

GRIEVE NOT THE HOLY SPIRIT

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A SERMON
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby you are sealed unto the day of redemption.”
Ephesians 4:30.

IT is a very clear proof of the personality of the Holy Spirit that He can be grieved. Now, it would be very difficult to imagine an influence, or a mere spiritual emanation being grieved. We can only grieve a person, and, inasmuch as the Holy Spirit may be grieved, we see that He is a distinct subsistence in the sacred Trinity. Rob Him not of the glory which is due to Him, but is ever mindful to do Him homage. Our text, moreover, reveals to us the close connection between the Holy Spirit and the believer; He must take a very tender and affectionate interest in us since He is grieved by our shortcomings and our sins. He is not a God who reigns in solitary isolation, divided by a great gulf, but He, the blessed Spirit, comes into such near contact with us, takes such minute observations, feels such tender regards, that He can be grieved by our faults and follies. Although the word “grieve” is a painful one, yet there is honey in the rock; for it is an inexpressibly delightful thought that He who rules heaven and earth, and is the Creator of all things, and the infinite and ever blessed God, condescends to enter into such infinite relationships with His people that His divine mind may be affected by their actions. What a marvel that Deity should be said to grieve over the faults of beings so utterly insignificant as we are! We may not understand the expression literally, as though the sacred Spirit could be affected with sorrow like to human sorrow, but we must not forego the consolatory assurance that He takes the same deep interest in us as a fond parent takes in a beloved but wayward child; and is not this a marvel? Let those who cannot feel be unmoved. As for me, I shall not cease to wonder and adore!

I. The first point which we will consider this morning is THE ASTOUNDING FACT *that the Holy Spirit may be grieved*. That loving, tender Spirit who, of His own accord, has taken upon Himself to quicken us from our death in sin, and to be the educator of the new life which He has implanted within us; that divine instructor, illuminator, comforter, remembrancer whom Jesus has sent forth to be our abiding guide and teacher, may be grieved! He whose divine energy is life to our souls, dew to our graces, light to our understandings, and comfort to our hearts, may be vexed by us. The heavenly dove may be disturbed; the celestial fire may be dampened; the divine wind may be resisted; the blessed Paraclete may be treated with despise.

The loving grief of the Holy Spirit may be traced to *His holy character and perfect attributes*. It is the nature of a holy being to be vexed with unholiness. There can be no concord between God and Belial. A Spirit immaculately pure cannot but take umbrage at uncleanness, and especially must He be grieved by the presence of evil in the objects of His affections. Sin everywhere must be displeasing to the Spirit of holiness, but sin in His own people is grievous to Him in the highest degree. He will not hate His people, but He does hate their sins, and hates them all the more because they nestle in His children's bosoms. The Spirit would not be the Spirit of truth if He could approve of that which is false in us—He would not be pure if that which is impure in us did not grieve Him. We could not believe Him to be Holy if He could look with complacency upon our unholiness; nor should we think of Him as being perfect if our imperfection could be regarded by Him without displeasure. No, because He is what He is, the Holy Spirit and the Spirit of holiness, therefore everything in us which falls short of His own nature must be grievous to Him—He helps our infirmities, but He grieves over our sins.

He is grieved with us mainly *for our own sakes*, for He knows what misery sin will cost us; He reads our sorrows in our sins. “Ah, silly sheep,” He seems to say, “I know the dark mountain upon which you will stumble; I see the thorns which will cut you, and the wounds which will pierce you! I know, O

