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How NOT to Break the Holy Spirit's Heart

Pastor Gene Giguere, September 20, 2026

Introduction

1) Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer writes:

“Christians are appointed to live every moment of their lives with the Holy Spirit of God. Life for them, is a moment-by-moment vital union with One Who is infinitely holy. Sin, therefore, in a Christian, is the very opposite of any true manifestation of the Spirit in the life.”¹

And so begins his discussion on grieving the Holy Spirit in his masterful book, *He That is Spiritual*. Dr. Chafer is right, of course: Sin, any sin, immediately severs our fellowship with God.

So, wherever and whenever we tolerate sin in our daily life, the Spirit Who indwells us, must turn from His ministry of working *through* us, to a ministry of pleading with us. From producing goodly fruit, to holding back blessing and bringing discipline.

The Holy Spirit never withdraws from us when we sin, but He is *grieved* in us. And so, we can conclude that our manner of life at any given moment is either grieving or not grieving the Holy Spirit.

Paul's injunction to us could not be more clear: “Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God whereby you are sealed unto the day of redemption” (**Ephesians 4:30**).

The condition of our spiritual life then rests heavily upon our understanding this principle and the continual adjustments we need to make with respect to the issue of sin in our daily walk.

¹ Chafer, Lewis Sperry, *He That Is Spiritual* (Moody Press: Chicago, 1918), p. 60.

Because God loves us, He has provided us with a means (1) of *preventing* sin and, (2) if we do fail, of *recovering* from sin. I want to deal with the first of these grace provisions this morning.

The Means for Preventing Sin

- 1) We've taught before that 'spirituality' and 'carnality' are two mutually exclusive states of being.

At any given time, a believer is either 100% spiritual (meaning simply that he or she is being led by the Holy Spirit) or 100% carnal (meaning simply that he or she is being led by the flesh) (**1 Corinthians 3:1-4**).

True spirituality is achieved by a moment-by-moment, day-by-day, reliance upon the Holy Spirit.²

We're told to be (1) filled with the Spirit, to (2) walk in the Spirit, to (3) be led by the Spirit, and to (4) keep in step with the Holy Spirit.

These things will keep us from sin and thus from grieving or quenching the Spirit.

We *must not* grieve or quench the Spirit; rather, we *must* walk in His power.

And **Galatians 5:16-17** tells us how to do that:

“Walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. ¹⁷ For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do.”

By this we should understand that we have *no power within ourselves* to accomplish this.

We prevent sin *only by the power of the Holy Spirit*.

² Some of what follows is a distillation of Chafer, Lewis Sperry, *He That Is Spiritual* (Moody Press: Chicago, 1918), pp. 93–140 (chapter VI: Walk in the Spirit).

What does it mean to ‘walk by the Spirit’?

Simply: to ‘walk by the Spirit’ is to move through life with a conscious reliance upon the power of the Spirit to accomplish all He desires to do through us.

Dr. Chafer writes, “In no sense does the believer lead, or direct, the Spirit. He can, however, be dependent on the Spirit, and this is his exact responsibility as revealed in this passage.”³

When we walk in an unbroken reliance upon the Spirit, we are walking by the Spirit.

- 2) Maturity begins in the life of a Christian when we come to an awareness of our limitations: what we can and cannot do.

It’s then that we come to see what is everywhere declared in Scripture: it is “not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord of hosts” (**Zechariah 4:6**).

He goes on to ask: “Who are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel [the man of God] you shall become a plain. And he shall bring forward the top stone amid shouts of ‘Grace, grace to it!’” (**Zechariah 4:7**).

The context of this verse was a message to Zerubbabel, the governor of Judah.⁴ Some of the Israelites had returned from exile and the Temple was being rebuilt. It was a gargantuan task and so God told Zerubbabel that it would be accomplished, but “not by might, nor by power.”

It would be accomplished, “by my Spirit, says the Lord of hosts” (**Zechariah 4:6**).

The work that God had for Zerubbabel to do *would be accomplished!* Every obstacle would be removed! “Who are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel [the man of God] you shall become a plain” (**Zechariah 4:7a**).

³ *Op. cit.*, Chafer, Lewis Sperry, *He That Is Spiritual* (Moody Press: Chicago, 1918), pp. 94.

⁴ Lindsey, F. Duane, “Zechariah,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. by J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), I:1555.

And watch this: God promised that Zerubbabel would “bring forward the top stone” of the Temple “amid shouts of ‘Grace, grace to it’” (4:7b)! Grace is not what we do; grace is what *God does* through us or for us. Grace is God’s undeserved merit; we neither earn it or deserve it.

And so it is with life in the Spirit. God does what He desires to do through undeserving vessels who are wise enough to simply step out of the way.

When we do, every obstacle to fulfilling the will of God in our lives is removed. The mountains become plains before us when we shout, ‘Grace, Grace’!

But in our own power, we can accomplish nothing. In **John 15:3-5**, our Lord said to His followers:

“Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you.
⁴ Abide [remain] in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me.
⁵ I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.”

And then, beginning in verse **26**, Jesus begins to speak of the Spirit who would come and live within the Church from the Day of Pentecost.

