

Pleasing the Holy Spirit Part 1

Resisting, Grieving, and Quenching: The Unbeliever's Resistance and the Believer's Relational Response

1. Brief recap from last meeting

In our recent studies we have been pressing deeper into **intimacy with Christ** through abiding in Him by being intentional with our relationship with Christ, living in the Spirit, walking with the Spirit, and keeping in step with the Spirit.

At the heart of our last study was this powerful insight from John Wesley on Galatians 5:25:

"If we live by the Spirit — If we are indeed raised from the dead, and are alive to God, by the operation of His Spirit. Let us walk by the Spirit — Let us follow his guidance, in all our tempers, thoughts, words, and actions." (on Gal. 5:25) – To that I would simply add: let us be intentional about this.

We also saw a clear pattern emerge across the previous studies:

Humility → Surrender → Cleansing → Repentance → Humility → Drawing Near

...and how this pathway leads us into **living by the Spirit** (where Christ is now our new identity and the Holy Spirit is our power source) and **walking / keeping in step with the Spirit** (daily obedience and moment-by-moment reliance on the Holy Spirit's guidance).

In this study we are now going to dive into full context of what it means to resist, grieve and quench the Holy Spirit which will lead us into our next study which will be Pleasing the Holy Spirit and how **the Holy Spirit is the One who helps us work out what God is working in us** — that is, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight. **Note:** I wanted to teach on pleasing the Holy Spirit which is pleasing to the Lord, but I had to teach on resisting, grieving and quenching the Holy Spirit first for full context.

2. Resisting the Holy Spirit

a) What the Bible has to say about resisting the Holy Spirit?

- **Resisting the Holy Spirit** (a message to unbelievers)
 - **Acts 7:51** is the only place in all of Scripture that explicitly speaks of "resisting the Holy Spirit." Let's dig into this, I went on a deep dive into this, very fascinating.
- b) **Acts 7:51 (NKJV)** *"You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! **You always resist the Holy Spirit**; as your fathers did, so do you."* Full context **Acts 7:51-53**.
- c) So, let's set the scene for this passage:
 - Stephen (a believer and filled with the Holy Spirit) is speaking to the (Sanhedrin).
 - The audience (Sanhedrin) = unsaved, non-believers.

- d) The "Sanhedrin" was the highest Jewish governing body in Jerusalem during the time of Jesus and the early church (roughly 200 BC – AD 70). It functioned as a combination of Supreme Court, Senate, and religious authority for the Jewish people under Roman occupation.
- e) At this early point in church history (Acts 7 is roughly AD 31–34), these leaders (Sanhedrin) had rejected Jesus as the Messiah. They orchestrated His crucifixion, persecuted the apostles, and are now about to stone Stephen. They are actively opposing the gospel and the work of the Holy Spirit. Stephen's accusation ("you always resist the Holy Spirit") is aimed squarely at unbelievers who are hardening their hearts against God's gracious drawing and conviction.
- f) The Sanhedrin was made up of Sadducees, Pharisees, Elders and Scribes. Their representation in the Sanhedrin in order of power was:
- **Sadducees** - Very strong — they controlled the High Priesthood and the majority of seats.
 - **Pharisees** - Significant but minority — they had real influence but were outnumbered by Sadducees.
 - **Elders & Scribes** – mixed and less power than the Sadducees and Pharisees.
- g) I want to tie in "*Him who called us*" in **2 Pet. 1:3** and the Father's universal drawing mentioned in **Jn. 6:44** to this story of Stephen telling the Sanhedrin that they were "resisting the Holy Spirit". This is a bit long but crucial to this passage:

In **2 Pet. 1:3** the apostle writes that God has given us everything we need for life and godliness "*through true and personal knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence*".

This "calling" is not a secret decree limited to a few "elect" people. It is the same gracious drawing Jesus described in **Jn. 6:44**: "*No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him.*"

The Father calls all people to the Son through the gospel and the convicting work of the Holy Spirit. This is God's grace on display: an open invitation extended to every human being, not just a select few.

All of humanity has free will to respond: we can believe in Christ and receive salvation and eternal life, or we can reject Him and receive eternal death. The Sanhedrin in Acts 7 is a tragic example: these religious leaders were actively resisting the Holy Spirit and rejecting the very Christ to whom the Father was drawing them. * Yes, the Father was drawing even the Sadducees, Pharisees, Elders & scribes to the Son as well.

Thus, when Peter speaks of "*Him who called us*," he is referring to believers who have already responded to the Father's universal call. The same God who draws every person by His glory and excellence **now works inside every believer who has said "yes"** — empowering them to please Him (**Heb. 13:21; Phil. 2:13**) through the Holy Spirit.

