

The Holy Spirit and Spirituality

Grieving and Resisting the Holy Spirit

Lesson #11 for March 18, 2017

Scriptures: Acts 7:51; Hebrews 10:24-25; Ephesians 4:25-5:2; 1 Thessalonians 5:19-22; Mark 3:20-29.

1. The Holy Spirit inspired the writers of the Bible and preserved it for us; He interacts with human beings at a number of different levels:
 - 1) He keeps us alive physically—every beat of the heart and every molecular reaction. (Acts 17:25,28)
 - 2) He woos sinners, encouraging them to become followers of Jesus.
 - 3) He convicts and converts those who respond.
 - 4) He gives spiritual gifts to those who are prepared to receive Him and work to reach out to others.
2. Despite His divine power and might, He will not force Himself upon anyone. Those who are enticed by sin and choose to follow the selfish path of Satan quench the Spirit. If we are determined to go our own selfish ways despite His numerous attempts to reach us in various ways, He will, finally, let us go like He finally had to let Israel go. (Hosea 4:17)
3. Read Matthew 12:31-32; Mark 3:28-29; and Luke 12:10. So, what is the unpardonable sin? What do we mean when we talk about blasphemy against the Holy Spirit? It is through the work of the Holy Spirit and the angels that we are convicted, converted, and attracted to Jesus Christ. There is no other way. If we repeatedly reject this path to holiness, ultimately, we will be left by the Holy Spirit. In this week's lesson, we will talk about grieving, quenching, and resisting the Holy Spirit and how that can become the unpardonable sin.
4. Read Acts 7:51. The longest sermon recorded in the Bible is in Acts 7. Stephen was speaking to the Sanhedrin, and he recognized that they were becoming more and more irritated by his powerful proofs that Jesus was the Messiah. Finally, he realized that they were ready to stone him. Rebelling against God's plan of salvation is a foolish and deadly thing to do. God will never force anyone to do His will. He refuses to violate our freedom.

The earth was dark through misapprehension of God. That the gloomy shadows might be lightened, that the world might be brought back to God, Satan's deceptive power was to be broken. **This could not be done by force. The exercise of force is contrary to the principles of God's government; He desires only the service of love; and love cannot be commanded; it cannot be won by force or authority. Only by love is love awakened.** To know God is to love Him; His character must be manifested in contrast to the character of Satan. This work only one Being in all the universe could do. Only He who knew the height and depth of the love of God could make it known. Upon the world's dark night the Sun of Righteousness must rise, "with healing in His wings." Mal. 4:2.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* 22.1. [Bold type is added.]

5. Why were the members of the Sanhedrin rejecting the appeals of Stephen and the Holy Spirit? It was 3½ years after the crucifixion of Christ; the Sanhedrin had hoped that once He was dead, His followers would gradually fade away. It was very irritating to them to find

that the influence of Jesus Christ was growing instead of waning.

6. Why is it that God so completely respects our personal freedom? Wouldn't it be better if He just used a little pressure on us—violating our freedom a little bit so that maybe He could save a lot more people? Would we give up some freedom for more security? Love is impossible without complete freedom. See the handout entitled *Love* at www.theox.org, filed under Teacher's Guides, then General Topics.
7. If God wanted to violate people's freedom and force them to do His will, He should have done so back when Satan rebelled in heaven. Or, He could have done so by preventing Eve from wandering near the tree of knowledge of good and evil and/or taking the fruit. Or, He could have prevented Satan from even entering the Garden of Eden.
8. Read Hebrews 10:24-25. There are a number of passages in Scripture suggesting that we need to help each other in the community of believers. Why is it there that there are so many different churches, denominations, or other religious groups in our day?
9. How often do we read Scripture, looking for something to support our already-held views as opposed to reading to discover the truth of God's will? It is easy to read the Old Testament and be critical of ancient Israel. But, how would we look if the details of our lives were made public each day?
10. What can we do to help ourselves and others in loving ways? By example! In what sense are we responsible for encouraging love and good works in others?

