

The Biblical Doctrine of Sanctification

6. Grieving the Holy Spirit
November 10, 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

b. Consider how we may grieve the Spirit

How do we grieve the Spirit? How do I know when I am grieving the Spirit? These are distinct questions. We begin to answer each by returning to the Ephesians context. **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...¹¹ And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers,¹² to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ,¹³ until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God...speaking the truth in love...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 (Eph 4.1-2, 11-13, 29- 5.2).**

Guardedly, I want to say that it is not our sins generally that grieve (and quench) the Spirit. We sin every day; we truly are sinners as saints; as sinners, sinning every day, He leads us graciously and efficaciously to the day of redemption. So, I am not inclined to say that grieving is defined by all the injunctions and possibilities of failure: pride, meanness, impatience and so forth. I want to emphasize the attitude and dynamic of “trying” to discern how to please God (trying to please, pleases the Spirit). It seems to me that the big picture of our text (in parallel with the big picture in the quenching text) puts two things before us: our relationship to the ministry of the word and our relationships with one another in relationship to the word.

The sum of it is that we grieve the Spirit when we have an unwilling spirit, a lack of openness, and a lack of submission to the means of sanctification in the life of the church as disciples called to be learners for holiness to the glory of God. Of course, these things apply to the Christian home *mutatis mutandis*.

Making the effort, striving, trying to move forward in your walk with God is pleasing to the Spirit. *The context of Ephesians stresses pastoral care and one anothering love (1 Thess 5 on quenching has the same emphasis).* We grieve the Spirit if we fail to have speech that edifies: **speaking the truth in love...Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up** (13, 29). This is within the fellowship of the saints (holy ones) where sin is acknowledged and forgiven (**forgiving one another**, v. 32). Kind, tenderhearted forgiveness is on the gospel track, far from legalism, because you are to forgive **as God in Christ forgave you** (32). Process is understood, a process *for sinners being made holy* by putting on the clothes of righteousness; *finding* these garments and *learning how* to wear them. We grieve the Spirit in how we deal with sinning as a given, as we continue to miss the mark. The crucial thing is how we deal with being sinners and

sinning; critical is how we receive correction and instruction from God through gospel ministry in the life of the church. This is the best context for Hebrews 13.17.

Thus, we grieve the Spirit when we break the bonds of love by not pursuing up building speech but by doing the opposites of clamor and slander that arise from wrong heartedness (emphasis is to be on open heartedness). So, we step away from God by failing to be disciples with submissive hearts in a process of learning in the context of the church. The submissive heart is a willing heart, open to the things of God, sincere, repentant. Per Ephesians, one anothering love in the church also extends to pastoral care: **And he gave...the shepherds and teachers...for building up the body of Christ, ¹³until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God (11, 12, 13).** There is a parallel here with quenching the Spirit by our attitude toward discipleship in relationship to other saints and pastors.

How do I know if I am grieving the Spirit? You know in an objective way by testing yourself to see if you have a submissive and willing spirit toward pastoral care and mutual exhortation. Also, more subjectively, it is a matter of distance from or nearness to the Lord in your personal walk in the communion of the saints in fellowship with God. Grieving the Spirit is a way of creating distance but if you draw near to God and He will draw near to you. We also need the help of others because of the deceitfulness of sin (Heb 4.13).

c. Motivation

Grieving 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.

Let's see how Calvin and Warfield develop the principle of motivation. We questioned Calvin's interpretation of Gen 6, but now we can appreciate aspects of what He says:

...to teach us...he says, in the second place, concerning grief; that God was so offended by the atrocious wickedness of men, as if they had wounded his heart with mortal grief...this paternal goodness and tenderness ought, in no slight degree, to subdue in us the love of sin; since God, in order more effectually to pierce our hearts, clothes himself with our affections (249).

In a sermon on "The Sealing of the Holy Spirit," (in *Faith and Life*) Warfield states that sealing expresses authentication and security. By being sealed, the Christian is "authenticated as a redeemed one, and made secure as to the completion of redemption" (292). Earlier, Paul said, **you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise** (Eph 1.13, NAS) because it is the Spirit "who works out all the promises to us" and who is also the earnest of our inheritance (1.14). If we recognize what Christ is doing in us by the Spirit who lovingly deals with us as the foretaste of our inheritance and guarantor that we shall receive it, then we will say, "If the Holy Spirit has done this for me...shall I have no care not to grieve Him?" "He is the loving Spirit who is working in us towards good. Do we feel the pull of this appeal? (297)

The taste of heaven that you have day by day, the joy, peace, comfort and fellowship with God is the experience you have by the presence of the Spirit in you as seal and earnest. When you fail in willingness and submission, you grieve the Spirit and in turn remove from yourself the taste of heaven. Grieving distances and interrupts sweet fellowship with the church family and the triune God. In the words of Warfield, do you therefore feel the pull of this appeal, "Grieve not the Holy Spirit by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption"?