

A FOUNTAIN SEALED

THE WORK OF THE SPIRIT IN SEALING



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by Richard Sibbes

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**TO THE TRULY NOBLE AND MUCH
HONoured LADY,
THE LADY ELIZABETH BROOKE,**

WIFE TO SIR ROBERT BROOKE.

MADAM,—Besides that deserved interest your ladyship held in the affections and esteem of this worthy man, more than any friend alive, which might entitle you to all that may call him author, this small piece of his acknowledgeth a more special propriety † unto your ladyship. For though his tongue was as the 'pen of a ready writer' in the hand of Christ who guided him, yet your ladyship's hand and pen was in this his scribe and amanuensis whilst he dictated a first draft of it in private, with intention for the public. In which labour both of humility and love your ladyship did that honour unto him which Baruch—though great and noble—did but receive in the like, transcribing the words of Jeremiah from his mouth, Jer. 36:4. Wherein yet your ladyship did indeed but write the story of your own life, which hath been long exactly framed to the rules herein prescribed. We therefore that are entrusted in the publishing of it, deem it but an act of justice in us to return it thus to your ladyship, unto whom it owes even its first birth; that so wherever this little treatise shall come, there also this that you have done may be told and recorded for a memorial of you. And we could not but esteem it also an addition of honour to the work, that no less than a lady's hand, so pious and so much honoured, brought it forth into the world; although in itself it deserveth as much as any other this blessed womb did bear. The Lord, in way of recompence, write all the holy contents of it yet more fully and abundantly in your ladyship's heart, and all the lineaments of the image of Jesus Christ, and seal up all unto you by his blessed Spirit, with joy and peace, to the day of redemption!

Madam, we are, your ladyship's devoted,

THO. GOODWIN.‡

PHILIP NYE.‡

A FOUNTAIN SEALED

And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby we are sealed unto the day of redemption.—EPH. 4:30.

WHETHER the words be a command ensuing from authority, or counsel from wisdom, or a caveat from God's care of our souls, it is not material, considering both counsel and caveats of the great God have both force of a command, with some mixture of the sweetness of love. The apostle, as his manner is, from the largeness of his spirit, riseth from a particular dissuasive from corrupt communication in the verse before, to this general advice of not grieving God's Spirit by sin, especially against conscience enlightened. And this dissuasive from evil is enforced from a dangerous effect of grieving the Spirit of God; and the danger of grieving ariseth from this, that it is the Spirit of God, and God himself, whom we grieve, and a holy Spirit: holy in himself, and holy as the cause of all holiness in us; and he that, after he hath wrought holiness in us, sealeth and confirmeth us in that act of grace, until the day of our glorious redemption. So that the grounds of not grieving are from the greatness and goodness of the person whom we grieve, and from the greatness and constancy of the benefits we have by him. To speak something of the person: the Holy Spirit is called a Spirit, not only by nature, as being a spiritual essence, but in regard of his person and office; he is both breathed from the Father and the Son, as proceeding from them both; and by office, breatheth into all that God hath given Christ to redeem and him to sanctify. He is so the Spirit of God in proceeding from God, as that he is God, which whoso denieth deny their own baptism; being as well baptized into the name of the Holy Ghost as into the Father and the Son. And no less a person than God is needful to assure our souls of God's love, and to change our nature, being in an opposite frame. Who can reveal to us the mind of God but the Spirit of God? And herein we may see the joint forwardness both of the Father and

Son and Holy Ghost: when both Father and Son join in willingness to send so great a person to apply unto us, and to assure us of that great good the Father hath decreed, and the Son performed for us.

Why Holy?

That attribute the Spirit delights in is that of holiness, which our corrupt nature least delights in and most opposeth.* Holiness is the glory and crown of all other excellency, without which they are neither good in themselves, nor comfortable to us. It implies a freedom from all impurity, and a perfect hatred of it; an absolute perfection of all that is excellent. What is it then to grieve such an Holy Spirit, before whom the heavens themselves are impure, and not only the devils tremble, but the angels cover their faces? What shall we think then of them which do not only neglect, but despise, yea, oppose this holiness, and endure anything else? What is hated in the world with keen and perfect hatred but holiness, 'without which yet we shall never see God,' Heb. 12:14, nor enter into that pure place into which we all profess a desire to enter? There was planted in man by nature a desire of holiness, and a desire of happiness. The desire of happiness is left still in us, but for holiness, which is the perfection of the image of God in us, is both lost, and the desire of it extinguished; and that men might the better drive it out of the world under a form and show of it, they oppose the truth of it, and that with the greater success, because under that great colour the devil and his vicar carry all their devilish policies under a show of holiness. We see in popery, everything is holy with them but that which should be holy, the truth of God and the expression of it. The Man of Sin himself must have no worse title than 'His Holiness.' A show of devised holiness pleaseth man's nature well enough, as being glorious for appearance, and useful for ends. But the truth of it being cross to the whole corrupt nature of man, will never be entertained until nature be new moulded by his Holy Spirit in the use of holy means, sanctified by himself for that end. It is this that makes a man a saint, and civil virtues to be graces; which raiseth things that are

otherwise common to an higher degree of excellency. This is that to a Christian which reason is to a man. It gives him a being and a beauty different from all other. It makes every action we do in obedience to God a service, and puts a religious respect upon all our actions, directing them to the highest end.

Now that which the apostle dissuades from is from grieving so holy a Spirit. These truths are presupposed.

First, That the Holy Ghost is not in us personally as the second person is in Christ man, for then the Holy Ghost and we should make one person; nor is the Holy Ghost in us essentially only, for so he is in all creatures; nor yet is in us only by stirring up holy motions, but he is in us mystically, and as temples dedicated to himself. Christ's human nature is the first temple wherein the Spirit dwells, and then we become temples by union with him. The difference betwixt his being in Christ and us, is, that the Spirit dwells in Christ in a fuller measure, by reason that as a head he is to convey spirit into all his members. Secondly, the Spirit is in Christ entirely without anything to oppose. The Spirit always finds something in us that is not his own, but ready to cross him. Thirdly, the Spirit is in us derivatively from Christ. As a fountain we receive grace at second hand, answerable to grace in him. The Holy Ghost was in Adam before his fall immediately, but now he is in Christ first, and then for Christ in us, as members of that body whereof Christ is the head. And it is well for us that he dwells first in Christ, and then in us. For from this it is that his communion with us is inseparable, as it is from Christ himself, with whom the Spirit makes us one. The Holy Spirit dwells in those that are Christ's after another manner than in others in whom he is in, in some sort by common gifts, but in his own he is in them as holy, and as making them holy; as the soul is in the whole body in regard of divers operations, but in the head only as it understandeth, and from thence ruleth the whole body. So the Holy Ghost is in his in regard of more noble operations, and his person is together with his working, though not personally. And though the whole man be the temple of the Holy Ghost, yet the soul especially;

and in the soul the very spirit of our minds, as most suitable to him, being a Spirit. Whence the apostle wishes 'the grace of Christ to be with our spirits,' 2 Tim. 4:22. The best of spirits delight most in the best of us, which is our spirits. In the temple the further they went all was more holy, till they came to the holy of holies. So in a Christian the most inward part, the spirit, is, as it were, the 'holy of holies,' where incense is offered to God continually.* What a mercy is this, that he that hath the heaven of heavens to dwell in will make a dungeon to be a temple, a prison to be a paradise, yea, an hell to be an heaven. Next to the love of Christ in taking our nature and dwelling in it, we may wonder at the love of the Holy Ghost, that will take up his residence in such defiled souls.

2. The second thing presupposed is, that the Holy Spirit being in us, after he hath prepared us for an house for himself to dwell in, and to take up his rest and delight in, he doth also become unto us a counsellor in all our doubts; a comforter in all our distresses; a solicitor to all duty; a guide in the whole course of our life, until we dwell with him for ever in heaven, unto which his dwelling here in us doth tend. He goeth before us as Christ did in the 'pillar of the cloud and fire' before the Israelites into Canaan, being a defence by day, and a direction by night. When we sin, what do we else but grieve this guide?

3. The third ground is, that we, the best of us, are prone to grieve this Holy Spirit. What use were there else of this caveat? We carry too good a proof of this in our own hearts. We have that which is enmity to the Spirit within us, sin; and an adversary to the Spirit and us, Satan. These joining together and having intelligence, and having correspondency one with another, stir us up to that which grieves this good Spirit.

4. The fourth thing presupposed is, that we may and ought, by Christian care and circumspection, so to walk in an even and pleasing course, that we shall not grievously offend the Spirit, or grieve our own spirits. We may avoid many lashes and blows, and

many an heavy day which we may thank ourselves for. And God delighteth in the prosperity of his children, and would have us walk in the comforts of the Holy Ghost; and is grieved when we grieve him: that then he must grieve us to prevent worse grief. The due and proper act of a Christian in this life is to please Christ, and to be comfortable in himself, and so to be fitted for all services.

Of Grieving the Spirit

These things premised, it is easy to conceive the equity of the apostle's dissuasive from grieving the Holy Spirit. For the better unfolding of which, we will unfold these four points. First, What it is to grieve the Spirit? Secondly, is Wherein we specially grieve the Spirit? Thirdly, How we may know when we have grieved the Spirit? Fourthly, What course we should take to prevent this grief?

1. For the first: The Holy Ghost cannot properly be grieved in his own person, because grief implies a defect of happiness in suffering that we wish removed. It implies a defect in foresight, to prevent that which may grieve. It implies passion, which is soon raised up and soon laid down. God is not subject to change. It implies some want of power to remove that which we feel to be a grievance. And therefore it is not beseeming the majesty of the Spirit thus to be grieved. We must therefore conceive of it as befitting the majesty of God, removing in our thoughts all imperfections. First, then, we are said to grieve God when we do that which is apt of itself to grieve; as we are said to destroy our weak brother when we do that which he taking offence at, is apt to mislead him and so to destroy him. Secondly, We grieve the Spirit when we do that whereupon the Spirit doth that which grieved persons do; that is, retireth and sheweth dislike and returns grief again. Thirdly, Though the passion of grief be not in the Holy Ghost, yet there is in his holy nature a pure displeasance and hatred of sin, with such a degree of abomination, as though it tend not to the destruction of the offender, yet to sharp correction; so that grief is eminently in the hatred of God in such a

manner as becomes him. Fourthly, We may conceive of the Spirit as he is in himself in heaven, and as he dwells and works in us; as we may conceive of God the Father, as hidden in himself and as revealed in his Son and in his word; and as we may conceive of Christ as the second person and as incarnate. So likewise of the Holy Ghost as in himself and as in us. God, in the person of his Son, and his Son as man and as minister of circumcision, was grieved at the rebellion and destruction of his own people. The Holy Spirit as in us grieveth with us, witnesseth with us, rejoiceth in us and with us; and the Spirit in himself and as he worketh in us hath the same name; as the gifts and graces and the comforts of the Spirit are called the Spirit; even as the beams of the sun shining on the earth are called the sun, and when we let them in or shut them out, we are said to let in or shut out the sun. We may grieve the Spirit, when we grieve him as working grace and offering comfort to us. The graces of the Spirit have the name of the Spirit whence they come, as the Spirit of love and wisdom. Again, our own spirits, so far as sanctified, are said to be the Spirit of God. So the Spirit of God, not in itself, but in Noah, did strive with the old world, 1 Pet. 3:19. And so we grieve the Spirit, when we grieve our own or other men's spirits, so far as they are sanctified by the Spirit.

Now the Spirit, as in us, worketh in us according to the principles of man's nature, as understanding and free creatures, and preserveth the free manner of working proper to man; and doth not always put forth an absolute prerogative power, but dealeth with us by way of gentle and sweet motions and persuasions, and leaveth it in our freedom to embrace or refuse these inferior works of the Spirit. And our hearts tell us it is in our power to entertain or reject the motions, which, when we do in our own apprehension, we churlishly offend the Spirit, as willing to draw us to better ways; and we cannot otherwise judge of this but as grieving. God in his dealing with men puts his cause into our hands, that by our prayers and otherwise we may help or hinder him against the mighty. And Christ puts himself into our hands in his ministers and in the poor, counts himself regarded or neglected in them. So the Holy Spirit puts, as it were, his

delight and contentment in our power, and counts when we entertain his motions of grace or comfort we entertain him, and when we refuse them we grieve him. And the Holy Ghost will have us interpret our refusing of his motion to be a refusing of him; and not only a refusing of him, but of the Son, and of the Father, whose Spirit he is. Oh, if we did but consider how high the slighting of a gracious motion reaches, even to the slighting of God himself, it would move us to give more regard unto them. As we use these motions, so would we use the Spirit himself if he were in our power. They are not only the ambassadors, but the royal offspring of the Spirit in us; and when we offer violence to them, we kill as much as in us lieth the royal seed of the Spirit.

Obj. It may be objected, when we do anything amiss, we intend not the grieving of the Spirit.

Ans. It is true, unless we were devils incarnate, we will not purposely and directly grieve the Spirit; but when we sin, we will the grieving of him in the cause. No man hates his own soul, or is in love with death; yet men will willingly do that which, if they hated their own souls, and loved death, they could not do worse. 'Why will you perish, you house of Israel?' Jer. 27:13, saith God. They intend no such matter as perishing. God's meaning is, why will you go on in such destructive courses as will end in perishing. If we could hate hell in the cause of it and way to it, as we hate it in itself, we would never come there.

2. For the second point, wherein we especially grieve the Spirit; grief ariseth either from antipathy and contrariety, or from disunion of things naturally joined together. In greater persons especially, grief ariseth from any indignity offered from neglect or disrespect, and most of all from unkindness after favour shewed. Thus the Holy Ghost is grieved by us. What more contrary to holiness than sin, which is the thing, and the only thing that God abominates, yea, in the devil himself. But, then, add to the contrariety in sin the aggravations from unkindness, and this makes it more sinful. What greater indignity can we offer to the Holy Spirit than to prefer base

dust before his motions leading us to holiness and happiness? What greater unkindness, yea, treachery, to leave directions of a friend to follow the counsel of an enemy; such as when they know God's will, yet will consent with flesh and blood, like Balaam, who was swayed by his profit against a clear discovery of God's will. We cannot but make the Spirit of God in us in some sort ashamed to think of our folly in 'leaving the fountain, and digging cisterns, Jer. 2:13; in leaving a true guide, and following the pirate. Men are grieved especially when they are disrespected in their place and office. It is the office of the Spirit to enlighten, to soften, to quicken, and to sanctify. When we give content to Satan, it puts the Holy Ghost out of office. The office of the Holy Ghost is likewise to be a comforter. It cannot therefore but grieve the Holy Spirit, when 'the consolations of the Almighty' are either forgotten, or 'seem nothing' unto us in the pettishness of our spirits; when, with Rachel, 'we will not be comforted,' who, instead of wrestling with God by prayer, wrangle with him by cavilling objections. They take pleasure to move objections, instead of a holy submission to higher reasons that might raise them to comfort, and take Satan's part against the Holy Spirit and their own spirit, and against arguments that are ministered by those that are more skilful in the ways of salvation than themselves. How little beholding is the Holy Spirit to such, who please themselves in a spirit of opposition; and yet so sweet is this Holy Spirit that after long patience, he overcomes many of these with his goodness, and makes them at length with shame lay their hands upon their mouths and be silent. Yet that is one reason they stick so long in temptations, and are kept so long under 'the spirit of bondage.' Those likewise cannot but grieve the Comforter, that leave his comforts and seek for other comforters; that think there is not comfort enough in religion, but will bow down to the world; such as linger after the liberties of the flesh, after 'stolen waters,' as if God kept house not good enough for them. It is a great disparagement to prefer husks before the provision of our Father's [house], and to die—like fish out of their proper element—if we want carnal comforts. But above all, they grieve the Spirit most that have had deepest acquaintance with the Spirit, and have received greatest favours from

the Spirit. When the Holy Ghost comes in love, and we have given way to him to enlighten our understandings; and when in our affections we have tasted of the good things of God, that the promises are sweet, and the gospel is good; when we have given such way to the Spirit, then to use him unkindly, this grieves the Spirit. Where the Holy Ghost hath not only set up a light, but given a taste of heavenly things, and yet we, upon false allurements, will grow to a distaste, it cannot but grieve the Spirit. And this makes the sin 'against the Holy Ghost' so desperate, because there hath been a strong conviction and illumination. Therefore, of all sins, the sins of professors of religion grieve the Spirit most; and of all professors, those that have most means of knowledge, because their obligations are deeper, and their engagements greater. The deeper the affection hath entered, the greater the grief must needs be in unloosing. The offence of friends grieves more than the injuries of enemies. And therefore the sins that offend God most are committed within the church. Where is the greatest sin of all, the sin against the Holy Ghost, committed, but within the church, and where there is the greatest light and the greatest means? Sins against knowledge grieve most, especially if there be a malicious opposing, for there can be nothing to excuse it. The malice of the will maketh the sin of the deeper die, and it is contrary to the Spirit, as it is a Spirit of goodness; and hence is it that presumptuous sins so much grieve the Spirit; for by such sins we abuse the sweetest attribute of God's Spirit, his goodness, and be therefore evil because he is good, and turn his grace into wantonness, the sin of this age. Sins against knowledge are either such as are

(1.) Directly against knowledge, as when we will not understand what we should do, because we will not do what we understand. Such put out the candle that they may sin with the more freedom. This kind of ignorance doth not free from sin, but increaseth it. Some men will not hear the word, nor read good books, lest their consciences should be awaked (a). This affected* ignorance increaseth the voluntariness. Again, when we maintain untruths for any advantage, knowing them to be untruths, as many learned papists cannot but do. What a great

indignity is it to the Spirit of God to 'sell the truth,' which we should 'buy,' yea, with the loss of our lives, and to prefer the pleasing of a base man, or some gain to ourselves, before a glorious beam of God!