Now, the natural tendency is to look at the mountains in our life and to go out and buy a jackhammer! But this is a devil’s bargain. We begin to be effective for the Lord only when we come to a place of complete reliance upon His power in our moment-by-moment lives.

Setting the Mind on the Things of the Spirit

- 1) The task before us is not a millionfold; it’s singular. It’s not, ‘Fight sin, then do this, then do that, and don’t neglect to do this and flee from that.’

It’s simply: ‘Be filled with the Spirit and all that He desires for you to accomplish will be done. Everything the Law of God requires of you will be fulfilled in you *through the Spirit*.

Let's look at **Romans 8:4-14** carefully:

“By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴ in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

✠ Knowing that sinners could never keep the Law of God, the Father sent His own Son into the world in human flesh.

Not in ‘sinful flesh’ like ours, but in the ‘likeness of sinful flesh.’ The sin nature is passed down through Adam, through the father. And so, the Virgin Birth protected Jesus from the transmission of an old sin nature.

When Jesus came, He condemned sin for us. **Colossians 2:13-14** says, “And you, who were dead in your trespasses ... God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, ¹⁴ by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.”

And *why* did Jesus condemn sin? **Romans 8:4**: “in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.”

Do you see it? That which the Law requires of us, the Spirit fulfills IN us, when we walk by the Spirit.

The Law was powerless to deliver us from sin.

So also, WE are powerless to deliver ourselves from sin – eternally or experientially.

But what *we* cannot do, *the Spirit* does for us, if only we'll submit to His guidance and walk in His power. It is “not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord of hosts” (**Zechariah 4:6**).

Now, “Who are you, O great mountain? Before” Gene or Mary or Jim, or Jeff or Anne or Mary-ellen or Melinda (etc.) “you shall become a plain.

And [they] shall bring forward the top stone amid shouts of ‘Grace, grace to it!’” (**Zechariah 4:7**)

Dr. John Witmer put it this way: “The *provision* of deliverance from the power of sin is through the death of Jesus Christ, but *experiencing* it in one’s daily conduct comes through the controlling power of the Holy Spirit.”⁵

Back to **Romans 8**. Verse **5**: “For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit.”

✠ Here Paul tells us very practically what it means to “live according to the flesh” or “the Spirit.” It’s just a matter of what we think on, what we set our mind upon.

Notice it: “Those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh.”⁶ [The Greek does not have “live,” but simply the verb ‘to be’ (οἱ γὰρ κατὰ σάρκα ὄντες).]

Conversely, “those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit.” It’s simply a matter of what we set our mind upon.

He goes on to say in verse **6**: “For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace.”

✠ He’s talking, I think, about the believer’s *experience*. God has given us ‘true life’ at salvation. That life has two aspects, life forever and real life now; I call this *exuberant, forever life*.

But for the believer to walk according to the flesh after he or she has been given this new life is to return to the realm of death and dying.

It’s to forfeit the ‘newness of life’ for the old life we were delivered from. To ‘set the mind on the flesh’ is to live in the *realm* of death, to desire only what our sinful flesh desires.

⁵ Witmer, John A., “Romans,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. by J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), II:469.

⁶ The Greek does not have “live,” but simply the verb ‘to be’ (οἱ γὰρ κατὰ σάρκα ὄντες).

But to set the mind on the Spirit is to experience our new life in all its fullness and to enjoy genuine peace – one of the exclusive ‘fruits’ of the Spirit (**Galatians 5:22-23**).

An unbeliever doesn’t care one whit about the things of God – he or she seeks only to fulfill the lusts of the flesh, whether they be material or sexual or the desire for praise.

And so, to set the mind on the flesh *is to live like an unbeliever*. And when we do, we bring sadness (metaphorically and literally, as we’ll see) to the Holy Spirit; we “grieve” Him.

Again, we avoid this by choosing to be occupied with the Spirit rather than the flesh.

“Walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.
¹⁷ For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh ...” (**Galatians 5:16-17a**).

The word translated mind here is **φρόνημα** and it refers to one’s way of thinking, his aims and aspirations, the things he strives for.

Romans 8:7: “For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God’s law; indeed, it cannot.”

✠ To set my thoughts on the things of the flesh is not without consequence!

In fact, it is an act of hostility against God: “For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God.”

James was writing to believers when he declared: “You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore, whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God” (**James 4:4**).

Now, here’s the thing: you’re going to be in trouble with someone whether you choose the world, or the Lord.

Jesus warned: “If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. ¹⁹ If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. ²⁰ Remember the word that I said to you: ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours” (**John 15:18-20**).

So, if you love Jesus, you *will* encounter hostility in your relationship with the world. But, if you love the world, you’re going to have a problem with God! Why? Because “the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God” (**Romans 8:7**) and God actually sets a battle plan against believers who operate in pride (**James 4:6b**).

And so, we have a choice to make – and *we must choose carefully!*

Jesus put it like this: “No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other.”