wayward child, the rod which you are making for your own back by your follies! I know, poor erring one, into what a sea of trouble you will plunge yourself by that headstrong will, that quick temper that love of self, that ardent pursuit of gain." He grieves over us because He sees how much chastisement we incur, and how much communion we lose. When we might have been upon the mountain of fellowship, we are sighing in the dungeon of despondency; and all because, from motives of fleshy ease, we preferred to go down By-Path Meadow, and forsake the right way because it was rough. The Spirit is grieved that we should thus bring ourselves into the darkness of a loathsome dungeon, and subject ourselves to the blows of the crab-tree club of giant Despair. He foresees how bitterly we shall rue the day in which we parted company with Jesus, and so pierced ourselves through with many sorrows. He foresees that the backslider in heart will be filled with his own ways, and grieves because He foresees the backslider's grief. A mother's grief for the wrong-doing of her prodigal son is not so much the pain which he has directly occasioned her, as the sorrow which she knows that he will bring upon himself. David did not so much lament his own loss of his child, as Absalom's death, with all its dread results, to Absalom himself. "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom!" Here is deep sorrow; but the next sentence shows that it was by no means selfish, for he is willing to take a greater grief upon himself—"Would God I had died for you, O Absalom, my son, my son!" Such is the holy grief of the Spirit of God for those in whom He dwells—it is for their sakes that He is troubled.

Moreover, it is doubtless *for Jesus Christ's sake* that the Spirit is grieved. We are the purchase of Jesus' death upon the tree—He has bought us dearly, and He should have us altogether for Himself; and when He does not have us completely as His own, you can well conceive that the Spirit of God is grieved. We ought to glorify Christ in these mortal bodies; it should be the one end and objective of our desire to crown that head with gems which once was crowned with thorns—it is lamentable that we should so frequently fail in this reasonable service. Jesus deserves our best—every wound of His claims us, and every pang He bore, and every groan that escaped His lips, is a fresh reason for perfect holiness and complete devotion to His cause; and, because the Holy Spirit sees us so traitorous to the love of Christ, so false to that redeeming blood, so forgetful of our solemn obligations, He grieves over us because we dishonor our Lord.

Would I be wrong if I say that He grieves over us *for the Church's sake*? How might some of you be useful if you did but live up to your privileges! Ah, my brothers, how the Comforter must surely grieve over those of us who are ministers, when He sets us as watchmen, and we do not watch, and the Church is invaded; when He commissions us as sowers of the good seed, and our hands are only half filled, or we scatter cockle and darnel instead of sowing the good wheat! How must He grieve over us because we have not that tenderness of heart, that melting of love, that vehemence of zeal, that earnestness of soul which we ought to exhibit! When the Church of God suffers damage through us—the Spirit loves the Church and cannot endure to see her robbed and despoiled, her children left to wander, her wounded sons unsuccored, and her broken hearts unhealed—because we are indifferent to our work, and careless in our labor for the Church, the Holy Spirit is much displeased. But it is not only with ministers, but with all of you, for there is a niche that each of you should fill; and if that is vacant the Church loses by you, the kingdom of Christ suffers damage, the revenue which ought to come into Zion is cut short, and the Holy Spirit is grieved. Your lack of prayer, your lack of love, your deficiency in generosity—all these may be sad injuries to the Church of God, and therefore is the loving Spirit of God much disquieted.

Remember once more, that the Spirit of God mourns over the shortcomings of Christians, *for sinners' sakes*; for it is the Spirit's office to convict the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment; but the course of many believers is directly counter to this work of the Spirit. Their lives do not convict the world of sin, but rather tend to comfort transgressors in their iniquity. We have heard the actions of professors quoted by worldlings as an excuse for their sins. Openly profane persons have said, "Look at those Christians! They do such-and-such, why may not we?" It is ill when Jerusalem comforts Sodom, and when the crimes of the heathens find precedents in the sins of Israel. It is the Spirit's work to convict the world of righteousness; but many a professor convicts the world of the opposite. "No," says the world, "there is no more righteousness to be had in Christ than anywhere else, for, look at those who follow Him, or pretend to do so, where is their righteousness? It does not exceed that of the scribes and

Pharisees.” The Spirit of truth convicts the world of judgment to come, but how few of us help Him in that great work! We live and act and talk as if there were no judgment to come; toiling for wealth as if this world were all careless of souls, as though hell were a dream. Unmoved by eternal realities, unshaken by the terrors of the Lord, indifferent to the ruin of mankind, many professors live like worldlings and are as unchristian as infidels! This is an indisputable fact, but one to be lamented with tears of blood.

