morning, we understand that there's a lot that the Bible teaches about the Holy Spirit, and we must be careful to not hear what the passage isn't saying.

Sayings like these, that we grieve the Spirit, that we affect the Holy Spirit, can lead us to hear things that are not in the text. So I want us just to slow down a little bit, and I want us to start there.

Let's start there by talking about what this passage doesn't say. So if you want to start taking notes, start there. Here's what the passage doesn't say. What this passage doesn't say about the Holy Spirit.

The first is this. The passage does not say that grieving and blaspheming are the same. If you're like me, you hear this passage, you read about the grieving of the Holy Spirit, and your mind immediately goes to Jesus' words about blaspheming the Spirit.

[ 7 : 01 ] And you start to get confused, and you think, oh no, I don't want to... Paul's saying don't blaspheme the Spirit. That's what he's saying. I don't want to get caught up in this, what did Jesus call it? Blaspheming was the unforgivable sin, right?

Look with me at Mark chapter 3. These are Jesus' words. He says this, In Mark chapter 3, Jesus is speaking about a much different act towards the Holy Spirit than the grieving that Paul is talking about here.

We're not going to consider Mark chapter 3 entirely this morning. I'm not going to do it justice. But you need to know that what Jesus was referring to here was a flagrant, willful, decisive judgment that the Spirit's testimony came from Satan.

That the Spirit's testimony was untrue. Jesus is explaining that all those who have this persistent, unrepentant denial of the Holy Spirit will not experience forgiveness.

The word that Jesus uses for blaspheming is entirely different. It has a different context. It was spoken by a different person. It comes from a different biblical author, and therefore it has a much different meaning than what Paul is talking about here in chapter 4.

[ 8 : 32 ] It's also worth noting that many Christians fear from Mark chapter 3 that they themselves might blaspheme the Spirit. This concern, this consideration actually shows a sensitivity to the Spirit, and it's evidence that you're not blaspheming the Spirit.

So if that's in the back of your mind somewhere, please know that. Please know that if you're sensitive to blaspheming the Spirit, you're not actually blaspheming the Spirit. You have good judgment. You're considering your own heart.

Paul's word choice, though, his word choice in Ephesians chapter 4 verse 30 is one that means to be made sad, to be made sorrowful, to affect with grief or to make one uneasy.

This definition, along with Paul's whole context, makes these very different ideas. Grieving is not blaspheming. Grieving is not blaspheming.

As we grieve the Spirit, which Paul knows that we will, he anticipates it by talking about it, we are doing something very different than what Jesus spoke about in Mark chapter 3.

[ 9 : 42 ] Paul is not saying that grieving is blaspheming. The second thing that Paul is not saying is that we can affect our relationship with the Father. He's not saying that we can affect our relationship with the Father.

We're going to talk a little bit more in a moment about our actions, both of our head and our hearts that grieve the Spirit, but we must first remove from our minds any idea that we can change or affect the standing that we have with the Father.

Paul is not saying that we can affect our relationship with the Father. This is true for a number of reasons. The first is that the entire book of Ephesians so far doesn't support that idea.

The entire book of Ephesians so far is founded upon, rooted in, the fact that we have received God's grace through Christ, and that we are eternally sealed by that.

As Paul talks about us grieving the Spirit, it's not in contradiction to what he's talked about already about grace. Paul knows that we are sealed by the Father.

[ 10 : 47 ] We are forever sons and daughters, and there's nothing that we can do to change that relationship. There's also a biblical precedent for grieving the Holy Spirit.

Paul had in mind Isaiah 63. It was in clear view when he wrote this passage, and in Isaiah 63, the people of God are described the exact same way, as grieving the Holy Spirit.

They've grieved the Holy Spirit through their disobedience. It was this common pattern of God's people to return to their sin again and again, right? And the Scripture tells us that God was saddened, that He was sorrowful, that He grieved when the people of God returned to their sin.

We can't miss the clear indication and the significance of the fact that our sins do affect the Father, but they do not affect our relationship with the Father.

This description of rebelling against God in Isaiah is couched, however, you need to understand, between two declarations of God's love. It's couched by two declarations of God's love.

[ 11 : 53 ] Look with me at Isaiah 63, beginning in verse 7. It says this, I will recount the steadfast love of the Lord, the praises of the Lord according to all that the Lord has granted us, and the great goodness to the house of Israel, according to the abundance of His steadfast love.

For He said, Surely they are My people, children who will not deal falsely. And He became their Savior. In all their affliction, He was afflicted, and the angel of His presence saved them in His love, and in His pity, He redeemed them.

He lifted them up and carried them all the days of old. God's love is offered again and again and again. His spirit grieves, but then listen to what comes next.

