

## Grieving the Holy Spirit

**"We often neglect or insult the Holy Spirit by ignoring Him or living contrary to His promptings, and then we wonder why there is no power in our lives." Francis Chan (Forgotten God).** We short-circuit the manifest presence of God by grieving the Holy Spirit. In this message we will explore what entails grieving the Holy Spirit and examine the various things that repel God's Spirit. It is important to note that God's manifest presence is essentially the presence of the Holy Spirit. It behoves us to study what the Holy Spirit likes and is attracted to, which we have been doing in this series thus far. It is not enough for us to know just what activates the presence without exploring what deactivates the manifest presence of God. **"When the Holy Spirit is grieved, the channels of spiritual blessing are closed, and the rivers of living water cease to flow."**

**A.W. Tozer**

**"The enjoyment of God is the only happiness with which our souls can be satisfied. To go to heaven, to fully enjoy God, is infinitely better than the most pleasant accommodations here... God is the highest good of the reasonable creature; and the enjoyment of Him is the only happiness with which our souls can be satisfied."— Jonathan Edwards, "The End for Which God Created the World"**

The Holy Spirit is always trying to keep us in this space where we are enjoying God and focused on Him alone as our source.

**Grieving the Holy Spirit is not the same as blaspheming against the Spirit.**

*Matthew 12:31–32 And so I tell you, every kind of sin and slander can be forgiven, but blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. 32 Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.*

Jesus described this as attributing the work of the Holy Spirit to Satan — in context, the Pharisees said Jesus was casting out demons by Beelzebul (the Devil). It is a wilful, final rejection of the Spirit's witness to Christ, calling God's holy work evil. This is described as unpardonable because the person permanently hardens their heart against the only means of forgiveness — the Holy Spirit's testimony about Jesus. Think of it like slamming the only open door to salvation shut, then destroying the key. It's not just any offense or moment of unbelief — it's a settled, hardened stance of attributing God's work to Satan. If you are worried about whether you have done this or not, then it means you haven't. A person who does this is not worried that they have.

### **1. Specific carnal behaviour grieves the Holy Spirit**

*Ephesians 4:30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.*

Sealed = mark of ownership or authentication. This is the most direct reference to grieving the Holy Spirit — Paul is telling believers to avoid actions or attitudes (like bitterness, rage, slander) that bring grief to the Spirit. The word grief here means to cause sorrow. Grieving (*lypeō*) is a word used for personal sorrow — not simply anger, but deep pain, the kind you feel when someone you love hurts you. It suggests the Holy Spirit is not an impersonal force, but a person who can be emotionally affected by our thoughts and actions. It is a personal sorrow because the Spirit dwells within us to sanctify us, so our sin wounds that relationship. **The scary thing is that many believers are carnal and not sensitive enough to know whether they have grieved the Holy Spirit or not.** Most people continue with business as usual, unaware of the shift that has taken place when the glory has departed.

Look at the build up to this verse.

*Ephesians 4:26-30* 26 *"In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, 27 and do not give the devil a foothold. 28 Anyone who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with their own hands, that they may have something to share with those in need. 29 Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. 30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.*

***"The Holy Spirit is grieved whenever we are unloving, unkind, ungracious, unforgiving, or harsh. The dove of peace takes its flight when we take up the weapons of ill-will."* Charles Spurgeon**

Matthew Henry describes how when we harbour sinful attitudes or corrupt talk, we dishonour the presence of the Spirit who has sealed us for redemption. It's like dishonouring a guest in your home. ***"He who would please the Spirit must carefully avoid whatever is offensive to Him. Our sins grieve Him because they stand against His work of holiness in us."* John Owen (Puritan theologian).** F.F. Bruce talks about how the sealing of the Spirit is a pledge of final salvation. To grieve Him is to undermine the very security He guarantees, acting as though we do not appreciate His work in sealing and keeping us for Christ. ***"The Spirit is the seal of God's ownership and the pledge of His intention to complete what He has begun."*— F.F. Bruce, on Ephesians.** Albert Barnes (19<sup>th</sup> Century American Theologian), describes how believers grieve the Spirit by refusing to listen to His promptings, neglecting holiness, or persisting in anger and corrupt speech. It is a relational concept, not a legal one — the Spirit is a divine person living within us.