Brothers and sisters, I dare not think how much of the ruin of the world must be laid at the door of the Church, but I will dare to say this, that although the divine purposes will be fulfilled, and God will not miss the number of His elect, yet the fact that this London of ours is now rather a heathen than a Christian city, can be laid at no one’s door but that of the professing Church of God and her ministers. Where else can it lie? Is the city wrapped in darkness? It need not have been so. If we had been faithful it would not have been so—if we are faithful in the future it shall not long remain so. I cannot imagine an apostolic Church, set down in the midst of London, and filled with the ardor of the first disciples, remaining long without influencing sensibly upon the masses. I know the increase of our population is immense—I know that we are adding every year a fresh town to this overgrown city; but I will not—I dare not—tolerate the idea that the zeal of God’s Church, if at its right pitch, is too feeble to meet the case. No, there is wealth enough among us, if it were consecrated, to build as many houses of prayer as shall be needed. There is ability enough among us, if it were but given to the ministry of the Word, to yield a sufficiency of preachers of the cross. We have all the pecuniary and mental strength that is needed. The point in which we fail is this—we are straitened in spiritual power, poverty-stricken in divine grace, lukewarm in zeal, meager in devotedness, staggering in faith. We are not straitened in our God; we are straitened in our own hearts. Brothers and sisters, I believe the Spirit of God is very greatly grieved with many Churches for the sake of the sinners in their congregations who are scarcely cared for, seldom prayed for, and never wept for. Would that the thought of this might move us and our brethren to mend our ways!

II. Secondly, let us refer to DEPLORABLE CAUSES *which produce the grief of the Holy Spirit.*

The context is some assistance to us. We learn that *sins of the flesh, filthiness, and evil speaking* of every sort, are grievous to Him. Note the preceding verse: “Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth.” Let a Christian fall into the habit of talking in a loose, unchaste style, let him delight in things that are improper, even if he shall not plunge into the commission of outward uncleanness, and the Spirit of God will not be pleased with him. The Holy Spirit descended upon our Lord as a dove; and a dove delights in the pure rivers of water, and shuns all kinds of filthiness. In Noah’s day, the dove found no place for the sole of its feet on all the carcasses floating in the waste; and even so the heavenly dove finds no repose in the dead and corrupt things of the flesh. If we live in the Spirit, we shall not obey the desires of the flesh; they who walk after the flesh know nothing of the Spirit. It appears, from the 31st verse, that the Holy Spirit is grieved by any approach to *bitterness*, wrath, anger, clamor, evil speaking and malice. If in a Christian Church there shall be dissensions and divisions; if brother shall speak evil of brother, and sister of sister, love is absent, and the Spirit of love will not long be present. The dove is the emblem of peace. One of the early fruits of the Spirit is peace. My dear friends, I hope as a Church, if there are any secret ill feelings among us, any hidden roots of bitterness, even though they may not yet have sprung up to trouble us, they may be removed and destroyed at once. I do not know of any such abominable things, and am happy to be able to say so; I trust we walk together in holy unity and concord of heart; and if any of you are conscious of bitterness in ever so small a measure, purge it out lest the Spirit of God be grieved with you, and grieved with the Church of God for your sake.