In verse 11, Then He remembered the days of old, of Moses and His people. Where is He who brought them up out of the sea with the shepherds of His flock?

Where is He who put in the midst of them His Holy Spirit, who caused His glorious arm to go at the right hand of Moses, who divided the waters before them to make for Himself an everlasting name?

[ 12 : 59 ] The proclamation is there. The message is clear. God's love never stops pursuing you. Even in His grief, there's nothing that will change your relationship with the Father.

Just as God does not want us to walk in sin, He also does not want us to ever forget His love and His redemption. Many can perceive these accounts from the Old Testament, even Ephesians chapter 4, read them on their own, and consider God as having this overriding sentiment of looking over your shoulder with shame.

He looks over your shoulder, shaking His head. He can't believe what you've done. No. The Father stands in front of you, and He smiles, and He says, You are my son, and you are my daughter.

I grieve your sin, but it does not change your standing with me. The reality of God's grievance cannot be separated from the truth of His unconditional love.

The prophet Isaiah did not lose sight of it. The apostle Paul did not lose sight of it. We cannot lose sight of the unchanging love that God has for us. Don't hear Paul saying that we can affect our relationship with the Father.

[14:20] The third thing that we don't need to hear, that we can't hear in this passage, is that human emotion is equivalent to divine emotion. That human emotion is equivalent to divine emotion.

What I mean when I say that is this. We must be able to separate our own understanding of an emotion as expressed between sinful human beings and how it's expressed from a holy and perfect God.

Something similar to this would be our understanding from the Bible of God's jealousy, of His wrath, of His anger. It's difficult for us to imagine a holy expression of those emotions when we so often only understand an expression of those emotions as it's affected by the fall, right?

For many of us, our experience of our wrongdoing, when we've sinned, when we disobeyed, with our heavenly parents, it was reflected in a removal of affection.

Maybe there was shame. Maybe there was abuse when you got out of line. Maybe your identity became your sin in that moment.

[15:33] Or perhaps, although you had very loving, very well-intentioned parents, you still struggled all through your childhood, and even today, to separate your behavior from the verdict of what Jesus says about you.

In our sinful state, and in our broken world, we often create a version of God that's flawed and incorrect. Blaise Pascal said that God created man in His own image, and man returned the favor. We must not create a version of God whose expression of emotions directly mirrors ours as ours are flawed and imperfect. The grievance of God doesn't always look like the grievance of man. The grievance of God is perfect, it's holy, it's pure. Its motives are without flaw, and its intentions are always good, and right.

And so Paul does not want us to hear him saying that human emotions are directly reflected in divine emotions. If these are the things, then, that Paul doesn't want us to hear him saying, what do we hear him saying?

[16:44] What is actually true? How do we then respond? You want to know, okay, Chad, I got it. How do I not grieve the Spirit? How do I respond to the Spirit appropriately? Here's what you do. The first, Paul wants you to understand that your actions do impact God's Spirit.

That's the truth. Your actions do impact God's Spirit. The actions of your heart, of your mind, of your hands do indeed impact God's Spirit.

But this is challenging for us, right? It's challenging for us because it's hard for us to imagine that something that we would do would affect God's heart, right? It feels almost contradictory for us to think about the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit who seals us in redemption, Paul tells us, who binds us together in love, who gives us a new birth, who we dwell in intimacy with, that that same Spirit we could cause to grieve, that we could cause that same Spirit to be sad.

Paul confirms for us that this is indeed true, that our actions do matter. But let's consider it in the analogy of a parent and a child.

Think of your own children. Think about when your children sin or when they disobey. When they depart from the way in which you have called them to walk in, how do your hearts respond?

[18:12] Your hearts are grieved, right? You're saddened. When my daughter sinfully acts out towards her brother, towards her mother, towards her friends, I'm saddened that her heart has led her to these actions.

But does that sin change the way that I feel about my daughter? Absolutely not. Do I love her less because she has sinned? Absolutely not. But am I grieved over the fact that she's a sinner, that she still sins?

Yes, I am. These things are not in contradiction with each other. They can actually live together, that God can grieve our sin, but still never stop loving us.

This is the correct view of the divine emotion that we should consider from Ephesians. Just as we never stop loving our children in their sin, even more so, the Father never, ever stops loving us, even as He has grieved over our sin.

Can you imagine a father who didn't care if we sinned? Can you imagine if He was so checked out from our relationship that our sins didn't matter to Him? Actually, His grievance, His saddening over

our sin is an expression of His love, right?

[ 19 : 30 ] It's because He cares. He wants us to walk as followers of Him. That's what Paul's reminding us of. Our hands and our hearts produce sin in such a way that God is affected with sadness.

