

“SINS AGAINST THE HOLY SPIRIT”

Ephesians 4:30

“Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.”

There are three confirming truths in the above verse (1) It confirms the personality of the Holy Spirit – only persons can be grieved; (2) It confirms the truth that God is affected by sinning Christians and (3) It confirms the fact that sinning Christians do not lose their salvation for “you are sealed for the day of redemption.”

There are at least three sins mentioned in the New Testament that can be committed against the Holy Spirit by Christians. They are: lying to, quenching and grieving the Spirit of God. Let us examine each one and, better still, open our hearts and pray with the psalm writer:

*“Search me, O God, and know my heart;
Try me, and know my thoughts;
And see if there is any wicked way in me,
And lead me in the way everlasting.”*

In what manner is it possible to sin against the Holy Spirit? All the sins that Christians commit against the Spirit of God can be listed under one or more of the following headings:

I. LYING. Acts 5:1-4

“But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession. And he kept back part of the proceeds, his wife also being aware of it, and brought a certain part and laid it at the apostles’ feet. But Peter said, “Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the price of the land for yourself? While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God.”

This is a well rehearsed story among church-going believers. The emphasis is often placed on the death the husband, Ananias, and his wife, Sapphira while the deed is pushed into the background. Why did they die? They expired because they told a lie about their real-estate transaction. It was not *where* they lied, in church, but to *Whom* they lied, that resulted in divine judgment.

Peter said, “why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit” – “You have not lied to men but to God.” All sin is against God and God is against all sin. If every Christian who lied dropped dead in church we would have no churches left! Lying is underscored here as a benchmark, a dead-on message, that lying is an offense against the Holy Spirit! Every deceitful action, every promise made to God and not kept, every pretense, all sham, all hypocrisy is lying to the Holy Spirit.

What were the subtle influences that caused this Christian couple to lie to God the Holy Spirit? There were two:

The Help of Satan. Peter asked Ananias, “why has Satan...?” The devil also goes to church! Here he is influencing Ananias to act in an anti-God manner. He always is anti-God! He wants to hurt God, to thwart God’s purposes, to cause God’s children to incur God’s disfavor and judgment, to ruin the testimony of believers and hinder the progress of the church of Jesus Christ. Oliver Wendell Holmes wrote, “Sin has many tools, but a lie is the handle that fits them all.” I would change one word in that statement and say, “*Satan* has many tools, but a lie is the handle that fits them all.”

The Heart of Ananias. Peter said, “Why have you conceived this thing in your heart?” The seed of sin in Ananias’ heart was watered by Satan. Jesus said, “For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within and defile a man.” (Mark 7:21-23)

Therefore, “Keep your heart with all diligence, For out of it spring the issues of life. Put away from you a deceitful mouth, and put perverse lips far from you.” (Prov.4:23-24)

Have you hurt God the Holy Spirit by lying? If we are insensitive to the hurt we cause God, we are insensitive to the hurt we do to others. Sinning against the Holy Spirit is hurtful.

II. QUENCHING. I Thessalonians 5:19

“Do not quench the Spirit.” That is Paul’s plain and pointed exhortation. To “quench means: “to extinguish, smother, stifle, snuff out.”

Warren W. Wiersbe writes, “In using the word *quench*, Paul pictured the Spirit of God as fire (see Isa.4:4; Acts 2:3; Rev.4:5). When the Holy Spirit is at work in our lives and churches, we have a warmth of love in our hearts, light for our minds, and energy for our wills. The fire of the Spirit must not go out on the altar of our hearts.”

We quench the Holy Spirit when we ignore His warnings. Quenching the Spirit is turning a deaf ear to the still, small voice that prompts us; it is ignoring a command we read in God’s Word; it is running the stop signs that He puts in front of us. The Holy Spirit kindles a fire of passion for God in our hearts but we must keep the fire burning by being sensitive to Him. When the fire starts going out because we throw the cold water of sin upon it, the Holy Spirit sounds the alarm. We quench Him when we ignore Him.

