Grieve Not The Holy Spirit

By Theodore H. Epp (1907 – 1985)

The Holy Spirit never forces Himself upon anyone, not on the unbeliever to be saved, nor on the believer for him to be sanctified. Yet the Holy Spirit can be caused great sorrow by us even though He is infinite in His attributes. We can cause Him great sorrow because of our sinfulness. When we sin, He cannot work. He is grieved.

His attitude is not that of some persons who, when mistreated, feel hurt and become haughty and refuse to cooperate. Instead, it is a deep sorrow because we will not allow Him to work in us what is best for us. He wants to help us but we will not allow Him. Our attitude makes it impossible for Him to work for us.

Things That Grieve the Spirit

The context of Ephesians 4:30 shows us what things grieve the Spirit of God. Verse 25 tells us, *"Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbor: for we are members one of another."* We usually think of lying as deliberately stating untruth. But untruth can often be lived as well as put into words. We can lie by our actions.

Whatever method we use, if we lie, we grieve the Spirit. Neither are we justified in telling what people call "white lies." Lying is lying.

In verse 26 we read, *"Be ye angry, and sin not."* If we cannot be angry without sinning, then we should not become angry. The anger of man does not work the purposes of God and the anger of the believer grieves the Holy Spirit.

The apostle states in verse 28: *"Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour."* If we need things, we must acquire them honestly. Theft grieves the Spirit of God.

So far the things mentioned are quite obvious to most of us. But the next is one that is indulged in more often than we like to think, and often with serious results. The admonition is, *"Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers"* (v. 29).

It is easy to sin with our lips. All evil speaking, all dishonest speech, all impure speech, all foolish speech is to be left alone. Later on in the 5th chapter of the same letter Paul tells us, *"Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks"* (5:4).

What we say should be wholesome. We are not to have a part in gossiping, for when we gossip about others, we are not edifying those to whom we are speaking. Gossip does not minister grace to the hearers. The Holy Spirit never makes light of sin no matter who commits

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it; but sin should not become a choice morsel of conversation for believers. If we are to speak so that we edify others, we will be careful what we say about our fellow men.

In chapter 4 verse 31 we are told: *"Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice."* Evil speaking arises from bitterness and spite. All such wrong things are to be put out of our lives. Do we carry a grudge against someone? As long as we do, the Holy Spirit cannot use us. Carrying grudges grieves the Spirit. He will not empower us or work through us.

On the positive side, we are told in verse 32 that we are to be *"kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."* When we see an absence of goodness or of forgiveness or of love in another, because we walk in love, we should be tenderhearted and forgiving. Christ has forgiven us. We will never have to forgive others as much as He has forgiven us. If we are not forgiving those who may have hurt us, we grieve the Holy Spirit.

Then there are gross sins often kept secret that interfere and grieve the Spirit. As we continue into the 5th chapter of Ephesians we learn that we are to avoid fornication and all uncleanness and covetousness. Covetousness is idolatry. It is greed and selfishness in the extreme. All of this grieves the Spirit.

In verse 11 we are warned to have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness but rather to reprove them. The things that evil men do in secret and under the cover of darkness – the sins mentioned already and that of drunkenness – should never be a part of the believer's experience. We are not to take part in any of these things, for they grieve the Spirit.

Sins Against the Spirit's Character

The Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of holiness in Romans 1:4. Therefore all impurity, filthiness and such like grieve Him.

In Isaiah 11:2 we learn that He is the Spirit of wisdom, of understanding, and of knowledge. Consequently, if we remain ignorant of spiritual truths and prefer the teaching of men to the teaching of the Word, we grieve Him. If we lack zeal in the study of the Scriptures, we grieve the Spirit. He is present to give us wisdom and understanding so that as we read the Word and meditate on it He will work through it to produce in us the likeness of Christ. So to neglect the Word is to grieve Him.

In Romans 8:2 and Second Timothy 1:7 we learn that He is the Spirit of life and of power. Through Him and through Him alone is spiritual life and supernatural life. For us to show spiritual weakness and to live after the flesh and to fail to grow in spiritual things and to have no power in our testimony grieves the Holy Spirit. He is the great "I am" dwelling in us. He is everything we need to make Christ real to us and to live through us.

He is also called the Spirit of truth according to John 14:17. Any lying or falsehood, any hypocrisy whether by word or attitude grieves Him. Even our false notions about others grieve the Spirit of God.

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He is called the Spirit of faith in Second Corinthians 4:13. So when we doubt His Word, when we take the attitude that we just cannot believe what He has said, we grieve Him. It is impossible for Him to lie, so all doubts and anxieties which result from lack of faith grieve Him.

We are told in the Word that faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God. But if we do not believe God's Word the Spirit of God cannot produce faith in us. Thus we dishonor Him.

He is called the Spirit of love and of grace in Second Timothy 1:7 and Hebrews 10:29. Therefore all hardness of heart, all refusing to forgive, all bitterness, all fleshly complaining are contrary to Him. He can give us grace and love to endure. He can make us satisfied and happy in conditions that we ourselves cannot change.

When there is a lack of concern for the souls of men or lukewarmness to our God, we grieve the Spirit.

He is called the Spirit of glory in First Peter 4:14. Consequently, the earthly sensual things of the natural heart grieve Him. Sins whether considered large or small, hidden or otherwise, hinder the Spirit's working in us, and so He is grieved.

As we stand before the mirror of God's Word we become conscious of these things. If we will bow in humility and repentance before Him, He will pardon and purify us. The promise of the Word is that if we confess our sins *"He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"* (1 John 1:9). He is more eager to forgive than we are to be forgiven. Let us do as He says and bring joy rather than grief to the Spirit of God.

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