I have no doubt it greatly grieves the Spirit to see in believers any degree of *love of the world*. His holy jealousy is excited by such unholy love. If a mother should see her child fonder of someone else than of her; if she should know that it was more happy in the company of a stranger than when in the bosom of its own parent, she would feel it a very hard trial to bear. Now the Spirit of God gives to believers celestial joys and abounding comforts; and if He sees us turn our back upon all these, to go into worldly company, to feed greedily upon the same empty joys which satisfy worldlings, He is a jealous

God, and He takes it as a great slight put upon Himself. What? Does the good Shepherd load the table with heaven's own dainties, and do we prefer to devour the husks which the swine eat? When I think of a Christian trying to find his enjoyment where the lowest of worldlings find theirs, I can scarcely imagine him to be a Christian, or, if he is, he must very greatly grieve the Spirit of God! Why, you set the world, which you profess to have found empty, and vain, and deceitful—you set that before the choice things of the kingdom of grace; and while you profess to be, “raised up to sit together with Christ in heavenly places,” you still grovel in the dust as others do. What does the world say? “Ah, ah,” they say, “Here is one of those Christian people coming after a little happiness! Poor soul! His religion gives him no joy, and, therefore, he is looking for a little elsewhere. Make room for him, poor fellow, he has a hard time of it on Sundays.” Then the notion goes abroad that Christians have no joy in Christ; that we have to deny ourselves all true happiness, and only get a little delight by stealth, when we do as others do. What a libel is this! And yet how many professors are responsible for it! If we live in communion with Jesus, we shall not hanker after the world; we shall despise its mirth and trample on its treasures. Worldliness, in any shape, must be very grievous to the Spirit of God; not only the love of pleasure, but the love of gain. Worldliness in Christian men and women in imitating the world in dress—worldliness in luxury, or in conversation, must displease the Spirit of God, because He calls us a peculiar people, and He tells us to, “come out from among them and be separated, and touch not the unclean thing.” And then He promises, “I will be a Father unto you, and you shall be My sons and daughters.” But if we will not be separate, how can we expect Him to be otherwise than grieved!

Israel was compelled to quit Egypt for the wilderness, and God said, “I remember you, the love of your espousals, when you went after Me in the wilderness.” He seems to dote upon Israel's early separation to Himself; and so I believe the Lord delights to see His people severing fond connections, giving up carnal pleasures, and going outside the camp, bearing the reproach of Christ. It ravishes the heart of Jesus to see His Church forsake the world. Here are His own words to His bride, “Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline your ear; forget also your own people, and your father's house; so shall the king greatly desire your beauty.” He loves to have His saints entirely to Himself. He is a jealous Savior, and hence Paul says, he labored that he might, “present the Church as a chaste virgin unto Christ.” Jesus wants to have our chastity to Him maintained beyond suspicion, that we may choose Him as our sole possession, and leave the base things of the earth to those who love them. Beware, my brothers and sisters, of grieving the Holy Spirit by worldliness. Moreover, the Spirit of God is greatly grieved by *unbelief*. What would grieve you more, dear friend, than to have your child suspect your truthfulness? “Alas,” cries the father, “Can it have come to this, that my own child will not believe me? Is my promise to be thrown in my teeth, and am I to be told by my own son, ‘My father, I cannot trust you’?” It is not come to that with any of us, as parents, yet, and shall it be so with our God? Alas, it has been! We have done despite to the Spirit of truth by doubting the promise and mistrusting the faithfulness of God. Of all sins, surely this must be one of the most provoking. If there is the virus of diabolical guilt in anything, it must be in the unbelief, not of sinners, but of God's own people; for sinners have never seen what saints have seen—never felt what we have felt, never known what we have known; and, therefore, if they should doubt, they do not sin against such light of God, nor do despite to such invincible arguments for confidence as we do. God forgive our unbelief, and may we never grieve His Spirit anymore.

Further, the Spirit is doubtless grieved by our *ingratitude*. When Jesus reveals His love to us, if we go away from the chamber of fellowship, to talk lightly, and forget that love; or if, when we have been raised up from a sickbed, we are no more consecrated than before; or if, when our bread is given us, and our water is sure, our heart never thanks the bounteous giver; or if, when preserved under temptation, we fail to magnify the Lord; surely this, in each case, must be a God-provoking sin.

