Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God

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Date: 01 January 2000

Preacher: Prof J.Douglas Macmillan

[0:00] Ephesians chapter 4 and verse 30. Verse 30 and to put the verse in its context let us read from verse 29.

Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth but that which is good to the use of edifying that it may minister grace unto the hearers and grieve not the Holy Spirit of God whereby he is sealed unto the day of redemption.
And especially these words and grieve not the Holy Spirit of God. These words bring before us a very solemn subject indeed.
A subject that belongs in the realm of a tender and warm and blessed relationship.
A relationship between the Christian believer and the one who is here is called the Holy Spirit of God.
[1:27] All that has been done in our Christian believers by the way of conviction of sin and repentance and faith and joy and holiness all of that is something that has been done by the Holy Spirit has been done by one who is God of very God and who is fully God.

God of but for this work Christ's redemptive accomplishment on the cross his resurrection power would never have had any saving effect in any sinner's heart.
let us have a firm and certain conviction about the plain teaching of the Bible just as the work of Christ for sinners was absolutely necessary to salvation so the work of the Holy Spirit in sinners is equally necessary to salvation.
He it is who makes the gospel the power of God unto salvation through faith working faith in the heart of a sinner.
There is no such thing as Christian experience apart from the work of the blessed Spirit of God.
[3:34] We are apt I think to fall into two extremes or either of two extremes of error when we think of the work of the Holy Spirit.

We are first of all apt to underrate it and neglect it altogether. And for myself I cannot but feel that a great deal of our own preaching in our own denomination has known some imbalance in this direction.
I believe it has certainly been true of my own preaching over the last 24 years. We tend to exalt the work of Christ and to neglect the work of the Holy Ghost a work without which the work of Christ would be our work in vain.
and the other error is to so exalt the work of the Holy Spirit in the sinners that it clouds and hides the work of the Lord Jesus.
And perhaps because of the neglect in evangelical preaching of the doctrine and work of the Holy Spirit we have seen over these last years that kind of emphasis come into the preaching of various parts of the Church of Christ amongst us.
[5:26] An emphasis upon the work of the Spirit which we cannot but feel does despite to the work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Let us remember and keep firmly in our minds what the short of catechism has to teach us on the basis of the Bible about who the Redeemer of God's elect is.
The only Redeemer of God's elect is the Lord Jesus Christ. There is no other Redeemer.
The Holy Spirit is not the Redeemer. He is a Savior in the sense in which the Father also is a Savior.
But Christ is the only Redeemer. It was not the Holy Spirit who became incarnate for us. Nor was it the Holy Spirit who bore our sins on the tree.
[6:31] He did not suffer. That is the other extremes. But extremes almost always lead to error.
And while we avoid extremes, either of these extremes, we must surely give a prominent place in

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our preaching, in our Christian understanding, in our personal devotional living.

We must give a prominent place to the Holy Spirit. do you remember the words of the Lord Jesus to his disciples? He said, it is expedient for you that I go away.
For if I go not away, the comforter shall not come. If I go away from you, I will send another comforter, another paraclete, one to be by you shine, he shall take of mine, and he shall reveal it to you.
He shall glorify me. My friends, my Christian brothers and sisters, let me say this to you tonight, if the Redeemer of God's elect, the Lord Jesus, has been made precious and glorious in your eyes, he has been made precious and glorious through the work of the Holy Spirit.
You may not think that, you may not feel that, as you analyze the experiences that made Jesus glorious where he had never been glorious before, in your heart, in your life.
[8:19] But when you take that experience to the Bible, and let the real biblical light shine on it, you find that it's all due to the work of the Holy Spirit of God.