This love is the evidence of their discipleship. "By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples," said Jesus, "if ye have love one to another." [John 13:35] When men are bound together, not by force or self-interest, but by love, they show the working of an influence that is above every human influence. Where this oneness exists, it is evidence that the image of God is being restored in humanity, that a new principle of life has been implanted. It shows that there is power in the divine nature to withstand the supernatural agencies of evil, and that the grace of God subdues the selfishness inherent in the natural heart.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* 678.1; AG 145.3; *LHU* 298.3; *1MCP* 210.3. [Content in brackets is added.]

11. Read Ephesians 4:30; compare Isaiah 63:9-10. How is it possible to grieve the Holy Spirit? Second Peter 3 and many other passages in Scripture make it clear that God would like to save everyone. But, when we repeatedly reject the Holy Spirit's approaches and offers of help, He will finally and sadly turn away, leaving us to our own choices and the consequences of those choices. The fact that the Holy Spirit can be grieved is proof that He is a personal Being, not just some kind of divine force or influence.
12. Read John 16:8. How does the Holy Spirit clarify in our minds the truth about sin? Do we have a clear understanding of the great controversy and what is involved and the charges that Satan has made against God? All three Members of the Godhead hate sin. They hate it because of what it does to us and to their other children. But, all heaven rejoices when we choose to come back to God and follow His plan for our lives. (Luke 15:7,10)
13. God recognizes the wonderful plans He/They have for us in the future. We can barely begin to understand those plans. (1 Corinthians 2:9) So, it makes the Godhead very sad to see us destroy ourselves.
14. Read Ephesians 4:2-3,15,17,23-31. When we accept the advice of the Holy Spirit, we follow Christ; He becomes our Guide, and we do not follow the customs and foolish ways of the world. Instead, we live a life pleasing to God.

15. Doing any of the evil things mentioned in Ephesians 4:25-31 grieves the Holy Spirit. That means we spurn His sanctifying presence and His life-transforming power because we continue to willfully sin. Please do not make the Holy Spirit sad.
16. What do we gain by lying, being angry, accepting the Devil's temptations, stealing, failing to work, not supporting the poor, using harmful words, or grieving the Holy Spirit? Do we really want to do those things?
17. There are many Christians who believe that God is completely sovereign and way above us so that virtually nothing we can do could affect Him in any way. But, in our discussions last quarter, we determined that God put His Own reputation on the line in the case of Job. We should ask the question: "If God has foreknowledge, is He really putting His reputation on the line?" In fact, He is! That is exactly the point of Satan's accusations. Satan does not believe that God has accurate foreknowledge. God was placing His foreknowledge of Job on the line as recorded in Job 1:1,8 and 2:3. See Job 42:7-8.
18. Did God put His reputation on the line in the case of Jesus Christ?

The value of a soul, who can estimate? Would you know its worth, go to Gethsemane, and there watch with Christ through those hours of anguish, when He sweat as it were great drops of blood. Look upon the Saviour uplifted on the cross. Hear that despairing cry, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Mark 15:34. Look upon the wounded head, the pierced side, the marred feet. **Remember that Christ risked all. For our redemption, heaven itself was imperiled. At the foot of the cross, remembering that for one sinner Christ would have laid down His life, you may estimate the value of a soul.**—Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons* 196.4. [Bold type is added.]
19. What would have happened if Christ had sinned? That would have demonstrated that God's foreknowledge was faulty and that Satan was right in the great controversy. That would have led to a crisis in confidence throughout the universe which could, in fact, have resulted in total destruction of the entire universe. And it probably would have happened very rapidly!
20. By contrast, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, Paul said as recorded in Ephesians 4:25-5:2 things that we should do. We should: 1) Speak the truth in love; 2) Although we may become angry about sin, we must not sin in our anger; 3) We should work with our own hands and use the products of our labor to do good for the needy; 4) We should speak in an edifying manner and impart grace to our hearers; and 5) We should be kind, tenderhearted, and forgiving. How would you like to live in a society like that?
21. Don't we, in fact, believe that Jesus Christ is our Model? If so, shouldn't we be allowing the Holy Spirit to change us so that we become more and more like Him?
22. What happens if our efforts at reaching out to others and what we say about Christians and how they behave do not match our actual behavior? That must certainly grieve the Holy Spirit. Remember that God has waited almost 2000 years since His death on the cross for people to stand up and honor His name and be so faithful to Him that nothing the Devil can do can cause them to give up. When those conditions are met, Jesus can come again.
23. But, there are more than individual issues at stake among church members. Read Ephesians 4:3-4,15-16,32. If we as church members treated our fellow members as Jesus recommended in John 13:35, would other people notice? The church is supposed to be the temple of God. (1 Corinthians 3:16-17; Ephesians 2:19-22) It is supposed to be a

hospital for sinners and not a club for saints. How are people welcomed in your church?