If we add pride to ingratitude we sorely grieve the blessed Spirit. When a saved sinner grows proud, he insults the wisdom of the Spirit of God by his folly, for what can there be in us to be proud of? Pride is a weed which will grow in *any* soil. Proud of the mercies of God! As well be proud of being in debt! Why, some of us are so foolish that God cannot exalt us, for if He did we would straightway grow dizzy, and would be sure to fall. If the Lord were to put so much as one gold piece of comfort into our pockets, we would think ourselves so rich that we would set up in business on our own account, and cease from

dependence upon Him. He cannot indulge us with a little joy—He has to keep us as the father in the parable did the elder brother, who complained, “You never gave me a kid that I might make merry with my friends.” Oh, it is sad that we should be so foolish as to become proud of our graces! This is a great grief to the Spirit in a private person, and even more so when it becomes the fault of an entire Church. If you as a Church shall boast that you are numerous, or generous, or rich, it will be all over with you. God will abase those who exalt themselves. If your soul can make her boast in the Lord, you may boast as much as you will; but if you glory in anything else, God will hide His face, and you will be troubled, though your mountain once stood so firm that you dreamed it could never be moved.

I cannot give you a full list of all the evils which grieve the Spirit of God, but let me mention here, particularly, one—a *lack of prayer*. This is grievous, either in the Church or in an individual. Does not this touch some of you? How little do some of us pray! Let each conscience now be its own accuser. My dear brothers and sisters, how about the mercy seat? How about the closet and secret communion with God? How about wrestling for your children? How about pleading for the pastor? Have you not been backward in interceding for the conversion of your neighbor? Could you read the story of Abraham’s interceding for Sodom, and say that you have interceded for London like that? Can you read of Jacob at the brook Jabbok, and say that you ever spent an hour, much less a night, in wrestling with the Lord? The prayerlessness of this age is one of its worst signs, and the prayerlessness of some of our Christian Churches, looks as if God were about to withdraw Himself from the land; for in many Churches, as I am told, they have a difficulty in getting enough men to attend the prayer meetings to carry them on. I know of some—“Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon!”—I know of some Churches that have given up prayer meetings because nobody comes. Ah, if this case were a solitary one, it ought to be daily mourned over, but there are scores of Churches in the same condition; the Lord have mercy upon them, and upon the land in which such Churches dwell.

To sum up many things which might be said, I think the Holy Spirit will be grieved with any one of us if we shall indulge *any known sin*, let it be what it may; and I will add to that, if any one of us shall neglect any known *duty*, let it be what it may. I cannot imagine the Spirit of God being pleased with a brother who knows his Master’s will, and does it not; I know the Word says that he shall be beaten with many stripes. Surely, beating with stripes must be the result of grief on the part of the hand that administers such stripes. Let any person or any Church know good and do it not, and to him or to it, it shall be sin; and that which might not be sin in the ignorant, will become sin to those blessed with the light of God. As soon as your conscience is enlightened, and you know the path of duty, you need not say, “Others ought to do it,” (so they should, but to their own Master they must stand or fall). If your judgment is enlightened, make haste and delay not to keep the commandments of God. John Owen, in his treatise upon the Holy Spirit, makes a remark that he believes the Spirit of God was greatly grieved in England by the public affirmation in the articles of the doctrine that the Church of God has power to decree rites and ceremonies for herself. God’s Word is the only rule of God’s Church. Inasmuch as the Church of England, so called, claims to be her own lawmaker, she has grieved the Spirit. When a Church claims to itself the right to judge what are to be its own ordinances instead of willingly and obediently acknowledging that she has no right of choice whatever, but is bound to obey the revealed will of her Great Head, she sins terribly. It is the duty of all Christians to search the Word as to what are the ordinances which God has fixed and commanded, and being once clear as to the rule of the Word, it is ours to obey it; if you see infant baptism in the Word, do not neglect it; if it is not there, do not regard it. Here I must give utterance to a thought which has long followed me. Perhaps the present sad condition of the Christian Church, and the prevalence of the dogma of “baptismal regeneration,” may be traceable to the neglect that reigns in the Church almost universally with regard to the great Christian ordinance of believers’ baptism. Men laugh at all talk about this, as if the question were of no importance; but I take leave to say that whatever may be the truth of God upon that ordinance, it is worth every believer’s while to find it out. I meet constantly with people who have no sort of faith in infant baptism, and have long ago given it up; and yet, though they admit that they ought to be baptized as believers, they neglect the duty as unimportant. Now mark, when the Last Great Day shall reveal all things, I am persuaded it will reveal this—that the Church’s supplanting the baptism of believers by that of infants was not only a great

