Eight Sins Against the Holy Spirit

In Genesis 1:2, the Bible says, “The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.” Although we are introduced to the Holy Spirit in the second verse of the Bible, the supportive, behind-the-scenes role played by the third member of the Godhead leads many people to reject His position as the third person in the Godhead. At the same time, other believers place so much emphasis on the Holy Spirit that they have the Holy Spirit overshadowing Jesus Christ. A number of Scriptures demonstrate the Holy Spirit’s position as a member of the Godhead and help give us some perspective on His work.

In Matthew 3:16-17, we find, “When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.’” When declaring the Great Commission, Jesus told the apostles in Matthew 28:19, “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” Again in 2 Corinthians 13:14, the Scriptures say, “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.” This morning we want to recognize the proper role of the Holy Spirit and expose eight sins committed against the Holy Spirit. But first, enjoy our song…

When people think about sins against the Holy Spirit, the one that most readily comes to mind is the unpardonable sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit recorded in Mark 3:22-30. The Bible says, “And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem said, "He has Beelzebub," and, "By the ruler of the demons He casts out demons." So He called them to Himself and said to them in parables: "How can Satan cast out Satan? If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand. And if Satan has risen up against himself, and is divided, he cannot stand, but has an end. No one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man. And then he will plunder his house. "Assuredly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the sons of men, and whatever blasphemies they may utter; 29 but he who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is subject to eternal condemnation"-- 30 because they said, "He has an unclean spirit."

The word “blasphemy” literally means to “speak evil of.” We are commanded not to take the name of the Lord in vain, but you can see that there is a special warning against speaking evil about the Holy Spirit. The Scribes in Mark 3 so thoroughly rejected Jesus that they said that "He has Beelzebub," and, "By the ruler of the demons He casts out demons." I think it’s very important to notice what the Scriptures say in pinpointing this sin in verses 29-30: “but he who blasphemes (speaks) against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is subject to eternal condemnation"-- because they said, "He has an unclean spirit." So the specific sin committed involved calling the Holy Spirit an unclean spirit. A. T. Robertson writes in his Word Pictures of the New Testament, “In saying that Jesus had an unclean spirit they had attributed to the devil the work of the Holy Spirit…” Christians are sometimes concerned that they have committed the unpardonable sin. They fear that they have committed blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. This, however, is highly unlikely. Have you ever suggested that Jesus had an unclean spirit? What Christian would even come close to doing this? Christians are more likely to commit some of the other sins against the Holy Spirit recorded in Scripture.

Another sin against the Holy Spirit is profaning the Holy Spirit. The Third Commandment presented in Exodus 20:7, reads, “Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.” Profanity is taking things that are holy and treating them like they are common and everyday. You don’t talk about God – the Father, Son or Holy Spirit - like you would the fella down the street. God demands the utmost respect. Some Christian professing folks are dragging the Holy Spirit and His holy name through the mud. They are capitalizing on the craving for entertainment and sensationalism in worship and Christian living. These folks balk at the basics. They despise the idea of worshiping “decently and in order” taught in I Corinthians 14:40. They disregard the teaching of I Corinthians 14:33, “For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.” Studying the word of God, singing and making melody in the heart and gathering around the Lord’s Table to praise and glorify God is not good enough – is not stimulating enough. So they spice up their service and sanction the changes by attributing it to the workings of the Holy Spirit. Some of the extreme examples of people profaning of the Holy Spirit include speaking of Holy Ghost laughter, Holy Ghost bartender, Holy Ghost steam roller, Holy Ghost hitman, chicken walk, tornado, glue, surfing, oinking, backfiring & backwashing. Supposedly Christian folks talk about being frozen by the Holy Spirit, marinated in the Holy Spirit, blasted by the Holy Spirit and soaking up the Holy Spirit.

This disrespectful talk is where folks end up who are dissatisfied with the completed work of the Holy Spirit, the Word of God. In 2 Peter 1:21, the apostle tells us that “prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.” Ephesians 6:17 speaks of the word of God as the “sword of the Spirit.” You see, when Jesus told the twelve in John 16:13 that “the Spirit of truth would guide you into all truth,” He referred to the great blessing of giving us the writings of the New Testament. When we value His great work, we need not profane the Holy Spirit by attaching His name to activities He has nothing to do with.

