

Sins Against The Spirit

Is it possible to sin against the Holy Spirit? Many believe that it is possible according to Matthew 12:31-32. In a day when spiritual gifts have been done away (1 Corinthians 13:8-10), an examination of some verses in the New Testament will be very helpful.

Paul warned the Ephesians, "*And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption*" (Ephesians 4:30). In the immediate context (vss. 26-32), Paul condemns speaking against others with bitter and angry words. Thus, by ungodly use of the tongue against others we can "cause pain or grief" to the Spirit. If we use our speech in such a way to cause others grief and offense, we are also doing the same to the Holy Spirit.

A reason is given not to grieve the Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit who has sealed us "*for the day of redemption.*" The seal is a mark of ownership. So long as we walk in the light and keep His words, we are identified as the children of God. The Spirit's presence becomes the constant evidence and guarantee of our salvation as long as we live (Ephesians 1:13-14). We do not have a piece of paper to show that we have an inheritance in heaven, but we have been ourselves sealed with the Holy Spirit showing that we are God's. However, to grieve the Spirit is to help to obliterate the seal.

Today, the Holy Spirit is grieved when Christians tear each other down with their words; i.e., deceit, malice, greed and foul language. The Spirit is concerned about the use of our tongues today, instead of giving us the gift of speaking in tongues. So the next time you are tempted to lie or hate, reflect on the grief you will bring, not only to yourself, but also to "*the Holy Spirit of God.*" Certainly, such thoughts should stifle your tongue when it would lash out in anger.

The Thessalonians were told, "*Do not quench the Spirit*" (1 Thessalonians 5:19). Thayer defines "*quench*" as: "Metaphorically to quench i.e. to suppress, stifle; ... divine influence, 1 Thessalonians 5:19 ..." The same word is used in Ephesians 6:16 concerning quenching all the fiery darts of the wicked one. Fire may be put out by water or by robbing it of fuel supply by covering it with an incombustible material. There is an allusion to fire on an altar, which was to be kept constantly burning. The descent of the Spirit at Pentecost was in the form of cloven tongues like as of fire (Acts 2:3). The Spirit in this text is considered as a flame which may be extinguished (Matthew 3:1).

Miracles and other gifts were used to confirm the word, and to establish brethren in the faith. In the first days of the church, different gifts of the Spirit were given by the laying on of the apostles' hands. Some may have become unconcerned about their use (2 Timothy 1:6). Some of them were trying to put out the fire of the Holy Spirit, and were growing indifferent toward the work of Christians as taught by the Holy Spirit (1 Thessalonians 5:17-19).

This passage is often thrown in the face of those who contend that the gifts of the Holy Spirit have ceased. Although it was true that the Holy Spirit could be quenched by the rejection of the miracles by the Spirit, there are other ways one can quench the Spirit. When we reject the Spirit-given word, we are quenching the effect of the Holy Spirit upon us. Today, the Spirit uses the word of God to make His will known to us. "*Now the Spirit speaketh expressly*" (1 Timothy 4:1). If we fail to read and study the word of God, we quench His effect upon us.

The Hebrew Christians were tempted to return to Judaism. This letter was written with many reasons not to reject Him. "*Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?*" (Hebrews 10:29). Vine defines "*despite*" as "to treat insultingly ... suggests insulting disdain of one who considers himself superior." God, through the Holy Spirit, had given such wonderful blessings but these Christians were willing to reject Him.

By the Holy Spirit, the world is convinced of sin, righteousness and judgment (John 16:8); and by Him, His saints are comforted and their infirmities are helped (John 7:39; Romans 8:26). By this Spirit we have access to God and we are given assurance of His presence and love. The backslider is guilty of rejecting the very agent by whom the grace of God is communicated to man. All that the backslider has to look forward to is the certainty of a fearful judgment at the hands of God. In rejecting Christ one has despised God's Son, regarded the Son's sacrifice of blood as nothing more than ordinary blood and has greatly insulted the Holy Spirit. To sin against God is to sin against God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit!

Adapted From Daniel R. Vess