(2.) Other sins, if we know them to be sins, are sins against knowledge, not so directly, but collaterally. Yet this will be the chief aggravation, when our consciences are once awaked, not so much that we have sinned, as that we have sinned against the light; when the will hath nothing to plead for itself. It would, because it would, though it knew the contrary. Involuntariness takes away something of the heinousness of sin. When there is ignorance, perturbation, or passion, there is less sin and less grieving of the Spirit. But when there are none of these, but a man will sin because he will, accounting it a kind of sovereignty to have his will, this will prove the most miserable condition. For not to have the will regulated by him that is the chiefest good, is the greatest perverseness, and will end in desperation.

Quest. Why are voluntary sins so great, and so much grieve the Spirit of God?

Ans. When there is passion there is some colour for sin, as profit, pleasure, fear to displease, &c. When there is ignorance, there is a want of that that might help the understanding; but when there are none of these, and a man willingly sins, he is more directly carried against the command and will of God. There is nothing puts him on. Yet he accounts it so small a matter that he will do it without any provocation, out of a slight esteem of the good pleasure and will of God.

As common swearers, can they plead ignorance? They know the commandment, 'God will not hold them guiltless that take his name in vain,' Exod. 20:7. Can they plead perturbation? They do it oft in a bravery, when they are not urged. There is no engagement in that sin of profit or pleasure, but a voluntary superfluity of pride. They would have you to know that they are men that care not for God himself; let

God and his ministers take it as they will. Though I have no pleasure or profit by it, yet I will have my liberty. The heart that hath been thus wicked will hardly admit of comfort when it stands in need of it.

We are not said to be ill, because we know ill, but because we will and consent to ill. It is the will that makes up the bargain; sin were not sin else. God hath given us the custody of our own souls, and as long as we keep the keys faithfully, and betray not our souls to Satan, so long we possess our own souls and our comforts. But when he suggests, Do this, or speak this, and we consent, he takes full and free possession of us, as much as in us lies; and God in judgment saith 'amen' to it. God saith, Take him, Satan. Since he will not have my Spirit to rule him, it is fit he should have a worse. The more willingness, the more sinfulness, and the less defence; and God's justice cannot better be satisfied than by punishing them most against their wills, who sinned most with their will. The clearer the light is, and the more advantages it hath, the more we sin.

In this respect it is that sins against the second table grieve more than sins against the first, because here the conscience is more awakened. These be sins against a multiplied light, against the light of nature, light of the word and Spirit; and such sins are contrary to human society. They dissolve those bonds that nature, even by the common relics it hath left, studies to maintain. Though corrupt nature hath no good in it, for we deserved to be like devils, yet God intending to have civil society, out of which he usually gathers his church, preserveth in man's nature an hatred of sins that overthrow society. Such sins, therefore, being committed against more light, wound more; as in case of murder, notorious perjury, theft, &c.

Therefore God oft gives up men, upon breach of the first table, to breaches of the second, that so they may come to more grief and shame, as being the breakers of both tables. Men never fall into the breach of the second table, but upon breach of the first. No man despiseth man's law, but he despiseth God's law first. No man breaks the law of nature, but he despiseth the God of nature. Profane

atheistical persons, that glory in the breach of the third commandment by swearing, God meets with them by giving them over to gross abominable sins of the second table; which vexeth them more, though they should not, than sins against the first table; exposing them, besides inward grief, to open shame. Then God opens conscience to tell them, not only that they are to blame for their gross sins, but for the root of them, atheism, profaneness, looseness, which are sins against the first table. This is an aggravation of sins against knowledge, when our knowledge hath been holpen and strengthened by education, by example of others running into our eyes, which is a more familiar teaching than that of rule, and strengthened also by observation and experience of ourselves, and the former strength we have had, against the sin we now commit; and sweetness we have found in the resisting of it. None are worse than those that have been good and are naught,* and might be good, and will be naught, when there is more deliberation and foreknowledge of the dangerous issue, and this also joined with the warning of others. As Reuben said unto the rest of his brethren, 'Spake I not unto you,' &c.,† so may God's Spirit and conscience say to men, Did not I acquaint you with the danger of sin? You are now in misery and terrors of conscience, but did you not slight former admonitions, and helps, and means? Conscience is an inferior light of the Spirit: to do things against conscience is to do them against the Spirit. God spake to me, and I heeded him not. How doth God speak? When conscience speaks, and saith, This is good, this is bad, then God speaks. Conscience hath somewhat divine in it. It is a petty god. It speaks from God. Especially when the Spirit joins with conscience, then God speaks indeed; then there is light upon light.

Upon divers respects some sin may grieve more or less than another. As the Holy Ghost is a Spirit, so spiritual sins grieve most—as pride, envy—imprinting upon the soul as it were a character of the contrary ill spirit. Carnal sins, whereby the soul is drowned in delight of the body, may more grieve the Spirit in another respect; as defiling his temple, and as taking away so much of the soul. Love and delight carry the soul with them; and the more deeply such sins enter into

the creature, besides the defilement, the less strength it hath to spiritual duties. Grace is seated in the powers of nature. Now carnal sins disable nature, and so sets us in a greater distance from grace, as taking away the heart, Hos. 4:11. Hereupon the apostle sets being 'filled with wine,' contrary to being 'filled with the Spirit,' Eph. 5:18. And hence it is the apostle forbids, in the former words, 'unclean communication.' The Holy Spirit is a Spirit of truth, hates hypocrites, being painted sepulchres; but as a spirit of purity hates foul livers, and foul-mouthed speakers, as 'open' sepulchres. They cannot therefore but much grieve the Spirit, that feed corrupt lusts, and study to give contentment, and pay tribute to the flesh, to which they owe no service and are no debtors, and by sowing to the flesh, from which we can reap nothing but corruption, Gal. 6:8. When our thoughts are exercised to content the outward man, to contrive for the things of the world only, this is to pay tribute of the strength and vigour of our affections to the utter enemy of God's Spirit, and our own souls. When our thoughts run deeply into earthly things, we become one with them.

Who will think himself well entertained into an house, when there shall be entertainment given to his greatest enemy with him, and shall see more regard had, and better countenance shewed, to his enemy than to him? When the motions of corrupt nature are more regarded than the motions of the Spirit? The 'wisdom' of the Spirit, 'which is from above, is first pure,' James 3:17, and maketh us so, and raiseth the soul upward to things above. Christians indeed have their failings; but if a true Christian examine himself, his heart will say, that every day he intends the glory of God, and the good of the state he lives in. He hath a larger heart than a base worldling, that keeps within the sphere of himself, spending all his thoughts there, and consults only with flesh and blood, with profit and pleasure, to hear what they say. Such baseness cannot but grieve the Spirit, as contrary to our hopes and heavenly calling, which are glorious.

It is a dangerous grieving of the Spirit, when, instead of drawing ourselves to the Spirit, we will labour to draw the Spirit to us, and

study the Scriptures to countenance us in some corrupt course, and labour to make God of our mind, that we may go on with the greater liberty; when men get to themselves teachers after their own lusts, as many do, especially if they be in place—Ahab shall not want his four hundred false prophets;—when men cut the rule and standard to fit themselves, and not fit themselves to it (b). You have some that are resolved what to do, and yet will be asking counsel; and if they have an answer to their minds then they rest; if not, then their answer is, This is your judgment, but others are of a contrary opinion. And thus they labour to make the Spirit of God in his ministers to serve their turn. So did the Jews in Jeremiah's time, Jer. 42:2, seq.

Some will father those sinful affections that arise from the flesh, and are strengthened by Satan, upon the Holy Spirit, counting wrath that is kindled from hell to be fire of holy zeal coming from heaven. Thus the enemies of religion think they do God service in their massacres.* Such are those that wickedly oppose the ways of God, and yet are ready to say, 'Glory be to the Lord.' Such men study holiness in the show, that they may overthrow it in the power, and will countenance an ill course by religion.

Such also are faulty who lay the blame of an uncomfortable life upon religion; when men are therefore uncomfortable, because they are not religious enough. 'The ways of wisdom are the ways of pleasure,' Prov. 3:17.

In these times, being the second spring of the gospel, we must take heed of sins against the gospel. Benefits, the greater they are, being neglected or abused, bring the greater judgment. The office of the Holy Spirit is, by the ministry, to lay open the riches of Christ, and the glory of God's grace in him. By neglecting so great salvation, and by thinking this favour of God to be a common favour, we sin against both Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; and in that they desire most to be glorified. Such therefore as say to the clouds, 'Drop not,' and to the winds, 'Blow not,' and to the prophets, 'Prophecy not;' that study to keep out the light and sin against it, as discovering them, and

awakening them, and hindering them from taking that solace in carnal courses of the world; as opening the eyes of others to know them further than they would be known, and so to lose that respect they would have in the hearts of men: this cannot but grieve the Spirit of God, and move him to take away that truth that we are so far from thinking a blessing, that we are weary of it, and fret against it.

The office of the Spirit is to set out Christ, and the favour and mercy of God in Christ. When we slight Christ in the gospel, the ordinance and organ of working good in us, the Holy Ghost is slighted and grieved. Bad is our condition by nature; and what a deal of misery do we add to this bad condition! Are we not all the children of wrath? And have we not since we were born added sin unto sin? Do we not grow in sin as we do in years? Is not God just? and hell terrible? Now God out of infinite mercy having provided a way to free us from the danger of sin; and not only so, but to advance us to life everlasting; and that we should not be ignorant of that he hath done for us, he hath set up an ordinance wherein the Holy Ghost discovers his love. When we slight this, and account it but an ordinary favour, nay, rather a burden, and think the opening of divine mysteries things that may be spared, that there is too much preaching; and what needs all this ado?—this grieves the Spirit, whose office is to lay open 'the unsearchable riches of Christ,' Eph. 3:8, the infinite and glorious mercy and goodness of God in Christ, wherein God hath set himself in all his attributes to triumph and be glorified. We grieve all the sacred Trinity. God the Father is grieved to see his mercy slighted; God the Son to see his blood accounted common; and God the Holy Ghost, whose office it is to discover these things. This is the common sin of the times and kingdom, which threateneth judgment more than anything else. When the gospel, the blessed truth of salvation, is published, 'the axe is laid to the root of the tree,' Mat. 3:10, the instrument of destruction; if men slight the mercies of God, entertain not Christ, walk not worthy of the gospel, they shall feel the stroke of his sharp anger. The blood-red horse followeth the white horse, Rev. 6:4. The white horse is the publishing of the gospel. When God sets himself to glorify himself, in mercy, in the greatest benefits, and we

account them nothing, or but common favours, God removes the candlestick; the red horse of blood and destruction follows. And indeed what man will endure his greatest favours and kindnesses to be slighted?

Now a degree in grieving the Spirit this way is, when men will not be thoroughly convinced of their own sinful condition, and of the infinite love and mercy of God in Christ, in the pardoning of them. If God by his Spirit in the ministry, or in a particular reproof, come to men and discover their natural condition, and tell them they are worse than they take themselves to be, they will oppose it and study revenge, as St Paul saith: 'Am I become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?' Gal. 4:16. This must needs grieve the Spirit.

Again, The Holy Spirit is grieved when ye have a corrupt judgment of things, not weighing them in the right balance, nor value them according to their worth. When we esteem any knowledge rather than divine knowledge, any truths but truths that concern Christ, when men look upon grace as contemptible, and prefer other things above it; make a tush at holiness—Give us, say they, gifts and parts—alas, what are all gifts and parts without a gracious heart? Have not the devils greater parts than any man? Are they not called dœmones, from the largeness of their understanding? (c) If parts and gifts were best, the devils were better than we.—What an indignity is this to the Holy Spirit, to think it better to be accounted witty and politic, than to be holy and gracious!

Again, Those sins wherein there is plotting and contriving exceedingly grieve the Spirit, because they are done in cold blood. David deeply wounded his conscience, and grieved the Spirit, in plotting the death of Uriah, which was the diminution of the credit of David, that the Scripture saith, he was good in all things, except in the matter of Uriah, 1 Kings 15:5. Why? Because therein he grieved the Spirit most, in plotting and contriving the cruel murder of so good a man. How can they think they have the Spirit of God, that plot and undermine men's estates, to have their wills in unjust courses?

or if they have the Spirit, can this be without grieving it? for the Spirit will perpetually suggest the contrary.

Again, We grieve the Holy Spirit when we commit such sins as we might avoid, such sins as we have some helps against and least provocation unto. It is a general rule, *Quanto major facilitas, &c.* (d). The more the facility of not sinning, the greater the sin. Therefore, when we are tempted to sin, consider what conscience saith: I have been an hearer of the word; what hath the Spirit of God revealed and discovered unto me? He hath shewed that this is a sin. Whom do I grieve by the commission of it? The Spirit of God, and wound my own conscience. And then consider, will that that I sin for countervail this? Do I not buy my sin too dear? Sins are dearly bought with the grieving of the Spirit of God. Therefore, wisely think beforehand what sin will cost.

Men grieve the Spirit by cavilling against the truth. The heathen man could say, It is an ill custom to be cavilling against religion, whether in good earnest or in jest (e). Yet we have a sect, a generation of men, that are of all religions, of no religion; men of a contradictory spirit, that always take the opposite part, that cavil at the truth to shew their parts. This is too ordinary among the wits of the world.

