

**THE IMPERFECT PRAYER LIFE AND THE DESIRE FOR COMMUNION WITH GOD - Part eight - Sunday, November 17th 2024 - 5:30 p.m.
Pastor Don Horban, Cedarview Community Church, Newmarket, ON**

GRIEVING THE HOLY SPIRIT - Yes, It Happens In Christians

It is hard to exaggerate the importance of the presence and influence of the Holy Spirit in the Christian's life when the Scriptures are taken at face value. The Scriptures speak of the *desirability* of being filled with the Spirit: **Luke 11:13** - **"If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"**

The clear implication of these words from Jesus is those who are children of the Heavenly Father (Christians) will **"ask"** to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Jesus is speaking to His disciples in these verses. Those words need to be thought through carefully.

The Bible consistently bears witness, not just to the *experience* of being filled with the Spirit, but to the *result* of being filled with the Holy Spirit: **Acts 1:8** - **"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."** It wasn't enough that these disciples had spent *time* with Jesus. And it wasn't enough that they knew the *teaching* of Jesus. They needed the experience of being filled with the Holy Spirit.

Then the Bible calls us to our **duty** to be filled with the Holy Spirit:

Ephesians 5:18 - “**And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit....**” This reminds us to never think of being filled with the Spirit as something **automatic** in the Christian experience. The fact that it’s a duty implies responsibility which can either be carried out or neglected.

It also seems to be a special portfolio of the Holy Spirit to aid the believer in times of **prayer** and **seeking God**. Several Scriptures point to this work:

Romans 8:26-27 - “**Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. [27] And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.**”

Ephesians 6:18 - “**....praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints....**”

Jude 20 - “**But you, beloved, build yourselves up in your most holy faith; pray in the Holy Spirit....**”

These verses draw out the main thrust of today's lesson. The believer has a role to play in walking with the Holy Spirit in this renewing process. It is not an automatic process. God does it, but not in a solo operation. Today we will study how Christians ***grieve the Holy Spirit*** and miss out on His inward help in prayer and power:

1) **WE GRIEVE THE HOLY SPIRIT BY A HYPOCRITICAL LIFESTYLE**

Matthew 6:5-8 - "And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. [6] But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. [7] "And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. [8] Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him."

Matthew 5:8 - "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

Let's understand the meaning of hypocrisy in its New Testament usage. The hypocrite is **not** one who doesn't fully practice what he knows or teaches. **None** of us lives up fully to what he or she knows. The hypocrite is one who **professes** and **pretends** to live on a higher level than he or she in fact does. **This** is the one who grieves the Holy Spirit and invites the judgment of God. It's the **false face** that makes hypocrisy so evil.

Our first passage relates hypocrisy to the issue of **prayer**. The hypocrite is one who prays with an eye to self. He is filled with all the wrong motives. He loves to **appear** religious - **more** religious than he is in fact. He loves to **convince** others that he's devout.

Our second text deals with the **pure in heart**. The pure in heart have no mixture of any false motives in their devotion to God. They want nothing else than to have their whole lives glorify God. Because they live before God and not the applause of others they don't need anybody else to even know about their prayer life. Hypocrites have no time for such private devotion. They get no public and immediate payback from such inward devotion.

Notice **Matthew 6:7** - “And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words.” This is Jesus’ way of saying hypocrisy empties prayer of power and worth. Hypocrisy ***shuts out the work of the Spirit*** very effectively. He only works to glorify Jesus, never self.

2) **WE GRIEVE THE HOLY SPIRIT BY LOVE OF WEALTH AND MATERIAL GOODS**

1 John 2:15 - “Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”

1 Timothy 6:6-10 - “Now there is great gain in godliness with contentment, [7] for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. [8] But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content. [9] But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. [10] For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.”

We need to consider this problem because the Bible specifically states the love of wealth and comfort will **escalate** in the last days - 2 Timothy 3:1-5 - "**But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. [2] For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, [3] heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, [4] treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, [5] having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. Avoid such people.**"

Love of wealth, like hypocrisy, is so damning because good people can be idolatrous without feeling they are sinning against God. Notice, Paul says these "**treacherous**" people will continue with the outward "**appearance of godliness**"(5). In this way people - **religious** people - can dethrone the Holy Spirit without feeling like traitors.

The basic point to remember is we cannot cater to the desires of the flesh and the life of the Spirit at the same time - **Galatians 5:16-17, 24-25** - **“But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. [17] For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do....[24] And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. [25] If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.”**

3) **WE GRIEVE THE HOLY SPIRIT BY NOT FULLY CONFESSING AND FORSAKING OUR SINS**

Proverbs 28:13 - **“Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy.”**

Luke 14:11 - **“For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”**

The Spirit is called the **“Holy”** Spirit. He takes inward purity with blazing seriousness. The Holy Spirit is grieved when we do a partial job and pretend we've done the whole. This can happen in several ways:

- a) ***By confessing sin only in very general terms*** - In this way confession is rushed through in such a manner that the sinner never really feels the weight of his own guilt. ***There is no mourning for sin*** (“Blessed are those who mourn”). We need to be careful that in an attempt to be “***positive***” we don’t rush through the painful part of repentance. This may ***feel*** more comforting for the moment, but it leads to deeper pain and regret. The disease never gets healed.
- b) ***By confessing certain sins while ignoring cherished ones*** - The safe rule is to always deal with the sins about which the Holy Spirit probes your heart. You can be sure it’s the Holy Spirit speaking when He calls you to deal ***first*** with the sins that cost the ***most*** to forsake. This is how the Holy Spirit tests our loyalty right out of the starting gate.
- c) ***By blaming others for their guilt and using their wickedness to justify an unscriptural response on our part***
- This is especially the case when you've been wronged or hurt in a real way and are carrying around a portable case of anger and bitterness. Our own natural sense of ***justice*** keeps us arguing with the Holy Spirit, who insists on pointing out ***our own guilt before God.***

- d) ***By confessing sins that we have no deep intention of turning away from in repentance*** - It's important to search your heart as you confess sins to God. Ask yourself, ***"Do I fully intend to root this thing out of my life right now? Am I already planning deep in my heart to commit the same sin again - and once again ask God for forgiveness? Am I just using the blood of Jesus as convenient rinse for my sinful desires?"*** There is no forgiveness for cherished sins. There is no cleansing for sins I refuse to renounce.