24. It is good to know the teachings of the church. It is good to believe in the three angels' messages. (Revelation 14:6-12) But, how we treat other church members and others in the community may have more impact on them than what we believe.
25. Read 1 Thessalonians 5:19-21 and Ephesians 6:16. What does it mean to resist or quench the Holy Spirit? *Quenching* sometimes is used in reference to putting out a fire. There are two very important things that the Holy Spirit does for us: 1) He reveals to us the truth about sin in the setting of the great controversy; and 2) By revealing to us the truth about Jesus and His ministry, He gives us power to overcome sin if we work with Him. Without the Spirit's help, we do not have the remotest chance of overcoming sin and become like Jesus.
26. Two of the most serious ways in which we can ignore the Holy Spirit and quench His fire in our lives are by ignoring the truths the Bible teaches and despising prophetic utterances. (1 Thessalonians 5:20)
27. This does not mean that we should accept indiscriminately whatever someone teaches from the pulpit. We need to be very discerning listeners, just as the Bereans were in Paul's day. (Acts 17:11; 1 Thessalonians 5:21; 1 John 4:1)
28. As believing Christians we need to walk in the Spirit. (Galatians 5:25) Are we willing to ask the Holy Spirit to guide us in doing so day by day?
29. One of the things we must avoid is twisting the Scriptures by interpreting them in ways that nullify their impact. We are not to twist the Scriptures to try to get them to agree with what we already believe. We are to accept the Scriptures in their most logical meaning, putting together all of Scripture and taking them as the guiding light for our lives.

The Bible with its precious gems of truth was not written for the scholar alone. On the contrary, it was designed for the common people; and the interpretation given by the common people, when aided by the Holy Spirit, accords best with the truth as it is in Jesus. The great truths necessary for salvation are made clear as the noonday, and none will mistake and lose their way except those who follow their own judgment instead of the plainly revealed will of God.—Ellen G. White, *5T* 331.2.

30. Read 1 Thessalonians 4:7-8. How might these words apply to us in our day?
1 Thessalonians 4:7-8 (GNB): ⁷God did not call us to live in immorality, but in holiness. ⁸So then, whoever rejects this teaching is not rejecting a human being, but God, who gives you his Holy Spirit.
31. Read Mark 3:28-29; Luke 12:10; and Matthew 12:31-32. These verses suggest that all sins and blasphemies can be forgiven; but, blasphemy against the Holy Spirit cannot be forgiven. Why is that? What are the implications of that? We need healing. A persistently rebellious attitude toward God and His plan of salvation disqualifies us from being Christians.
32. There has been a great deal of misunderstanding and anguish over the unpardonable sin. In actual fact, if you one is worried about having committed the unpardonable sin, s/he has not yet committed it. In fact, there is no sin that cannot be forgiven. However, there are people who are unwilling to ask for forgiveness and those who are unwilling to accept God's forgiveness and allow God to change their lives. God is forgiveness Personified.

Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, therefore, must be understood as the deliberate and persistent repudiation of Jesus' saving work. It occurs when an individual willfully and obstinately resists the Spirit's testimony to Christ and His salvation and grace.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* for Thursday, March 16.

33. This kind of blasphemy is not a result of a one-time act or indiscretion; it implies persistent unbelief and open hostility toward God.

Those who would not receive Christ were dead in trespasses and sins. As they looked upon the evidences that He presented, by curing disease and making the suffering ones rejoice in health, why did they not yield their unbelief? Because by such an action they would have confessed themselves to be sinners. In the place of receiving the evidence offered them, in the place of recognizing in Christ's works the endowment of heaven, they held right on to their wicked purposes, and said, He performed this wonderful work through the devil.

