

# **THE SOVEREIGN GOD AND THE MYSTERY OF HIS WILL: A STUDY OF EPHESIANS**

## **(LESSON SEVENTY-TWO)**

### ***“DO NOT GRIEVE THE HOLY SPIRIT”***

#### **EPHESIANS 4:25-30**

*25 Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another.*

*26 Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath:*

*27 Neither give place to the devil.*

*28 Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.*

*29 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.*

*30 And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.*

In **Ephesians 4:17-24**, the Apostle Paul writes of the tremendous change that is wrought in believing sinners at the moment of their conversion. He also writes of them being gradually conformed into the image of Jesus Christ, as they intentionally and consistently yield to the indwelling Holy Spirit. He informs the believers of three points, first, that they have **put off the old man**, second, that they are being **renewed in the spirit of their mind**, and third, that they have **put on the new**

**man.** On the basis of these three points, he proceeds to give them detailed exhortations beginning in verse **25**.

We made the point in an earlier Lesson that Paul was never content to mention a doctrinal position or principle, without seeking to apply it to the believer's life. Accordingly, in verses **25-32**, he mentions **five** specific sins which he urges believers to avoid, and he explains why these sins should be avoided. We have already considered **four** of the specific sins that Paul spoke off, namely **Lying, Un-godly Anger, Stealing** and **Unwholesome Talk**. We will come to the fifth sin in verse **31**, but before we do, we have to grapple with a very serious matter.

In verse **30**, Paul writes, *“And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.”*

The **New English Translation** renders the verse as follows: *“And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.”*

The first word in verse **30** is the word *“And,”* which is a translation of the Greek word **kai**. The word **kai** connects the grieving of the Holy Spirit with the *“corrupt communication,”* mentioned in the previous verse. The very clear implication is that unwholesome speech grieves the Holy Spirit. In fact, I believe that all of the sins mentioned in this section of the letter are a cause of grief to the Holy Spirit. **Believers are therefore urged to abstain from anything and everything that has the potential to grieve the Holy Spirit.**

The word *“grieve”* is a translation of the Greek word **lupeó**: (**loo-peh'-o**), which means, “to make sorrowful; to affect with sadness, to cause grief; to throw into sorrow.” The word speaks of deep emotional or physical pain. The word **lupeó** is in a construction which indicates that Paul is forbidding the continuance of an action already occurring. The implication is that some of the believers were, in fact, habitually grieving the Holy Spirit. Paul is saying in essence, “Stop grieving the Spirit, the Holy Spirit of God.”

The "*Prince of Preachers*," **C. H. Spurgeon**, commenting on the grieving of the Holy Spirit, made the following remarks:

"I think I now see the Spirit of God grieving, when you are sitting down to read a novel and there is your Bible unread...You have no time for prayer, but the Spirit sees you very active about worldly things, and having many hours to spare for relaxation and amusement. And then He is grieved because He sees that you love worldly things better than you love Him.

Although the word 'grieve' is a painful one, yet there is honey in the rock; for it is an inexpressibly delightful thought, that He who rules heaven and earth, and is the creator of all things, and the infinite and ever blessed God, condescends to enter into such infinite relationships with His people that **His** divine mind may be affected by **their** actions. What a marvel that Deity should be said to grieve over the faults of beings so utterly insignificant as we are!

Sin everywhere must be displeasing to the Spirit of holiness, **but sin in His own people is grievous to Him in the highest degree.** He will not hate His people, but He does hate their sins, and hates them all the more because they nestle in His children's bosoms. The Spirit would not be the Spirit of truth if He could approve of that which is false in us: He would not be pure if that which is impure in us did not grieve Him.

The Holy Spirit's grief is not of a petty, oversensitive nature. He is grieved with us mainly for our own sakes, for He knows what misery sin will cost us; He reads our sorrows in our sins...He grieves over us because He sees how much chastisement we incur, and how much communion we lose."