means in the original establishment of Popery, but that the maintenance of the perverted ordinance in our Protestant Church, is the chief root and cause of the present revival of Popery in this land!

If we would lay the axe to the roots of sacramentarianism, we must go back to the old Scriptural method of giving ordinances to believers only—the ordinances *after* faith, not *before* faith. We must give up baptizing in order to regenerate and administer it to those alone who profess to be already regenerate. When we all come to this, we shall hear no more of “baptismal regeneration,” and a thousand other false doctrines will vanish away. Lay down the rule that unbelievers have no right to Church ordinances, and you put it out of the power of men to establish the unhallowed institution of a State Church; for, mark you, no National Church is possible on the principle of believers’ baptism—a principle much too exclusive to suit the mixed multitude of a whole nation! A State Church *must* hold to infant baptism; necessarily it must receive all the members of the State into its number—it *must*, or else it cannot expect the pay of the State. Make the Church a body consisting only of professedly faithful men and women, believers in the Lord Jesus, and let the Church say to all others, “You have no part nor lot in this matter until you are converted,” and there is the end of the unholy alliance between the Church and the world which is now a withering blight upon our land. Errors of doctrine, practice, and polity may cause the dew of heaven to be withheld. You will say, “Such errors did not hinder revivals in other days.” Perhaps not, but God does not always wink at our ignorance. In these days no one needs to be ignorant about the mystery of “baptismal regeneration,” the error has worked itself to its full development, and reached such a climax that every Christian ought to give it his most earnest consideration. Guilt will come upon us if we are not earnest in seeking out the roots of an evil which is the cause of such deadly mischief in the land. If, as a Church, we are clear in our testimony on this point, I entreat you to see if there is any other error with which you may be charged. Is there a part of Scripture which we have not attended to? Is there a truth of God which we have neglected? Let us hold ourselves ready to relinquish our most cherished opinions at the commands of Scripture, whatever they may be. I say to you what I say to others, if the form of our Church government, if the manner of our administration of Christian ordinances, if the doctrines we hold are unwarranted by the Word of God, let us be faithful to our consciences and to the Word, and be ready to alter, according to our light. Let us give up the idea of stereotyping anything; let us be ready at any moment and every moment to do just what the Spirit of God would have us do; for if not, we may not expect the Spirit of God to abide with us. O for a heart to serve God perfectly! O that such a heart would be given to all His people, so that they were ready to renounce authority, antiquity, taste, and opinion, and bow before the Holy Spirit alone! May the Church yet come to walk by the simple rule of God’s Book, and by the light of God’s Spirit, and then shall we cease to grieve the Holy Spirit.

III. Thirdly, and very briefly—much too briefly—THE LAMENTABLE RESULT *of the Spirit’s being grieved.*

In the child of God it will not lead to his utter destruction, for no heir of heaven can perish; neither will the Holy Spirit be utterly taken away from him, for the Spirit of God is given to abide with us forever. But the ill-effects are nevertheless most terrible. You will lose, my dear friends, *all sense of the Holy Spirit’s presence*—He will be as one hidden from you—no beams of comfort, no words of peace, no thoughts of love. There will be what Cowper calls, “an aching void which the world can never fill.” Grieve the Holy Spirit, and you will lose all *Christian joy*; the light of God shall be taken from you, and you shall stumble in darkness; those very means of divine grace which once were such a delight, shall have no music in your ears. Your soul shall be no longer as a watered garden, but as a howling wilderness. Grieve the Spirit of God, and you will lose all *power*; if you pray, it will be a very weak prayer—you will not prevail with God. When you read the Scriptures you shall not be able to lift the latch and force your way into the inner mysteries of the truth of God. When you go up to the house of God, there shall be none of that devout exhilaration, that running without weariness, that walking without fainting. You shall feel yourself like Samson when his hair was lost—weak, captive, and blind. Let the Holy Spirit depart, and *assurance* is gone, doubts follow, questions and suspicions are aroused—

