

Spirit-Filled Life: Hindrances and Consequences

Sin Grieves the Person of the Spirit

Ephesians 4:30

Known sin in the life of a believer grieves, pains, and offends the heart of the Holy Spirit of God. The Spirit is holy and abhors sin. In the interest of God's glory and His purpose to indwell us, He longs to control or empower us for God's service, and to transform us into the character of Christ. When He cannot, He is grieved because He is offended by the sin, particularly by the sins of self-reliance and rebellion which hinder His purpose in indwelling us.

Sin Quenches the Power of the Spirit

1 Thessalonians 5:19

Since the Holy Spirit is sometimes likened to fire, Paul used it figuratively in the sense of stifle, resist, or suppress in relation to the ministry of the Spirit.

The command comes as part of a series of exhortations which end Paul's message to the Thessalonians. The epistle praises the Thessalonians for their spiritual walk and witness (1:2-9), but it also challenges them to continue to live obediently, orderly, and in harmony with one another and with those in leadership.

Verse 20 warns against despising prophetic utterances which entailed direct revelation from God (1 Corinthians 14:29-32). The primary function of the prophet was to speak forth God's revelation in a day when God's Word was not yet complete as it is today. To despise prophetic utterances is the same as despising or treating God's Word with contempt by resisting or refusing to obey it. To refuse to obey God's Word is to walk independently according to the flesh; it is to think and act as though one can guide his own life.

To quench the Spirit, then, is to act consciously and willfully against God's written word, to deliberately disobey a known command of Scripture, and to do so in such a way that the promptings of the Holy Spirit are silenced in the conscience of the disobeying believer.

The Difference between Grieving and Quenching the Spirit

In grieving the stress is on the person of the Spirit who, being Holy, is pained and offended by known sin in the life of any believer. Grieving brings out the concept of fellowship and focuses our attention on what sin does to that fellowship with the Lord and the Spirit. Though a believer's relationship as a child of God remains secure, fellowship is broken.

Grieving the Spirit points to the need of readjustment to the Spirit or restoration to fellowship through confession of all known sin. Grieving occurs because of sin, because of disobedience.

In quenching the Spirit, the stress is on resisting the enabling ministry of the Spirit who longs to enable and lead believers in obedience to God's will. Quenching is directly related to yieldedness or the dedication of our lives to God.

The believer simply will not experience the control of the Spirit without this yieldedness on a day-by-day, moment-by-moment basis. The unyielded person is the person who thinks he can run his own life, who believes his way is best, and who therefore is trusting in his own ability and wisdom.

Consequences of Carnality

1 Corinthians 3:3

The "world" may be defined as that strong and rebellious disposition in people to operate out of their own human resources to meet their needs and wants, the things they perceive they must have for security, satisfaction, and significance. Thus, to be worldly means to adapt our lives to the worldly way of life, to use worldly resources or weapons to manipulate and handle life rather than the spiritual resources given to us by God such as the indwelling Spirit, the Word, and prayer.

Scripture is full of warnings concerning the disastrous consequences of carnality, the pursuit of life apart from faith in God, living independently of His direction and power, or pursuing our own way.

1. Loss of Fellowship. 1 John 1:5-7. When the Spirit is grieved and quenched, we are hindered in prayer (Psalms 66:18), in witnessing (Acts 1:8), in Bible study (1 Corinthians 2:10-16), i.e., in all the ministries of the Holy Spirit in the lives of believers. To trust in one's self is to fail to trust in the Spirit.

2. Dissipation of Resources. When believers are controlled by the flesh, another consequence is dissipation or wastefulness of their spiritual, mental, and physical resources (Ephesians 5:18). Included in this are the works of the flesh with their awful destructive consequences to health, integrity, human relationships, and society.

3. Divine Discipline. Because God is our Father, carnality will eventually result in divine discipline (Hebrews 12:5-11).

Questions:

Recall a time when you think you grieved or quenched the Holy Spirit. What happened?

Which consequence of not living by the Spirit are you most concerned about? Why?