This grieves the Holy Spirit also, when men take the office of the Spirit from him; that is, when we will do things in our own strength and by our own light, as if we were gods to ourselves. Man naturally affects a kind of divinity. It was the fault of Adam. And till God drive him out of himself by his Spirit, and by afflictions, he sets much by his own parts and wit, and thereupon neglects prayer and dependence on God, as if the Spirit had nothing to do with his regiment.* When men set upon actions in the strength of natural parts, perhaps they may go on in their course as civil[†] men, but never as Christians, to have comfort of their actions, because they will be guides and gods to themselves. If a man belong to God, God will cross him in such ways wherein he refuseth to honour God and to give him his due place. He shall miscarry, when, perhaps, other men

shall have success, though it be to harden them to destruction. This is a subtle way by which Satan abuseth men. The life of a Christian is dependent on an higher principle than himself, to rule and guide him.

Another way whereby we commonly grieve the Spirit of God is, when the mind is troubled with a multitude of business; when the soul is like a mill, where one cannot hear another, the noise is such as takes away all intercourse. It diminisheth of our respect to the Holy Spirit when we give way to a multitude of business; for multitude of business begets multitudes of passions and distractions; that when God's Spirit dictates the best things that tend to our comfort and peace, we have no time to heed what the Spirit adviseth. Therefore we should so moderate our occasions and affairs, that we may be always ready for good suggestions. If a man will be lost, let him lose himself in Christ and in the things of heaven; for if we be drowned in the world, it will breed discomfort.

Lastly, Omission or slight performance of duties grieve the Spirit. The Spirit, as he comes from the Father and the Son, from God, so he is great in himself, being God: 'Offer this to thy king,' saith Malachi, 1:8, when he saw them come negligently and carelessly to the worship of God. When people hear drowsily, and receive the sacrament unpreparedly, this grieves the Spirit, because it comes from irreverence and disrespect. And the reason why so many are dead-hearted, is because they make no conscience of omissions, of drowsiness, of negligent cold performances. Such Christians, what do they differ from carnal men in duties, for they will hear, pray, receive sacraments. He is the best Christian that is the most reverent Christian, the most careful Christian, most jealous over his own heart. Usually those are the richest in grace. Even amongst good men, those that are most careful and watchful over themselves, they go away enriched with the greatest blessing. Therefore let us hear, and so hear; let us receive, and receive 'thus:' 'So let us eat of this bread,' &c., 1 Cor. 11:28. The Scripture fixeth a reverent respect

before duty, suitable to the majesty of the great God whose business we are about.

Besides grieving God's Spirit in ourselves, there is an heavy guilt lies upon us for grieving the Spirit in others, which is done many ways.

First, By neglecting the grace of God in them, or despising them for some infirmities which love should cover. Contempt is a thing which the nature of man is more impatient of than of any injury. Those that are given this way to wrong others are punished with the common hatred of all.

We likewise grieve the spirit of others by sharp censures, and the greater our authority is, the deeper is the grief a censure inflicteth. Many weak spirits cannot enjoy quiet, while they are exercised with such sharpness. They think themselves excommunicated out of the hearts of those in whose good liking they desire to dwell.

Again, Those that are above others grieve the spirits of those under them by unjust commands; as when masters press their servants to that which their conscience cannot digest, and so make them sin, and offer violence to that tender part.

Again, We grieve the spirit of others, when those that are inferior shew themselves untractable to those above them in magistracy or ministry, when they make them spend their strength in vain. Thus the Spirit of God in Noah strove with the old world, 1 Pet. 3:19. Our duty is, therefore, to walk wisely in regard of others; and if it be a duty to please men in all things lawful in the way of humanity, much more ought we to please Christians in those things wherein we do not displease God, as being joined in communion with them in the same spirit. Yet here we must remember that it is one thing to cross the humour and offend the pride of another; and another to grieve the Spirit in him. No cures can be wrought without grief in that kind; and if we grieve not their spirits when such humours prevail in them, we shall grieve our own for neglect of duty.

And in the last place, this causeth another grief, when those that are good watch not over their ways. The Spirit is grieved for the reproaches of religion that come from the wicked; for what say they? Doth religion and the Spirit teach you this? Thus Christians make the name of God to be ill spoken of; and this grieves the Spirit, and will grieve them if they belong to God. Oh, wretch that I am, that I should open the mouths of others, and grieve the Spirit of God, not only in myself, but in others, because he is grieved by me!

Scandalous courses; either by unreasonable use of our liberty, without respect to the weakness of others, or by actions that are in themselves evil or of ill report. By such actions we grieve the spirit of others. An ill example always either grieveth or infecteth. The spirit of Lot was grieved for the unclean conversation of the Sodomites, which no question hastened their ruin, 2 Peter 2:7.

How shall we know when we grieve the Spirit? We may know that by the sins before mentioned as the cause of grief. Again, the Spirit will bring report of its own grief. We may know when we have offended a friend, when he leaves our company; so we may know we have discontented the Spirit by spiritual desertions, both in respect of assistance in the performance of duties, and resisting temptations, and bearing afflictions; as also in respect of comfort, as when we find a strangeness and dulness of disposition, unless it be from some natural distemper of body, we may fear all is not well.

When we find a proneness to divert* to other comforts, and to hold correspondency with carnal persons, and delight not as formerly in the communion of saints, but find an indifferency for any acquaintance; when we drive hardly, and our wheels fall off;† when conscience will not let us omit good duties, and yet we want the oil of the Spirit to make us strong and nimble in the performance of them, whereupon they come not off with that acceptance to God or our own spirits: these indispositions shew we have not used the Spirit well, whom otherwise we should find a Spirit of strength, a Spirit of comfort, a quickening Spirit.

The issues of grieving the Spirit will prove very dangerous, for the Spirit may justly leave us to our own spirits and deceitful hearts, which, as they are arch-flatterers, so will prove arch-traitors to us, and so let in a worse guest into our souls. The ill spirit is always ready presently to take possession, who, by joining with the stream of our corruptions, may please us for a time, but will destroy us for ever.

When we grieve the good Spirit of God, and cause him to leave us, our soul is left as a hell; for what is hell but the absence of God in his favour and mercy?

Again, We cannot grieve the Spirit of God in doing anything against it but it will grieve us again, and, being a Spirit, may fill our spirits with that grief that may make our conditions a kind of hell upon earth. Few reprobates feel those terrors here that the godly oft do by their bold adventures; for besides the terrors of the natural conscience, they have the Spirit to set them on, and that Spirit which had so well deserved of them before, which cannot but increase the horror and shame. In hell itself this will be the bitterest torment, to think of refusing mercy, mercy pressed and offered with all love. A careless spirit oft proves 'a wounded spirit,' and that, 'who can bear?' Prov. 18:14, until he that woundeth healeth again, by giving grace to afflict ourselves, and wait his good time to take pity of us. That which we say of conscience is true. It is our best friend, and our worst enemy. If a man's conscience be his friend, it will make all friendly to him (f). It will make God his friend, affliction his friend; nothing can sit at the heart to grieve him. But if a man's conscience turn his enemy, there need no other enemies be sought out. He hath enow in his own heart, his own tormenting conscience tearing itself. This may be as truly said of the Spirit of God, who is above conscience. If we make him not our best friend, we are sure to have him our worst enemy, that sets all other enemies upon us. Displeasure is as the person is. 'It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God,' Heb. 10:31. 'Who knows the power of his wrath?' Ps. 90:11. It is a powerful wrath. No creature hath power over the spirit immediately,

but this Spirit of spirits, who can fill the soul, the whole soul, and every corner of it. Being adequate to the soul, as large as the soul and larger, he can fill it with wrath that shall burn to hell; and who shall take off the wrath of God when the Spirit of God sets it on once?

Quest. Whence is it that we grieve the Spirit?

Ans. Because there is a cursed principle in us, always active, which is not perfectly subdued in this life. Death is the accomplishment of mortification; but while we are here, this corruption in us will always be working. 'The flesh lusteth against the Spirit,' Gal. 5:17. The flesh is an active busy thing. It bestirs itself. Now, when contraries are so near as the flesh and Spirit, in the same soul, they must needs thwart and grieve one another continually.

Quest. It may be demanded how far forth a child of God may grieve the Spirit, and yet remain the child of God?

Ans. In answer to this know, that we must not judge of sin by the matter in which, but by the spirit from which, sin is committed. There is no sin so gross but the saints of God may fall into it; but yet the child of God is hindered by a contrary law of the Spirit from yielding full consent before, or taking full delight in a sin, or allowing or persisting after. And though, in regard of ingratitude, the sin of a godly man admits of a greater aggravation than the sin of others, yet setting that aside, the sin itself of a godly man is less, for his temptations be stronger, and Satan's malice more eager against him, and his resistance of sin greater, all which doth abate the heinousness of the guilt. The more resistance from within argues a stronger party from within in the godly; the force of sin is broken from within. Take a godly man at the worst, there is some work of the Spirit in him, that in some measure is answerable to the counsels and motions of the Spirit without him. The Holy Spirit hath some hold in him, by which he doth recover him. A wicked man proceeds from grieving to quenching, and from quenching to resisting. The Spirit hath no party, no side in him; and therefore, when the Spirit is gone,

farewell. They are glad that then they can follow their pleasures and sins without check.

Sometimes God leads his children to heaven through some foul way, by which he lets them see what need they have of washing by the blood and Spirit of Christ, which otherwise perhaps they would not so much value, when they grieve the Spirit, and the Spirit thereupon grieves them, and that grief proves medicinal. The grief which sin breeds, consumes the sin that bred it. We are in covenant with so wise and powerful a God, that overrules even sin itself to serve his purpose in bringing his to heaven. They have that in them whereby they hate the sin they do, and love the goodness they do not; whereas others hate the good in some respects they do, and love the ill which they dare not commit. Howsoever they are drawn into sin, yet they will never break the conjugal bond betwixt Christ and their souls, so far as that sin should reign in them as a commanding lord, they will not forsake their oath of allegiance to serve willingly a contrary king. They may presume sometimes upon Christ, thinking they have a balm ready to cure the wound again,—as some, to shew the virtue of their oils, do 'make wounds in themselves,—the deceitfulness of sin seducing them. But God ever chastiseth this boldness, and taketh such a course with them, that it ends in taking the greater shame to themselves, and by so much as they have been more presumptuous. The loss of comfort, and the sense of sorrow they feel, makes them say from experience, that there is nothing gotten by sin, and that it proves bitterness in the end.

Again, Though they are kept from sins, in some sense, presumptuous, yet they are always kept from that 'great offence.' Though they may commit a sin against the Holy Ghost, yet they can never commit the sin against the Holy Spirit, because this is a sin of malice after strong conviction; expressed in words dipped in malice by 'a tongue set on fire by hell,' James 3:6, and in actions coming from an opposite spirit, and tending to opposition, and to bitter persecution, if their malice be not greater than their power. And it ends always in impenitency, by reason they despise that grace, and

cast away that potion whereby they should recover. Their pride will not stoop to God's way.

Thirdly, After such fearful relapses, darkness in the understanding and rebellion in the will increaseth, sin grows stronger, and they weaker and weaker to resist.

Fourthly, Satan being once cast out by some degree of illumination and reformation, brings 'seven devils after, worse than himself,' Mat. 12:45. When they see their former courses stand not with their lusts and hopes, they take a contrary course, and so fall to bitterness in the end.

There is a double miscarriage about this sin.

(1.) Some are too headlong in their censures of others; whereas the greater the sin is, the greater caution should be in fastening it upon any, especially whose spirits we are not thoroughly acquainted withal, considering so many things must meet in this sin.

(2.) The second miscarriage is, in an ungrounded censure of ourselves. There be three things that fear frees us from the danger of. First, Fear lest the time of our conversion be past, because we have so often grieved the Spirit; whereas if their time were past they would be given up to a careless security. A second is, fear of some judgment, which God stirs up in the heart to prevent the judgment that we may not feel that we fear; because fear stirs up care, and care stirs up diligence to avoid what we fear. A third is, fear lest we have committed the sin against the Holy Ghost, which shews we have not committed that sin. It is never committed but without fear and with delight. In these cases we need fear them least that fear themselves most.

The fourth point is, What course we should take to prevent this grieving of the Spirit.

1. Let us give up the government of our souls to the Spirit of God. It is for our safety so to do, as being wiser than ourselves, who are unable to direct our own way. It is our liberty to be under a wisdom and goodness larger than our own. Let the Spirit think in us, desire in us, pray in us, live in us, do all in us; labour ever to be in such a frame as we may be fit for the Spirit to work upon; as Nazianzen saith of himself, 'Lord, I am an instrument for thee to touch' (g). A musical instrument, though in tune, soundeth nothing unless it be touched. Let us lay ourselves open to the Spirit's touch. Thus Saint Paul lived not, but Christ lived in him, Gal. 2:20. This requires a great deal of self-denial, to put ourselves thus upon the guidance of the Spirit. But if we knew what enemies we are to ourselves, it would be no such hard matter.

2. Secondly, Study to walk perfectly in obeying the Spirit in all things; which requires much circumspection in knowing and regarding our ways; and then we shall find the Spirit ready to close with us, and tell us, 'This is the way, walk in it,' Isa. 30:21. And upon obedience we shall find the Spirit encouraging us by a secret intimation, that this or that is well done. Thus Paul was said to be 'bound in Spirit,' Acts 20:22. The Spirit so put him on, that he could not withstand the motions, until the execution of it. We must take especial heed of slighting any motion, as being the Spirit's messenger. They are God's ambassadors, sent to make way for God into our hearts; therefore give them entertainment. Many men, rather than they will be troubled with holy motions, stifle them in the birth, as harlots, that to avoid the pain of child-birth, kill their fruit in the womb. Let us take heed of murdering these births of the Spirit. But seeing Satan will oft interrupt good motions by good motions, that he may hinder both,

Quest. How shall we know from whence the motions come?

Ans. 1. When two good motions arise, seeming diverse, the Spirit of God carries strong to one—and that is from God—more than to the other. Good motions are either raised up in us, or sent unto us by the

Spirit. Both these, if they be raised by the Spirit, will carry us to God. They will rise as high as the spring is whence they come. What ariseth from ourselves endeth in ourselves.

2. Those motions that the Spirit stirs up from within come from sanctified judgment and estimation of what they are moved to. Other motions are hasty, and gone before they have their errand. Holy motions are constant (as strengthened from constant grace within), till they see the issue of what they are moved to. Other motions are like lightning, and sudden flashes, that leave the soul more dark and amazed than before. Holy motions are answerable to the duties of our calling. Other motions oft lead us out of the compass of our calling.

3. The Spirit moveth in the godly: first, by a dwelling in them, and working in them gracious abilities; and then draws forth those abilities to good actions. But the Spirit dwelleth not in others, nor produceth any sanctified abilities in them, but only moveth them sometimes to good actions, without changing of them.

4. The Holy Spirit's motions are seasonable. Other motions oft press upon us to disturb an holy duty. The breath of the Spirit in us is suitable to the Spirit's breathing in the Scriptures; the same Spirit doth not breathe contrary motions.

5. Motions of the Spirit, when they come in favour, carry their own evidence with them, as light doth. The motions of the Spirit are sweet and mild, and lead us gently on. They are not ordinarily violent raptures, removing the soul from itself, but leave in the soul a judgment of them, and of other things.

6. Again, The Spirit moveth us so to duties of religion as agree with civil honesty and charity to our neighbours.* Those therefore know not what spirit they are of, who, under a pretence of zeal, will be uncivil and cruel, shewing they are not led by that Spirit that appeared in the shape of a dove. Both tables in this are one, that they

come from one Spirit; and 'the second is like the first,' and requires love. And because all graces and duties come from the same Spirit, therefore one duty never crosses another; but the wisdom of the Spirit moves to all holy duties in their several and suitable places.

7. Motions, for the matter good, yet may be carnal in regard of self-confidence from whence they come.† That which Peter resolved upon was good, but confidence in himself marred it. Those motions which the Spirit stirs up are carried along in relying upon assisting grace. So much for that question.

3. Again, If we would not grieve the Spirit, let us take heed of being wanting to the Spirit's direction. The flesh here will make a forward objection, 'We can do no more than we can.'