When someone is grieving, they have experienced some form of loss. **When we grieve the Holy Spirit, He experiences loss of what could have been.** He believes in our potential. It's very personal. He plays the role of helping us to pray (Rom 8:26-27) and helping us to worship (Jn 4:23-24), so you can imagine how He feels when we do the opposite (e.g. when we accuse instead of intercede); when we trust in other sources instead of praying to Father God and when we engage in idolatry instead of worshiping in Spirit and truth. Isn't God so gracious that He would choose to make our bodies the temple of the Holy Spirit? Think of the standard in the temple in the Old Testament. Priests had to be ceremonially clean before entering in. It should be no surprise to us that the Holy Spirit can be grieved. He is holy! **The Spirit within us resents the world's influence; He stirs us to return to God.**

**The Holy Spirit is emotionally invested in our transformation.**

There are consequences to the Holy Spirit being grieved. You might be wondering what happens as a result of Him being grieved. ***"They who grieve the Holy Spirit lose His gracious influences and comforting presence, for He will withdraw where He is thus slighted and dishonoured."* Matthew Henry (commentary).** Let's unpack this in the next point.

*1 Thessalonians 5:19* *"Do not quench the Spirit."*

**Implication: Ignoring or suppressing the Spirit's activity or gifts can lead to His withdrawal of empowerment or presence.**

The word quench literally means to extinguish like one would do to a fire or flame. This is implying the Spirit is like a fire that must not be suppressed, ignored, or stifled. The verse is prohibiting behaviour that dampens or resists the Spirit's activity (e.g., despising prophecy, resisting conviction, rejecting spiritual gifts or movement). Sometimes we suppress the voice of the Holy Spirit by naturalistic thinking. **How do you feel when you try to give counsel to a friend, and they ignore you? Yet you know their weaknesses and**

**blind spots.** With the concept of love bids for connection, it's a known fact that if bids are ignored or turned against half the time, people stop rebidding. Jesus Himself says, do not throw pearls to swine. **The Holy Spirit stops speaking if you persistently ignore Him, and then He might use other means to get your attention. God does not remain infinitely tolerant of willful ignorance.**

**Jonah 1–4** Jonah ignored God's voice. God used a storm, pagan sailors, and a giant fish to redirect him. This is a vivid example of **God using increasingly external means** to confront disobedience.

**2 Samuel 12:1–7** After David sinned with Bathsheba and ignored God's conviction, God sent **the prophet Nathan**. When the inner voice is ignored, **God may send external correction** through people or events.

Proverbs 1:24–28 is a **sober warning: if we continually resist God's voice — His Word, Spirit, and conviction — there may come a time when He allows silence to speak louder than words.**

*Proverbs 1:24–28 (ESV) 24 Because I have called and you refused to listen, have stretched out my hand and no one has heeded, 25 because you have ignored all my counsel and would have none of my reproof, 26 I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when terror strikes you, 27 when terror strikes you like a storm and your calamity comes like a whirlwind, when distress and anguish come upon you. 28 Then they will call upon me, but I will not answer; they will seek me diligently but will not find me.*

## **2. The Holy Spirit can resist you when you rebel against Him**

**God's primary purpose is not your glorification. He is interested in His eternal purposes and glory. This is appropriate because He is God.**

Isaiah 43:7 *"Everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made."*

Romans 11:36 *"For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen."*

*Isaiah 63:10 Yet they rebelled and grieved his Holy Spirit. So he turned and became their enemy and he himself fought against them.*

If you take this verse in isolation, you can think that God is a harsh task master. He does not fight against us because His default is harsh. **God acts first and foremost for the sake of His name, glory, and eternal purposes, not our self-exaltation.** When we understand this, it does not surprise us that God can resist us when we persistently move in the opposite direction. People live like God has accomplished all His KPI's if He blesses them; assignment done.

Look at the verses in the build-up as they reveal God's nature.

*Isaiah 63:7-9 I will tell of the kindnesses of the Lord, the deeds for which he is to be praised, according to all the Lord has done for us—yes, the many good things he has done for Israel, according to his compassion and many kindnesses. 8 He said, "Surely they are my people, children who will be true to me"; and so he became their Savior. 9 In all their distress he too was distressed, and the angel of his presence saved them. In his love and mercy he redeemed them; he lifted them up and carried them all the days of old.*

This culminates in verse 10 which speaks of the consequences of grieving the Holy Spirit. God didn't just wake up one day and start resisting them. His heart is revealed from verse 7 to 9.

*Another example is how God resists the proud*

*James 4:6 "God opposes the proud but shows favour to the humble." You can be a proud Christian.*

(antitassō) anti = against and tassō = to arrange, set in order. In Greek, the word “opposes” (sometimes translated “resists”) is This word literally means “to set oneself in battle array against” — a military term describing how an army lines up to resist or fight an enemy. It conveys the idea of active resistance, not merely passive disapproval.