See that? The one you choose – whether the flesh or the Spirit – you will eventually *fall in love with!*

So, friends, just as the unbeliever has *no interest* in doing the things which please the Lord, so the believer living like an unbeliever also has *no interest* in pleasing the Lord. The “mind set on the flesh” (τὸ φρόνημα τῆς σαρκὸς) does not submit to God’s Law, neither can it.

And so, **Romans 8:8** says bluntly, “Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.”

✠ And that’s a BIG problem, because *pleasing God is one of the most fundamental goals of the Christian life.*

- “Whether we are at home or away,” Paul says in **2 Corinthians 5:9**, “we make it our aim to please him.”
- **Ephesians 5:8b, 10** tells us to “walk as children of light ... ¹⁰ and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord.”

- Are you a soldier for Christ? Have you been enlisted into His army? Well, **2 Timothy 2:4** says, “No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him [Jesus, **John 15:16**].”
- And so, believers desire to do the things which please the Father! The man or woman who loves Jesus must determine to set his or her mind upon the things of the Spirit, regardless of what others think about it!

In **Galatians 1:10**, Paul asked rhetorically: “Am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ.”

Now Paul isn’t being hard-hearted here, nor should we be. He’s not cavalier; he cared about everyone! In fact, his desire was to please all men, but without compromising His walk with God.

He wrote, in **1 Corinthians 10:33**: “I try to please everyone in everything I do, not seeking my own advantage, but that of many, that they may be saved.” And in **1 Corinthians 9:22**, he explained, “I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some.”

These passages define Paul's approach to evangelism and discipleship: he was flexible, willing to adapt to all people of all cultures in order to facilitate a hearing for the Gospel.

He tried to remove any and all unnecessary obstacles which stood in the way of sinners coming to faith in Jesus – and so should we! We should never major in the minors; we should major only in the majors – and the Gospel is the major of all majors!

But Paul *utterly rejected any temptation to compromise or distort the Gospel* in order to gain human approval!

So, pleasing God is a big deal indeed for believers – at least it should be!

And that's what makes **Romans 8:8** so sobering: "Those who are in the flesh" – those who are 'walking according to the flesh' or 'have their mind set on the flesh' – cannot please God."⁷

✠ Then, beginning with **Romans 8:9**, Paul beautifully reminds us of *what we are!*

We are sons of God (**Romans 8:14**), sons of Light and of the day (**1 Thessalonians 5:5**), sinners rescued from death (**Colossians 1:13**, **Ephesians 2:1-10**) and delivered into a life that is forever and exuberant (**John 10:10, 28**)!

"You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. ¹⁰ But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. ¹¹ If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you. ¹² So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. ¹³ For if you live according to the flesh you will die [live in the experience of death], but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live [live in the experience of your new life in Jesus]. ¹⁴ For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God."

We can never lose our sonship, but we can lose the 'path' of sonship! The very fact that the Spirit indwells us means that we have been given a new life. We owe the flesh no debt to serve its will or fulfil its desires. We are truly free. Jesus, through His Holy Spirit has given us a new way to be human.

We have roads open to us that are closed to every unbeliever: the roads of the Spirit. The "indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit is the identifying mark of a believer in Jesus Christ." The Apostle John put it this way: "By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit" (**1 John 4:13**).⁸

⁷ We can only ever please the Father when we're walking by faith, for, "without faith it is impossible to please him" (Hebrews 11:6).

⁸ Witmer, John A., "Romans," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. by J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), II, 470.

And then something that I truly love – and always try to emphasize in my teaching: God’s word promises resurrection life NOW, N.O.W.! Look again at verse **11**: “If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you [AND HE DOES!], he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also *give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.*”

This is talking about walking in our post-salvation, resurrected, exuberant life; the “newness of life in Christ Jesus” (**Romans 6:4**).

‘While a thief would come “only to steal and kill and destroy,” Jesus said, “I came that they may have life and have it abundantly [*exuberantly!*]” (**John 10:10**).

“We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life ... ⁸ Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him ... ¹¹ So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin [NOW] and alive to God in Christ Jesus [NOW]” (**Romans 6:4, 8, 11**).

- 2) So, for all believers there is (1) a resurrection coming (**Romans 6:5; 1 Corinthians 6:14, 15:42, 53; 2 Corinthians 4:14**), and there is (2) a resurrection that HAS COME.

We don’t HAVE to grieve the Spirit. We don’t have to set your mind on the things of the flesh. We don’t have to walk in experiential death.

We can choose to submit to the Spirit, walk in the newness of the life Jesus has given you and do that which is pleasing to the Father – a Trinitarian blessing!

Colossians 3:1-17, watch it carefully because it’s all here!

“If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ² Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.”

✠ Remember **Romans 8:6b**: “[T]o set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace.”

“For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

⁵ Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. ⁶ On account of these the wrath of God is coming.

⁷ In these you too once walked, when you were living in them. ⁸ But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth.

⁹ Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices ¹⁰ and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator ...

¹² Put on then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, ¹³ bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive ...

¹⁵ And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful.

¹⁶ Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

¹⁷ And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.”

If we’ll do these things, Church, we will not grieve the Holy Spirit.

We’ll continue next time.

Amen.