

The Sorrows of the Holy Spirit."

Ephesians 4:30-32

July 14, 2024

by Senior Pastor Hong Poonghwa

am not hearing the voice of God saying, 'The Holy Spirit is grieved'?" .

Part One

Ephesians 4:30-32 (PowerPoint presentation)

Preface

In today's Scripture passage, we find the meaningful words, "Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God".

We have seen throughout the book of Ephesians, up to 4:29, that it is in our relationships with others that the specifics of believing and living in Jesus Christ are expressed, through the following words: "Speak the truth to your neighbor, not falsely, but as members of one another's body," "Do not remain angry with others," "Do not steal," "Give grace to others with your words," and so on.

In Ephesians 4:31 and following, which we have just read, we are also told and encouraged to "put away uncharitableness, indignation, anger, rage, cursing, malice, etc." and "be kind to one another, forgiving one another with a tender heart," and similar practices of conduct in Christ that are important in building relationships with others.

If we compare the words up to verse 29 and the words from verse 31 to the two sides of delicious bread that sandwich the ingredients of a sandwich, then in verse 30, the words "Do not grieve the Holy Spirit" appear as the key ingredient that determines what the sandwich is.

"Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God."

There may be nothing more important in the concrete manifestation of Christian faith in our lives than the content of these words.

It seems to me that we are being asked, as believers in Christ, are we basing our judgments, decisions, and actions on whether God the Holy Spirit, not me, is grieving or rejoicing in our lives?

I myself am reminded of this verse. What is really in my heart?" I wonder if what I feel sad about is more important to me than what the Holy Spirit feels sad about. Is it not that 'I am sad' has become an idol, and I

What do you think of these Apostle Paul's words, "Do not grieve the Holy Spirit"?

Does it make your heart ache or tremble?

Or do you think, "Well, I guess I didn't do much to grieve the Holy Spirit."

Or, "Hmmm, I don't really feel anything. I don't think I've ever felt the Holy Spirit's feelings or thoughts."?

In John 6:63, Jesus says the following.

John 6:63 (PowerPoint)

The word that I have spoken to you is the Spirit and the life.

Thus, Jesus' words, the words of the Bible, are essential for us to remember the speaking and thoughts of the Holy Spirit.

I think it is mostly through reading, listening, eating, chewing, and taking in as nourishment for our flesh and spirit, and through our prayer life, that we can gradually feel the Holy Spirit's words and thoughts inside of us.

Of course, since God is the Creator of things out of nothing, in the beginning, or at times, He may allow us to feel the thoughts of the Holy Spirit without the words of the Bible. But if we believe in Christ, the Bible tells us that the very Word of God, the very words of Jesus, and the very words of the Bible are the speaking of the Holy Spirit.

In fact, through today's Word, we are now in the speaking of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit now speaks to us through the words, "Put away uncharitableness, indignation, wrath, anger, cursing, and malice; be kind to one another, forgiving one another with a tender heart. For God also has forgiven you in Christ."

I believe that the teaching, "Do not grieve the Holy Spirit," came out of the mouth of the Apostle Paul, who made it his life to hear, speak, defend, and do the words of the Bible, and the grieving of the Holy Spirit who lived within him.

Not only Paul, but also Jesus once spoke words similar

to these.

In Matthew 12:31 we read. "A person can be forgiven for any blasphemy, even if he speaks a word against Me, but blasphemy against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, neither in this world nor in the next." In saying this, Jesus taught us the importance of listening to, obeying, and doing what the Holy Spirit speaks to us and what He gives to our hearts and souls, that is, to cherish the Holy Spirit as the difference between life and death for eternity before God."

Part Two

In today's scripture, what is the Holy Spirit grieving? The Bible tells us that the content of the Holy Spirit's message to us is about our relationships with other human beings.

In fact, our relationships with other human beings can either save us or kill us.

Not only physically, but also spiritually. Relationships that are in line with the grace of Christ will keep us alive spiritually, but relationships that are not in line with the grace of Christ can lead us to spiritual death.

That is why today's Scripture passage speaks to us in this way. "Not speaking the truth to one another as a part of the body, remaining resentful toward others, stealing, tormenting or harming others with words, being uncharitable, yelling and cursing, not being kind to one another, not forgiving one another, grieves God the Holy Spirit. Do you hear that sorrow of the Holy Spirit? Is that sorrow also your sorrow?"

