

The work of and the Relationship with the Holy Spirit Part 2

The Holy Spirit at Work in the Unbeliever and the Believer: Resisting and Ignoring the Holy Spirit Hinders the Work of the Holy Spirit

1. Brief recap from last meeting

In our last meeting we saw that “resisting the Holy Spirit” is not a general phrase used throughout Scripture. **Acts 7:51** is the only place the Bible uses the exact words “resists the Holy Spirit.” Stephen spoke those words to the Sanhedrin — unsaved religious leaders (Sadducees, Pharisees, elders, and scribes) whom he called stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears: *“You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you.”* Our deep dive into that speech showed that Stephen was describing unbelievers hardening themselves against the Father’s drawing and the Spirit’s conviction.

We also talked about how the Scriptures that warn us not to **grieve** or **quench the Holy Spirit** were given as a message to believers. **Unbelievers (without the Holy Spirit) can resist – Believers (with the Holy Spirit) can grieve, quench or ignore.**

We then discussed whether Scripture ever specifically says a believer resists the Holy Spirit. It does not. Those who have already believed and been sealed by the Holy Spirit (**Eph. 1:13–14; 4:30**) are warned in different, though related, language: do not grieve the Spirit (**Eph. 4:30**) and do not quench the Spirit (**1 Thess. 5:19**). **Ignoring His leading** is how that happens in practice, which is a lot like resisting the Holy Spirit. We will dive more into this concept in this study.

2. The Spirit’s work before and after salvation - (* See homework for Jn. 16:8-11.)

- a) Let’s dive into **Jn. 6:44; Jn. 16:8-11 (ESV)** and see how they are connected - These two passages describe God’s work toward the unbeliever: the Father draws, and the Holy Spirit is the agent of that drawing. In **Acts 7:51** Stephen was telling the unbelieving Jewish leaders that they were resisting the Holy Spirit. This is pointing to the fact that the Holy Spirit was and is still involved in the Father drawing people towards the Son, but they were resisting that drawing. They were resisting the Holy Spirit who was at work in the drawing by *“convicting the world of the sin of not believing in the Son”*.
- b) We will see that conviction and condemnation for the unbeliever are closely related and **Rom. 8:1 (ESV)** is the good news for the believer which we will get to shortly.
- c) **Drawn to the Son, then walking with the Spirit** - **Jn. 6:44** and **Jn. 16:8–9** describe the Father’s drawing through the Spirit’s conviction of the sin of unbelief. That conviction is how people are drawn to the Son. **Drawing is not yet salvation**; it brings a person to the point of hearing the gospel. Then, by faith, they receive the Son and are saved (**Jn. 1:12; 3:16; 6:47; Rom. 10:9 ESV**). At that same moment the Holy Spirit — who is the Spirit of Christ — comes to dwell in them. At salvation a person receives **the person of the Holy Spirit**. That is how “Christ in you” becomes true of the believer (**Jn. 3:5–8; Jn. 7:38–39; Gal. 3:2; Eph. 1:13–14; Col. 1:27**).

* One can also reject through unbelief and not receive. (free will)

d) The Spirit who first convicted us of not believing now lives in a believer as Helper (**Jn. 14:16–17, 26; 16:7, 13**). A believer is not standing in court waiting to hear if God will accept them. That verdict is already in. He still deals with remaining sin: He opens our eyes to it, makes it bitter, makes Christ sweet, pulls our desires toward God, and walks us into repentance. **Before salvation** He convicts of unbelief. **After salvation** He indwells the believer and helps us fight the flesh. There is still a check in your spirit — an awareness of sin — but it is no longer the conviction bound up with condemnation (**Rom. 8:1**). The Spirit now helps us refuse the flesh and walk in what pleases the Lord (**Gal. 5:16–17; Rom. 8:13**).

3. The unbelievers “Resisting” in Acts 7:51, and what believers can still refuse or ignore

a) Scripture uses the exact words “resist the Holy Spirit” only in **Acts 7:51**. Stephen said that to unbelieving leaders who were hardening themselves against the Father’s drawing and the Spirit’s conviction. That is not the Bible’s language for those already sealed by the Spirit (**Eph. 1:13**). *At salvation a believer is sealed with the Holy Spirit.*

b) What Scripture does say to believers is: do not grieve the Spirit (**Eph. 4:30**) and do not quench the Spirit (**1 Thess. 5:19**). Grieving and quenching do not undo the seal. They hinder fellowship and the Spirit’s work in us.

c) That is where free will still matters after salvation. We can ignore His influence. We can push past the check in our spirit when we want to satisfy the flesh. We can forget who we are in Christ and refuse the Spirit’s help to resist temptation. That is not **Acts 7:51** all over again — we are not unsaved people slamming the door on the gospel — but it is a real refusal of His present help over the flesh. **Ignoring Him functions like resisting His influence in the life He already indwells.**

d) Do not grieve, quench, or ignore Him. The Spirit in you can be treated as Lord or treated as if He were not there.

- Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed (**Eph. 4:30**).
- Do not quench the Spirit (**1 Thess. 5:19**).
- Walk by the Spirit; keep in step with the Spirit (**Gal. 5:16, 25**).
- Do not neglect the Helper already in you (**Eph. 4:30; 1 Thess. 5:19**).

e) You have full access to the Helper. Access is not the same as attention. A believer can have the Spirit and still walk in the flesh, live in fear, or stay silent. **The problem is never that He is only partly present. The problem is ignoring the One who is fully present.** Ignoring the Holy Spirit’s help, guidance, or promptings can lead to giving in to the flesh, dulling spiritual sensitivity, weakening fruitfulness, and hardening the heart. We should aim toward being “responsive to and controlled and guided by the Spirit” **Gal. 5:16-17 (NASB/AMPC)**.

f) The contrast looks like this:

- **Before faith**: The Spirit convicts of unbelief so that we might come to the Son.
- **After faith**: The Spirit lives in us to wage war against the flesh (**Gal. 5:16–17**), help us put to death the deeds of the body (**Rom. 8:13**), helps us in our weakness (**Rom. 8:26–27**), Sheds the love of God abroad into our hearts (**Rom. 5:5**) and reminds us what the Word says (**Jn. 14:26**). When we ignore that help, we are not losing the Spirit. **We are choosing the flesh over the Helper who is already ours.**

- g) So, the study question is not, “*Can a sealed believer become an **Acts 7:51** resistor of the gospel?*” It is, “*Will we listen when the Spirit checks us, or will we ignore Him in order to gratify the flesh?*” Walking by the Spirit is how we do not gratify the flesh (**Gal. 5:16**). Setting our minds on the things of the Spirit is how we seek what gratifies Him (**Rom. 8:5 AMPC**). **Note:** only the AMPC uses “*gratify the Holy Spirit*”. Most other translations only say “*but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit.*” “*Gratify the Holy Spirit*” is the AMPC’s amplification of this context. That is the believer’s side of the relationship: **not ignoring the One who already lives in us, but yielding to His help against the flesh.**

4. Conviction and condemnation

- a) **Jn. 16:8–9** is courtroom language. The Spirit “convicts” (elegchō — expose, prove guilty) the world concerning sin “because they do not believe in me.” That is not first a list of bad habits. It is the charge that leaves a person under God’s verdict. Unbelief is the sin that keeps every other sin unforgiven.
- b) That is why this conviction sits so close to condemnation:
- “*Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is **condemned already**, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God*” (**Jn. 3:18**).
 - “*Whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, **but the wrath of God remains on him***” (**Jn. 3:36**).
 - The same paragraph in **Jn. 16** adds judgment: “*concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged*” (**Jn. 16:11**).
- c) Before faith, the Spirit’s work toward a person is bound up with that verdict: you do not believe; you stand guilty; judgment is real. That conviction can be resisted (**Acts 7:51**). It can also be the drawing that brings someone to hear the gospel and receive the Son.

5. After a person is in Christ, the verdict changes.

- a) “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (**Rom. 8:1**). The case that **Jn. 16:8–9** was pressing — unbelief, guilt, coming judgment — is closed. The Spirit who once stood over the sinner as prosecutor now lives in the believer as the Spirit of Christ (**Rom. 8:9–10**). You are not on trial for salvation again.
- b) That does **not** mean the Spirit goes silent about sin. It means the kind of work changes.
- c) **Condemnation** says: you do not belong to Christ; the wrath of God remains. **The Spirit’s work in a believer** says: you belong to Christ; this does not fit who you are; do not gratify the flesh; walk with Me.
- d) Scripture describes that second work in several ways, and none of them put the believer back under **Rom. 8:1’s** cancelled verdict:
- He **grieves** when we give the flesh room (**Eph. 4:30**).
 - He can be **quenched** when we shut down His leading (**1 Thess. 5:19**).
 - He **wars against the flesh** so we do not do whatever we want (**Gal. 5:16–17**).
 - By the Spirit we **put to death the deeds of the body** (**Rom. 8:13**).

