

Sins Against the Holy Spirit

Several weeks ago we began this series of messages concerning the Holy Spirit. Remember that the Holy Spirit is a person. Jesus never referred to the H.S. as “it” but always spoke of “He” and “Him.” He is not a force or a thing but a person. The Bible ascribes to Him all the actions we would expect of a real person.¹

He speaks: Rev. 2:7; Acts 13:2. He intercedes: Rom. 8:26. He testifies: John 15:26. He leads: Rom. 8:14; Acts 8:29. He commands: Acts 16:6-7. He guides: John 16:13. He appoints: Acts 20:28.

These are the acts of a person who loves us because He acts for our best and eternal interests. The HS is Jesus with us still reaching out in godly love to make us whole. To be whole would mean for us to love Him the way He loves us. This isn’t a mushy, romantic love ... it is a love that guides, draws boundaries, and even lets us suffer the consequences of our mistakes and disobedience. His is a love like that of the best parent who wants his/her child to grow to responsible maturity while continuing a loving relationship.

Jesus said, *If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching*, John 14:23. God has willed for each of us to live a life of righteousness, obeying our Savior’s commands, to follow a plan and purpose He has designed for us, and He expects to see us in heaven. Do you find this as challenging as I do? It’s so much easier to just go through life following my own desires. Living as a genuine disciple of Jesus is really hard. Jesus knew this and that’s why He sent the HS. But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you, John 14:26. The Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness and empowers us to obey and follow what Jesus has shown us. Additionally, He gives spiritual gifts to us for the benefit of the Church and He improves our character by growing the fruit of His Spirit in us, making us better persons fit for God’s kingdom.

Yet, He is not to be taken for granted nor can He be manipulated. We have a responsibility to consciously follow the guidance of the HS when we call on Him, even if it does not bring our immediate comfort and convenience. Let us not be stubborn and unheeding of the HS’s work in our lives. I noted in the first of these messages that the HS can be lied to. He can be insulted. He can be grieved. He can be blasphemed. Let’s look at each of these offenses (if you will) in turn.

A. He can be lied to: Acts 5:3-4. In Acts chapter 5 we have this rather strange story of Ananias and Safira. Here’s the background: many people were getting saved and selling their possessions and bringing all of the proceeds to help those in need and to help support the Apostles who were active in spreading the news about Jesus. ... *they shared everything they had*. A couple in the church named Ananias and Safira sold some land and held back part of the money for themselves, but acted like they were sharing everything they had. Peter said this- *Why has Satan made you keep back some of the money from the sale of the property? Why have you lied to the Holy Spirit?*

The fact they held some back wasn’t a problem, but they lied to the church about it in an effort to make themselves look more generous than they were. Again Peter said: *You have not lied to men but to God*” and then to the wife, “*How could you agree to test the Spirit of God?* That is, how could she try to use the HS to cover their deceit? They both dropped dead – we don’t know whether this was the direct action of the HS or it was from their own fear, knowing that they had lied directly to God.

B. He can be insulted: Heb. 10:29 - *If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God. Anyone who rejected the law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much more*

severely do you think someone deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified them, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace?

So, if we know that we have been saved from our sin by the grace of Jesus, and the HS has come into our lives to empower us to resist temptation, yet we deliberately choose to sin, isn't that an insult to the HS and His power to work goodness in our lives? Yes, we often sin unknowingly, but think of the times we've sinned when we were well aware of the transgression we were committing. This is a warning not to do that!

C. He can be grieved: Eph. 4:30 – “*And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.*” This is similar to insulting. Paul says these words in the context of exhortation to church members and how they relate to one another, then to those outside the church. We don't always have perfectly harmonious relationships with everyone and sometimes it's because so many are preventing the fruit of the Spirit from taking root in their lives. There is hardly a Christian who has ever lived who hasn't allowed some weeds of the unredeemed life to take hold in their lives. The HS reveals to believers the sin that lingers in our lives after we've received Christ as Savior. If we refuse to confess it and repent and keep on sinning in that way, we are grieving the HS who desires to free us from such sin.

“If the Spirit of God detects anything in you that is wrong, He doesn't ask you to make it right; He only asks you to accept the light of truth, and then He will make it right. A child of the light will confess sin instantly and stand completely open before God. But a child of the darkness will say, “Oh, I can explain that.”² Darkness is full of excuses and rationalizations.

“Am I set on my own way for God? We are never free from this snare until we are brought into the experience of the baptism of the Holy Ghost and fire. Obstinate and self-will will always stab Jesus Christ. It may hurt no one else, but it wounds His Spirit.”³

If we continue to wound His Spirit until we have no sense of it at all, we risk entering into the unforgiveable sin.

D. He can be blasphemed: Matt. 12:31-32 – *And so I tell you, every kind of sin and slander can be forgiven, but blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven.* Yikes! This sounds scary! Well yes, it is something to be warned against, for sure.

