

The Biblical Doctrine of Sanctification

6. Grieving the Holy Spirit

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The context of quenching the Spirit (1 Thess 5.11-24) shows that sanctification has a corporate dimension relating to the communion of the saints. Therefore, it is bonded with the mission of the church to be disciples for holiness to the glory of God. Fulfillment of that mission depends on the blessing of the Spirit working with the word. Clearly, in this sanctifying process, we have the obligation not to walk in the flesh (Rom 8.12-13), but in step with the Spirit by not quenching the Spirit (1 Thess 5.19) and additionally by not grieving the Spirit, Eph 4.30, the only text that states this command (**And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption**).

I. Ephesians 4.30 in the context of 4.1-5.2

An outline of the three parts of this text helps us put the grieving theme into perspective. Paul exhorts the church to a worthy walk.

A. The opening connective: therefore, 4.1

This connective sends us back to the beginning of the book: **God...blessed us...as he chose us in [Christ] before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy** (1.3-4). Profound truths are associated with election: predestination (1.5), redemption (1.6), enlightenment (1.18), grace to the spiritually dead (2.1-10), the mystery of Gentiles in the church (3.1-13), and Paul's prayer for growth in knowing God (3.14-21). Because of election and the profound truths associated with it, Paul gives the exhortation to walk worthy. Thus, holiness (sanctification) is one of the core purposes of electing grace **he chose us ... that we should be holy**.

B. Threefold exhortation to walk worthily as a new self in practical ways

1. First, walk worthy of your calling in mutual love and unity, 1-16

a. He begins with one anothering love with an emphasis on unity (4.1-6)

I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called,² with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love,³ eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.⁴ There is one body and one Spirit--just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call--⁵ one Lord, one faith, one baptism,⁶ one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. Connection with election is made by the reference to the **calling to which you have been called**. Your calling (vocation in life, your life work) is something to which God's call brought you. Calling is the saving voice of God by the Spirit through the Word that brings us from death to life: "Effectual calling is the work of God's Spirit, whereby, convincing us of our sin and misery, enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ, and renewing our wills, he doth persuade and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ, freely offered to us in the gospel" (WSC 31).

b. Unity is not compromised by the reality of differences (7-10)

Paul is careful to explain that unity is not compromised by the reality that differences of gifts exist (7-10) because grace is given to each one by Christ (v. 7); He gives each a function.

c. The apostle itemizes the gifts given by the resurrected Christ (11-12)

And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers (v. 11). The purpose (job, task) of gifted men has three important dimensions (v. 12). So, pastor-teachers are given to the church: 1) **To equip the saints** 2) **For the work of ministry** 3) **For building up the body of Christ**. Note the difference in the grammar:

To equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ

To equip the saints, for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ

As we argued before on the mission of the church, here the work of pastoral care is defined in three ways, not one (the one being to equip the saints who in turn do the work of ministry).

d. Goal of the building up

Goal is unity, knowledge, maturity: ¹³ until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, ¹⁴ so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. ¹⁵ Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, ¹⁶ from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love. Instead of being children tossed about in doctrine by human cunning and deceitful schemes (14), we are to speak the truth in love for growing up in Christ (15), as the church thus builds itself up in love (16). Like we have in 1 Thessalonians 5, Paul stresses the need that pastor and flock function in love for mutual up building.

2. Second (in the threefold exhortation), walk worthily as a new self, 17-24

Verse 17 returns to the walking worthy theme of v. 1. It does so by contrasting the Christian's walk with his former walk in the futility of mind (v. 17) with darkened understanding, alienated from God in ignorance and hardness of heart (v. 18) being callous, greedy and impure (19). Instead (by contrast, **But that is not the way you learned Christ!**), the way a Christian learns of Christ is by a faith commitment to discipleship (20-21).

What did one learn and do in coming to Christ? You learned to put off the old self and put on the new: you learned to **put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires,** ²³ and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, ²⁴ and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness (22-24). The definitive change at the beginning (work of God) grounds the duties of a progressive growth in holiness. Similarly, in Colossians, Paul says, you have put off the old self (Col 3.10a) and are being renewed in the image of God (Col 3.10b). Thus, he says, you *died* with Christ (Col 3.3), therefore, *put to death* what is earthly in you (Col 3.5). Note the connection with baptism, which is putting on of Christ; therefore, baptism includes a commitment to discipleship for holiness.

3. Third, walk worthily in specific practical ways, 4.25-5.2

Paul then gives some imperatives based on the indicatives just explained and rooted in electing grace of chapters 1-3 by two uses of therefore: ²⁵ **Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another.** ²⁶ Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, ²⁷ and give no opportunity to the devil. ²⁸ Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need. ²⁹ Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. ³⁰ And **do not grieve the Holy Spirit** of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. ³¹ Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. ³² Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you. **Therefore** be imitators of God, as beloved children. ² And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

In the middle of these injunctions is the command not to grieve the Spirit, 4.30. It is a negative command again like not quenching the Spirit. It is directly personal, referring to you in relationship to the Spirit Himself. Because of this personal aspect, this injunction is distinct within the series. It relates to all the rest. It is a motivating duty in relationship to the other duties of the entire chapter. We will return to this point later.

II. What does it mean to grieve the Spirit?