Paul is here exhorting Christian believers about that relationship which exists between themselves and the Holy Spirit.
I want you to notice just first of all this, that it is an exhortation to Christians, not to unbelievers, not to unconverted men, or unconverted women.
I have never preached from this text before, to the best of my knowledge. I have heard sermons on it. Every single sermon I have heard on it has applied, or been applied, I've been applying this truth to the unconverted.
I'm talking about the danger of unconverted people grieving the Spirit, but actually a very attitude in the church here this evening, my unconverted friend, is a grieving of the Holy Ghost.
[9:49] Well, I have to leave that with you. These sermons take up a truth and apply it, but do not apply it in the direction in which Paul applies it. Paul applies it not to the unconverted, but to the professing Christian believer, to the converted.

That's quite clear because he is talking to people who have been sealed by the Holy Spirit and who have been sealed by the Holy Spirit unto the day of redemption.
The Holy Spirit has regenerated and renewed them and in regeneration he has sealed them with his own special seal. And Paul is not saying that this seal may be broken by grieving the Spirit.
He is not saying that at all. We believe that the Bible teaches the perseverance of the saints. When a man is renewed and the life of God is imparted to his soul, that life will never die.
He is sealed unto the day of redemption. But what Paul is saying is this, because you have been sealed by him unto the day of redemption, do not grieve him.
[11:24] He is not talking about the possibility of this seal being broken. He is talking about the possibility of the one who has sealed being grieved and offended.

It is an exhortation to Christian believers. That's the very first point. It's a very simple one, but I want to make it because of my own experience of listening to men who obviously believe that it was first and foremost for unbelievers.
Go back into the context again and let us emphasize the same fact. verse 29, let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth.
That is an exhortation to Christians. For that which is good, how is your own speech, how is mine, in your workplace, in your home? For that which is good, to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearer, God.
Go further back and you'll find him exhorting from verse 24 that you put on the new man, be clothed in the new man. You can only do that by the Holy Spirit, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.
[12:50] What is Paul pleading for? He is pleading for a holy life in God's people. He is pleading from godliness not on the outside but godliness on the inside.

Therefore put away lying. This is not an exhortation to unconverted men. No man can put away lying in his own strength.
Speak every man truth with his neighbor. Let things be true and frank and open between Christian brethren. Are you treating your fellow Christians just as you would treat the world?
do you cover up for them or cover up yourself from them? Do sometimes your words deceive them? Do you put a cloak of righteousness around you when you're with them that's not really you?

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My friend Paul says put it away. What grieves the spirit this very thing? You're professing to be a new man to be a new creature in Christ Jesus.
[13:58] You're professing to be created in righteousness and holiness. Then how grievous to the one whose work it is if you and I continue to be untruthful in the world in which God has set us as his witnesses.

My friend you're being found out in just one simple untruthment. People talk about white lies. I would guess a lie really has only one color in the eyes of God.
If you found out in one untruth by one of your own Christian brothers or sisters just think of how that Christian brother or sister is grieved.
Just think of how he or she is made to doubt the reality of your conversion. And if you're found in it out in it by the world, just think of what the world, that's your Christianity for you.
Why are churches empty? Well, doubtless there are many reasons. There's the inscrutable purpose of God, there's perhaps the judgment of God, but one reason is certainly this.
[15:13] What the average person who himself or herself never goes to church sees in and thinks of those who do go to church and those who do profess the name of Christ.

Paul's talking, especially in verse 25, about Christian neighborhoods. We are members one of another, he says. Then he says, be angry and sin not.
Now he doesn't say, don't be angry. But he says, be angry and sin not. Hunger in itself is not a sin. God is angry with the wicked every day.
And my friend, God is holy and without any imperfection. But if you're hunger is not also under the sanctifying power of the Holy Ghost, it will lead you into sin.
Let not the sun go down upon your life. Anything wrong between you and another Christian? Anything wrong man, Christian man, between you and your wife? Do you let the sun go down upon it?
[16:37] Will you go on your knees by your bed? And perhaps climbing beside her and you're still not speaking to her. It grieves the Holy Ghost. I speak very plainly and I make no excuse for speaking plainly.