Ans. The Spirit is always beforehand with us, preventing‡ us with some knowledge and some ability, which if we join with the Spirit in putting forth, the Spirit is ready to concur with us, and lead us further. And our conscience will tell us so much, that if we do otherwise it is not for want of present assistance or privity, that the Spirit will deny us strength if we put ourselves upon it. Our own hearts, though deceitful, will tell us that we do what we do out of willingness, preferring some seeming good before the motion of the Spirit. Herein we carry in our conscience that which will quit God and condemn ourselves. There is not the worst man, whose heart runs away from God, but God follows him a great while with sweet motions, though such be the invincible stubbornness of the heart, that it will not yield. This will take away all excuse, as Saint Austin argues well (h). If I had known, saith a wicked man, I would not have done thus. Saith he, the pride of thy heart suggests that. Hadst thou not motions and admonitions that told thee the danger of it? If the Spirit, even in the worst actions, concur so far as they are actions and motions, may we not think that he is much more ready to concur with holy motions stirred up first by himself? If the Spirit be willing to concur in natural actions, much more in spiritual, whereunto itself is the first mover. The Spirit leaves not us till we leave the Spirit.

4. When the Spirit suggests good motions, turn them presently into holy resolutions.* Is this my duty, and that which tends to my comfort? Certainly I will do it. Let not these motions die in us. How many holy motions are kindled in hearing the word, and receiving the sacraments, &c., which die as soon as they are kindled for want of resolution! Therefore let us not give over till these motions be turned into purposes, and those good purposes ripened to holy actions, that they be not nipped in the blossom, but may bring forth perfect fruit. Let us labour to improve these talents to the end for which they are sent. Are they motions of comfort? Let us use them for comfort. Are they motions tending to duty? Let us make conscience to do our duty: let not our despairing hearts cross the Spirit in his comforts, nor stand out stubbornly as enemies against our duty, for that is to cross God, and to nip his motions in the bud.

5. Let the Spirit have full scope, both in the ordinances, and in the motions stirred up by the ordinances. This is the way to make the ordinances and the times glorious, but the liberties of the gospel are contrary to the liberties of the flesh. It turneth all things upside down, and men out of themselves. Hence is it that there is nothing so much opposed by the spirit of the world, as the purity and power of the gospel, which is a sufficient prejudice of an ill condition that all such men are in. But there is another spirit in gracious men. They are the children of light, and love it. If we would not grieve the Spirit, we must be willing to bring ourselves under all advantages of the Spirit's working; as conversing with those that are spiritual, and especially attending on those ordinances wherein the Spirit breatheth; wherein we may meet the Spirit. The walks of God's Spirit are, in the means of salvation, hearing the word preached, and holy communion one with another. The word and Spirit go together. Therefore if we will have the comforts of the Spirit, we must attend upon the word. Men grieve the Spirit by neglecting the word, and holy conference, &c. It is with the word and Spirit as with the veins and arteries. The veins have arteries, that as the veins carry the blood, the arteries carry the spirits to quicken the blood. The word is dead without the Spirit, and therefore attend on the word. And then wait on the Spirit to quicken

the word, that both word and Spirit may guide us to life everlasting. Motions of this kind come from the Spirit; as it is said of old Simeon, that he came by the motion of the Spirit into the temple, Luke 2:27. John was 'in the Spirit on the Lord's day,' Rev. 1:10. Our manna falls most then. Christ's Spirit and word dwell together in the heart. Therefore the apostle useth the dwelling of Christ in us and the word indefinitely.* Faith wrought by the word lays hold upon Christ, and brings him into the soul, and keeps him there. It is a blessed thing when the Spirit in the ordinance and the Spirit in our hearts meet together. This is the way to feed and cherish the Spirit in us, and to put oil as it were into our lamp; because the Spirit, as it is in us, is thus nourished, even as the fire, though in its own element, feedeth upon nothing; yet with us here below it is maintained with fuel, otherwise dieth and goeth out. Take heed of slighting any help of faith that God affords us, as wicked Ahaz, Isa. 7:3, seq. God offered him, for the strengthening of his faith, a sign from heaven, or from earth, or any other creature. Oh no! he would not tempt God. He seemed a pious man; he would not tempt God; but what saith the prophet? 'Is it little for you to despise me? but you will grieve God;' insinuating, that when we despise those helps God hath given, we grieve the Spirit of God. Those that neglect the word and sacrament, what do they despise? A poor minister? and neglect bread and wine? No. They despise God himself, who knows better than ourselves what need we have of these helps.

6. Again, When we find the Spirit not assisting and comforting as in former times, it is fit to search the cause, which we shall find some slighting of holy motions, or the means of breeding of them; or yielding to some corruption which we are more especially addicted unto, or some sin unrepented of, which we take no notice of. It is good, therefore, to search our souls to the bottom. There may be some hidden corruption lying in the soul, which may undermine our grace and comfort; there may be a privy thief that robs us of all. And besides beloved and secret sins, it is good to bethink ourselves of old sins, which perhaps hitherto we have but outwardly thought of; and God is willing by some deadness and trouble of spirit, to mind us of

renewing of sorrow for them. For want of strict accounting with ourselves, God calls us to these arrearages and back-reckonings, as we see in Joseph's brethren, Gen. 50:15. If we find not that sweetness of communion with the Spirit that formerly we enjoyed, bethink ourselves when and wherein we lost it, that we may meet the Spirit again in these ways wherein we found him before we lost him, and take heed of those courses, in the entrance of which we found the Spirit leaving us.:

7. Again, Take heed of little sins, which we count lesser sins perhaps than God doth. We weigh sin in our own balance, and not in his, whereas no sin is to be accounted little; for if it were once set upon the conscience, and the wrath opened due unto it, it would take all comfort from us. And therefore we must judge of sin as the Spirit doth, if we would not grieve the Spirit. As the communion of the Spirit is of all the sweetest, so the preserving of it requires most exact watchfulness and thorough understanding of ourselves. Take heed of the beginning of sin. When any lust ariseth, pray it down presently; say nay to it; let it have no consent; be presently humbled; otherwise we are endangered by yielding to grieve, by grieving to resist, by resisting to quench, by quenching, maliciously to oppose the Spirit. Sin hath no bounds but those which the Spirit puts, whom therefore we should not grieve. And let us look to the head and spring of sins, whereby we grieve the Spirit of God; not to the sin so much as to the root. We are angry with ourselves for being passionate, but what is the cause of passion? It comes from pride. Jonah was a passionate man; in that measure that he was passionate he was proud. He was loath to be shamed when he had said, 'Nineveh shall be destroyed,' Jonah 4:11. He thought upon the sparing of them he should be discredited; and he preferred his credit before the destruction of a populous city. So there is much depraving and detraction in the world; and thereupon brawls and breaches. What is the cause? A spirit of envy, and oftentimes a spirit of pride. So men run into the danger of others by wronging them. What is the cause? Worldliness, base earthly-mindedness. Men think not of the root of sin, but dwell

upon the act done. We should be led from the remote streams to the spring and source of all, and bewail that especially.

This care will be helped by spiritual wisdom, whereby we may discern both wherein we have grieved the Spirit, and wherein for the time to come we may. We cannot maintain friendship in perfect and sweet terms with any whose dispositions we know not; what will please or displease them. Therefore we should study the nature and delight of the Spirit, and wherein we are prone both to forget ourselves and the Spirit. We esteem not much the friendship of those who are so much friends to themselves, as they pass* not much whether friends be contented or discontented. The Spirit dwells most largely in that heart that hath emptied itself of itself. The Israelites felt not the sweetness of the manna till they had spent their fleshpots and other provision of Egypt. The nature of God's Spirit is holy; as it is holy, so [it] delighteth only in holy temples. Those, therefore, that set up any 'idol of jealousy' in their souls against God, that do not 'preserve their vessels in holiness,' cannot think of any communion with the Spirit. The Spirit is jealous of our affections, and will have nothing set up in the heart above God. Though the Spirit stoops to dwell in us, yet we must not forget the respect due to so great a superior, but reverently entertain whatever comes from him. Reverence and obedience is the carriage due to a superior, and where the distance is not kept a breach will follow. We should reverence ourselves for the Spirit's sake, and think ourselves too good for any base lust to lodge in. The heart that the Spirit hath taken for itself should turn off all the contrary motions with abomination. What should pride and envy and passion do in an heart consecrated to the Spirit of meekness and holiness?

Upon any breach we must look by renewing repentance and faith in Christ, to renew our peace with God, before we can expect the grace and comfort of the Spirit. For as the Spirit cometh from the Father and the Son, and is procured by the death and satisfaction of the Son to the Father, without which we could never have expected the gift of the Spirit, so still we must have an eye to this satisfaction by Christ,

and reconciliation through it, before we can recover communion with the Spirit, as being the best fruit of the love of God reconciled through Christ. We see David in the 51st Psalm first importunes God for mercy again and again, and then 'for the Spirit,' and for 'the joy of salvation.'

And take heed that nothing come in nor go out of our souls that may grieve the Spirit of God. Some things come in to us that grieve the Spirit, the corruptions we receive from others. Some things come out of our hearts that grieves God's Spirit, as corrupt thoughts and speeches. That indeed is the scope of this place, 'Let no corrupt communication come out of your mouths,' &c., and then follows, 'And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God.' And after again he saith, 'Let all bitterness, and wrath, and clamour be laid aside,' insinuating that one way of grieving the Spirit is by ill and corrupt language. We can never talk with company that is not spiritual, but they will either vex and grieve us, or taint and defile us, unless it be in such exigencies of our calling as requires our converse with them. But I speak of a voluntary choice of such as favour not good things. Many men, to please their own carnal spirits, and the carnal spirits of others, they vent that that is against conscience, and against that that is higher than conscience, a more divine principle, the Holy Spirit of God; loose carnal speakers are people void of the power of religion.

Obj. Let no man say, Here is ado, indeed! duty upon duty. This will make our life troublesome.

Ans. The life of a Christian is an honourable, a comfortable, sweet life. Indeed, it requires the most care and watchfulness of any life in the world, being the best life. It is begun here, and accomplished in an everlasting life in heaven. Nothing in this world, neither our estates nor our favour with great persons, can be preserved without watchfulness; and shall we think to preserve the chief happiness of our souls without it, having so many enemies without and within, that labour to draw us into a cursed condition?

Therefore, to stir us up to the practice of these duties, that we may give contentment to so sweet a guest, consider what reason we have to regard the Spirit and his motions, from the good we have by them.

The Holy Spirit of God is our guide. Who will displease his guide, a sweet comfortable guide, that leads us through the wilderness of this world? As the cloud before the Israelites by day, and the pillar of fire by night, so he conducts us to the heavenly Canaan. If we grieve our guide, we cause him to leave us to ourselves. The Israelites would not go a step further than God by his angel went before them. It is in vain for us to make toward heaven without our blessed guide. We cannot do, nor speak, nor think anything that is holy and good without him. Whatsoever is holy and pious, it grows not in our garden, in our nature, but it is planted by the Spirit.

There is nothing in the world so great and sweet a friend that will do us so much good as the Spirit, if we give him entertainment. Indeed, he must rule. He will have the keys delivered to him; we must submit to his government. And when he is in the heart, he will subdue by little and little all high thoughts, rebellious risings, and despairing fears. This shall be our happiness in heaven, when we shall be wholly spiritual, that 'God shall be all in all.' We shall be perfectly obedient to the Spirit in our understandings, wills, and affections. The Spirit will then dwell largely in us, and will make the room where he dwelleth sweet and lightsome and free, subduing whatsoever is contrary, and bring fulness of peace and joy and comfort. And in the mean time, in what condition soever we are, we shall have suitable help from the Spirit. We are partly flesh and partly spirit. God is not all in all; the flesh hath a part in us. We are often in afflictions and under clouds. Let us therefore prize our fellowship with the Spirit. For are we in darkness? He is a Spirit of light. Are we in deadness of spirit? He is a Spirit of life. Are we in a disconsolate estate? He is a Spirit of consolation. Are we in perplexity, and know not what to do? He is a Spirit of wisdom. Are we troubled with corruptions? He is a sanctifying, a subduing, a mortifying Spirit. In what condition soever we are, he will never leave us till he hath raised us from the grave,

and taken full possession of body and soul in heaven. He will prove a comforter when neither friends, nor riches, nor any thing in the world can comfort us. How careful should we be to give contentment to this sweet Spirit of God!

No Christian is so happy as the watchful Christian that is careful of his duty, and to preserve his communion with the Holy Spirit of God; for by entertaining him, he is sure to have communion with the Father and the Son. It is the happiest condition in the world, when the soul is the temple of the Holy Spirit; when the heart is as the 'holy of holies,' where there be prayers and praises offered to God. The soul is as it were an holy ark; the memory like the pot of manna preserving heavenly truths. It is an heavenly condition. A man prospers to heavenward when the Spirit of God is with him. You know Obed-Edom, when the ark was in his house, all thrived with him, 2 Sam. 6:12; so while the Spirit and his motions are entertained by us we shall be happy in life, happy in death, happy to eternity. For it is he

'By which you are sealed to the day of redemption.'

The apostle sealeth this grave admonition by an argument taken from the Spirit's sealing of them 'to the day of redemption.'

We are all by nature in bondage to sin and corruption. We are all redeemed from sin by the first coming of Christ, and are to be redeemed from corruption by the second.

There is a day appointed for this glorious work. In the mean time, God would have us assured of it aforehand. This assurance is by 'sealing.' And this sealing is 'by the Spirit.' None else need do it, no meaner person can do it.

And what respect is due to the Spirit for doing so gracious a work? That we grieve him not; and not only so, but that we endeavour so to please him, as he may with delight go on with this blessed work that it hath pleased him to take upon him.

As the duty is spiritual, so the arguments that enforce it are spiritual; and the argument here is fetched from that which hath a most constraining force; love expressed in the sweetest fruit of it, and the stability of it, 'sealing,' and 'sealing to the day of redemption,' as if the apostle should reason thus: God the Father hath ordained you to salvation by the redemption of Christ his Son; and that you might have the comfort of it in the way to it against all discouragements you may meet with, the Holy Ghost hath assured you of it, and set his seal upon you as those that are set apart for so great salvation; that the sense of this love might breed love in you again, and love breed a care out of ingenuity,* not to offend so gracious a Spirit.

The Holy Spirit by which you are sealed

The Holy Ghost delighteth to speak in our own language. We cannot rise to him, therefore he stoopeth to us.

This 'sealing' is either sealing of persons, or of good things intended to the persons. Sealing is not only a witnessing to us, but a work upon us and in us, carrying the image of him that sealeth us; whereby we are not only assured of the good promised to us, but fitted for the receiving of it. God prepareth no good for any but whom he prepares and fits for that good. There is not only an outward authorising of the great grants we have by promise, oath, and sacrament, but an inward by the Spirit persuading of our interest in them, and working that which doth authorise us to lay claim unto them, after the use of a seal, both in confirmation and representation, and resemblance of him that sealed.

Of the Sealing of the Spirit

The persons sealed are, first, Christ, and then those that are given to Christ.

I. Christ is sealed,*

1. By the Father. Christ was ordained by him to be a saviour in our nature, predestinate to be the head of the church. Wherefore he often saith he came to do his Father's will: 'Him hath the Father sealed,' John 6:27, anointing him, calling him, setting him forth, sanctifying him by the Spirit, and every way fitting him with all grace to be a saviour.

2. He was sealed by the fulness of the Godhead dwelling in flesh, abased and exalted for us; so as his flesh is the flesh of the Son of God, and his blood the 'blood of God,' Acts 20:28.