There is nothing more important as a Christian believer in Jesus Christ when living in earthly relationships than to feel and think that God the Holy Spirit's sorrow is like my sorrow.

The words, "Do not grieve the Holy Spirit," are not only about relationships between people, but also about the question, "What is your relationship with God the Holy Spirit?"

How well do we recognize and remember the Holy Spirit's sorrow or joy in our relationships with others?

If we say, "All my relationships with others are my will and decision, and there is no room for God in them. My faith is all about the fulfillment of my personal religious mind, my relationship with God," then that is not faith in

Christ. Nor is it a practice of the Word that says, "Do not grieve the Holy Spirit."

The Bible says, "God the Holy Spirit is grieved when relationships between people are broken, torn, quarrelsome, or judgmental."

In other words, faith is the degree to which I am aware of and reflect the sorrow and joy of the Holy Spirit in my relationships with others, and this will determine whether I am or am not wearing the new man in Christ whose spirit and heart are continually being renewed.

Part Three

Grieving God the Holy Spirit, not anyone else.

Satan and his demons are in the business of grieving God, so they fuel the desire to fight within our bodies, seeking to tear apart relationships, to devour someone like a howling lion.

And that incitement usually colludes with that pesky sense of justice within us that tells us, "I am right! He is wrong, he is wrong, he is wrong!" We become attached to, obsessed with, and wrapped up in the thought, "I am right!"

Have you ever had the experience in your relationships with others that "I have grieved the Holy Spirit. I was feeling the Holy Spirit is grieving, but I have ignored that grief and continued to insist on your own righteousness"?

Or are you in such a situation right now?

There is something I mentioned in a message once before that I will never forget. There was a time when I felt the grief of the Holy Spirit in my relationships, but I kept ignoring it and kept thinking: "If that person contacts me first, I will forgive him. If he apologizes first, I will forgive him. I am always ready to forgive, and he is the one who is wrong, so if he calls or visits me first, that is all that matters."

I think it was exactly nine years ago, when I was preparing to leave the ministry of Tsuchiura Megumi Church to go to the U.S. with my family of six to study at a seminary.

When it became necessary for my family of six to go to the U.S., the thing that worried me the most and kept

me up at night was the financial situation.

We were in a situation where we had to go to the U.S. as a family of six with our four children, with only enough finances to hit the bottom in a little over a year, no matter how much we scraped together, when we received a phone call.

I answered the phone in the parking lot of Megumi Church. It was a call from my cousin who is 30 years older than me and lives in Los Angeles, California.

Since he is 30 years older than me, he took care of me like a father when I studied abroad in the U.S. for a year when I was a college student. I started going to church for the first time through the cousin's daughter, who was a year younger than me, and we even went on short-term missions to Russia and Kazakhstan together. They were the benefactor family that helped me meet Jesus, and they were my only relatives in the US.

So, about a month before I left for the U.S., I received a phone call out of the blue from my cousin.

He suddenly said, "Hey, Toyokazu! I heard that you and your family of six are coming to the U.S. to study! Do you have the money? Do you know how much money it takes for a family of four to live in Los Angeles? And even more so, it's reckless for six people to live in Los Angeles! Do you have a job after you come to the US? If not, don't come! Don't count on me or our children!" I felt as if I had been told something like that.

Now I think he was concerned about our family, but at the time I thought it sounded like an expletive against me.

Until that phone call, I had never called my cousin's family to let them know that I was going to the U.S. because I thought it might be a burden for them, but the sudden international call made me angry and I said, "Hey, you've got to be kidding me! Who the hell do you think you are? You're not my family, and I don't want to hear from you ever again! I hung up the phone."

I was still angry, so I called my wife and then my mother at home, and started to badmouth the cousin.

Then I erased and disposed of everything that gave me that cousin's phone number and address so that he could not be contacted by me at all, and went to the US.

Since that time, I have always felt something stuck in

my heart, like I couldn't get a hold of it.

I kept thinking, "It's his fault, so if he finds out my contact information or address and comes to me first to apologize, I will meet with him."

For the next two and a half years, my cousin did not know my contact information or where I was, so of course he never contacted me, nor did I go to see him or contact him.

I felt sad and bitter, and no matter what I did, I could not get the thought out of my mind that I had lost the relationship with the family member who had provided me with the most important encounter with Jesus in my life.

In light of today's words, it was as if I had been ignoring the Holy Spirit's voice of sorrow.