- He **guides into all truth** (Jn. 16:13) and **conforms us to the image of the Son** (Rom. 8:29; 2 Cor. 3:18).
 - He produces **godly sorrow that leads to repentance**, not despair (2 Cor. 7:9–10).
 - The Father **disciplines sons**, which is love, not condemnation (Heb. 12:5–11).
 - “When we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may **not be condemned along with the world**” (1 Cor. 11:31–32 AMPC) – This is fatherly correction, not final condemnation.
- e) The last item on the list above about **not being condemned with the world** ties it together nicely. * The enemy can make you feel like you are still condemned. The Role of the Enemy - The enemy often tries to make believers feel condemned by:
- **Accusations:** Reminding them of past sins or failures.
 - **Lies:** Suggesting that they are unworthy of God's love and forgiveness.
 - **Emotional Manipulation:** Causing feelings of guilt that can lead to spiritual discouragement.
- f) **Rom. 8:1** and **1 Cor. 11:32** belong together. One states the believer's standing. The other shows how God still deals with a believer's sin without touching that standing.
- g) “There is therefore now no condemnation (katakrima) for those who are in Christ Jesus.”
- katakrima: Condemnation, judgment
 - Phonetic Spelling: (kat-ak'-ree-mah) = an adverse sentence (the verdict); the results of judgment; the exact sentence of condemnation handed down after due process.
 - That is the verdict of the gospel. In Christ the case is closed. A believer is no longer under the world's sentence. No longer condemned.
- h) The difference between conviction prior to salvation and after salvation:
- **Jn. 16:8–9 / Jn. 3:18** — conviction bound up with condemnation for the unbeliever.
 - **Rom. 8:1** — that condemnation is gone in Christ.
 - **1 Cor. 11:32** — remaining sin is still addressed, but as the Father's discipline, not as the Judge's final sentence.
- i) The Spirit's “check” in a believer fits **1 Cor. 11:32** better than Jn. 16:8–9. It is not “you are condemned.” It is “you are Mine; this will not be ignored; come back.” That is the Holy Spirit at work in us, helping us wage war against the flesh (**Gal. 5:16–17; Rom. 8:13**).

So, the “check in your spirit” when you want to gratify the flesh is real. It can feel like conviction of sin — and in a sense it is: the Spirit is exposing something that does not belong in a life He indwells. But it is not **Jn. 16:8–9** all over again. It is not “*you are condemned because you do not believe.*” It is “*you are in Christ; do not set your mind on the flesh.*”

The issue after salvation is not, “Am I still under condemnation?” **Rom. 8:1** has answered that. The issue is, “Will I ignore the indwelling Spirit and gratify the flesh, or will I listen to His check and seek what pleases the Lord?” Forgetting who you are in Christ and refusing His help against temptation is how a believer resists His influence.

Summary:

The believer's active relationship with the Holy Spirit: You walk with Him, keep in step with Him, are filled by Him, pray in Him, listen to Him, refuse to grieve or quench Him, and sow toward Him. The Spirit already lives in the believer.

The Holy Spirit's relationship with the believer: He lives in you, teaches. reminds you what the Word says, guides you into all truth, intercedes for you, seals you, bears witness that you are God's child, leads you, pours out the love of God into your hearts, and produces His fruit in you.

This study covered resisting and ignoring the Holy Spirit and relationship with the Holy Spirit. In the next few studies, we will be heading towards:

- a.) Being filled with the Spirit. b.) Pleasing the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.
- c.) Those who are in Christ and those who belong to Christ.

Homework: Dig into this!

Below is a breakdown of **Jn. 16:8-11 ESV** - *"And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning **sin** and **righteousness** and **judgment**: concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer; concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged."*

1. **Sin** - The Spirit convicts of sin because they do not believe in Jesus (John 16:9). Unbelief is not a small extra sin; it is the sin that defines the unbeliever. Every other sin stays unforgiven because the person refuses the only Savior who can take it away. Unbelief is the sin. – **deeper:** Jn. 3:18-20; 8:24; 15:22-24; Acts 2:36-37.

2. **Righteousness** - The Spirit convicts of righteousness because Jesus goes to the Father (John 16:10). The world is wrong about Jesus and about itself. Unbelievers are unrighteous. They have no righteousness God accepts. Jesus' return to the Father proves He is the Righteous One, and His righteousness is the only righteousness that counts. Only through faith in Christ does a person become righteous. At salvation the believer receives Christ's righteousness and is made right with God (Romans 3:22–26; 10:10). Unbelief keeps a person outside that gift. Faith receives it. – **Deeper:** Jn. 16:28; Acts 2:32-36; Rom. 3:21-26; 10:9-10.

3. **Judgment** - The Spirit convicts of judgment because the ruler of this world is already judged (John 16:11). Unbelief leaves a person on Satan's side—the side already under sentence (John 3:18, 36). Unbelief does not wait for a future verdict. It already stands under the judgment that fell on the world's ruler.

Deeper: Jn. 3:18, 36; 8:24, 12:31, 48; 14:30; Col. 2:15, 2 Thess. 2:12.

Unbelief is the **sin**, unbelief rejects the only **righteousness** God gives, and unbelief leaves a person under the **judgment** already passed onto the ruler of this world. Faith in Christ is the only way out of all three.