According to **John 15:26**, the Holy Spirit always exalts Jesus Christ, and when we fail to do the same, we grieve the Holy Spirit. As the noted theologian of the nineteenth century, **Charles Hodge** commented, "**To**

**grieve Him is to wound Him on Whom our salvation depends.** Though He will not finally withdraw from those in whom He dwells, yet when grieved, He withholds the manifestations of His presence."

The fact that the Holy Spirit can be grieved clearly indicates that He is a Person and not merely a force or an influence. The Holy Spirit is referred to in the Bible as "He," "it." The fact that He can be grieved also means that He loves believers, because only a person who loves can be grieved. **Grief is always an indication of the presence of love.** In order for you to truly grieve a person, it is necessary for that person to love you. You cannot grieve someone who does not love you. You might annoy, or anger, or disappoint the person, but you cannot grieve him or her. If we found out that money was missing from our wallet or purse, we would certainly be angry. But if we discovered later that it was our son or daughter who stole it, our anger would quickly turn into grief. **The Holy Spirit is grieved when we sin deliberately, because we are the objects of the love of the Father who elected us, the Son who redeemed us, and of He who dwells within us.**

Brothers and sisters, we have said that the favourite ministry of the Spirit of God is to glorify Jesus Christ, **and His favourite way of glorifying Jesus Christ is to conform believers into Christ's likeness!** When we persist in deliberate sin, we effectively short-circuit, or cut off the supply of supernatural power which is necessary for us to live this supernatural life! The Holy Spirit has to pause from His ministry of conforming us into Christ's image, in order to restore our fractured fellowship with our heavenly Father. He must convict us of our sin, lead us to the place of repentance and to the confession of our sin. It grieves Him to see our spiritual progress interrupted by sin. Sin grieves the Holy Spirit and results in the loss of His fellowship, the loss of His continual filling, and the loss of His control over our lives!

Beloved, the Holy Spirit who indwells us, desires to share an intimate, God-glorifying, Christ exalting, life-transforming relationship with us. As one person has observed: "The relationship that exists between us

and the Holy Spirit is precious! The Holy Spirit is deeply in love with us. Just as someone in love thinks about, dreams of, and cherishes the one he loves, the Holy Spirit longs for us, thinks about us, desires to be close to us, and wants to reveal Himself to us. But when we act like the world, talk like the world, behave like the world, and respond the same way the world does, we cause the Spirit of God to feel shock, hurt, and grief. You see, when we deliberately do what is wrong, we drag Him right into the mire of sin with us, because He lives in us and goes wherever we go. The Holy Spirit convicted us of sin and brought us to Jesus; then He indwelt us, sanctified us, empowered us, and faithfully remains alongside to help us. So when we deliberately enter into sin, it grieves Him. Just as a husband or wife would feel who has just discovered that his or her spouse has committed adultery, the Holy Spirit is shocked when we dishonor His Presence in our lives."

The **Message** translates **Ephesians 4:30** in the following way: "*Don't grieve God. Don't break his heart. His Holy Spirit, moving and breathing in you, is the most intimate part of your life, making you fit for himself. Don't take such a gift for granted.*"

Brothers and sisters, it has been said that "**There is no secret of the inner life more necessary than to retain the inner presence of an un-grieved Spirit.**" I wonder how many of us have made a habit of pausing every now and then during our daily activities and praying, "Lord, is there anything in my life that is grieving the Holy Spirit? If there is, please reveal it to me and grant me, so that I can confess it and forsake it by your grace."

Paul writes, "*And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.*" The word "*sealed*" is a translation of the Greek word **sphragizó**: (**sfrag-id'-zo**), which means "to set a seal upon, to mark with a seal." In secular Greek, the word **sphragizó** signified at least four things:

## **1 A Finished Transaction**

## 2 A Mark of Ownership

## 3 A Bond of Security

## 4 An Imprint of Authenticity or of Identity

Brothers and sisters, when God saves an individual, He places His Holy Spirit in him or her permanently, as His seal or stamp of ownership and authentication. Earlier, in chapter 1 verses 13 and 14, Paul had written,

*13 And when you heard the word of truth (the gospel of your salvation)—when you believed in Christ—you were marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit,*

*14 who is the down payment of our inheritance, until the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of his glory.*

**(New English Translation)**

The word **sphragizó** is in a construction in the Greek which indicates three things. Firstly, that the act of sealing represents a past completed action. Secondly, that those who are sealed are acted upon by an outside force or power, in this case, God. Thirdly, that the act of sealing is an accomplished fact, or “a done deal.” The good news then, is that the Holy Spirit’s work of sealing is a finished, permanent work. A believer cannot be “unsealed,” even though he or she may “grieve” the Spirit. What love! What mercy! What grace!