This was the sin against the Holy Ghost. They had not forgiveness in this world, nor in the world to come.—Ellen G. White, *Loma Linda Messages* 155.8-156.1.

34. When a person is stubbornly and persistently rebellious against God, he:

... is beyond the possibility of forgiveness, not because God is powerless or unwilling to forgive, but because the person is not [willing or] able to recognize his or her sin. Therefore, he or she does not accept forgiveness through Jesus. This attitude, of course, has eternal consequences.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* for Thursday, March 16. [Content in brackets is added.]

35. To avoid even the possibility of a persistent rebellion against God, we should turn immediately to the Holy Spirit and ask for His guidance and obey God's Word.

36. Let us state once more this fact which is so important in our understanding of this lesson: The only person that God cannot forgive is a person who persistently refuses to accept the calling of the Holy Spirit and come to Jesus and ask for forgiveness and guidance.

In this our day men have placed themselves where they are wholly unable to fulfill the conditions of repentance and confession: therefore they cannot find mercy and pardon. **The sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit does not lie in any sudden word or deed; it is the firm, determined resistance of truth and evidence.**—Ellen G. White, *MS 30*, 1890; EGW Comments: *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, 1093.1. [Bold type is added.]

37. Thus, we can say without any hesitation that God can and is willing to forgive anyone who really wants forgiveness no matter how serious his/her sin might have been. There may be times when God allows circumstances to come into our lives that are unpleasant; our natural tendency is to rise in rebellion. Think of the story of Job. In such times, we must learn to turn to the Holy Spirit in confidence that He will guide us.

38. Unfortunately, there are some who see problems in the church and others around them and feel like they need to follow their own interpretation of things, separate themselves from the church, and go their own way. That is clearly a mistake.

2 Peter 1:20-21 (GNB): ²⁰Above all else, however, remember that no one can explain by himself or herself a prophecy in the Scriptures. ²¹For no prophetic message ever came just from human will, but people were under the control of the Holy Spirit as they spoke the message that came from God.

39. How do we become more sensitive to the promptings and appeals of the Holy Spirit? Would that help us to avoid grieving the Holy Spirit?
40. Anyone who has at one time recognized the importance of becoming a church member and the value of the guidance of the Holy Spirit surely could not find it easy to turn around and grieve the Holy Spirit. We cannot say it is impossible because we remember what Lucifer did in the very presence of God in heaven. But, we need to give up our selfishness, that is, our desire to go our own way and do our own will. We must not allow ourselves to fall into Satan's trap and desire to do something new and different—to be our own boss.
41. All three Members of the Godhead—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—are in the salvation business. They want to save us even more than we want to be saved. But, history shows that religious leaders in the past have made terrible mistakes in this respect. So, will we do any better in our day? God is certainly appealing in the strongest possible terms to those living at this time in history to accept the guidance of His Spirit and move forward.
42. There are some people who having been convicted by the Holy Spirit choose to join the church; but, then they look back and recognize that they have done some terrible sin/sins in the past. If they have wronged someone else and there is a possibility to try to correct that wrong, they should do so. If that person turns out to be another church member, a great deal of healing can take place if the person is willing to confess and where possible make restitution. (See Matthew 5:23-24.)
43. In this lesson we have discovered that Ephesians 4 gives a fairly significant list of things that grieve the Holy Spirit; then, it follows with a very good list of things that we should do to cooperate with the Holy Spirit.
44. Do we really want to make the Holy Spirit sad? (Ephesians 4:30) Remember that this is one of the most powerful verses to suggest that the Holy Spirit is an individual Being and not just a force or influence. Forces or influences do not become grieved or saddened. The sins that grieve the Holy Spirit are not individual acts such as adultery, murder, lying, or stealing no matter how terrible they may be.

Here is a simple way to think of the unpardonable sin. It is a state in sin wherein an individual no longer desires or wants salvation, has hardened his or her heart against God through willful rebellion, and is now incapable of responding to the strongest appeals of the Holy Spirit and affirmations of God's love.—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* 148.

45. Surely, none of us would like to find ourselves in that condition. Do you know of someone who seems to be running away from God as fast as s/he can? Could you help that person turn around and come back to God? What could you do?

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