3. Sealed by a testimony from heaven of all three persons: by the Father, 'This is my well-beloved Son;' by the Holy Spirit descending like a dove; by himself to his human nature dwelling in all fulness in it. Christ is sealed by miracles done upon him and by him; by his baptizing and installing into his office, and by giving himself up to shed his blood for sin, by which blood the covenant is established and sealed.

4. In being justified in the Spirit, being raised from the dead, and 'declared thereby to be the Son of God mightily with power,' Rom. 1:4; and then advanced to the right hand of God, that through him our faith and trust might be in God, 2 Peter 3:14; and appearing there for ever for us, sheweth not only his ability and willingness to save us, but that it is done already. We may see all whatever we can look for to ourselves performed in our head to our comfort.

II. As Christ was sealed and fitted for us, so we are sealed and fitted for Christ. † There is a privy seal in predestination. This is known only to God himself: 'The Lord knoweth who are his,' 2 Tim. 2:19. And this knowledge of God of us is carried secret, as a river under ground, until his calling of and separating us from the rest of men, when first by his Spirit he convinceth us of what we are in ourselves, and of our cursed condition, and thereby layeth us low by sorrow and humiliation for sin as the greatest evil. And then a pardon is more to us than a crown; then we will wait for mercy and continue so, and

beg for mercy, and that upon Christ's own condition, by denying and renouncing anything of our own; then Christ is Christ unto us. Indeed, after this, it pleaseth Christ by his Spirit to open 'a door of hope,' and give some hints of mercy; and to let in some beams of love, and withal to raise up the soul by a spirit of faith, to close with particular mercy opened and offered by the Spirit, whereby the soul sealeth to the truth of the promise: John 3:33, 'He that believeth hath set to his seal that God is true.' It is strange that God should stoop so low as to receive, as it were, confirmation by our belief, but thus God condescends in the phrase of Scripture, as we are said to help God: 'Curse ye Meroz, because they came not to help the Lord,' &c., Judges 5:23. God stoops to be helped by us, and to have his truth, and power, and goodness ratified and confirmed by us. When we believe the promise of God in Christ—though it be by the help of the Spirit—we seal God's truth. And then God honoureth that sealing of ours by the sealing of his Spirit: 'After you believed you were sealed,' saith the apostle, Eph. 1:13; that is, the gracious love of Christ was further confirmed to them. God honours no grace so much as faith. Why? Because it honours God most of all others. It gives God the honour of his mercy, and goodness, and wisdom, and power, and of his truth, especially he that believe sin God by believing, seals that God is true; and God honours that soul again by sealing it to the day of redemption. God hath promised, 'Those that honour me, I will honour,' John 12:26; therefore, 'He that believeth hath the witness in himself,' 1 John 5:10. That grace promised belongeth to him, for he carries in his heart the counterpane* of the promises, he that confesseth and believeth shall have mercy. I believe, saith the soul, therefore the promise belongs to me. My faith, answering God's love in the promise, witnesseth so much to me. The Spirit not only revealeth Christ and the promises in general, but in attending upon the ordinances, by an heavenly light, the Spirit discovers to us our interest in particular, and saith to the soul, God is thy salvation, and enableth the soul to say, I am God's. 'I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine,' Cant. 2:16. 'Christ loved me, and gave himself for me,' Gal. 2:20. Whence came this voice of Saint Paul? It was the still voice of the Spirit of God, that, together with the general truth in the

gospel, discovered in particular Christ's love to him. It is not a general faith that will bring to heaven, but there is a special work of the Spirit, in the use of means, discovering and sealing the good will of God to us, that he intends good unto us; and thereupon our hearts are persuaded to believe in God, and to love God as our God, and Christ as our Christ.

This is excellently set down in the sweet communion of marriage. The Spirit is the paranymphos, † the procurer of the marriage, between Christ and the soul. Now it is not sufficient to know that God and Christ bear good will to all believers (though that be the ground and general foundation of all, and a great preparative to the special sealing of the Spirit); but then the Spirit comes and saith, Christ hath a special good will to me, and stirs up in me a liking to him again, to take him upon his own conditions, with conflict of corruptions, with the scorns of the world, &c. Whereupon the mutual marriage is made up between Christ and us. This work is the 'sealing of the Spirit.'

Many are the privileges of a Christian from this his sealing, as the use of a seal in man's affairs is manifold.

1. Seals serve for confirmation and allowance. To that purpose measures are sealed. God is said to seal instruction, Job 33:16. Confirmation is either by giving strength, or by the authority of such as are able to make good what they promise, and also willing; which they shew by putting to their seal, which hath as much strength to confirm him to whom the promise is made, as he hath will and power to make it good that hath engaged himself. Amongst men there is the writing, and the seal to the writing. When the seal is added to the writing there is a perfect ratification. So there are abundance of gracious promises in the Scriptures. Now when the Spirit comes and seals them to the soul, then they are sure to us; the Spirit puts the seal to the promises.

2. The use of it likewise is for distinction from others that carry not that mark. So the sealing of the Spirit distinguisheth a Christian from all other men. There is a distinction between men, in God's eternal purpose, but that concerns not us to meddle with, further than to know it in general. God 'knoweth who are his,' 2 Tim. 2:19, and who are not his; but in time the Holy Spirit distinguisheth and ranks men as they were distinguished before all worlds, and as they shall be at the day of judgment. The beginning of that distinction that shall be afterward is in this life.

A seal maketh the impression of an image; the prince's image useth to be in his seal. So is God's image in his, which destroyeth the old image and print that was in us before. Holy and good men by this work of the Spirit are distinguished,

(1.) From civil* men by the work of holiness, which mere civil men have not at all, but despise.

(2.) And, secondly, from seeing† good men by the depth of that work. The Spirit of God works a new nature in them, whereby they are distinguished. Now nature in every creature is carried to one thing more than to another. There is a distinct propension‡ in a good man to God, to grace and goodness; his aims and bent are distinct; and thereupon he hath a greater enlargement of heart suitable to his great aims. He looks above the world and worldly men. They are narrow, low, base-spirited men, the best of them.

(3.) Again, Things by nature work from within. Herein painted hypocrites are distinguished from a true substantial Christian. He works from a principle within. Another man is moved as the automata, things, of motion, clocks, and the like engines of wit,§ that move from a weight without that poiseth them. If they do any good it is from somewhat without that swayeth their aims and ends, and not from an inward principle. Nature works from an inward principle; light things go upward and heavy things downward, naturally;

artificial things are forced. Thus good men are distinguished from those that are seemingly holy; there is a new nature wrought in them.

(4.) Again, Nature is constant. What is done naturally is done constantly. Heavy bodies go always downward, and light bodies upward. Every creature works according to his nature. An holy man is exercised in holiness constantly, because he doth it from an inward principle, from a work and stamp within. Different things may seem the same; as wild herbs may have the colour and form of those that are planted in the garden, but there is difference in the virtue of them. The seeming graces and actions of an hypocrite, they have no virtue in them; as there are some drugs without virtue, dead things. But there is a distinguishing virtue in the faith of a Christian, whereby he overcomes the world and his lusts; whereby he doth all duties, prays and hears, and is fruitful in his conversation. In all his graces there is a comforting, strengthening virtue. True gold hath the virtue to comfort and strengthen the heart|| that alchymy gold hath not (i). True grace hath a working, comforting virtue. Another man's formal artificial actions have no virtue in them; neither is it intended, they being only put on to serve a turn. Two men may do the same things, and yet there be a grand difference: the one doing them from the seal of the Spirit, from a deeper die and stamp of the Spirit; the other if from the Spirit, yet it is but from a common work at the best. Some dyes cannot bear the weather, but alter colour presently; but there are others that, having something that give a deeper tincture, will hold. The graces of a true Christian hold out in all kinds of weathers, in winter and summer, prosperity and adversity, when superficial counterfeit holiness will give out. Thus we see the seal of the Spirit serves for distinction.

3. The use of a seal is likewise for appropriation. Merchants use to seal their wares they would not have others have any right unto.

A Christian is God's in a more peculiar manner than others. There is not only a witness of the Spirit that God is his; but the Spirit works in him an assent to take God again. There is a mutual appropriation: 'I

am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine,' Cant. 2:16. When the soul can say, 'Thou art my God,' it is not frustrate, because God saith before, 'I am thy salvation,' Ps. 35:3. Where the Spirit seals, God appropriates. 'God chooseth the righteous man to himself,' Ps. 4:3. And we may know this appropriation by appropriating God again: 'Whom have I in heaven but thee? and what have I in earth in comparison of thee?' Ps. 73:25. There is no action that God works upon the soul, but there is a reflect action by the Spirit to God again. If God choose and love us, we choose and love him again. God appropriates us first. We are his and we are Christ's. We are God's, because he hath given Christ for us. We are Christ's, because he hath given himself for us. We are, as the apostle saith, a people of acquisition, 'a people purchased,' Acts 20:28—purchased at a dear rate by the blood of Christ. Those that are Christ's, the Spirit appropriates them. This appropriation is by sealing.

4. Again, We use to set our seal only upon that we have some estimation of. 'Set me as a seal,' saith the church in the Canticles, 'upon thy right hand,' 8:6; have me in thy eye and mind as a special thing thou valuest.

The witness and work of the Spirit shews God's estimation of us. The Scripture is abundant in setting forth the great price that God sets on his children. They are his children, his spouse, his friends, his portion, his treasure, his coin. He sets his mark, his likeness on them. They are things hallowed and consecrated. They are first fruits. 'Israel is a holy thing,' Jer. 2:3. Their titles shew the esteem that God hath of them. He values them more than all the world besides, which are as chaff and dross: 'The righteous man is more excellent than his neighbour,' Prov. 12:26. As there is a difference of excellency between precious stones and other common stones, between fruitful and barren trees, so there is amongst men. And in this regard, God sets a higher esteem upon some; and thence it is that they have those honourable and glorious titles in Scripture, of 'sons,' 'heirs,' 'kings,' and 'co-heirs with Christ;' when others are termed 'dross and dung,' and thorns,' and have all the base terms that may be.

Now this estimation, by 'sealing,' is known to us by the grace God works in us. Common gifts and privileges and favours of the world are no seal of God's estimation. If God should give a man kingdoms and great monarchies, it seals not God's love to him at all; but when God makes a man a spiritual king to rule over his base lusts, this is a seal of God's valuing him above other men. Therefore we should learn how to value others and ourselves, not by common things that castaways may have, but by the stamp of God set on us by the Spirit, which is an argument that God intends to lay us up as coin for another treasury, for heaven. It is the common grand error of the times to be led with false evidences. Many think God loves them, because he spares them and follows them with long patience, and makes them thrive in the world. Alas! are these fruits of God's special love? What grace hath he wrought in thy heart by his Spirit? 'He gives his Spirit to them that pray,' Luke 11:13; insinuating that next the gift of his Son, the greatest gift is the Spirit, to fashion and fit us to be members of his Son. This is an argument of God's love and esteem.

5. Seals likewise are used for secrecy, as in letters, &c. So this seal of the Spirit is a secret work. God knoweth who are his. They are only known to him and to their own hearts: 'The white stone is only known to him that hath it, and the hidden manna,' Rev. 2:17. None so infallibly can know the state in grace, as those that have the gracious work themselves. Holy men in some degree are known one to another, to make the communion of saints the sweeter. There is a great deal of spiritual likeness in Christians; 'face answereth to face,' Prov. 27:19, that one hath strong confidence of the salvation of another. But the undoubted certainty of a man's estate is known only to God and his own soul; nay, sometimes it is hidden from a man's self. There are so many infirmities and abasements and troubles in the world, that this life is called a 'hidden life' in Scripture: 'Our life is hid with Christ in God,' Col. 3:3. It is unknown to the saints themselves sometimes, and the world alway: 'They neither know him that begets, nor them that are begotten,' 1 John 5:1.

6. Hence, likewise, the use of a seal is to shew that things should be kept inviolable. Hereupon the church is as a 'sealed fountain,' Cant. 4:12. Sealing shews a care of preservation from common annoyance. Hereupon likewise it is that sealing is the securing of persons or things sealed from hurt. No man will violate a letter, because it is sealed. The tomb where Christ was buried was sealed, and the prison doors upon Daniel, that none might meddle with them. So the Spirit of God, by this work of sealing, secures God's children; as the blood sprinkled upon the posts of the doors of the Israelites secured them from the destroying angel. In Ezek. 9:4, there was a mark set upon those that were to be preserved that secured them; and in Rev. 7:3, the 'sealed ones' must not be hurt. So where this seal of the Spirit is, it is an argument that God means to preserve such a one from eternal destruction, and from prevailing dangers in this world. They are God's sealed ones. No man can hurt them without wrong to God himself. 'Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm,' Ps. 105:15. And likewise from devouring sins and dangerous apostasy. A man that is truly sealed by the Spirit of God he never becomes a member of antichrist, a stigmatised papist—for antichrist hath his seal too—he is kept from soul-murdering errors; he hath this security upon him by the work and witness of God's Spirit. Whatsoever the use is, or can be, of a seal in man's affairs, that God will have us make use of in his heavenly intercourse betwixt him and us.

Whereby you are sealed

Now there are divers degrees of the Spirit's sealing.

1. Faith; 'He that believes hath the witness in himself,' 1 John 5:10. He carries in his heart the counterpane* of all the promises. This grace is first planted in the heart, and answereth to God's love and purpose towards us of giving eternal life. The seal and first discovery of election is manifested to us in our believing. Acts 13:48, 'As many as were ordained to eternal life believed.' This believing is also a seal to us, in that it is of those gifts that 'accompany salvation,' Heb. 6:9,

of which God never repents him by calling back again. It is a 'seed that abideth for ever.'

2. The work of sanctifying grace upon the heart is a seal. Whom the Spirit sanctifieth he saveth. 'The Lord knoweth who are his,' 2 Tim. 2:19. But how shall we know it? By this seal: 'Let every one that nameth the name of the Lord depart from iniquity,' not only in heart and affection, but in conversation, and that shall be a seal of his sonship to him. None are children of God by adoption, but those that are children also by regeneration; none are heirs of heaven but they are new born to it. 'Blessed be God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath begotten us anew to an inheritance immortal,' &c., 1 Peter 1:4. This seal of sanctification leaves upon the soul the likeness of Jesus Christ, even grace for grace.

But because in time of desertion and temptation we are in a mist, and cannot read our own faith and our own graces, it pleaseth Christ after some trial and exercise to shine upon his own graces in the heart, whereby we may know we believe and know we love; until which time, the heart sees nothing that is good, and seems to be nothing but all objections and doubtings. We may be sometimes in such a state as Paul and his company was in the ship, Acts 27:20, when 'they saw neither sun nor stars many days together;' almost past all hope. So a Christian may for many days together see neither sun nor star; neither light in God's countenance nor light in his own heart; no grace issuing from God; no grace carrying the soul to God; though even at that time God darts some beam through those clouds upon the soul. The soul again, by a spirit of faith, sees some light through those thickest clouds, enough to keep the soul from utter despair, though not to settle it in peace.

In this dark condition, if they do as St Paul and his company did, cast anchor even in the dark night of temptation, and pray still for day, God will appear, and all shall clear up; we shall see light without and light within; the day-star will arise in their hearts.

Though by reflecting upon our souls we are able to discern a spirit of faith, God may hide himself from the soul in regard of comfort. Nay, a Christian may know himself to be in the state of grace, and yet be in an afflicted condition. As in Job's case, he knew his Redeemer lived, and he resolved to trust in him, 'even though he killed him,' Job 13:15; he knew he was no hypocrite; he knew his graces were true; and for all the imputations of his friends, they could not dispute him out of his sincerity: 'You shall not take my uprightness from me,' Job 27:6. Yet for the present he saw no light from heaven till it pleased God to reveal himself in special favour to him. There is always peace and joy in believing; yet not in that degree which gives the soul content, until by honouring God in believing, and waiting still his good time, he honoureth us with further sense of his favour, and poureth forth his Spirit to us, manifesting his special love towards us; and this is a further degree of sealing of us, confirming us more strongly than before.