*“Do I love the Lord or no?
Am I His, or am I not?”*

Grieve the Spirit of God, and *usefulness* will cease; the ministry will yield no fruit; your Sunday school work will be barren; your speaking to others and laboring for others souls will be like sowing the wind.

Let a *Church* grieve the Spirit of God, and oh, the blights that shall come and wither her fair garden! Then her days of solemn assembly will have no acceptance with heaven; her sons, although all of them ordained as priests unto God, will have no acceptable incense to offer. Let the Church grieve the Spirit, and she shall fail to bless the age in which she lives; she shall cast no light of God into the surrounding darkness; no sinners will be saved by her means; there shall be few additions to her number; her missionaries will cease to go forth; there shall be no marriage feasts of communion in her house; darkness and death will reign where all was joy and life. Brothers and sisters, beloved in the Lord, may the Lord prevent us from grieving His Spirit as a Church, but may we be earnest, zealous, truthful, united, and holy, so that we may retain among us this heavenly guest who will leave us if we grieve Him.

IV. Lastly, there is one PERSONAL ARGUMENT which is used in the text to forbid our grieving the Spirit—“Whereby you are sealed unto the day of redemption.”

What does this mean? There are many meanings assigned by different commentators—we shall be content with the following—A seal is set upon a thing to *attest its authenticity and authority*. By what can I know that I am truly what I profess to be? I am by profession a Christian. How do I know whether I am really a Christian or not? God sets a seal on every genuine believer—what is it? It is the possession of the Holy Spirit. If you have the Holy Spirit, my dear friend, that is God’s seal set upon you that you are His child. Do you not see, then, that if you grieve the Spirit, you lose your seal, and you are like a commission with the seal torn away—you are like a note of hand without a signature. Your evidence of being God’s child is the Spirit; for if “any man have not the Spirit of Christ, He is none of His.” If you have not the Spirit in you, that will be decisive evidence for you that you do not belong to Christ; for you lack the groundwork of true assurance, which is the indwelling presence, power, and your enjoyment of the Spirit.

Moreover, I have said a seal is used for *attestation*; and so it is, not only to you, but to others. You say to the world around, “I am a child of God.” How are they to know it? They can only judge as you must judge yourself, by looking for the seal. If you possess the Spirit of God, they will soon see you to be a Christian; if you have it not, whatever else you have, you will soon be discovered to be a forgery, for you lack the seal. Beloved, all Church history proves this, that when the Christian Church has been filled with the Spirit of God, the world has confessed her pedigree, because it could not help doing so; but when the Church has lost her enthusiasm and fervor because she has lost the heavenly fire, then the world has asked, “What is this Christian Church more than the synagogue of the Jews, or the company of Mohammed?” The world knows God’s seal; and if it does not see it, it soon despises that society which pretends to be the Church of God, but has not the mark and proof of it. The same truth holds good in all cases; for instance, in the matter of the Christian ministry. When I first came to minister in London, there was some little talk about my being ordained. “If I am ordained of God, I do not need human ordination; and if, on the other hand, God has not called me to the work, no man or set of men can do it.” But it was said, “You must have a recognition service, that others may signify their approval!” “No,” I said, “if God is with me, they will recognize me quickly enough as a man of God; and if the Lord’s presence is denied me, human approval is of little worth.” Brothers, if you profess to be called to any form of ministry, your only way of proving your call will be by showing the seal of the Spirit; when that seal is affixed to your labors, you will require no other recognition. The camp of Dan soon recognized Samson when the Spirit came upon him; and when he went among his enemies—the Philistines—with the jaw-bone of an ass, they soon recognized him as they saw him piling the slain heaps upon heaps. This is how the minister or Christian must compel the recognition of his status and call. Knights of the cross must win their spurs upon the battlefield! The only way for a Christian to be discerned to be a Christian, or for a Church to be manifested as a Church of God, is by having the Spirit of God, and in the name of the Spirit of God doing exploits for God, and bringing glory to His holy name.