- h) **The Sanhedrin:** The Sadducees, Pharisees, Elders & Scribes were all united in their opposition to Jesus, the Holy Spirit and the early church. Stephen's accusation of them being a stiff-necked people and resisting the Holy Spirit was aimed at this mixed but hardened group of Jewish leaders who had seen God's work but chose to reject it. To put it simply, the Sanhedrin were unbelievers that were resisting the Holy Spirit.
- i) **This led me to ask the question:** *"are there any scriptures that talk about the believer resisting the Holy Spirit?"* The answer is no. **Acts 7:51** is the only scripture in the entire Bible that talks about "resisting the Holy Spirit" which was specifically about the unbelieving Sanhedrin.
- j) This is where we get into **grieving** and **quenching** the Holy Spirit. For those who are already saved and indwelt by the Holy Spirit, Scripture uses different (but very related) language which is "grieving" and "quenching" the Holy Spirit.

3. Grieving and Quenching the Holy Spirit (a message to believers)

- a) **Grieve: Eph. 4:30 (ESV)** *"And do not **grieve the Holy Spirit of God**, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption."*
 - Written directly to believers (the church at Ephesus).
 - "Grieve" means to cause sorrow, pain, or distress.
 - The context (Eph. 4:25–32) lists specific sins believers are to put away: lying, anger, stealing, corrupt talk, bitterness, slander, etc. When we live like the old self instead of the new, we make the Holy Spirit sorrowful.
 - This is the closest parallel to "resisting" for a believer: it is relational resistance that damages fellowship, even though the Spirit remains sealed in us.
- b) **Quench: 1 Thes. 5:16-22 (ESV)** *"16 Rejoice always, 17 pray without ceasing, 18 in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. 19 **Do not quench the Spirit**. 20 Do not despise prophecies. 21 Test all things; hold fast what is good. 22 Abstain from every form of evil."*
 - Also written to believers in the church at Thessalonica.
 - "Quench" means to extinguish or stifle a fire. The Holy Spirit is pictured as a flame burning within us.
 - Right in context: "Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophecies, but test everything; hold fast what is good" (vv. 19-21). It includes **rejecting or ignoring the Spirit's promptings**, gifts, or leading (including through Scripture and godly counsel).
 - Other ways believers quench the Spirit: neglecting spiritual gifts (1 Tim.4:14; 2 Tim. 1:6), refusing to walk by the Spirit (Gal.5:16-25), or choosing the desires of the flesh over the fruit of the Spirit.

Summary:

Unbelievers can resist the Holy Spirit's drawing and convicting work (Jn. 6:44; Acts 7:51; 2 Pet. 1:3) — and that resistance can be final if they never believe.

Believers (those who have already responded to the call) cannot “resist” in the sense of rejecting salvation again, because through faith in Christ, they are sealed by the Spirit (Eph. 1:13-14; 4:30). However, they can grieve or quench Him through ongoing disobedience or neglect. This hinders the Holy Spirit from helping believers “work out what God is working in us” (Phil. 2:12-13; Heb. 13:21) — the very topic of our next study.

Our next study will be:

Pleasing the Holy Spirit: How He Helps Us Work Out What God Is Working in Us

Hebrews 13:20-21 – “God of peace... working in us that which is pleasing in his sight”

We “get to” please Him, because we are already pleasing to Him.

The same God who works in us (Phil. 2:13; Heb. 13:21) does so through the Holy Spirit.

Homework:

So in this study we learned all about resisting, grieving and quenching the Holy Spirit, the next study will be all about **pleasing the Holy Spirit even though God is already pleased with us.**

Passages to dive into through the summer for this upcoming study: Living to gratify, please, or sow toward the Holy Spirit: **Rom. 8:5-8; Gal. 5:16, 6:8; Eph. 5:10; Col. 1:10 (NLT, ESV, AMPC).**

“Seek those things which gratify the [Holy] Spirit” can be found in **Rom 8:5 AMPC**. This is striking because it shifts the focus from just avoiding the negative (like **grieving** and **quenching** the Holy Spirit to **actively pursuing what brings Him pleasure and satisfaction**. Here are key scriptures that carry the same idea of living to gratify, please, or sow toward the Holy Spirit:

Gal. 6:8: “...those who live to please the Spirit will harvest everlasting life from the Spirit.”

Gal. 5:16: “Let the Holy Spirit guide your lives...”

Rom. 8:5: “...those who are controlled by the Holy Spirit think about things that please the Spirit.”

Rom. 8:8: “...those who are living the life of the flesh cannot please or satisfy God...”

Eph. 5:10: “try to learn what is pleasing to the Lord...”

Col. 1:10: “...fully pleasing to him...”

These verses show that **“gratifying/pleasing the Holy Spirit”** looks like setting your mind on spiritual things, walking in step with Him, and choosing kindness, forgiveness, and dependence instead of bitterness or self-centeredness. **Yielding to the Holy Spirit is pleasing to the Lord.**

Rom. 8:5 in the AMPC highlights a profound contrast in mindset and pursuit. It ties directly into the broader New Covenant theme of pleasing the Lord (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) not as a works-based obligation, but as the natural overflow of being united with Christ—abiding in Him, walking by the Spirit, and responding to grace with love and gratitude.

2 Corinthians 5:9: “We make it our aim to please him.”

Colossians 1:10: “walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him.”

Ephesians 5:10: “try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord.”

Hebrews 13:21: God works in us “that which is pleasing in his sight.”

And many others (**Rom. 12:1-2; 14:17-18; 1 Jn. 3:22**, etc.).