

The Biblical Doctrine of Sanctification

6. Grieving the Holy Spirit

October 27, 2013

I. Ephesians 4.30 in the context of 4.1-5.2

II. What does it mean to grieve the Spirit?

A. Paradox

1. Examples

2. Cautions

B. Christology

C. Condescension

D. Application

1. Consider the weeping, the grieving of Jesus over Jerusalem

2. Consider the grieving of the Spirit in the Christian life

a. What it means

To grieve the Spirit therefore means to affect the Holy Spirit and to hurt His feelings, as properties He has taken to Himself to relate to us and communicate with us. He may really and truly experience grief because of our conduct. We can fill out what this means by considering the opposite. If we do not grieve, then we please the Spirit. That brings Psalm 19.14 to mind. **Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer.** Hence, the prayer for growth in holiness from the inside out: “Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart bring pleasure instead of grief to the Holy Spirit and may my actions follow in kind by your grace through Jesus Christ my Lord, amen.”

Before we leave this Psalm, let’s consider *how* it is that we may please God. Obviously, to speak like this of a change in God’s experience that goes hand in hand with His eternally unchanging attributes is to stand on the edge of things that tower above our thoughts like the heavens tower above the earth. Still, the fact stands throughout Scripture and right here in Psalm 19.14 that this astounding reality of pleasing God occurs even when we factor in our sinfulness.

To explain this, we must of course begin with the work of Jesus Christ. You can please God and find acceptance in His sight when you can say: “the Lord Jesus is **my rock and my redeemer.**” Accordingly, in Ephesians, we read: **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.³ But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints.⁴ Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving.⁵ For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.⁶ Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.⁷ Therefore do not become partners with them;⁸ for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light⁹ (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true),¹⁰ and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. (Ephesians 5:1-10 ESV). Our failures are not emphasized. Duty is enjoined in 1-7, but it is wonderful to see how: imitate God as beloved children (v. 1); walk in love as loved by Christ in sacrifice (v. 2); avoid sexual immorality, as proper among holy ones (v. 3); be thankful (v. 4), knowing that the sexually immoral, impure, or covetous have no inheritance in the kingdom of God only wrath (5-6); do not join with the ungodly in their darkness because you are light in the Lord (v. 7). So, walk as children of light because the fruit in front of you, the fruit of light, is good, and right, and true. Finally, try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord (v 10). Mainly, the injunction is to be what you are: pursue godliness because you are God’s. Finally, work at the process of growing in a life that pleases the Holy Spirit.**

Furthermore, Psalm 19 places before each of us a striking opportunity and privilege, almost too good to be true: there is something that we may do to bring pleasure to God instead of displeasure. It is like the experience of parents of accepting and finding pleasure in the conduct of their children. Interestingly, for children of God, the conduct in view pertains to thoughts and speech that correspond to God's thoughts and speech. Good works as such are not the point of Psalm 19. Emphasis is on *meditation* of the heart and *speech* that complements that meditation.

You please the Lord when you meditate on His speech and speak in response to it. It brings joy in the presence of the angels when you meditate on God's speech in Scripture that revives the soul and that explains how Jesus is the rock of redemption.

You please the Lord when you recognize the voice of God in all of your experiences of this world, when you revel in created things like a kid in a candy store. There you enjoy nothing in itself and nothing for its own end. You enjoy God by hearing, seeing, tasting, and experiencing the majesty, wisdom, power, and glory of the Lord God Almighty high and lifted up that surrounds you completely in every fact of life in all you experience.

Then, of course, you must speak. You have a share in His thoughts. He shares them with you by speaking in the indirect words of creation (Ps 19. 1-6) and in the direct words of Scripture (Ps 19. 7-11). Thus, you cannot help but share in speech what you drink into your thoughts. As God's image bearer, you have the outstanding privilege of thinking God's thoughts after Him. His overtures warm your soul and rejoice your heart. His redemptive word gives wholeness to your experiences of seeing the Grand Canyon and playing tennis, of all the work you do day by day and night by night in weekly cycles of work and rest, as history moves ever forward to eternal Sabbath rest.

Therefore, the key to a full life, a satisfying life of joy in glorifying God is to view the world of things as not simply God's creation, but as His speech. It is the speech of a bridegroom that conveys knowledge of His deepest thoughts and love. It is the speech of a champion runner who encircles the earth with the radiance of the sun warming the hearts of His redeemed children. The facts of life are created facts, yes, but more than that they are utterances of God's speaking; they are communications from God in which He shares His thoughts with us giving us the wonderful privilege of sharing in His thoughts, tasting the honey in the honeycomb, and experiencing the goodness and greatness of God communicated everywhere in creation and redemptively in Scripture.

Thus, He gives us many flowers with beauty and sweet smells and we are taken by them, "love" them, enjoy them and study them (biology etc) with much attachment, but it is attachment to them as God's speech, which we listen to in discovering His wisdom and for which we praise Him in every delight. Additionally, we possess earthly things properly for the time God gives us when we view them through the lens of Scripture giving priority to God's speech in Scripture which is direct and redemptive in relationship to His speech in created things.