Brothers and sisters, the transaction by which Jesus Christ, the Son of God, paid the penalty for the sins of the elect on the Cross, is a finished transaction. As a result of that finished transaction, God owns us as His property by right of purchase. And because of these two preceding facts, the saints are secure in salvation “*unto the day of redemption,*” that is, with a view to the day when our physical bodies will be glorified. The Holy Spirit is the seal that God places upon the saints which guarantees all of this.

Why did Paul mention “*the day of redemption*” in this verse relative to grieving the Holy Spirit? What is the day of redemption? I believe that it is the same as the “*blessed hope*” spoken of by Paul in **Titus 2:13**. In verses **11-14** we read,

*11 For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men,*

*12 Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world;*

*13 Looking for that **blessed hope**, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;*

*14 Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.*

Is the “***blessed hope**, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ*” not something about which we can be absolutely certain? Of course it is! Well then, by the grace of God, the certainty of that hope should motivate us to “[deny] *ungodliness and worldly lusts*, [and to] *live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.*”

Our Holy Spirit sealing should cause us to do all that we can to avoid grieving the Spirit by which we were so graciously sealed. As we look forward and eagerly await the imminent return of our “*great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ*,” at which time we will be glorified, we should be “*a peculiar people, zealous of good works.*”

John says it like this in **1 John 3:2-3**:

*2 Dear friends, we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet been revealed. We know that whenever it is revealed we will be like him, because we will see him just as he is.*

*3 And everyone who has this hope focused on him purifies himself, just as Jesus is pure).*

**(New English Translation)**

The American theologian **Samuel Lewis Johnson Jr.**, made the following comments regarding the Holy Spirit's work of sealing believers:

"This was particularly significant for the Ephesians, because in Ephesus, there was a great deal of trading going on in timber...And when individuals came from the other cities...to buy lumber, because there was a good bit of industry in that area, they would buy some of the logs that were floating in the harbor, and they would take a seal. And they would make their particular mark on each of the logs that belonged to them, which they bought. And later on, when the time came for them to take possession of these things, someone would come back with the seal, and then the particular logs that belonged to him would be identified, and then taken to the particular place where they were to be used.

Well, it's something like that with us. Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God by whom you were sealed unto the day of redemption. So, the Holy Spirit has been implanted within us as a person who dwells within us permanently, and that is the sign, that's the seal of our redemption. And the time is coming when the Lord Jesus shall come for our redemption, and he shall obtain his property, and each of us shall have the seal, the seal of the Holy Spirit. So, don't grieve the Holy Spirit by whom you were sealed unto the day of redemption. I think that that expression, the day of redemption, in the light of the Apostle's statements elsewhere, refers to the time when we receive our glorified bodies."

Brothers and sisters, the idea behind Paul's exhortation is as follows: "When you were saved, the Holy Spirit put a seal on you, declaring that



you belong to God forever. Since He has been gracious enough to give you salvation, seal you forever, and keep your salvation secure until the day of redemption, how could you willfully grieve Him? In the light of all that He has done for you, I am pleading with you not to deliberately cause Him any grief.”