What kind of relationships are there between Christian husbands and Christian wives? What kind of relationships are there between Christian men and Christian women in our own congregation here? Do we harbour grudges against one another? Can we expect anything else but to be grieving the spirit if we do? Let not the sun go down upon our wrath.
Let us take our wrath to the only place for it, the fruit of the cross. I was thinking this afternoon about a little chorus that our mother used to sing with us as a family when I was just a wee boy and it came back to me when I was converted.
I used to sing it a lot and I was chiding myself because I haven't been singing it for years. Jesus, keep me near the cross.
[17:52] How near the cross are you tonight, my Christian friend? Do you find that indwelling corruption and appalling sin and failure to obey Christ drives you again and again to the cross?

I find that. When I read Romans 7, I believe I find it in Paul too. Paul was who had to say, O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me.
And then I think in his own way, he performed with the truth of our little chorus performed. He said, I thank God through Christ Jesus our Lord.
Jesus, keep me near the cross. There are precious fountains, free to all, a healing spring.
is there something in you like tonight, my life that needs the healing of the cross? First of all, because it's grieving, the Holy Spirit of God.
[19:04] And my friend, let us take it to the cross. We'll never have the joy of the Holy Ghost in our heart until we do.

Amen. Amen.
Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. sin and the failure and you call yourself a Christian and you've got the audacity to say that the Holy Spirit has done a saving work in you you're not a Christian and Paul wisely says don't give him a place don't listen to his voice and if he doesn't accuse you on the basis of your own heart and this failure he'll accuse you on something else and he'll say ah there's a Christian brother and you know he doesn't like you perhaps he doesn't think you're really converted at all don't give a place for the devil now the apostle says resist the devil and he'll flee from you do

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you do that and do you stand back to watch him run or do you give him a place and say oh dear me I can't help it there it is again it's got me down I got angry under my anger I've sinned or I covered up with truth when I shouldn't have done so but him that stole steal no more imagine having to make that exhortation to Christian believers but Paul makes it and I suppose there's various ways in which one can steal you don't have to go and break the windows in the shops in Zaghy Hall Street to be a thief you might do it at your desk when you're filling up your tox form very tempting if you give place to the devil you'll be stealing or you might do it when you open your mouth and you have thief from somebody else's reputation and you repeat a little bit of gossip and you don't even know whether it's through or not let him not steal that stole steal no more and don't let necessity drive you into theft think that's what's in the apostle's mind here especially let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth leave not the holy spirit go on to verse 31 let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor is summing up now and evil speaking be put away from you with all mothers and listen not just negative positive be kind one to another tender hearty are you tender hearty to mind forgiving one another even as God for Christ's sake have forgiven you oh my friend how much he has forgiven us and yet how slow we are to yield forgiveness to anybody who wrongs us or sins against us how slow and yet we'll repeat the Lord's prayer and it's good to repeat it often after this manner of praying he jesus said and in the Lord's prayer we say forgive us our trespasses forgive us our debts even as we forgive our debtors where else be tender hearty forgiving one another even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven you these are the things let's bring them into to to focus and an even more practical way if we can why do these things arise in a Christian believers when we convert it at first we say me having to put away lying i would never dream of life when we convert it at first we say still i would never do it if we were reading an exhortation about lukewarmness we would say me how could i be lukewarm about this savior who's come into my heart and into my life and now my friend you look back over the years and what sad patches of sheer lukewarmness there has been hasn't it and you hear the voice of God saying it makes you afraid as it does me i would that thou art wet cold or hot for i will spew that which is lukewarm out of my mind what is it to grieve the spirit well of course it is not to grieve him in the sense in which we can be grieved god the holy spirit is like god the father and god the son although he is a person he is not a preacher and he cannot be grieved in the sense i suppose in which we can be grieved but nevertheless he can be he can be touched or paul wouldn't use this word one commentary i was reading was saying it was a metaphor i wouldn't go with that i believe it's more than a metaphor but it will be a holy grieving it will be a grieving which will not disturb his personal blessedness as gone yet it's possible to grieve him how do we do it by disregarding his voice when in his tenderness and in his holy graciousness towards us he speaks to us and prompts us and leads us and guides us and we disregard it and we set it aside perhaps when we disregard his voice in the preaching of the gospel and we say ah yes oh that's true for other people but it's not true for me and if god is speaking to us by his spirit and we close our ears and refuse to hear to grieve him to grieve him to grieve him is not only to disregard his voice it's to oppose his influence that's involved too now every influence my friend you like whatever felt for good has been from the holy spirit of god every blessing you've ever enjoyed in your soul has been due to his work how wrong and how sinful to oppose that work in any way that must be very grieving to him to allow his work to decay to neglect the work that he has done in us that must be grieving to him as well i'm not an architect look down at one of our brothers a friend here and he's an architect and i'm sure he's an architect if he had designed a fine building and seen it erected and watched it there would be a glow in his heart and then if he saw the building neglected by its owners and beginning to fall into decay and ruin he'll be sad wouldn't he be grieved it's in ephesians 2 that paul says to believers that they have been built into a temple of god