The reason why we can neither have grace to believe, nor know we believe, nor when we know we believe enjoy comfort without a fresh new act of the Spirit, is because the whole carriage of a soul to heaven is above nature. Where the Spirit makes a stand, we stand and can go no further. We cannot conclude from right grounds without some help of the Spirit; some doubts, some fears will hinder the application to ourselves, even as those that live in some damnable sin cannot but grant that those that live in such a sin shall never inherit heaven; and their conscience tells them they live in such a sin, yet self-love blinds them so, that they will not conclude against themselves that they shall be damned; so true believers cannot conclude for themselves without divine light and help.

It pleaseth God thus to keep every degree and act of sealing in his own hand, to keep us in a perpetual dependence upon him, and to awe us that we should not grieve the Spirit of grace, and cause him to suspend either act of grace or comfort.

Joy and strong comfort come from a superadded seal of the Spirit. The works of the Spirit are of a double kind: either in us, by imprinting sanctifying grace; or upon us, by shining upon our souls in sweet feelings of joy. What the Spirit worketh in us is more constant, as a new nature which is always like itself and worketh uniformly; but comfort and joy are of the nature of such privileges as God vouchsafeth at one time and not at another, to some and not to others.

This degree of sealing in regard of joy hath its degrees likewise; sometimes it is so clear and strong, that the soul questioneth not its state in grace ever after, but passeth on in a triumphant manner to that glory it looks for. Sometimes after this sealing there may be interrupting of comfortable communion so far as to question our condition; yet this calling into question comes not from the Spirit, which, where it once witnesseth for us, never witnesseth against us, but it is a fruit of the flesh not fully subdued, it is a sin itself, and usually a fruit of some former sin. For howsoever we should not doubt after a former witness of the Spirit, yet there will be so much weakening of sense of our assurance, as there is yielding to any lust. The knowledge of our estate in grace and comfort thereupon, though it may be weakened by neglect of our watchfulness, yet still it hath the force of an argument to assure us when the Spirit pleaseth to direct us to make use of it, because God's love varies not as our feelings doth; and a fit doth not alter a state. The child in the womb stirs not always, yet it lives; and that may be gathered from the former stirrings.

This degree of sealing by way of witness and comfort, is appropriated to the Holy Spirit. Every person in the blessed Trinity hath their several work. The Father chooseth us and passeth a decree upon the whole groundwork of our salvation. The Son executeth it to the full. The Spirit applieth it, and witnesseth our interest in it by leading our souls to lay hold upon him, and by raising up our souls in the assurance of it, and by breeding and cherishing sweet communion with Father and Son, who both of them seal us like wise by the Spirit.

This joy and comfort is so appropriated to the Spirit, as it carrieth the very name of the Spirit, and is one of the three witnesses on earth, that witnesseth not only Christ to be a Saviour, but our Saviour, 1 John 5:7. The three witnesses on earth are, the 'Spirit, water, and blood.'* For the better conceiving of which place, we must know that the great work of Christ's redemption and justification was typified in the Old Testament by blood; and the great work of our sanctification typified by their washing. To answer which types, when Christ's side was pierced, there came forth both blood and water, shewing that Christ came not only by blood to justify us, but by water to sanctify us. Hereupon blood and water have the power to be witnesses. The blood of Christ being sprinkled on the heart by the Spirit, doth pacify the conscience in assuring it that God is pacified by blood, as 'being offered by the eternal Spirit,' Heb. 9:14. This quieting power sheweth that it was the blood of God, and shed for me in particular.

The witness of water is from the power the Spirit hath to cleanse our nature, which no creature can do, but the Spirit of God. Change of nature is peculiar to the Author of nature. If we feel, therefore, our natures altered, and of unclean become holy, in some measure we may know we are the children of God, as being begotten by the Spirit of Christ, conforming us to his own holiness. Our spirit as sanctified can witness to us that we are Christ's,

But oft it falls out, that our own spirits, though sanctified, cannot stand against a subtle temptation strongly enforced. God superadds his own Spirit. Guilt often prevails over the testimony of blood; that of water, by reason of stirring corruptions, runneth troubled. Therefore the third, the immediate testimony of the Spirit, is necessary to witness the Father's love to us, to us in particular, saying, 'I am thy salvation,' Ps. 35:3, 'thy sins are pardoned,' Mat. 9:2. And this testimony the word echoeth unto, and the heart is stirred up and comforted with joy inexpressible. So that both our spirits and consciences, and the Spirit of Christ joining in one, strongly witness our condition in grace, that we are the sons of God.

In this threefold testimony, the order is this: blood begets water; satisfaction by blood procures the Spirit from God, as a witness of God's love; and by feeling the power of blood and water, we come to have the Spirit witnessing and sealing our adoption unto us, to establish us in the state of grace against storms of temptation to the contrary. The Spirit persuadeth to look unto blood, convinceth the heart of the efficacy of it, and then quieteth the soul, which giveth itself up to Christ wholly and to whole Christ; and thence feels his heart established against carnal reason, so as he can and doth oppose Christ's blood to all the guilt that doth arise. And this witness of the Spirit comforting the soul is the most familiar, and affects most.

If we feel it not, as oft we do not, then rise upward from want of this joy of spirit to water, and see what work we find of the Spirit in cleansing our souls; and if we find these waters not to run so clearly as to discern our condition in them, then go to the witness of blood, and let us bathe our souls in it, and then we shall find peace in free grace procured by blood; for oftentimes a Christian is driven to that pass, that nothing can comfort him, within or without him, in heaven or earth, but the free and infinite mercy of God in the blood of Christ, whereon the soul relieth when it feels no comfort, nor joy of the Spirit, nor sees no work of sanctification. Then it must rest on the satisfaction wrought by the blood of Christ, when the soul can go to God and say, 'If we confess our sins, thou art just to forgive them; and the blood of Christ shall cleanse us from all sin,' 1 John 1:9. Therefore, though I feel not inward peace, nor the work of the Spirit, yet I will cast myself upon thy mercy in Christ. Hereupon we shall in God's time come to have the witness of water and the Spirit more evidently made clear unto us.

The Spirit it is that witnesses with blood, and witnesses with water, and by water, whatsoever of Christ's is applied unto us by the Spirit. But, besides witnessing with these witnesses, the Spirit hath a distinct witness by way of enlarging the soul; which [is] joy in the apprehension of God's fatherly love and Christ's setting the soul at liberty. The Spirit doth not always witness unto us our condition by

force of argument from sanctification, but sometimes immediately by way of presence; as the sight of a friend comforts without help of discourse. The very joy from sight prevents the use of discourse.

This testimony of the Spirit containeth in it the force of all, word, promise, oath, seal, &c. This is greater than the promise, as a seal is more than our hand, and as an oath is more than a man's bare word. The same that is said of God's oath in comparison with his bare promise, may be said of this sealing in comparison of other testimonies. That as God was willing more abundantly to clear to the heirs of promise their salvation, he added an oath, Heb. 6:18; so for the same end he added this his Spirit as a seal to the promise, and to the other testimonies. Our own graces indeed, if we were watchful enough, would satisfy us. The fountain is open as to Hagar, but she seeth it not, &c., Gen. 21:17, seq. Howsoever the Spirit, if that cometh, it subdueth all doubts.

As God in his oath and swearing joineth none to himself, but sweareth by himself, so in this witness he taketh in no other testimony to confirm it, but witnesseth by himself. And hence ariseth 'joy unspeakable and glorious,' 1 Pet. 1:8, and 'peace which passeth all understanding,' Philip. 4:7; for it is an extract of heaven when we see our being in the state of grace, not in the effect only, but as in the breast and bosom of God.

Quest. But how shall we know this witness from an enthusiastical fancy and illusion?

Ans. This witness of the Spirit is known from the strong conviction it bringeth with it, which weigheth and overpowers the soul to give credit unto it. But there be, you will say, strong illusions. True. Bring them therefore to some rules of discerning. Bring all your joy, and peace, and confidence to the word. They go both together. As a pair of indentures, one answers another. In Christ's transfiguration upon the mount, Moses and Elias appeared together with Christ. In whatsoever transfiguration and ravishment we cannot find Moses

and Elias and Christ to meet—that is, if what we find in us be not agreeable to the Scriptures—we may well suspect it as an illusion.

That you may know the voice of the Spirit of God from the carnal confidence of our own spirits, inquire,

1. What went before.
2. What accompanieth it.
3. What followeth after this ravishing joy.

1. The word must go before it, in being assented unto by faith, and submitted unto by answerable obedience: 'In whom, after you believed' the word of promise, 'you were sealed.' So that if there be not,

(1.) First, A believing of the word of promise, there is no sealing: 'The God of peace give you joy in believing,' 1 Thes. 5:23. There must be a believing, a 'walking according to rule,' Gal. 6:16, or else no joy nor peace will be unto us. If we cannot bring the word and our hearts together, it is not God's, but Satan's sealing, a groundless presumption, and it will end in despair. As Christ came by water and blood, so doth this testimony; it cometh after the other two. First, the heart is carried to blood, and from thence hath quiet; then followeth water, and our nature is washed and changed; and then cometh this of the Spirit. Though it be not grounded on their testimony, but is above theirs, yet they go before. Where we thus find the work, we may know it to be right by the order of it.

(2.) It cometh after deep humiliation and abasement. Though we know ourselves to be the children of God in some such measure, as we would not change our condition for all the world, yet we would have more evidence; we would have further manifestation of God's countenance towards us; we are not satisfied, but wait. After we have long fasted, and our hearts melted and softened, then God poureth water upon the dry wilderness, and then it comes to pass, through

his goodness and mercy, that he comforts and satisfies the desires of the hungry soul. God will not suffer the spirit of his children to fail.

(3.) Likewise, after self-denial in that which is pleasing to us. It is made up with inward comfort. If this self-denial be from a desire of nearer communion with God, God will not fail them in that they desire. There are wretches in the world that will deny their sinful nature nothing. If they have a disposition to pride, they will be proud; if they have a lust to be rich, to live in pleasures, to follow the vanities of the times, they will do so; they will not say nay to corrupt nature in any thing. Will God vouchsafe to give any true joy or comfort of spirit to such ones? No. Those that let loose their natures without a check shall never taste of this hidden manna. But when we deny ourselves, deny to hear or see that which may feed corruption, when we deny to take delight in that, that we might if we would go the course of the world, there is a proportionable measure of joy and peace and comfort in a higher kind made good to the soul. God is so good, we shall lose nothing for parting with anything for his sake.

(4.) It is usually found, after conflict and victory, as a reward. 'To him that overcometh, will I give to eat of the hidden manna,' Rev. 2:17. God's children, after strong conflict with some temptation or inward corruption, especially that which accompanieth their disposition and temper, when they have so conflicted as that at last they get the better, they find by experience sweet enlargement of spirit. To strive against them is a sign of grace, but to get victory over them, even to subdue our enemies under us that rise up against us, this bringeth true peace and joy.

(5.) After we have put forth our spiritual strength in holy duties, God crowns our endeavours with increase of comfort. A Christian that takes pains with his heart, and will not serve God with that which cost him nothing, enjoys that which the spiritual sluggard wishes for, and goes without. God is so just that those men which have striven to live according to the principles of nature, have found a contentment

proportionable to their endeavours; some degree of pleasure attends every good action, as a reward before a reward.

2. Besides these things that go before this joy and testimony, there are, secondly, some things that do accompany it, if it be right, as,

(1.) This spiritual comfort enlargeth our hearts to a desire after an high prizing the ordinances, so far is it from taking us off from a dependence upon them. In the word and other means it found comfort from God, therefore it delights to be meeting God still in his own ways. The eye of the soul is strengthened to see further into truths, and is enabled more spiritually to understand the things it knew before, as in many of the same truths that wise men understand, they understood them when they were young as when they were old, but then more clearly. So all truths are more clearly known by this. The Spirit by which we are sealed is the Spirit of illumination, not that it reveals any thing different from the word, but giveth a more large understanding and inward knowledge of the same truths as were known before.

(2.) A liberty and boldness with God, for 'where the Spirit is, there is a gracious liberty;' that is, further enlargements from the law, guilt of sin, and the fear of the wrath of God, that we can come with some boldness to his throne and to him as our Father; a freedom to open our souls in prayer before him. This stands not so much in multitude of words, or forms of expressions, but a son-like boldness in our approaches in prayer. The hypocrite, especially in extremity, cannot pray; his conscience stops his mouth. But where the Spirit sealeth, it giveth this liberty, freely to open and spread our case before him and call upon him, yea, under the evidence of some displeasure.

(3.) There doth likewise ordinarily accompany this sealing of the Spirit, Satan's malice and opposition; who, being cast from heaven himself, envies this heaven upon earth in a creature of meaner rank by creation than himself. We must not think to enjoy pure joy here

without molestation. If there be danger of exalting above measure, we must look for some messenger of Satan.

3. After this witness it leaves the soul more humble; none more abased in themselves than those that have nearest communion with God, as we see in the angels that stand before God and cover their faces, so Isa. 6:2, seq. Job, after God had manifested himself unto him, abhorred himself in dust and ashes, Job 42:6. It brings with it a greater desire of sanctification and heavenly-mindedness. As Elias ascended up into heaven, his cloak fell by degrees from him; the higher our spirits are raised, the more we put off affections to earthly things.

(2.) Again, The end of this further manifestation of the Spirit being encouragement to duty, or suffering in a good cause, the soul by this witness of the Spirit finds increase of spiritual mettle. It finds itself steeled against opposition. Whilst this wind filleth their sails, they are carried on amain,* and are frightened with nothing that stands in their way. See how the believers triumph upon the Spirit's witnessing to their spirits that they are the sons of God, Rom. 8:16–33, &c.

God usually reserveth such comforts for the worst times: 'Give wine to those that be of heavy heart,' Prov. 31:6. The sense of this love of Christ is better than wine. This refreshing Paul had in the dungeon, and he sung at midnight. After this witnessing, therefore, look for some piece of service to do, or trial to undergo.

Much must be left to God's fatherly wisdom in this, who knows whom to cheer up, and when and in what degree, and to what purpose and service; and remember always that these enlargements of spirit are as occasional refreshings in the way, not daily food to live upon. We maintain our life by faith, not by sight or feeling. Feasting is not for every day, except that feast of a good conscience, which is continual; but I speak of grand days and high feasts. These are disposed as God seeth cause.

(3.) Where this sealing of the Spirit is, there followeth also upon it a lifting up of the head in thinking of our latter end. It makes one think of the times to come with joy, as the Holy Ghost here mentioneth the day of redemption, as a motive to them to take heed that they did not grieve the Spirit; intimating they should think of the day of redemption with a great deal of joy and comfort. The saints are described in Scripture to be those that 'look for the appearing of Christ,' 2 Pet. 3:12. They are Christ's, and in him their reckonings and accounts are even. And therefore with delight they can often think and meditate upon the blessed times that are to come.

There be divers degrees of sealing, arising from divers degrees of revelation. God first reveals his good will in his promises to all believers. This is the privilege of the church, especially in these latter times. Then by his Spirit reveals those saving truths to those that are his, by a divine light. So that by argument drawn from the power they feel from truths, in searching secrets, in casting down, in raising up, in staying the soul, they can seal to them that they are divine.

The same Spirit that reveals the power of the word to me, reveals in particular mine own interest in all those truths upon hearing them. Whereupon they are written in my heart, as if they had been made in particular to me: the comfortable truths in the word are transcribed into my heart answerable to the word; as that God in Christ is mine, forgiveness mine, grace mine: whereupon adoption in Christ is sealed; which God still sealeth further to my soul by increase of comfort, as he seeth cause for encouragement. The same Spirit that manifesteth in me the word I hear and read to be the truth of God, from the power and efficacy of it: the same Spirit teacheth to apply it, and in applying of it sealeth me.