Please permit me to quote **Spurgeon** again:

“Grieving the Holy Spirit produces a lamentable result. In the child of God it will not lead to his utter destruction, for no heir of heaven can perish; neither will the Holy Spirit be utterly taken away from him, for the Spirit of God is given to abide with us for ever. But the ill-effects are nevertheless most terrible. You will lose, my dear friends, all sense of the Holy Spirit’s presence: He will be as one hidden from you—no beams of comfort, no words of peace, no thoughts of love—there will be what [**William**] **Cowper** calls, ‘*an aching void the world can never fill.*’

Grieve the Holy Spirit, and you will lose all Christian joy; the light shall be taken from you, and you shall stumble in darkness; those very means of grace which once were such a delight, shall have no music in your ear. Your soul shall be no longer as a watered garden, but as a howling wilderness. Grieve the Spirit of God, and you will lose all power; if you pray, it will be a very weak prayer—you will not prevail with God. When you read the Scriptures, you shall not be able to lift the latch and force your way into the inner mysteries of truth. When you go up to the house of God, there shall be none of that devout exhilaration, that running without weariness, that walking without fainting. You shall feel yourself like Samson when his hair was lost, weak, captive, and blinded. Let the Holy Spirit depart, and assurance is gone, doubts follow, questionings and suspicions are aroused. Grieve the Spirit of God, and usefulness will cease: the ministry shall yield no fruit; your Sunday School work shall be barren; your speaking to others and labouring for others shall be like sowing the wind...If it is unprofitable for us to

cause our church leaders to grieve, (**Hebrews 13:17**), how much worse it must be for us if we cause our God to grieve."

In the quote we just read, **Spurgeon** mentions lines from the hymn "**O For a Closer Walk With God**," written by **William Cowper**. In light of the subject we are considering this evening, I believe it will be helpful for us to read the words of the hymn:

*O for a closer walk with God,  
A calm and heavenly frame,  
A light to shine upon the road  
That leads me to the Lamb!*

*Where is the blessedness I knew,  
When first I saw the Lord?  
Where is the soul refreshing view  
Of Jesus, and His Word?*

*What peaceful hours I once enjoyed!  
How sweet their memory still!  
But they have left an aching void  
The world can never fill.*

*Return, O holy Dove, return,  
Sweet messenger of rest;  
I hate the sins that made Thee mourn  
And drove Thee from my breast.*

*The dearest idol I have known,  
Whate'er that idol be  
Help me to tear it from Thy throne,  
And worship only Thee.*

*So shall my walk be close with God,  
Calm and serene my frame;*

*So purer light shall mark the road  
That leads me to the Lamb.*

Brothers and sisters, there is a sense in which the words, “*do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God,*” is the hub around which the verses immediately prior, and the verses immediately following, revolve. The key to our relationships with our brothers and sisters in Christ, is our relationship with God. As we endeavour to deal effectively with our human relationships, the place to begin is with our relationship with God. Our relationship with the members of the Body of Christ will reflect our relationship with our God. It always does. We must ensure that we address the **vertical** problem before we address the **horizontal** problem. How are we to address the horizontal problem? The answer is “*do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God.*” That is the place to start. It always is!

The primary meaning of being filled with the Holy Spirit is to be dominated and controlled by Him. The big question is, “Are we “Spirit-filled” believers in that sense of the word?” How can we become Spirit-filled believers? By deliberately and consistently yielding to the promptings and sweet persuasions of the Holy Spirit. Beloved, are we willing to do this?

The moment a person sincerely believes in Jesus Christ and places his or her faith in Him for salvation, he or she is saved and is indwelt and sealed forever by the Holy Spirit. Such a person never again has to question his or her eternal destiny, or doubt God’s intentions toward him or her. The Holy Spirit will never leave us, but if we grieve Him, He may temporarily withdraw His fellowship and power. For the believer who desires an intimate, personal relationship with God, nothing could be more devastating.

For us to compile a list of everything that grieves the Spirit, and then try to avoid each item on the list would, itself, grieve the Spirit! That is the essence of legalism and He abhors legalism! Ultimately we would be trusting in our own works, rather than in the finished work of Jesus Christ. What God desires is that we be continually aware of the Holy

Spirit's indwelling presence in us, and be sensitive to how deeply sin affects Him, and us. The most certain way to avoid grieving the Holy Spirit is to know Him and walk in a moment-by-moment, love relationship with Him. Then, grieving Him becomes almost unthinkable and unbearable.