Another sin against the Holy Spirit is addressed in 1 Thessalonians 5:19, “Quench not the Spirit.” To disobey this command is sin. This gets closer to home. More of us are more likely to be guilty of this wrong. The word for "quench" was used for putting out a fire. Paul is saying keep the fire of love, devotion and enthusiasm burning for the kingdom. He warned of this danger in I Corinthians 11:30, “Many are weak and sickly among you, and some sleep.”

Just as fire may be smothered by dirt or water, so the spirit of God may be quenched in human heart. The cares, riches and pleasures of life can choke the word and quench the Spirit. Worldliness and selfishness can quench the spirit. Neglected prayer, Bible reading and church attendance are signs the fire is going out.

Another sin against the Holy Spirit is presented in Acts 5:1-11:

But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession. 2And he kept back part of the proceeds, his wife also being aware of it, and brought a certain part and laid it at the apostles' feet. 3But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the price of the land for yourself? 4While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God." Then Ananias, hearing these words, fell down and breathed his last. So great fear came upon all those who heard these things. 6And the young men arose and wrapped him up, carried him out, and buried him. Now it was about three hours later when his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. And Peter answered her, "Tell me whether you sold the land for so much?" She said, "Yes, for so much."

9Then Peter said to her, "How is it that you have agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord? Look, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out." 10Then immediately she fell down at his feet and breathed her last. And the young men came in and found her dead, and carrying her out, buried her by her husband. 11So great fear came upon all the church and upon all who heard these things.

Peter accused Ananias of lying to the Holy Spirit. H. Leo Boles, on his book on The Holy Spirit writes,

“Evidently Ananias and Sapphira, voluntarily made a covenant with the church to give their possessions to it as did Barnabas. This husband and wife attempted to practice gross deception, thinking no one would know the truth; they coveted that which they had pledged to God, and then sought to mislead the apostles by seeming to keep the covenant which they made. But Peter said’ “Ananias, why hath Satan filled thy heart to lie to the Holy Spirit, and to keep back part of the price of the land ?“ “Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.” (Acts 5:3-4.) The word “lie”…means to deceive; the design of Satan was to deceive the Holy Spirit; Satan filled the heart of Ananias to deceive; the result of the attempt was merely to lie. While the devil filled Ananias’ heart, Ananias responded voluntarily to the sin of lying.

So, can we lie to the Holy Spirit today? There are three possible interpretations: 1) All lying is lying to the Holy Spirit. This seems too general to fit the only time this sin is mentioned in the Scriptures. 2) Lying to the Holy Spirit is reneging on a financial commitment made to the church. This, however, seems overly specific. 3) Lying to the Holy Spirit could refer to the breaking of any commitment made to the church. This is certainly worth thinking about. Don’t lie to the Holy Spirit!

Our next sin against the Holy Spirit is addressed in Hebrews 10:24-29: And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching. For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries. Anyone who has rejected Moses' law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace? This last phrase is rendered by Green’s literal translation, “having insulted the Spirit of Grace?”

Let’s consider a few explanations of this sin. A. T. Robertson says that this sin involves “insulting the Holy Spirit after receiving his blessings.” Chrysostym says that “He who does not accept the benefit, insults Him who confers it.” According to the Peoples New Testament, these people sin by “rejecting all the work, the words, the preaching, the pleadings of the Holy Spirit. What a shame, Paul says, that some could ignore or pass over the Holy Spirit’s logical, eloquent pleadings. As Barnes puts it, this “would have shown the highest disregard for the only agent who can save the soul--the Spirit of God.”

So who is guilty of insulting the Holy Spirit? Paul is either referring to 1) the Jewish Christian who completely turns his back on the sacrifice of Christ to return to the animal sacrifices of Judaism as alluded to in Hebrews 6:4-6, or 2) to the Christian who casually forsakes the assembly and looks so lightly at Lord's Supper that he opts to omit it from his weekly schedule like it is some common snack he can take or leave. The immediate context of verse 25 points in this direction, while the general context of the book points to first conclusion. In either case, excuses will abound but the bottom line is: the Christian referred to has allowed the world to lure him away from what matters most.