During those two and a half years, there was a voice that resounded noisily in my heart.

"Hey, Toyokazu. Are you really okay with that? Even you were at fault, weren't you, for letting your emotions get the better of you in a fit of anger and hurling such rude words at a father figure who was 30 years older than you?"

You believe in Jesus, don't you? God has forgiven you in Jesus, too, right? You were reconciled to God the Father through Jesus, right? And you're a pastor, right?

Above all, you! Isn't "reconciliation" the topic of your dissertation?

How dare you write a paper on reconciliation without reconciliation when there are people who need to be reconciled?

How can you read a book about reconciliation while pretending not to hear this voice?

You can hear my sorrow, can't you?"

After being talked to in this way for so long, my heart became bitter, and I finally surrendered.

I gave up and searched the Internet, typing my cousin's name "Jason Hong," and found a list of alumni associations of Korean immigrants to the United States living near Los Angeles.

Then I found the information of "Jason Hong" there. I was surprised to find that he was in the real estate business, his address, age, phone number, email address, etc. I was able to get that much information.

Since I was able to get that much information, I had no

choice but to follow the promptings of the Holy Spirit.

Praying, I decided my mind and sent an e-mail to him.

"Brother Jason, how are you? We have been in the U.S. for two and a half years now, living in the family dormitory at Fuller Seminary. Please forgive me for my rudeness two and a half years ago, and I am also sorry for not contacting you during that time. If you forgive me, may I visit you once to say hello?" Then, I received a reply saying, "Toyokazu, thank you for your email. I am sorry too. Let's meet once again, you and your family and all of our family members."

Finally, the day of the meeting arrived.

I was very excited when I visited their home. The cousin and his wife, his son's family, and his daughter's family were all very happy to see me for the first time in 20 years, and we all hugged each other with tears in our eyes and prayed together.

When we left, they gave us a cardboard box full of fruit, food, and souvenirs for the children that they had prepared for us, and I felt a warm feeling of "Oh, they were really sorry for me."

We saw each other frequently for the next six months until I left the U.S. When we returned to Japan, my cousin's daughter Jayne's family drove us to the Los Angeles International Airport.

Such a wonderful joy of the Holy Spirit to share together and such a wonderful loving relationship that we had after surrendering and obeying the Holy Spirit's exhortation to "put away uncharitableness, resentment, anger, vindictiveness, and malice, and be kind to one another, forgiving one another with a tender heart, even as God also has forgiven you in Christ." I really regretted that I should have contacted him earlier and reconciled with him if this was going to happen.

I had no idea that we would end up like this, and the reason why I couldn't contact him during that time is because I thought, "I just can't agree with him, he is worse than me, and if he apologizes to me first, well, I'll forgive him."

And most of all, I thought, "Why is this happening to me!" I was angry at my life, my situation, the person I was, and God who had led me to such a place of emotional suffering.

Well it must have been terrible misunderstanding for

God, but for me, I was like, "What the hell!"

Conclusion

I wonder how much I have grieved the Holy Spirit with such feelings.

How much I have grieved the Holy Spirit.

I have no choice but to confess that I myself am a person who cannot help but grieve the Holy Spirit even from now on.

It is not that I do what pleases the Holy Spirit. Rather, I can only confess that the Holy Spirit is pleased with me, like a parent who is pleased with a small, poor, insignificant picture drawn by a young child, and cherishes it forever like a treasure, or like a parent who is pleased with a small step or deed that is far from being successful or completed, but squints at its courage and thoughtfulness, and is pleased to see it. I can only confess that I live my Christian life feeling this way, and that I am being kept alive.

I am still angry, I am still deceitful, I am still unforgiving. I have been merciless instead of kind, and I have been cold instead of kind. I may also speak evil words to others rather than words of grace to those who listen. I think I often find myself taking God's place, saying, "I have the right to forgive and I am forgiving," rather than the most important fact, that God has forgiven us in Christ.

I can't count the number of times I have grieved the Holy Spirit of God in this way.

But even so, I want God the Holy Spirit to be pleased with me, just as the prodigal son in Jesus' parable of the prodigal son was pleased to see his father, who was pleased to see him return to his father's presence, even though he was in tatters.

I hope to follow the Holy Spirit, once again reflecting on how to listen to, keep, and obey the deep, high, wide, long, subtle, but vivid words of the Triune God, "Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God."

Let's pray.

Benediction: Ephesians 4:30