

Grieving the Spirit

by J. Wilbur Chapman

The Holy Spirit is a person who can be grieved by our actions and attitudes, but He is also a Spirit who can fill us with love, joy, peace, and longsuffering.

Scripture: Psalm 139:23, John 8:32, John 14:13, Romans 8:38, 2 Corinthians 1:20, Galatians 5:22, Ephesians 4:30-31, 1 John 5:13, Jude 1:24

Topics: "Holy Spirit", "Sanctification"

Description

J. Wilbur Chapman preaches on the importance of not grieving the Holy Spirit of God, as mentioned in Ephesians 4:30. He emphasizes the sensitivity and love of the Holy Spirit, highlighting how disobedience, failure to keep our hearts clean, and denying His word can grieve Him. Chapman urges believers to seek the infilling of the Spirit by cleansing themselves and aligning with God's will, rather than relying on emotional experiences. He also stresses the significance of holding firm to sound doctrine and the assurance of salvation to avoid grieving the Spirit.

Transcript

"Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God." Ephesians 4:30.

Of all the epistles that ever came from the heart of the great Apostle Paul, this letter to the Ephesians seems to me about the sweetest and best. It is the epistle in which we find "the heavenly places" mentioned so many times; it is the epistle in which we find so many different names applied to our Father in heaven; and I suppose it is the letter in which we find the very highest spiritual truth presented in all the Bible. But while we find the very highest idea of spiritual things, we also find the Apostle Paul turning to give us instructions concerning the most ordinary affairs of daily life. Some rules are here concerning Christian conversation. Some suggestions are made touching the relation which the husband sustains to the wife, and the wife to the husband. Indeed, if one should live in the spirit of this letter to the Ephesians, he would do nothing less than live what has been called by some "the life of surrender," and others "the victorious life," but which Paul calls "the life in the heavenly places." Paul makes all these different suggestions, and then adds: "And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God," as if He could be grieved by a wrong atmosphere in the home, or by a wrong use of the lips; and this is true.

While many of us would shrink from doing things plainly inconsistent with our Christian profession, we would be astonished if we could be made to understand that the way we have used our lips has grieved the Holy Spirit.

First of all, the very fact that we may grieve Him proves by inference His personality. You cannot grieve an influence. It seems to me that we may grieve the Spirit by even stopping to prove that He has a personality equal to the Father and to the Son, for it is so self-evident. Yet many men and women do not seem to have grasped the truth of His personality, and thus must grieve Him. In the second place, the fact that we may grieve Him proves His sensitiveness. In John 1:32, it is said: "I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove." The dove stands for all that is sensitive in the family of birds. I have been told that the dove has been known to tremble when there was held before it one single feather of a vulture's wing. The Spirit of God is so sensitive that that which has even the appearance of the evil in it hurts Him.

This idea of sensitiveness presents to us the thought of His love. If I do not love you, you cannot grieve me, but just in the proportion that I love you, you find it easy to grieve me. You cannot grieve an indifferent person. You may possibly hurt his feelings; you may anger him; but you grieve only the one whose heart is filled to overflowing with affection for you. The feeling that a mother must have when her offspring breaks her heart by evil-doing, is the feeling -- but multiplied by infinity-- which the Holy Ghost must have when we grieve Him.

There are several different expressions in the New Testament in line with my text. "Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost" (Acts 7:51). I believe that only the unregenerate resist Him. In his letter to the Thessalonians Paul says, "Quench not the Spirit." That may refer especially to the life of the Holy Ghost in the church, so that we may quench Him by ignoring Him in the government of the church. If we would have a blessing sweeping over our land from sea to sea, from north to south, I believe that we must begin by conforming the life of our churches to the teachings of the Holy Ghost.

"Grieve not the holy Spirit of God." Only a child of God may grieve the Spirit, and that is the sad part of it. How many times we have heard these words referred to and read as if they admonished us not to grieve away the Spirit of God! It seems to me that we must at least grieve the Spirit when we add to or take from any part of revealed truth. It would be contrary to Scripture to say that we could grieve away the Spirit. If the Spirit of God comes to abide in us, He comes to stay, and there is no power on earth that can separate us from Him, when once He takes possession of us. We have been born of the Spirit, and we cannot grieve Him away. That would mean a change of all God's plan for us, for we were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, and we are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation. I believe that I am a part of God's great plan for ages to come, and if I should fall out it would mean a change of all God's plans for time and eternity. We cannot grieve away the Holy Spirit of God; no, but we may grieve Him.

1. We may grieve Him by disobedience. Disobedience of children always raises a barrier between them and their parents. There may be ever so much love in a father's heart, and he may have ever so much desire to pour forth that love, but he cannot do it so long as there is this barrier of disobedience between him and his child. The father of the prodigal son never ceased to love him, but the barrier of disobedience was there, higher than the highest mountain. Never until the son crossed that mountain could the father begin to pour forth his love upon him.

What does Paul mean when he says, "Be not drunk with wine wherein is excess"? We take that to be a command. "But be filled with the Spirit" is the rest of the same verse, and that is just as much a command as not to be drunk with wine. The only difference between the first command and the second is that one is negative and the other is positive. Are you filled with the Spirit? If not, you have disobeyed God's command, and there is a barrier between you and Him.