It's affected because His children, His children are not walking in the way in which He has called them. But what's also encouraging southward is that the opposite is true.

That when we do walk in obedience, the Spirit is encouraged. When we walk in obedience, the Spirit is encouraged and lifted up. God's kingdom moves forward as we honor and obey the Spirit. So the opposite is also true. Just as we can grieve the Spirit with our sin, we can lift the Spirit up in our obedience. This begs the question then, what does it look like to obey?

Specifically from this passage then, what does it look like to obey? There's lots of speculation about whether Paul intended for this to be a standalone statement, whether Paul intended for this to be tied with the rest of the verses.

[ 20 : 33 ] I'm actually going to go both ways. I'm going to say yes. All right? So Paul had some things to say that particularly applied to this passage, and it was these things. That God desires our obedience as we are sensitive to truthfulness and integrity.

That God desires obedience to the Spirit as we respond to each other appropriately in our anger. God cares about us doing honest work. God cares about us being sensitive to wholesome talk coming from our mouths.

God is sensitive to our hearts being ruled by love and gentleness. He's sensitive that all malice, all slander, all wrath, all bitterness be put away.

So the verses that are surrounding this passage all apply. Those are ways to lift up and encourage the Spirit. But if we look at the bigger picture of Paul's message in Ephesians, what has he been telling us about over and over again?

Unity. That one of the greatest ways that you honor the Spirit, that you lift up the Spirit, is in your unity. Paul's warning is that as we walk in the way of our old self, as we indulge in our sin, particularly those of deception, theft, but especially those that disrupt our unity, when we do those things, we are grieving the Spirit.

[ 21 : 54 ] One commentator explains that everything that is incompatible with the purity and the unity of the church is incompatible with the Spirit's own nature. Incompatible with the Spirit's own nature.

And so because of that, it's going to naturally sadden the Spirit when we don't have unity. Sins which disrupt the communal life, which disrupt our connection as the body of Christ, are in opposition to the work of the Spirit.

Because when we are unified, God's kingdom can move forward. When we are unified as the church, God's kingdom moves forward. The final thing that we will consider about the Spirit, what Paul does tell us about the Spirit is this, and don't miss this.

When we respond in obedience, when we honor the Spirit in obedience, we do so as saved and redeemed people. When we respond to the Spirit, we do so as saved and redeemed people.

The second clause of this verse cannot be separated from the first clause. That as we grieve the Spirit in our disobedience, the second clause reminds us of what? That we were sealed for the day of redemption.

[ 23 : 06 ] Paul's creating two big markers in time, and he's saying when you were sealed, when you were saved, when you came to a saving knowledge of Christ, the payment for your sin was forever paid, and you are now sealed for heaven.

But then he says there's also coming a day of redemption where your bodies will receive final redemption and consummation. So Paul's establishing a marker in time when you were saved, and then he's establishing a marker in time when full consummation, redemption will happen.

And he says you live in between those two markers. That as you grieve the Spirit, you live in between those two markers, but don't forget those two markers. Don't forget that as you obey, you do so as people who were saved and people who were being redeemed.

As we're challenged not to grieve the Spirit, we are reminded that we live as people who are already saved, beloved, and who are promised full redemption.

Southward, we cannot miss the importance of the gospel as we consider how sin impacts God's Spirit. To better understand this message of God's love, I want you to hear from a friend of mine.

[ 24 : 20 ] He's not actually a friend. I wish he was my friend, and you'll find out in a minute. His name is Brennan Manning. He's written a whole host of books. I would recommend every book that he's written.

The video that you're going to see was a sermon that he gave, and it's not in HD. The sound quality is not great, but that's part of what I love about it. It's an unpolished message about the gospel of grace, and he says it far better than I ever will, so I'd like for you to hear it from him.

Y'all watch with me. If you'd like to benefit most from the worship this morning, I would suggest that from this moment until you put your head in the pillow tonight, you know that the focus of your inner life rests on one truth, the staggering, mind-blowing truth that God loves you just as you are and not as you should be because nobody in this building is as they should be.

That God loves you, not the person next to you, not that God loves Billy Graham, Mother Teresa, not that God loves the church, the world, not that God loves in some vague way the whole human race, but the truth that God loves you in such a way that he'd rather die than be without you. Isn't it difficult to believe you're worth the death of anyone? Least of all, the all-holy God. This moment, do you truly believe that God loves you unconditionally as you are and not as you should be?

[ 25 : 56 ] Do you? You know, I've never asked a Christian in 20 years, do you believe God loves you? He's not replied, oh yeah, yeah. I've known that quite a while. In fact, I've known that since childhood.

And watch the way they live. Lives of anxiety, fear, shame, guilt, low self-esteem, remorse, self-condemnation, and self-hatred.