Illust. Several years ago two ladies perished when their house caught fire. The fire inspectors investigation revealed that the night before, they had had a party in their home and had disconnected the smoke detector because many of the guests were smoking cigarettes. The Holy Spirit activates our consciences, not when the fire flames up but when the fire is dying out in our hearts. We disconnect His alarm signal at our own peril. Don’t turn a deaf ear to the Spirit’s promptings.

We quench the Holy Spirit when we act rashly and respond hastily in anger. A woman once told the evangelist Billy Sunday that she had a bad temper, but it was always over in a minute. He replied, “So is a shot-gun blast! It too is over in a second, but look at the damage it can do.”

We quench the Holy Spirit when we smother the desire to speak or act for the Lord. We have many opportunities to “gossip the Gospel” but when we stifle the urging to do so we are throwing cold water on the Spirit’s flame.

We quench the Spirit in more ways than we expect. By our attitudes and actions: a rebellious frame of mind, complacency, disloyalty to Jesus Christ, unholy alliances, not using our giftedness for God’s glory, serving in our own strength the icy water of pride. Any cause that dampens the fire of the Holy Spirit is a serious affront to the Holy Spirit.

Let the Spirit’s fire burn in your heart! If you’re afraid that you have all but extinguished it, confess your sin and ask God to revive the fire. When you do, the flame will once again burn brightly and you will sense the warmth of His presence.

III. GRIEVING. Ephesians 4:30

“Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption”

The Greek word translated “grief” is *“lupeite”* and means “to make sad or sorrowful.” Used in relation to other humans it means to treat others in a manner so as to cause grief. No word reveals the tender heart of God as does the word “grieve.” To think that we can make God sad should move us to repentance.

We anger our enemies, we grieve those who love us. When, as a child, my Mother would tell me to do something and I hesitated she would say, “Don’t give me any grief, just do as I say!” We grieve God when we do not do as He says. What are some of the things that grieve God the Holy Spirit? The context of the prohibition that Paul articulates gives us a clear understanding of that which is grievous to God.

An unclean mouth.

Ephesians 4:29 – “Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth.”

An un-Christlike spirit.

Ephesians 4:31 – “Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice.”

An unkind attitude.

Ephesians 4:32a – “be kind to one another, tenderhearted....”

An unforgiving spirit.

Ephesians 4:32b – “forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.”

Causing God grief is a most serious matter. The nation of Israel serves as a warning of the seriousness of such an affront. Notice a reference to Israel’s infraction in this regard:

Isaiah 63:9,10 – “In His love and in His pity He redeemed them; And He bore them and

carried them all the days of old. But they rebelled and grieved His Holy Spirit; So He turned Himself against them as an enemy, and He fought against them.”

CONCLUSION

- Sin is against God – any sin, every sin, all sin is sin against the Holy God Who cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance!
- The fact that the Holy Spirit can be sinned against is another proof that He is God – God the Holy Spirit. This should cause great pause and concern on our part. Hebrews 10:29-30 asks the question: “How much more severely do you think a man deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God under foot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified him, and *who has insulted the Spirit of grace?*” (emphasis mine)
- Only a person can experience an affront, an insult, a slight and/or disrespect. It is an insult to us human beings when someone acts toward us in a wrong manner. So it is when the Holy Spirit is insulted and this is sin.
- Saints sin. Let us be honest before God. If we want to grow, make spiritual progress, have God’s favor and blessing upon our lives and service, we must admit our shortcomings and turn from our sins. If our lives are out of harmony with the Holy Spirit, we are guilty of one or a combination of the above sins.
- What do we do when we sin? 1 John 1:9 tells us what we *ought* to do: “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

At the funeral for her wayward son, an aged mother said, looking into the coffin, “He caused me a lot of grief, but I loved him, after all, he was my son.” I looked into her wrinkled face and wondered how many of those wrinkles that prodigal boy had put into that sorrowing face.

We do not put wrinkles into God’s face when we sin, but we can cause the One Who loves us to grieve!

“Have I grieved thy Holy Spirit?
Have I quenched His power within?
If I have, O Lord, forgive me,
Cleanse my heart from every sin.”

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