Therefore we ought to desire to be sealed by the Spirit, in regard of an holy impression; and then that the Holy Spirit would shine upon his own graces, so as we may clearly see what is wrought in us above nature; and because this is furthered by revealing his love in Christ in adoption to us, we must desire of God to vouchsafe the Spirit of

revelation, to reveal the mysteries of his truth unto us, and our portion in them in particular, and so our adoption; and in the mean time to wait and attend his good pleasure in the use of all good means. Thus we waiting, God will so far reveal himself in love to us, as shall assure us of his love, and stir up love again; and the same Spirit that is a Spirit of revelation will be a Spirit of sanctification, and so adoption. Dignity, and fitting qualities suitable to dignity, go both together.

In that grand inquiry about our condition, there is a great miscarriage when men will begin with the first work of the Father in election, then pass to redemption by Christ: I am God's, and Christ hath redeemed me; and never think of the action of the third person in sanctification, which is the nearest action upon the soul, as the third person himself is nearest unto us; and so fetch their first rise where they should set up their last rest. Whereas we should begin our inquiry in the work of the third person, which is next unto us; and then upon good grounds we may know our redemption and election.

The Holy Spirit is both a Spirit of revelation and of sanctification together, as hath been said; for together with opening the love of the Father and the Son, he fitteth us by grace for communication with them.

People out of self-love will have conceits of the Father's and Son's love severed from the work of the Spirit upon their hearts, which will prove a dangerous illusion. Although the whole work of grace by the Spirit arise from the Father's and Son's love, witnessed by the Spirit, yet the proof of the Father's love to us in particular, ariseth from some knowledge of the work of the Spirit; the error is not in thinking of the Father's and Son's love, but in a strengthening themselves by a pleasing powerless thought of it against the work of grace by the Spirit, which their corruption withstands. So they will carve out of the work of the Trinity what they think agreeable to their lusts, whereas otherwise, if their heart were upright, they would for this

very end think of God's love and Christ's, to quicken them to duty and to arm them against corruption.

To the Day of Redemption

1. There is a double redemption: redemption of the soul by the first coming of Christ to shed his blood for us; redemption of our bodies from corruption by his second coming. We have not the perfect consummation and accomplishment of that which Christ wrought in his first coming till his second coming. Then there shall be a total redemption of our souls, and bodies, and conditions. There is a double redemption, as there is a double coming of Christ, the first and the second; the one to redeem our souls from sin and Satan, and to give us title to heaven; the other to redeem our bodies from corruption, when Christ shall come 'to be glorious in his saints,' 2 Thes. 1:10. As likewise there is a double resurrection, the first and the second, and a double regeneration, of soul and body.

In sickness and weakness of body, or when age hath overtaken us that we cannot live long here, and the horror of the grave, the house of darkness, is presented to us; Oh let us think there will be a redemption of our bodies as well as of our souls! Christ will redeem our bodies from corruption, as he came to work the redemption of our souls from sin and death; and he that will redeem our bodies out of the grave, he will redeem his church out of misery. He will call the Jews; he that will do the greater will do the inferior. When we hear of this, let us think with comfort of all the promises that are yet unperformed.

2. Secondly, Full redemption is not yet. What need I bring Scripture to prove it. It is a point that every man's experience teacheth. Alas! let our bodies speak: we are not free from sickness and diseases; nay, what is our life but a going to corruption? The sentence is passed

upon us, 'earth returneth to earth,' Gen. 3:19. Till death we are going to death; so besides sickness and weakness here, we must die, and after death be subject to corruption. The apostle in this respect calleth our body 'a vile body,'* Philip. 3:21. As for our souls, though they be freed from the guilt and damnation of sin, yet there are remainders of corruption that breed fear and terror; and though they be freed from the rule of Satan, yet not from his molestation and vexations by temptations. In a word, our whole state and condition in this world is a state and condition of misery; we are followed with many afflictions, so that there is not yet perfect redemption, whether we look to body, soul, or state; the body being subject to diseases, the soul to infirmities, the state to misery.

But there is a 'day' appointed for it.

By a 'day' we are not to understand the time measured by the course of the sun in twenty-four hours, but in the Scripture meaning, a day is a set time of mercy or judgment. As there was a solemn day, 'the fulness of time,' Gal. 4:4, for the working of the first redemption, so there is a solemn time set for the second redemption, when all the children of God shall be gathered; those that lie in the dust shall be raised and for ever glorified. It is the day of all days; that day that by way of excellency is called 'that day,'[†] in the Scriptures, and 'the day of the Lord,' Mat. 12:8—the day that we should think of every day, especially in sickness, and trouble, and crosses, and molestations, from the wicked world, and in sense of the remainders of corruption. There is a day of redemption to come that will make amends for all. The frequent thoughts of that day would comfort us, and keep us from shrinking in any affliction and trouble; it would move us to a carriage and conversation answerable to our hopes, and also it would help to fit us, it would infuse a desire of qualification to be prepared for that great day.

But how little of our time is spent in thoughts this way! If we could oft think of the day of redemption, our lives would be otherwise, both in regard of gracious as also of comfortable carriage. Should we be

disconsolate at every loss and cross, at sicknesses and the thought of death, when we shall be turned into our first principle, the earth, if we did think of the day of redemption, when all shall be restored again, all the decays of nature, and the image of God be perfectly stamped? The thought of this would make us go willingly to our graves, knowing that all this is but a preparation for the great 'day of redemption.' The first day of redemption, when Christ came to redeem our souls, and to give us title to heaven, it was in the expectation of all good people before Christ. They are said 'to wait for the consolation of Israel,' Luke 2:25. That was the character to know those blessed people by. And what should be the distinguishing character of gracious souls now, but to be such as wait for the coming of Christ? How oft in the epistles of St Paul is it? 'There is a crown of righteousness for me, and for all that wait for the appearing of Christ,' 2 Tim. 4:8.

There was a year of jubilee among the Jews every fifty years. Then all that were in bondage were set at liberty. So at this blessed jubilee, this glorious day of redemption, all that are in bondage of death and under corruption shall be set at everlasting liberty. No question but the poor servants that were vexed with hard masters, they thought of the jubilee; and those that had their possessions took away, they thought of the jubilee, the day of recovering all. So let us oft think of this everlasting jubilee, when we shall recover all that we lost, for ever to keep it, and never to lose it again as we did in the first creation. Let us oft think of this day. It will infuse vigour and strength into all our conversation. Indeed, to the ungodly, it is not a day of redemption, but a 'day of judgment,' and the 'revelation of the just wrath of God,' when their sins shall be laid open, and receive a sentence answerable.

Alas! there is such a deal of atheism in the world—and the seeds of it in the best, unless it be wrought out daily—that we forget the God of vengeance and the day of vengeance. Would men go on in sins against conscience if they thought of this last day? It is impossible. Such courses come from this abominable root of atheism and

unbelief; for had they but a slight faith, it would be effectual to alter their course in some measure. Therefore the Scripture gives them the name of fools, though they would be thought to be the only wise men. 'The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God,' Ps. 14:1. And what follows? 'Corrupt are they, and abominable.' The cause of all is, the fool hath said in his heart. He will needs force it upon his heart that there is no God, hell, nor heaven, nor judgment. Thence come abominable courses.

Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption

From the consideration of all that hath been formerly spoken of, the sealing of the Spirit to the day of redemption, there ariseth these four conclusions:

First, That we may attain unto a knowledge that we are in that state of grace.

Secondly, That upon knowledge of our state in grace for the present, we may be assured of our future full redemption.

Thirdly, That this assured knowledge is wrought by the Spirit.

Fourthly, That the consideration of this assurance wrought by the Spirit is an effectual argument to dissuade from grieving the Spirit.

1. For the first, we may know we are in the state of grace, first, because the apostle would not have used an argument moving not to grieve the Spirit from a thing unknown or guessed at. It is an ill manner of reasoning to argue from a thing unknown.

2. Again, Sealing of us by the Spirit is not in regard of God, but ourselves. God knoweth who are his, but we know not that we are his but by sealing.

3. The scope of the Scriptures indited by the Spirit is for comfort. The apostle saith so directly; and what comfort is in an uncertain condition, wherein a man knows not but he may be a reprobate? Wherefore came our Saviour into the world and took our nature upon him? Why became he a curse for us? Why hath he carried our nature into heaven, and there appears for us till he hath brought us home to himself, but that he would have us out of all doubt of his love after once by faith we have received him? Whence proceeded those commandments to believe, those checks of unbelievers, the commendation of them that did believe, those upbraidings of doubting, as springing from unbelief? To what use are the sacraments, but to seal unto us the benefits of Christ, if upon all this we should still doubt of God's love, especially when, besides the sealing of the promises to us, we are sealed ourselves by the Spirit of promise?

Obj. This is true if we know we do believe.

Ans. It is the office of the Spirit, as to work faith and other graces, so to reveal them to us. Every grace of God is a light of itself coming from the Father of lights; and it is the property of light not only to discover other things, but itself too; and it is the office of the Spirit to give further light to this light, by shining upon his own grace in us. An excellent place for this is 1 Cor. 2:12, 'We have received the Spirit that is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.' 'In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every thing be confirmed.' One witness is, 'the spirit of man,' which knows 'the things that are in man,' 1 Cor. 2:11; the other witness is 'the Spirit of God, witnessing to our spirits that we are the children of God,' Rom. 8:14. Here is light added to light, witness added to witness, the greater witness of the Spirit to the less of our spirits. The apostle joins them both together: 'My conscience bears me witness through the Holy Ghost,' Rom. 9:1.

Obj. Man's heart is deceitful.

Ans. But the Spirit of God in man's heart is not deceitful. It is too holy to deceive, and too wise to be deceived in this point of assurance. We plough with the Spirit's heifer, or else we could not find out this riddle, Judges 14:18. Where there is an object to be seen, and an eye to see, and light to discover the object to the eye, sight must needs follow. In a true believer, after he is enlightened, as there is grace to be seen, and an eye of faith to see, so there is a light of the Spirit discovering that grace to that inward sight. In the bottom of a clear river, a clear eyesight may see anything. Where nothing is, nothing can be seen. It is an evidence that the patrons of doubtings have little grace in them, and much boldness in making themselves a measure for others. Those that are base-born know their mothers better than their fathers. The Church of Rome is all for the mother, but the babes of Christ know their father. The remainder of corruption will indeed be still breeding doubts, but it is the office of the Spirit of faith to quell them as they arise. We are too ready in time of temptation to doubt. We need not help the tempter by holding it a duty to doubt. This is to light a candle before the devil, as we use to speak.

Quest. May not there be doubtings where there is true faith? May not a true believer be without assurance?

Ans. There be three ranks of Christians: First, Some that are yet under the spirit of bondage, that like little children do all for fear. Secondly, Those that are under the spirit of adoption, and do many things well, but yet are not altogether free from fear. These are like those children that are moved with reverence to obey their parents, and yet find their commands somewhat irksome unto them. The third are such as, by the love of God shed into their hearts by the Spirit of adoption, are carried with large spirits to obey their Father; and herein like unto those children that not only obey, but take a delight in it, upon a judgment that both obedience and the thing wherein they obey is good. This we ought to labour for. But we find many Christians in the second rank. Many truly believe in Christ by some light let into their hearts by the Spirit of adoption, who are not

yet fully assured of the love of Christ. There is the act of faith and the fruit of faith. The act of faith is to cast ourselves upon God's mercy in Christ; the fruit of faith is in believing to be assured of this. We must know that faith is one thing, assurance another. They may have faith, and yet want a double assurance: first, assurance of their faith, being not able to judge at all times of their own act; likewise, secondly, assurance of their state in grace, as in time of desertion and temptation. A soul at such a time casts itself upon Christ, as knowing comfort is there to be had, though he be not sure of it for himself; and this the soul doth out of obedience, though not out of feeling, as the poor man in the gospel, 'Lord, I believe: help my unbelief,' Mark 9:24. The soul oftentimes out of the deep, cries, and in the dark, trusts in God; and this is the bold adventure of faith, the first object whereof is Christ held out in a promise; and not assurance, which springeth from the first act when it pleaseth God to shine upon the soul; and is a reward of glorifying God's mercy in Christ by casting the soul upon his truth and goodness. Assurance is God's seal, faith is our seal. When we set to our seal by believing, he sets to his seal, assuring us of our condition. We yield first the consent and the assent of faith; and then God puts his seal to the contract. There must be a good title before a confirmation, a planting before a rooting and establishing, the bargain before the earnest. Some would have faith to be an overpowering light of the soul, whereby undoubtedly they believe themselves to be Christ,* and Christ to be theirs; which stumbleth many a weak yet true Christian; for this is rather the fruit of a strong faith than the act of a weak, which struggleth with doubting until it hath gotten the upper hand. True it is, there must be so much light let into the soul as the soul may rely upon Christ; and this light must be discovered by the Spirit; and such a light as shews a special love of Christ to the soul. And again, it is true that we are not to take up our rest in the light until the heart be further subdued; as many are too hasty to conclude of a good condition upon uncertain signs, before they have attained unto fuller assurance; but yet we must not deny faith where this strong assurance is wanting, so far as to conclude against ourselves, if there be desires putting on, to endeavour with conflict against the rising of

unbelief, with a high prizing of the favour of God in Christ, so as to value it above all things. Degrees do not vary the kind; weakness may stand with truth, but where truth is there will be an incessant desire of future sealing.

2. The second conclusion: We may, upon the knowledge of our present estate in grace, be assured for the time to come, for this sealing is to the 'day of redemption;' that is, till we be put into full possession of what we now believe; and besides, sealing is for securing for the time to come; and our Saviour's promise is, that though he departed from them, yet the Comforter should abide with them for ever, John 14:16. And why are we certain of the favour of God to our comfort for the present, but that we doubt not of it for the time to come?

Faith and love, and these graces, they never fail finally; therefore when the Scripture speaks of faith, it speaks of salvation by it for the present; as if a man should be in heaven presently so soon as he believed. 'We are saved by faith,' say the Scriptures, Eph. 2:8. We are not yet saved, but the meaning is, we are set by faith into a state of salvation. Being put into Christ by faith, we 'are risen with Christ, and sit in heavenly places with him,' Eph. 1:3. Faith makes the things to come present; and faith believes that 'neither things present, nor things to come, shall be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ,' Rom. 8:39. So that our assurance is not only for the present, but for the time to come. We are sealed 'to the day of redemption,' and who can reverse God's seal, or God's act or deed? Grace is the earnest-penny of glory.* God hath made a covenant, and given earnest. He will not lose it. The earnest is never taken away, but filled up. If we be assured of grace for the present, we may be sure it shall be made up full in glory hereafter. If the Spirit of Christ be in us, the same Spirit that raised Christ from the dead will raise us up likewise, and not leave us until we be in full redemption: 'We shall awake filled with his image,' Rom. 8:11, seq., and Ps. 17:15.

No opposition shall prevail. God hath set us a seal on his right hand to keep us; ay, and on his breast (as the high priest had the twelve tribes) to love us, and on his shoulder to support us. The marked and sealed ones in Ezek. 9:4, and Rev. 7:2, were secured from all destruction. If we be in Christ our rock, temptations and oppositions are but as waves; they may dash upon us, but they break themselves.

Quest. Why then do we pray for the forgiveness of sins?

Ans. We pray for a clear evidence of what we have; secondly, as the end is ordained, so the means must be used. God doth and will pardon sin; and therefore we must pray for pardon, as a means ordained. Thirdly, Prayer doth not prejudice the certainty of a thing. Christ prayeth for that he was most sure of: John 17:24, 'I pray for them which thou hast given me, for they are thine.'