### **Because pride is the heart’s declaration: “I don’t need God.”**

God’s opposition isn’t cruel — it’s a grace aimed at breaking down false glory so we can receive His true grace. How does God resist the proud?

- He confounds their wisdom (1 Cor 1:19).
- He lets their self-reliance fail.
- He exposes their false security (e.g. Pharaoh, Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 4).
- He humbles them so they might see their need for Him.

### **“When we grieve the Spirit by our pride or worldliness, we refuse the very influence that would make us more like Christ.” Jonathan Edwards**

*Ezekiel 10:18–19 “Then the glory of the Lord departed from over the threshold of the temple...”*

The people of Judah had repeatedly turned to idolatry, social injustice, and false worship. Even inside the temple, they had brought in idols and pagan practices (see Ezekiel 8). This was despite numerous warnings through prophets. God's glory, which once filled the temple, gradually departs in Ezekiel’s vision—symbolizing the withdrawal of divine favour and protection from Jerusalem before its destruction by Babylon.

*1 Samuel 16:14 “Now the Spirit of the Lord had departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the Lord tormented him.”*

Context: After repeated disobedience, God rejected Saul as king, and His Spirit left him.

He offered a sacrifice instead of waiting for Samuel (1 Sam. 13). He spared King Agag and the best livestock after being told to destroy everything (1 Sam. 15). The Spirit of the Lord, which had once empowered Saul, **departed** from him, and an **evil spirit was permitted** by God to torment him—likely a means of divine judgment and psychological/spiritual distress.

*Judges 16:20 “But he did not know that the Lord had left him.”*

Context: After breaking his Nazirite vow and revealing the secret of his strength to Delilah, the Spirit of the Lord departed from Samson. **It’s quite dangerous thinking you are anointed when you are not. It can lead you to step out foolishly presuming God is with you when He is not.** It results in negative blind-spots and unwise decisions.

### **3. We grieve the Holy Spirit by wilfully rejecting Him and His work**

**"God is glorified not only by His glory being seen, but by it being rejoiced in... God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in Him."** — Jonathan Edwards

*Acts 7:51 You stiff-necked people! Your hearts and ears are still uncircumcised. You are just like your ancestors: You always resist the Holy Spirit!*

Here Stephen confronts the Sanhedrin for continually resisting the Spirit's work. The word for resist here is ***Sklērotrachēloi* - stiff-necked, obstinate (literally: "hard-necked")**

The phrase comes from farming language. It describes an **ox** or **donkey** that refuses to turn its head or respond to the reins — resisting its master, refusing guidance, stubbornly going its own way.

In Hebrew culture, a *stiff neck* meant:

1. **Refusing to bow** — a proud person who won't lower themselves before God
2. **Unteachable** — unwilling to change direction or receive correction
3. **Rebellious** — ignoring God's instructions even after repeated warnings

In today's terms, "stiff-necked" means:

1. **Proud and resistant to God's authority**
2. **Refusing to repent when confronted**
3. **Spiritually rigid and closed to change**
4. **Self-willed and hard-hearted**

***Antipete* - literally "to fall against," meaning to oppose, to resist, to fight against.**

This shows a picture of pushing back, resisting forcefully, refusing submission — Stephen accuses them of habitually resisting the Holy Spirit, just like their ancestors resisted God's messengers. **What is the Holy Spirit wanting to do in your life right now? Are you open to Him or do you keep resisting Him?**

*Hebrews 10:29* How much more severely do you think someone deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified them, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace?

This speaks of *insulting* the Spirit through wilful rejection.

A smooth paraphrase would be: "...who has insulted (outraged, treated with contempt) the Spirit who brings and applies God's grace."

*Enubridzō* means "to treat with insulting arrogance," "to outrage," "to mock with contempt". It conveys gross, insolent disrespect — not just ignoring, but showing hateful contempt. So "insulted the Spirit of grace" means:

- **showing contempt for the Spirit's gracious work**
- **scorning the grace offered through Christ**
- **arrogantly rejecting the Spirit who applies that grace to our lives**

The writer of Hebrews is describing a shocking act of rebellion — not a moment of weakness, but a wilful, hardened rejection of the salvation the Spirit makes available.

*Heb 10:24-28* And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, 25 not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching. 26 If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, 27 but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God. 28 Anyone who rejected the law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses.

## Conclusion

**Just as we grieve losing connection with people we love, the Spirit grieves losing close fellowship with us when we sin.** *A stranger cannot grieve you the way a spouse or child can.* That is why the command **“Do not grieve the Holy Spirit”** (Eph 4:30) is so moving — it reminds us that God is not cold or mechanical, but *personal, relational, and loving.*