my friend the temple of the christian believer is the finest work of god's spirit and that work is neglected by you and by me and left to itself how that must grieve the spirit is the finest have we stopped praying over the work of god's spirit in our hearts have we have we stopped cherishing the wonderful work that he did when he brought us from darkness to light ah that must be grieving too have we stopped calling on him for the power that we used to ask for witnessing to others have we stopped asking him to fill us and make us godly men and women this incident is where i tend still to disagree with professor donald mcleod i do not believe that the filling of the spirit is something that is totally commensurate with regeneration i believe it is something that ends and flows in our believers life i read of peter and the other apostles again and again and again in the book of art that they were filled with the spirit with all due respect to professor mccloud i find it hard to identify that

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with regeneration it is something which is with regeneration doubtless often and it is something which will always look to regeneration but i do believe there is a a fullness of this spirit which we can't lose when we leave this spirit that's not really what i'm thinking about and perhaps someone not that will yet convince me it's got another article to write it's not really what i'm preaching on this evening but i find this little last when i say it do you ask for the anointing of the holy ghost as you once did when you go to speak to others or do you go out in your own strength do you go on your knees even if it's only the knees of your soul in the morning before you go to your west and ask that you might be filled with all the fullness of god so that your life will radiate christ to others do you are you used to do it why are you not doing it now and they're not doing it what are you doing you're neglecting the work of the holy ghost the work of god in your heart and soul and my friend it must be grieving to him and if it's grieving to him and he's taking away the fullness he's taking away the cutting edge of your life he's taking away the peace that he ministers from the blood of christ and he's taking away the joy and you're beginning to live as though you didn't have all the riches of glory in the bank which is christ himself but they're all there my friend and they're as foolish as everywhere and you know i think too that we grieve the holy spirit when we deny his work in our soul and how often and i want to say this very carefully how often out of a sense of false humility people in the free church deny the work of the spirit within and they'll say oh yes i hope so they have no business making the profession they make if they only hope they've been converted [31:51] and very often the depreciation with which they speak of themselves there's no humility at all but an invested pride the kind of humility that's proud of itself sometimes i have tested it because i see them myself i see it in others and i've tested it and when our person has mourned about how they feel they will never have any work of god during the shows at all of death i just say to them yes i thought that about you something myself you should see the look in the face then the humility goes deny would you ever deny the work of the lord jesus christ the outward work why deny the inward work that has changed and transformed your life yes i know there are times when that life ebbs away down and you wonder if it's there at all yes i know just as much as these people do about unworthiness and of course unworthiness is something that the most saintly men have felt and their unworthiness was not a sham it was real when you go to the scriptures and you get men like jacob confessing their sin and their vileness before god when you get him a holy man like david falling into sin and seeing in his soul the vile corruption that's there when you get him confessing his sin to god with a broken heart and a broken voice and weeping eyes then of course you realize how god's sins have felt that the power of their unworthiness and my friend you find that not only in day in jacob and david you find it in peter and paul as well paul was not being a hypocrite and it was no false humility that made him say i am the least of all things or that made him say i am the chief of sinners he knew it and he felt the power of it but let me say this you never ever got the apostle paul denying that god had done a saving work in him never once he knew his corruption and he knew his feelings and he knew his sin as a christian believer but he said this i know whom i believe and i am persuaded that he is able to keep that which i have committed unto him against that day for a savior paul knew one who's going to save this mass of corruption this mass of contradiction that one day feels so holy and the next day knows it's so vile my friend that's the savior you've got if you've got jesus as well jesus is not saving good people ideal people jesus is saving sinners and he's saving them in the fallen world of which they're apart let me say this too a consciousness of personal unworthiness this is not a sign that god has not worked but it is a sign that god has worked why are there unconverted people in this church this evening because they have never felt their sin before a holy god why can young men come into the church and try and close their ears to the gospel