Pregnant for the proof of this point is that of Peter: 'We are begotten again to a lively hope,' a hope of that life which maketh lively, 1 Peter 1:3–5. Oh but we are weak! True, but 'we are kept by the power of God.' An inheritance is not only kept for us, but we are kept for it.

Obj. But Satan is strong, and his malice is more than his strength.

Ans. True. But we are kept as by a garrison. We have a guard about us.

Obj. All this is true while faith holdeth out, but that may fail.

Ans. No. We are kept by the power of God 'through faith.' God keepeth our faith, and us by faith.

Obj. But the time is long between us and salvation, and many dangers may fall out.

Ans. Be it so that the time is long, yet we are 'kept unto salvation,' even until the 'day of redemption;' for the Spirit, by virtue of the covenant, puts the fear of God into our hearts, that we shall never

depart from him. God doth not promise what we shall do of ourselves, but what he will do in us and by us. Thus the Holy Ghost putteth a shield into our hands to ward off all objections; and helps us to subdue the reasonings that are apt to rise within us against this blessed hope. So that this happy condition is not only sure to us, but God hath assured us of it. God's gracious indulgence is such, he sees here we go through a wilderness and are molested every way; therefore he would have us assured of a blessed condition to come. So good is God, he doth not only find out a glorious way of redemption by the blood of his Son God-man, but he acquaints us with it in the days of our pilgrimage, partly that we may glorify him, that he may have the praise beforehand of what good he intends us; for assurance of that blessed condition will stir up our spirits to bless God. What the thing itself would work, faith works the same in some measure. Therefore Saint Peter, 1 Pet. 1:3, 4, 'Blessed be God,' saith he, 'who hath begotten us again to a lively hope of an inheritance immortal, undefiled, that fadeth not away, reserved in the heavens.' Why doth he bless God before we have it? Because we are as sure of it as if we had it. What is revealed beforehand is praised for beforehand. God would have us assured, that he may have glory.

Partly to comfort us: for faith is effectual to work that comfort that the thing present would do in some measure. What comfort would the soul have if it should see heaven open and itself entering into it, if redemption were at hand? The same faith works in some measure. What is more sure than the thing itself? What more comfortable than faith in it?

When the Israelites were in the wilderness, going to Canaan, they had many promises that they should come to Canaan, and many extraordinary helps to lead them thither—the pillar, and cloud, and angel; and God, out of indulgence condescending to their weakness, gave them some grapes of Canaan. He put it into the mind of the spies to bring of the fruits. So God gives us some work of his blessed Spirit, whereby he would have us assured and sealed to the day of redemption.

3. The third conclusion is this, that the Spirit doth seal us. This cannot be otherwise; for who can establish us in the love of God, but he that knows the mind of God towards us? and who knows the mind of God but the Spirit of God?

Then am I sealed, when I do not only believe, but by a reflecting act of the soul know I do believe; and this reflection, though it be by reason, yet it is by reason enabled by the Spirit. Our spirits by the Spirit only, can discern of spiritual acts. It is not for us to know things above nature; without a cause, above nature. None can know the meaning of our broken desires, so as to help us in our infirmities, but that Spirit that stirred up those desires. Again, none knows the grievances of our spirits, but our own spirits and the Spirit of God, who knows all the turnings and corners of the soul.

Who can mortify those strong corruptions that would hinder us in the way to heaven, but the Spirit clothing our spirit with power from above? Who purifieth the conscience, but he that is above conscience? Who can raise our spirits above all temptations and troubles, but that Spirit of power that is above all?

The strength and vigour of any creature is from the spirits; and the strength of the spirits of all flesh is from this Spirit, whose office is to put spirit into our spirit.

As God redeemed us with his blood, so God must apply this blood, that conscience may be quieted. He only can subdue the rebellion of our spirits, and soften our hearts, and make them fit for sealing. The Spirit only can so report the mercy of God to our souls, as to persuade and work our hearts to this assurance, otherwise we would never yield. For partly the greatness of the state is such that none but God can assure; and partly the misgiving and unbelief of our heart is such that none but God can subdue it. The thing being so great, and our deservings so little, being unworthy of the things of this life, much more of that eternal happiness, this cannot be done without the high and glorious Spirit of God.

How earnest and desirous then is both the Father and the Son to save us, that pleased to send such an orator and ambassador as is equal with themselves to persuade us, to assure us, to fit us for salvation! And how gracious is the Spirit that will vouchsafe to have such communion with such poor sinful spirits as ours! And should not this work upon our hearts a care not to grieve the Holy Spirit? And so we come to the fourth conclusion.

4. The fourth conclusion is, that the sealing of the Spirit unto salvation should be a strong prevailing argument not to grieve the Spirit; that is, not to sin, for sin only grieves the Spirit. 'The grace of God,' saith Paul to Titus, 'that bringeth salvation,' Tit. 2:11, 12. Christ appeared; and what is Christ but grace? Christ appeared, and the free favour of God in Christ, whereby we are assured of salvation, 'which teacheth us'—what to do?—'to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world.' Even the consideration of the benefits of Christ that are past, such as came with Christ's first coming; but that is not all: ver. 13, 'Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.' The second coming of Christ enforceth likewise the same care of holiness: 'Our conversation is in heaven,' Philip. 3:20, and not as theirs, spoken of in the former verse, whose end is damnation, whose belly is their god, who mind earthly things. No. We mind heavenly things. And these heavenly desires, from whence sprung they but from the certain 'expectation of our Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile bodies?' &c., Philip. 3:21; that is, shall redeem us fully, even our bodies as well as our souls.

1. It is an argument of force whether we be not yet sealed, or be sealed. If not sealed, then grieve not him whose only office is to seal, entertain his motions, give way to him, that he may have scope and liberty of working. Set no reasons against his reasons. Hearken to no counsel against his counsel. Stand not out his persuasions any longer, but yield up your spirits to him, lest he put a period to his patience. He is long-suffering, but not always-suffering. If he give us

up to our own spirits, we shall only be witty* to work out our own damnation. We are not given up to our own spirits but after many repulses of this Holy Spirit; and at length, what now will not serve for an argument to persuade us shall be used hereafter as an argument to torment us. The Spirit will help our spirits to repeat and recall all the motions to our own good that we formerly put back. We should think, when conscience speaks in us, God speaks; and when the Spirit moves us, it is God that moves us; and that all excuse will be cut off: answer will be, Did not I tell you of this by conscience, my deputy? Did not I move you to this good by mine own Spirit? Take heed of keeping out any light; for light, where it doth not come in and soften, hardens; none so hard-hearted as those upon whom the light hath shined. There is more to be hoped from a man that hath only a natural conscience, than from him whose heart and spirit hath been long beaten on; there is more to be hoped from a heathen Pilate than a proud Pharisee. Those that will not be sealed to their salvation, it is just with God that they should be sealed up to their destruction. The soul without the Spirit is darkness and confusion, full of self-accusing and self-tormenting thoughts. If we let the Spirit come in, it will scatter all and settle the soul in a sweet quiet.

2. For those that have been sealed by the Spirit, and yet not so fully as to silence all doubts about their estate: those should, out of that beginning of comfort which they feel, study to be pliable to the Spirit for further increase. The Spirit sealet by degrees. As our care of pleasing the Spirit increaseth, so our comfort increaseth: our light will increase as the morning light unto the perfect day. Yielding to the Spirit in one holy motion will cause him to lead us to another, and so on forwards until we be more deeply acquainted with the whole counsel of God concerning our salvation. Otherwise, if we give way to any contrary lust, darkness will grow upon our spirits unawares, and we shall be left in an unsettled condition, as those that travel in the twilight, that cannot perfectly find out their way. We shall be on and off, not daring to yield wholly to our lusts, because of a work of grace begun; nor yield wholly to the Spirit, because we have let some unruly affection get too much strength in

us; and so our spirits are without comfort, and our profession without glory.

We shall lie open to Satan if he be let loose to winnow our faith; for if our state come to be questioned we have nothing to allege but the truth of our graces, and if we have not used the Spirit well we shall not have power to allege them, nor to look upon any grace wrought in us, but upon those lusts and sins whereby we have grieved the Spirit; they will be set in order before us, and so stare us in the face, that we cannot but fix our thoughts upon them. And Satan will not lose such an advantage, but will tempt us to call the work of grace in question, which though it be a true work, yet, for want of light of the Spirit to discern it, we cannot see it to our comfort; whereas, if the Spirit would witness unto us the truth of our state and the sincerity of our graces, we should be able to hold our own, and those temptations will vanish.

3. For those that the Holy Spirit hath set a clearer and stronger stamp upon, that do not question their condition, they of all others should not grieve the Spirit.

(1.) A Spirit of ingenuity* will hinder them, and stir up a shame in them to requite so ill such a friend. Nothing so ingenuous as grace. What is commendable in nature is in greater perfection in grace. How doth the conscience of unkindness to a friend that hath deserved well of us trouble our spirits, that we know not with what face to look upon him? And will not unkindness to the Spirit make us ashamed to lift up our face to heaven?

(2.) Benefits are bonds, and the greater favour the stronger obligation. Now what greater favour is there than for the Spirit to renew us according to the image of God our glorious Saviour, who carried the image of Satan before? And by this to appropriate us unto God, to be laid up in his treasure, as carrying his stamp; and by this to be separated from the vile condition of the world, although we carry in us the seeds of the same corruption that the worst doth,

differing nothing from them but in God's free grace and the fruits of it; for God to esteem so of us, that have no worthiness of our own, but altogether persons not worthy to be loved, as to make our unworthiness a foil to set out the freeness of his love in making us worthy, whom he found not so; for the Spirit by sealing of us to secure us in the midst of all spiritual dangers, and to hide us as his secret ones, that that evil one should not touch us to hurt us: these, as they are favours of an high nature, the more care they require to walk worthy of them. We cannot but forget ourselves, before we yield to anything against that dignity the Spirit hath sealed us to.

(3.) Nature, helped with ordinary education, moveth every man to carry himself answerable to his condition: a magistrate as a magistrate, a subject as a subject, a child as a child; and we think it disgraceful to do otherwise. And shall that which is disgraceful to nature not be much more disgraceful to nature renewed and advanced by the Spirit? And indeed, as we should not, so we cannot grieve the Spirit so far forth as we are renewed, 1 John 3:9. Our new nature will not suffer us to dissemble, to be worldly, to be carnal, as the world is. We cannot but study holiness, we cannot but be for God and his truth, we cannot but express what we are and whose we are.

It is impossible a man should care for heaven, that doth not care for the beginnings of heaven. He cannot be said to care for full redemption and glory, that doth not care for the Spirit of grace. Fulness of grace is the best thing in glory. Other things, as peace and joy and the like, they are but the shinings forth of this fulness of grace in glory.

Again, When the Spirit assureth us of God's love in the greatest fruits of it, as it doth when it assureth this redemption, that love kindles love again, and love constrains us by a sweet necessity to yield cheerful and willing obedience in all things. There is nothing more active and fuller of invention than love, and there is nothing that love studies more than how to please. There is nothing that it fears more than to discontent. It is a neat* affection, and will endure nothing

offensive, either to itself or the spirit of such as we love; and this love the Spirit teaches the heart, and love teaches us not only our duty, but to do it in a loving and acceptable manner. It carries out the whole stream of the soul with it, and rules all whilst it rules, and will not suffer the soul to divert to by-things, much less to contrary.

Again, These graces that are conversant about that condition which the Spirit assureth us of, as faith and hope, are purging and purifying graces, working a suitableness in the soul to the things believed and hoped for; and the excellency of the things believed and hoped for have such a working upon the soul that it will not suffer the soul to defile itself. Our hopes on high will lead us to ways on high. Therefore whilst these graces are exercised about these objects, the soul cannot but be in a pleasing frame.

It hath been an old cavil, that certainty of salvation breeds security and looseness of life. And what is there that an ill-disposed soul cannot suck poison out of? A man may as truly say the sea burns, or the fire cools. There is nothing quickens a soul more to cheerful obedience than assurance of God's love, and that our 'labour should not be in vain in the Lord,' 1 Cor. 15:58. This is the Scripture's logic and rhetoric, to enforce and persuade [to] a holy life, from knowledge of our present estate in grace. 'I beseech you by the mercies of God,' saith St Paul, Rom. 12:1. What mercies? Such as he had spoken of before,—justification, sanctification, assurance, that all shall work together for good, that nothing shall be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ. All duties tend to assurance, or spring from assurance.

God's intendment* is to bring us to heaven by a way of love and cheerfulness, as all his ways towards us in our salvation are in love. And this is the scope of the covenant of grace, and for this end he sends the Spirit of adoption into our hearts, that we may have a child-like liberty with God in all our addresses to him. When he offers himself to us as a Father, it is fit we should offer ourselves to him as children; nature teaches a child, the more he desires his

father's love, the more he fears to displease him. And he is judged to be graceless that will therefore venture to offend his father, because he knows he neither can or will disinherit him. Certain it is, the more surely we know God hath begotten us to so glorious an inheritance, the more it will work upon our bowels, to take all to heart that may any way touch him. This wrought upon David. When the prophet told him God hath done this and this for thee, and 'would have done more if that had been too little,' 2 Sam. 12:8, it melted him presently into an humble confession. Those that have felt the power of the Spirit of adoption on their hearts, will both by a divine instinct, as also by strength of reason, be carried to all those courses wherein they shall approve themselves to their Father. Instinct of nature strengthened with grounds will move strongly.

To conclude this discourse, let Christians therefore be careful to preserve and cherish the work of assurance and sealing in them.

Means. 1. What God doth for us, he doth by grace in us. He will preserve us that we shall not fall from him by putting the grace of fear into us, Jer. 32:40. He will keep us, but by what means? 'The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall guard our hearts,' Phil. 4:7. God maketh our calling and election sure in us, by stirring our hearts up to be diligently exercised in adding one grace unto another, and in growing in every grace, as 2 Pet. 1:5. Therefore we must attend upon all spiritual means of growth and quickening: so shall you have a further 'entrance into the kingdom of Jesus Christ, 2 Pet. 1:11; that is, you shall have more evident knowledge of your entrance into the kingdom of grace here, and likewise into the kingdom of glory hereafter. Those that do not so shall have no comfort either from the time past, for they shall forget that they were purged from their sins; or from thoughts of the time to come, for they shall 'not be able to see things far off.'

2. If assurance be in a lesser degree, yet yield not to temptations and carnal reasonings. If our evidences be not so fair, yet we will not part with our inheritance. Coins, as old as groats, that have little of the

stamp left, yet are current. We lose our comfort many times, because we yield so easily, because we have not such a strong and clear seal of salvation as we would. To be borne down that we have none at all, is a great weakness. Exercise, therefore, the little faith thou hast, in striving against such objections, and it will be a means to preserve the seal of the Spirit.

3. Because this sealing is gradual, we should pray, as Paul, Eph. 1:17, for a spirit of revelation, that we may be more sealed. The Ephesians were sealed, for whom Paul prays, and so the Colossians; yet [he prays] that God would reveal to their spirits more their excellent condition. There are 'riches of assurance,' Col. 2:2. The apostle would have them to labour not only for assurance, but for the riches of it. That will bring rich comfort, and joy and peace. Times of temptations and trial may come, and such as, if we have not strong assurance, we may be sorely troubled and call all in question. This may be the sad condition of God's own children; and from this, that in times of peace they contented themselves with a lesser degree of this assurance and sealing.

4. Lastly, Be watchful over your own hearts and ways, that according to what you have now learned you grieve not the Spirit, 'for by it you are sealed;' intimating, that if [in] anything we withstand and grieve the Spirit, we shall in so doing prejudice ourselves, and suffer in the comfort and evidence of our sealing.

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