There are two tests, I think, by which we may know. First, if you are filled with the Spirit, God will give to you the testimony in His own word: "And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do" (John 14:13). Have you ever asked to be filled with the Spirit? If you have prayed, believing that the infilling of the Holy Ghost would come to you, He will come. The promise of the Spirit is a promise of power, and "all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him Amen" (2 Cor. 1:20). Then it is not a question of feeling, but of belief. Once when I was in deepest sorrow, a member of my church said to me, "I am very much afraid that you are having financial difficulties," and he gave me a little piece of paper. It was a blank check signed with his name, that I might fill in for any amount.

I said, "I think it is unsafe to give a man a check like that. I might send it back for half a million dollars."

"Well," he said, "if it would do you any good to think you had my fortune back of you, you may take the check."

I put it in my pocket, and every time I passed a man on the street I thought to myself: "I wonder if he has such a fortune back of him as I." I believed in that check simply because I believed in the name that was signed to it.

Have you asked to be filled with the Spirit, believing in Christ? Well, then, if you do not believe that you are filled, you are grieving the Holy Spirit of God.

But there is another test. "By their fruits ye shall know them." "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance" (Gal. 5:22). Where there is a fulness of the Spirit, there will be a fulness of the fruit of the Spirit, but not always in perfection, of course. The fulness of the Spirit is a gift, and the fruit of the Spirit is a growth. To be drunk with wine is to be filled with a kind of wild exultation which leaves the last state of a man worse than the first. To be filled with the Spirit of God is to be filled with joy and exultation which is heavenly, and every wave of blessing that comes in upon us, wave upon wave, like the tide of the sea, carries a man nearer to the heavenly places.

2. Again, we grieve the Spirit by failing to keep our hearts clean. The late John MacNeil of Australia said that a new heart is not necessarily a clean heart; but many of us have been thinking that it was. David committed a great transgression, and was pardoned, and prayed: "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me." Paul says: "He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

MacNeil uses the illustration of a mother who puts a clean dress on her child in the morning, and tells her to keep it unspotted all day long. When night comes, the child's dress is so soiled that it is hard to tell whether it is white or black; but the mother cleanses it. The child had the will to keep it clean, but the nature of the child made her get it soiled. The same thing takes place every day, but if that mother could only impart some of her own spirit to that child, so that the child would not only have the will but the ability to keep clean, would not that be wonderful? That is exactly what God wants to do for us. He wants to put Himself in us, and while we have the old nature of the flesh, He wants to give us, in all its fulness, His own blessed nature, to keep us free from sin.

Some say that is perfection. Well, what of it? As an old minister once said to me, "I wish that people were as much afraid of imperfection as of perfection." But we may forsake every known sin, and still be very imperfect in God's sight, for God may behold sin where we would be blind to it. It is not a question as to whether I can keep from sinning or not -- I know that I cannot, for I have tried it many years; but the

question is as to whether Jesus Christ can keep me. Who am I that I should limit the power of the Almighty? He is able to save unto the uttermost. Has He not told us in Jude that He is able to keep us from stumbling? Is anything too hard for the Lord?

What Must You Do To Be Filled?

You are the temple of God, and the Spirit dwelleth in you, so that if you want Him to fill you, the first thing to do is to get the temple clean. God does not require golden vessels, or silver vessels, but He must have clean vessels. In the days of Hezekiah, when the temple was filled with things that had no place there, it had to be cleansed before God would manifest Himself there. Again, when the court was filled with money-changers, Jesus had to drive them out with the scourge. Too many of us have allowed ourselves to be soiled by contact with the world. We may not be grossly inconsistent, and yet many times we have lost our power. A man can never be filled with electricity so long as he stands on the ground. He may touch the current, but it will pass away from him. But if he stands on a little stool with glass legs, he will be filled instantly, for glass is a non-conductor of electricity. If he touch the earth with one finger, he will lose the power. Now Paul says, "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing." We have been told that if we would be filled with the Spirit, we must weep, pray, agonize; but it is all to no purpose. One minister said to me: "I believe this filling is only for a few elect persons." Another said: "I have fulfilled every command of God, and still I am not filled." Brethren, the thing to do is to stop weeping, agonizing, and just get down before God and say: "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me." Then ask Him to take it away. When you have become cleansed and set right, then God will be ready to fill you.

Then we may grieve the Spirit by practically denying His word. Was there not much of pathos in Jesus' words when He said: "Why do ye not understand my speech?" Christ has promised to be with us "always, even unto the end of the world." With us even in disappointment and trial. Some one has said that a Christian should spell disappointment with an "H" in place of the "d," and make it His-appointment.

But we grieve the Spirit more perhaps in matters of doctrine than anything else. We grieve Him in our lack of assurance. John says, "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life," and yet Christians are continually praying, "Save us at last." Do you not think that grieves the Spirit of God? We know that we are saved, not by our feelings, for they change like the waves of the sea, but because the Word of the Lord hath spoken it. To say anything else, to believe anything else, to act as if you believed anything else, grieves the Spirit. I am thankful that I believe these things, not because I feel them, not because I understand them, not because I can reconcile them with science, not because other men believe them, but because the Lord hath spoken them. A man has no right to advance his views unless he has compared scripture with scripture, and has reached his conclusions from the Word of God. Blessed Book! Laughed at, scorned, railed at; it is sweeter than ever, more powerful than ever! Heaven and earth shall pass away, but this Word, never, never, never!

One word in closing. In Ephesians 4:31, the Apostle says, "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice." This is a practical thought with which to close. Paul would seem to indicate that we grieve the Spirit by yielding to any of these things. The Spirit of God is grieved whenever we allow our old nature to triumph over our spiritual nature. For God has promised in His Word to set us free from the law of sin and death.

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