Once more, a seal is used for *preserving*, as well as for attesting. The Easterner seals up his money-bags to secure the gold within, and we seal our letters to guard the enclosure. A seal is set for security. Now, beloved, as the only way by which you can be known to be a Christian is by really possessing the

supernatural power of the Holy Spirit, so, also, the only way by which you can be kept a Christian, and preserved from going back to the world, is by still possessing that same Holy Spirit. What are you if the Spirit of God is gone? Salt that has lost its savor. With what can you be salted? “Trees twice dead, plucked up by the roots...wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.” The Holy Spirit is not to you a luxury, but a necessity—you must have Him, or you die; you must have Him, or you are damned, yes, and with a double damnation. Here comes in this choice promise that the Lord will not leave you, and will not forsake you; but if He did leave you forever, there would remain no more sacrifice for sin; it would be impossible to renew you again unto repentance, seeing that you would have crucified the Lord afresh, and put Him to an open shame. Grieve not, then, that Spirit upon whom you are so dependent—He is your credentials as a Christian; He is your life as a believer. Prize Him beyond all price; speak of Him with bowed head, with reverent awe; rest upon Him with childlike, loving confidence; obey His faintest monitions; neglect not His inward whispers; turn not aside from His teachings in the Word, or by His ministers; and be as ready to feel His power as the waves of the sea are to be moved by the wind, or a feather to be wafted by the gale. Hold yourselves ready to do His bidding. As the eyes of the handmaiden are to her mistress, so let your eyes be on Him. When you know His will, ask no questions, count no costs, dare all hazards, defy all circumstances. Let the will of the Spirit be your absolute law, apart from gain or loss, apart from your own judgment or your own taste. Let the will of the Spirit, when once plainly perceived by you, be instantly obeyed, and try to perceive that will. Do not willfully shut your eyes to an unpleasant duty, or close your understanding to an unwelcome truth. Lean not to your own understanding; consider that the Holy Spirit alone can teach you, and that those who will not be taught of Him must remain hopelessly foolish.

Oh, if I might but live to see the Church of God recognize the power of the Holy Spirit; if I could but see her cast aside the grave clothes which she has so long persisted in wearing; if I could see her put no confidence in State or power—rely no longer upon eloquence and learning; if I could see her depend upon the Holy Spirit, even though her ministers should again be fishermen, and her followers should again be the “base things of this world, and the things that are not,” even though she should have to be baptized in blood; even though the man-child should excite the dragon’s wrath and he should pour floods out against her, yet the day of her final victory would have dawned. If she did but obey the Spirit—if her directories, creeds, rules, prayer books, rubrics, and canons, were cast to the winds, and the free Spirit of the living God ruled everywhere; if, instead of the decrees of her councils and the slavish bondage of priestcraft and ritual, she would only embrace the liberty with which Christ has made her free, and walk according to His Word and the teachings of her heavenly Teacher—then might we hear the shout of the King in our midst, and the battlements of error would fall! God send it, and send it in our time, and His shall be praise!

I fear there are some here who do not *grieve* the Spirit, but do worse than that; they *quench* the Spirit—they *resist* the Spirit. May the Lord grant them forgiveness of this great sin, and may they be led to the cross of Christ to find pardon for every sin! At the cross, and there alone, can everlasting life be found. God bless you for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—EPH 4:17-32; 5:1-7.

Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software.

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