The next sin against the Holy Spirit is expressed in the sermon presented by the martyr Stephen shortly before his stoning. He says in Acts 7:51, "You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you. Which of the prophets did not your fathers persecute? and they killed them that showed before of the coming of the Righteous One: of whom ye now have become betrayers and murderers; ye who received the law as it was ordained by angels, and kept it not.”

This was no immature tirade, but an accurate assessment of their cold, calloused hearts and closed minds. He lumps his audience in with the Jews who hated the message of the prophets who told them God’s truth. Stephen says, you did just like your ancestors did, “If you didn’t like the message, you attacked the messenger.” You resisted the Holy Spirit!

We often focus on the thousands of Jewish conversions in and around Jerusalem, but while tens of thousands of Jews were converted to Christ, hundreds of thousands of Jews totally rejected the Messiah and the good news of the gospel. This sin brought temporal consequences. About thirty-five years after Stephen's speech, the armies of Vespasian and Titus leveled Jerusalem and the temple, putting to death more than a million people who resisted the Holy Spirit and rejected Christ.

You don’t have to throw stones at a faithful gospel preacher to be guilty of resisting the Holy Spirit. We resist the Spirit today whenever we read or hear preached some Biblical truth and we reject it out of stubbornness. Brothers, sisters, friends, this is a sin against the Holy Spirit and demands repentance.

We learn in I Corinthians 6:19-20 that we can defile the temple of the Holy Spirit: “Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.”

This sin against the Holy Spirit is familiar to most of us, yet it is one of the most frequently violated. The surest way to commit this sin is to abandon moral purity. We read of this in verse 18: “Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body.” Adultery, homosexuality and sex before marriage are all sins against the Holy Spirit. In this passage, Paul emphasizes the positive: “glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's. Glorify God, not yourself, not your friends. How selfish to say, “It’s my body and I’ll do whatever I want with it.” How I care for my body reflects the respect I have for it as something purchased with the blood of Christ on Calvary’s cross. How are you caring for the body Jesus bought and paid for?

Now consider I Corinthians 3:16-17, “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are. The temple of God here refers to the church. The word defile means to destroy or corrupt. Barnes says rightfully in his commentary, "If any man by his doctrines or precepts shall pursue such a course as tends to destroy the church, God shall severely punish him." This would include false doctrine as well as a contentious spirit.

Finally, we can sin against the Holy Spirit by grieving Him. Paul writes in Ephesians 4:30, “And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, in whom ye were sealed unto the day of redemption.” Grief shows personality. Obviously, grief can only be exercised only by a person. We all know what it is like to be grieved – to experience grief. Here we see that the Holy Spirit also knows grief. When we put this verse back in its context, we see the specific ways of grieving the Spirit under consideration in Ephesians 4:

29 Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. 30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. 31 Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. 32 And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.

So, the Holy Spirit is grieved when we utter vulgar and uncharitable words. Then Paul says, in addition, in verse 31, that attitudes and behaviors grieve the Holy Spirit. Bitterness is the settled disposition of one who is resentful. Anger is strong, sudden, explosive antagonism. Wrath.is like a roaring furnace, settled indignation. Clamor is yelling at others. Railing means "speaking abusively against God or man." Malice exists when one delights in inflicting hurt or injury. All of these, at least, must be conceded contextually as sins against Holy Spirit. That puts an entirely new light on them. We must guard our words and attitudes. Stay with us and we’ll tell you how you can get a copy of this message after our song…

Thank you for watching Let the Bible Speak. We pray that you have heard God speak to you through His word. If you’d like a copy of this sermon, “Eight Sins Against the Holy Spirit,” please write the address on your screen and we’ll be glad to get it out to you. You may also request a free Bible study course you can complete at home. Please visit our website, letthebiblespeak.com, and watch videos of the program at your convenience. Finally, we echo the sentiment of the apostle Paul when he wrote in Romans 16:16, “the churches of Christ salute you.” Until next week, goodbye and God bless.