not that they do it in this church but they do it in many why can men and women come week after week and hear the gospel and go on in the road to hell i'll tell you why my friend because the bible tells me they have never felt that they are really sinners lost and unworthy the holy spirit of god has never done that work in them so personal unworthiness is not a sign a sense of personal unworthiness it's not a sign that god has not worked it is a sign that god has worked and if your feeling of personal unworthiness drives you back to the foot of the foot of the cross then my friend go down on your knees and stand the holy ghost for it he's done it again in his mercy and our consciousness of personal unworthy unworthiness is perfectly consistent with the most wonderful hope of eternal glory paul could say oh wretched man that i am but paul could say this too i am persuaded that neither death nor life nor angels nor principalities nor powers nor things present or things to come shall be able to separate me from the love of god which is in christ jesus my lord

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talking to someone through last week about this very thing about how sin works in the in the believers in the christians what difficulties it brings and what failures and how often how frequently we fall and skin our knees as a preacher once said to me the knees of our souls speaking to someone the other day they said to me ah yes we've got to keep our eyes on jesus so we do who helps us to do that our own friends you all my friends only the holy spirit who fixed your eyes on jesus at the beginning the powerful efficacious working of the spirit of god gave you faith to look for faith is the gift of god it is not of yourself who can keep you looking to jesus the same spirit don't deny it's work let me ask you tonight no matter how unworthy or how awful you feel is this not true my christian brother and sister is this not true you have felt the power of your own sin haven't you perhaps you felt the power of your own sin far more dynamically and drastically since your conversion than you ever did before your conversion has there been periods of coldness and backsliding has there been falls ah now god has shown you your need of the sanctifier as well as the saints god has shown you how much you need him let me ask you have you never felt the plague of your heart now i'm not using a word just because other christians use it i'm talking of what i know and feel the power of in my own life have you never felt the plague of your heart that which would make you walk over the blood of christ down into hell
if god would allow it the plague of your heart then my friend you've been shown powerfully your need of christ who could do that but the holy ghost by the word don't say if you felt that don't say that he's never done anything in you have you never felt how sweet how wonderful it is to be at the foot of the ground and to know absolute peace between your own soul and your god creator well my friend don't say that the holy spirit has never done anything in have you never felt unknown the need to go down on your knees and confess your sin to god and ask for repentance that will tell you again have you never had to cry and say to god if you don't save me and told me alone where did it come from from the work of the holy spirit bless and trust of course god has done a work in you god has done a work in you despite the fact that you've stayed so far despite the fact that you've given so much room to sin and iniquity and wickedness so you can change everything for you to be here with God is oh yang i manipulated oh kuliah

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