

Grieving the Spirit

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[0 : 0 0] 17, Ephesians 4, reading from verse 17. Now this I affirm and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do in the futility of their minds.

They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to the hardness of heart.

Then verse 25. Therefore, putting away falsehood, let everyone speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another.

Be angry, but do not sin. Do not let the sun go down in your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil.

Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor doing honest work with his hands, so that he may be able to give to those in need.

[1 : 1 6] Let no evil talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for edifying as fits the occasion, that it may impart grace to those who hear.

Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, in whom you are sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be away from you with all malice.

And be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

Therefore, be imitators of God and beloved children, and walk in love as Christ loved us, and gave himself for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

Amen. May the Lord bless you us, that reading from his own word be to his praise and to his glory.

Verse 30 of chapter 4.

Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed, for the day of redemption. If you study the letters of Paul as he wrote them, there are in fact four groups.

[2 : 3 3] But the third group consists of four letters, which he wrote during his imprisonment in Rome, which you find right at the end of Acts 28.

And he comments on that in chapter 4, verse 1, I therefore a prisoner of the Lord. So that's his status. Now, as far as they're concerned, the general order that these were written in is like this. Colossians, Philemon, Philippians, and Ephesians. That's not an important observation. Because after this, all he wrote were personal letters to Timothy and Titus.

So if that's the case, Ephesians is the last major theological work that's full of teaching for us, written in AD 62.

And in AD 65, he died as a martyr. So let's think, first of all, about the giving of the Spirit. In this section in Ephesians 4, this portion deals with a set of contrasting lifestyles, i.e., let him who steal, steal no more, but let him work with his own hands, that he may have something to give to those that are in need.

[4 : 0 9] And part of this advice is not to grieve the work of the Holy Spirit of God. So if we think of the giving of the Spirit, on the day of Pentecost, the Apostle Peter quoted Joel chapter 2, It shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh.

Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy. Your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. Even upon the men servants and maid servants, in those days, I will pour out my Spirit.

If you read the minor prophets, they are roughly in chronological order, so that Hosea to Micah, including Joel, would have been written somewhere about 838 to 756 B.C.

Why is that worth mentioning? Because it took 800 years for that prophecy to be fulfilled.

Now, why was that? In a sense, it had to await the coming of Jesus Christ, the Messiah, but that the fulfillment was also delayed because of the sin of idolatry which both the houses of Israel and Judah had committed.

[5 : 49] The last of the prophets spoke in 397 B.C., Malachi. And there is no other prophecy until you get to Luke 1, where we read of the father of John the Baptist, that his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied.

In the latter bit of the book of Nehemiah, Nehemiah directs that those that could not prove their legal descent to the priesthood were not to partake of the most holy food until a priest with urine and thumbing should arise.

Now, to this day, this lack of the prophetic voice is spoken of in Judaism as the quenching of the Spirit.

because to Judaism, there has been no word of prophecy since 397 B.C.

I have a friend who's a Jewish bookseller. And this, what I'm going to tell you, illustrates the point.

[7 : 17] I asked him for a book on the concept of revelation in Judaism, not the book of, the act of God revealing himself. Oh, he said, I can't help you there.

We don't believe in it. I said, well, what about Moses and the prophets? Oh, yeah, he said, we believe that, but that's all past. There's nothing contemporary. The quenching of the Spirit.

What can we learn from this? We can learn from the behavior of ancient Israel that we do not cause a period of decline or to set in by the quenching or grieving of the Spirit.

Now, how did the Spirit come? It came in and through the person of Jesus. And in John 20, we read these words.

Jesus said to them again, the disciples, peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I send you. And when he said this, he breathed on them and said, receive the Holy Spirit.

[8 : 30] If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven. If you retain the sins of any, they are retained. How can we understand this happening prior to the day of Pentecost?

In actual fact, it has a parallel. And the parallel is to be found in Genesis 2 in the creation narrative. Then the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and man became a living being.

So that in other words, on this day, prior to Pentecost, a new creation, a new beginning was starting.

And we are part of that new beginning. Jesus spoke about it to Nicodemus in John 3.

Isaiah looked forward to a new day. He said this, I will pour water on the thirsty land and streams on the dry ground. I will pour my spirit upon your descendants and my blessing on your offspring.

[9 : 44] A new day is coming. It's come through the person of Jesus and we can receive it afresh.

Let me go on to the sealing of the Spirit. Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Now the apostle also talks about this sealing of the Spirit in 2 Corinthians chapter 1 verses 21 to 22.

He says there, It is God who establishes us with you in Christ and has commissioned us. He has put his seal upon us and given us his spirit in our hearts as a guarantee, as a down payment.

And then in chapter 1, In him you also who have heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit which is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it to the praise of his glory.

Now what is this sealing of the Spirit? it is based on an Old Testament concept.

[11 : 15] You find in Ezekiel chapter 9 and verse 4, And the Lord said to him, the angel, Go through the city, through Jerusalem, put a mark upon the foreheads of the men whose scion groan over all the abominations that are committed in it.

The context of that verse is that a judgment is about to fall on Jerusalem. And the idea of placing a mark on those that moaned and were concerned with the abominations committed in Jerusalem, that mark is one of ownership and protection so that these individuals will be exempt from the judgment.

And these ideas of ownership, protection, and perseverance are all to be noted in the Greek verb used here, which is saffragizo.

It means to seal, to skewer with a seal, mark with a seal, set apart by a seal. But interestingly enough, there is a noun that comes from that verb and that noun means a signet ring.