Oh, they believe that God loves you in some vague, distant, abstract way, but they'd be hard-pressed to say that right now the essence of their Christian life is a love affair, and not just a simple love affair, but what G.K.

justin' called a furious love affair going on between Christ themselves at this very moment. Do you honestly believe that with all the wrong turns you made in your past, the mistakes, the detours, the moments of sin, selfishness, dishonesty, and degraded love, that God has used them all to bring them where you are right now, and the word says you are standing on holy ground?

This moment, do you honestly believe that God loves you beyond worthiness and unworthiness, beyond fidelity and infidelity, that he loves you in the morning sun and the evening rain without caution, regret, boundary, limit, breaking point, no matter what's gone down, he can't stop loving you.

[ 27 : 30 ] If you don't fully trust that, you're living a life of illusion, superstition, cowardice, you're projecting onto Jesus your own hateful feelings toward yourself, assuming he feels about you the way you feel about you, and thus you're worshipping a God of human manufacturing, a God who does not exist.

There is one God of the Christian vision, the God revealed by and in Jesus Christ, who this moment walks directly to your seat, looks you straight in the eye, and says, I have a word for you.

I know your whole life story. I know every skeleton in your closet. I know every moment of sin, shame, dishonesty, and degraded love that has darkened your past.

Right now, I know your shallow faith, your feeble prayer life, your inconsistent discipleship. Nothing is hidden from my eyes, and my word is this.

I dare you to trust that I love you as you are, and not as you should be, because you're never going to be as you should be.

[ 28 : 52 ] Isn't that powerful? this powerful truth? At this moment, do you truly believe that God loves you unconditionally?

At this moment, do you believe that God loves you despite all your failure, all your doubt, all your wrongdoing, all your lying, your cheating, your stealing, your lust, your degraded love, your impure motives?

Do you believe that God loves you so much that He can't stop pursuing you? Do you believe that Jesus looks at you and says, I love you as you are, not as you should be, because you're never going to be as you should be?

Brothers and sisters, our text is telling us that we live in this place where God loves us just as we are, not as we should be, because until that day of final redemption, we're never going to be as we should be.

We're going to continue to live as sinful beings in a broken world, but God loves you as you are, not as you should be. There are lots of things that my daughter can do wrong.

[ 30 : 08 ] There are plenty of sins which her heart is capable of. She can lie, she can cause me pain, she can hurt others with her words, she can disrespect, she can quickly grow impatient and disobedient.

Each of these things saddens and grieves me as her father, but you know what grieves me the most? What hurts my heart the most is when she forgets how much I love her.

My heart is most broken when my daughter is led to believe that her sin will alter how I feel about her or that her sin says something different about who she is besides being my beloved child.

My heart is most broken when she does not believe that she is eternally loved. This Southwood is the thing which I think grieves the Holy Spirit the most.

When we refuse to believe or we forget that we are forgiven, that we are sealed, that we are covered in Christ's blood so that the all-holy God will never leave us nor forsake us.

[ 31 : 23 ] Have you imagined the gospel to be so big, to be so real in your life that God the Father and Jesus Christ would walk into this room right now that he would sit down beside you and he would say, do you know how proud I am of you?

That he would walk up to you and say, you know what breaks my heart is when you refuse to accept that every sin of your past life is not only forgiven but it's so forgiven that I can't even remember what it was.

Do you know that I've loved you from all eternity and that no matter what happens I can't stop loving you? Do you believe that Jesus would tell you that if he walked in this room right now?

Beloved, this is why God loves and adores you because of his son, because of what Jesus did for you. Your sins have been eternally forgiven.

When the Father looks at you, he doesn't look at you with shameful contempt. He looks at you and he smiles. This God, his Holy Spirit who we love and serve with our lives is the same God who gave us his son who paid the debt for our sins so that God's promises would be fully redeemed again.

[ 32 : 43 ] Redeemed, forgiven, and loved. This is who you are before God the Father and God does not want you to ever forget it. You are his forever.

Let's pray. Father, could this glorious news be true that no matter how wicked the works of our hands, no matter how sinful our hearts, that you would offer us love, forgiveness, and redemption.

Father, thank you. Thank you for the Spirit who not only grieves in our disobedience, but the Spirit who lovingly comes into our hearts and lives. Father, hopefully right now in this moment and reminds us of this truth, reminds us of the good news of the gospel.

Would you work that in the hearts of these, your people? Would you remind us of this, not only today but throughout this week as we enter into a broken and sinful world and face the reality of our sinful hearts again?

Father, remind us of this good news and we thank you for it. In Jesus' name. Amen. For more information, visit us online at [southwood.org](http://southwood.org).