Here's the context: in Matthew “... they brought him a demon-possessed man who was blind and mute, and Jesus healed him, so that he could both talk and see.” Then the Pharisees accused him of casting out demons with demonic power. In Mark (3:29) Jesus had been healing people and driving out evil spirits, then he gave authority to twelve men to preach and drive out demons. He entered a house and a crowd gathered round. His family thought he was crazy and wanted to take him home. The teachers of the law came and said He was possessed by the prince of demons. In Luke Jesus warns against the “yeast of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy” then talks about denying Him and then His warning about blaspheming the HS.

The dictionary says blasphemy is to speak ill of or mock the work, the words, or the character of a deity. The Pharisees were teachers of the faith; they had memorized huge portions of the Bible. Of all people they should be able to recognize the Messiah. Yet, they questioned Jesus' ability to perform miracles by His own power. They constantly questioned His teaching. They accused Him of working for the devil and using satanic power to accomplish his work on earth. In all they questioned Jesus' deity and authority.

Because they were so sure that they knew better than anyone what Scripture said about the Messiah and God's work they couldn't recognize who Jesus really was. His miracles, His word, even His parables spoke to who He was. The Pharisees should have said to themselves: “Whoa, this is the promised Messiah!” What makes blasphemy evil is that it resists the Holy Spirit so that Jesus cannot be revealed for who He is. The Pharisees' hearts were hardened against Him.

That was the 1st century, what about now? If we turn our backs on the voice of the Holy Spirit we begin to silence His convictions and eventually we cannot hear His convicting power. This effectively blocks the working of God in our lives because we have reached a point where we are unable to respond to the promptings of the Holy Spirit.

Consider this: Imagine you are tired of the Holy Spirit convicting you of a particular pet sin. You want to remove His promptings even though the voice is warning you of danger and lovingly trying to show you the right path. So, what do you do? You begin building a metaphorical brick wall to block your conviction. Each brick in the wall represents a singular time you reject the conviction of the Holy Spirit. As you continue to reject the Holy Spirit, the "voice" you hear gets softer and softer. You become more and more confident in your current pathway of life. Eventually, as you lay more and more bricks down you cannot hear the Holy Spirit anymore, thus effectively cutting off your way of repentance and therefore salvation.

It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age and who have fallen[a] away, to be brought back to repentance. To their loss they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace.

If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God. Hebrews 10:26-31.

The unforgivable sin is resisting the Holy Spirit's call to surrender to Jesus and to cast your hope and faith upon Him. It is deliberately turning your back on the saving Work of the Holy Spirit in your life. It's having a heart hardened toward God. It is reaching the point where you cannot recognize your own sin so that it cannot be confessed and repented of and therefore cannot be forgiven. William Tyndale [English scholar and Reformation leader] said, "Sin against the Holy Ghost is despising of the gospel and his working. Where that attitude has made its home, there is no remedy of sin: for it fights against faith, which is the forgiveness of sin. If that rebellion be put away, faith may enter in, and all sins depart."

If you are worried that you have committed this sin - that's a pretty good indication you haven't, because you still feel the convicting power of the Holy Spirit working within you

Conclusion

These verses from the Bible, ones concerning grieving, lying, insulting, and blaspheming the HS, are not verses most of us care to dwell on. We don't often hear them read in church, much less preached on. Yet here they are, right in our own Bibles! These few phrases offer us wisdom and warning. Though we may have repented of our sin when we first confessed Christ as our Savior, the sin nature is still in us. Truly Jesus is the bearer of God's grace, who loves us and anyone, even when we were not lovable. He brings forgiveness and healing – healing from sin. Jesus is also the One who calls us to repentance and discipleship. Claiming that His love rescues everyone - including unrepentant sinners -simply because they are created in the image of God, is to claim cheap grace devoid of repentance or amendment of life. It would be love without the cross and therefore simply untrue. These verses remind us that His love was costly and that our freedom from sin was bought at a price.

Do not hesitate to ask the HS into your life. Ask Him to walk with you so that you may walk with Him. Ask Him to reveal to you where you are still resisting His presence. When you recognize the sin, admit it and ask Him to take it away from you. Living by the Spirit will make us attractive to some, and repellent to others. Yet God desires and intends for us to live by the Spirit.

HS Prayer

Praise to you HS for the work of sanctification you are always doing in our lives. You convict us of sin and motivate us to repent. You work to crucify the sinful nature and inspire

us to live aright. You reveal to each of us the truth and help us to be set apart for God. And when we fail, You HS help us to fail forward in God's plan. Let us always speak truth about You. Come HS, walk with us that we may walk with you. Amen.

Sermon Take Away

- 1) The unforgivable sin is deliberately turning your back on the saving work of the Holy Spirit in your life.**
- 2) What makes blasphemy evil is that it resists the Holy Spirit so that Jesus cannot be revealed for who He is.**
- 3) The HS reveals to believers the sin that lingers in our lives after we've received Christ as Savior.**
- 4) The Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness and empowers us to obey and follow what Jesus has shown us.**

¹ Billy Graham, *The Holy Spirit, Activating God's Power in Your Life*, (1988, Thomas Nelson, Nashville, TN), 2-4. The list which follows is from Billy Graham.

² Oswald Chambers, *My Utmost For His Highest*

³ Oswald Chambers *My Utmost For His Highest*, Jan. 28.