So, in the time of the first century, when you had a lot of people who were enslaved, they could buy their freedom and a contract would be drawn up and the owner would sign it with his signet reel and on this document would be signed in wax his name.

[13:10] What does it mean? It means this deal is authentic. It means this slave no longer belongs to me and because he got this mark and he's got this contract, he's protected from Roman law.

That's the idea that's in the sealing of the Spirit. One of ownership, authenticity, it certifies you belong to God and there's the idea of protection.

It indicates to us that we belong to Christ now and for eternity. The seal indicates the living presence of Christ within us so that we become fully aware of the life we're meant to lead.

These are the ideas that are in this, by whom we are sealed by the Holy Spirit of God.

Then, following on from Ezekiel and looking forward, there's another usage found in the book of Revelation chapter 7 verses 2 to 3.

[14:37] I saw another angel ascend from the rising of the sun with the seal of the living God and he called with a loud voice to the four angels who had been given power to harm earth and sea saying, do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees till we have sealed the servants of God upon their foreheads.

And if you read Revelation 7, you will find that the number comprises 144,000 of all the tribes of Israel.

And then there's another number. They cannot be numbered or counted. They come from every nation, tribe, tongue, and people. They also have the seal of the living God and to them is given the promise of final protection.

These are they, verse 14, who have come out of great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

Thank you. So, there's the idea here of authenticity. They belong to God.

[16:11] There's the idea of ownership. They are gods. And there's the idea of perseverance. That when tribulation and difficulties arise, the Holy Spirit is there to take them through.

You see, it's a fundamentally practical truth. We all face moments of difficulty. We all face moments of doubt.

We all face moments of opposition. But in these moments, we need to realize that the Holy Spirit of God is with us each and every day and every moment.

Now, we come to the final bit, the grieving of the Spirit. Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God by whom you were sealed unto the day of redemption.

Once again, the Apostle Paul is drawing on an Old Testament occurrence. That Old Testament occurrence is found in Isaiah 63 verse 10, where the prophet is recounting the behavior of the sons of Israel.

[17:42] They rebelled and grieved his Holy Spirit. Therefore, he turned to be their enemy and himself fought against them.

That particular example is drawn from the Greek version of the Old Testament, where the verb that's translated grieve actually means to provoke.

But in Ephesians 4, it's a different verb that's used, which means to cause grief, sorrow, experience distress, be distressed, or to be in grief.

When we think of sadness, we immediately think of bereavement. And we think of the blessing which Jesus gave.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Now, it's a different verb that's used there, which means to be sad. But this sadness and distress and sorrow has got nothing to do with bereavement.

[18:52] It's the kind of distress and sorrow that is caused by one person which offends the other person. And that's what the apostle is getting at here.

He is saying, you must conduct your life in such a way that you do not grieve, offend the Spirit of God. In Psalm 51, we read of David this, create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me.

Cast me not away out of your presence and take not your Holy Spirit from me. So, he realizes that by his actions he's caused offense to the Holy Spirit.

And the very first verse of the psalm tells you in the title, a psalm of David when Nathan the prophet came to him after he had gone in to Bathsheba, i.e.

he had committed adultery. He had clearly offended the Spirit of God.

[20:16] He was afraid that God would depart from him. His sentiments were like Peter, who on one occasion said to Jesus, depart from me, for I am a sinful man.

And so, the apostle writes, do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

What are the situations by which we could grieve the Holy Spirit of God? When the apostle wrote to the Corinthians, in 1 Corinthians, it's clear that some of its members had grieved the Holy Spirit by refusing to believe that Christ had risen from the dead.

Now, if Christ is preached and raised from the dead, how can some among you say there is no resurrection of the dead?

So, these people had robbed themselves of the promises of God and grieved the Holy Spirit. Their lack of faith had altered their lifestyle so that they had now denied their radiant testimony in the gospel.

[21 : 49] Going back into the Old Testament once again, think of the example of Jonah. God gave him this challenge.

Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city and cry against it, for their wickedness has come up before me.

A challenge. The ministry of the word is so designed that it challenges, first of all, the preacher.

Have I done this? it challenges you that listen also. There are some congregations, and this isn't one of them, that don't want to be challenged.

Let it be clearly said, the congregation that doesn't want to be challenged might think it's standing still. in reality, it's going back.

[23 : 03] So we read that Jonah rose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. He went down to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish. He paid the fare and went on board to go with them to Tarshish away from the presence of the Lord.

Now what happened? You know the story as well as I do. God intervened in his sovereignty and eventually Jonah in the mouth of the whale ited the words salvation is of the Lord.

And so the next verse in chapter 3 reads the word of the Lord came to Jonah a second time so that in grieving the spirit of the Lord God and refusing his challenge Jonah the prophet the one that was called to speak forth the word of God paid a great cost to his own life and ministry.

You could say well that's all Old Testament and so it is. What about the case of Ananias and Sapphira in Acts chapter 5?

Now what was the deal there? The deal was that people in the previous chapter were giving large sums of money over ground that they had sold.

[24 : 35] And we're not told how much these things cost that they were sold for but if they were sold for say 10,000 pounds they gave 10,000 pounds.

But Ananias and Sapphira they thought they could outwit the situation. So they sold their piece of ground for 10,000 pounds and came along with seven and a half and kept two and a half to themselves.

And what does Peter say to them? How is it you have agreed in your hearts to lie to the Holy Spirit? It's a challenge. Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. The challenge comes to us.

The challenge comes as we make decisions. The challenge comes as we follow the law. The challenge comes in our behavior. The challenge comes.

[25 : 41] Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God who is yours until the day of redemption.

Amen. Amen.