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# A FOUNTAIN SEALED

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are sealed unto the day of redemption.—EPH. 4:30*

RICHARD SIBBES



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**A Fountain Sealed**  
**The Work of the Spirit in Sealing**  
**by Richard Sibbes**

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**TO THE TRULY NOBLE AND HIGHLY  
HONORED LADY,  
LADY ELIZABETH BROOKE,**

## **WIFE OF SIR ROBERT BROOKE.**

MADAM,—Apart from the well-deserved affection and esteem that your ladyship possesses from this honorable man, surpassing that of any living friend, which grants you the right to be called his author, this small piece acknowledges a particularly strong connection to your ladyship. Although his eloquence was as skillful as the hand of a talented writer guided by Christ, it was your ladyship's hand and pen that acted as his scribe and amanuensis while he dictated the initial draft of this work in private, with the intention of making it public. In this act of humility and love, your ladyship honored him, just as Baruch received honor when he transcribed the words of Jeremiah from his mouth (Jer. 36:4). Yet, in truth, your ladyship was merely recording the story of your own life, which has been meticulously shaped in accordance with the principles outlined herein. Therefore, as those entrusted with its publication, we consider it an act of justice to present it back to your ladyship, to whom it owes its very existence. Thus, wherever this small treatise may travel, your contribution will be told and recorded as a memorial to you. Additionally, we cannot help but regard it as an honorable addition to the work that it was brought into the world by the hand of a pious and esteemed lady such as yourself. Although it is worthy in its own right, it is further elevated because it was delivered by a hand that has been blessed as much as any other in bearing the image of Jesus Christ. May the Lord, in return, write the holy contents of this work even more fully and abundantly upon your ladyship's heart, and may all the qualities of the likeness of Jesus Christ be sealed upon you by His blessed Spirit, bringing you joy and peace until the day of redemption!

Madam, we remain, devotedly yours,

THOMAS GOODWIN.‡

PHILIP NYE.‡

## **A FOUNTAIN SEALED**

And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom we are sealed until the day of redemption.—EPH. 4:30.

Whether these words are a command issuing from authority, or counsel from wisdom, or a warning from God's care for our souls, it is not significant, considering that both counsel and warnings from the great God possess the force of a command, accompanied by a touch of love's sweetness. The apostle, in his customary manner, moves from a specific dissuasion against corrupt speech in the preceding verse to this general advice of not grieving the Spirit of God through sin, particularly when acting against an enlightened conscience. This dissuasion from evil is reinforced by the dangerous consequence of grieving the Spirit of God, and the danger arises from the fact that it is the Spirit of God and God Himself whom we grieve—a holy Spirit: holy in His own nature, and holy as the source of all holiness within us. He, after working holiness in us, seals and confirms us in that state of grace until the day of our glorious redemption. Therefore, the reasons for not grieving lie in the greatness and goodness of the person whom we grieve and the magnitude and constancy of the benefits we receive from Him. To say something about the person: the Holy Spirit is called a Spirit not

only in terms of nature, as being a spiritual essence, but also with regard to His person and role. He is both breathed forth from the Father and the Son, proceeding from both of them, and by His role, He breathes life into all whom God has given Christ to redeem and whom He Himself sanctifies. He is the Spirit of God in the sense of proceeding from God, and yet He is God Himself. Those who deny this deny their own baptism, for they are baptized into the name of the Holy Spirit just as they are baptized into the name of the Father and the Son. Nothing less than a person who is God is necessary to assure our souls of God's love and to transform our nature when it is in opposition to Him. Who else can reveal to us the mind of God except the Spirit of God? In this, we witness the united willingness of both the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit: when both the Father and the Son are eager to send such a great person to minister to us and assure us of the immense good the Father has ordained and the Son has accomplished on our behalf.

## **Why Holy?**

That which the Spirit takes delight in is holiness, whereas our corrupted nature finds the least delight in it and opposes it the most. Holiness is the glory and pinnacle of all other virtues, without which they are neither inherently good nor bring us comfort. It signifies freedom from all impurity and a perfect hatred of it, as well as the absolute perfection of all that is excellent. So, what does it mean to grieve such a Holy Spirit? We are grieving the Spirit of God, before whom even the heavens themselves are impure, and not only do the devils tremble, but the angels also cover their faces in reverence.

What, then, should we think of those who not only neglect but also despise, and even oppose, this holiness, enduring anything else instead? What is hated in the world with intense and complete hatred except holiness, "without which we shall never see God" (Heb. 12:14), nor enter into that pure place that we all desire to reach?

By nature, a desire for holiness and a desire for happiness were planted within us. The desire for happiness still remains, but the desire for holiness, which is the perfection of the image of God in us, is both lost and extinguished. To further eradicate it from the world, men oppose its truth and do so successfully, as they employ the guise of holiness to carry out their devilish schemes. In the realm of popery, for instance, everything is considered holy except that which truly deserves holiness—the truth of God and its expression. Even the Man of Sin himself is given no lesser title than "His Holiness." A show of contrived holiness may satisfy human nature, as it appears glorious and serves certain purposes. However, the truth of holiness, being contrary to the corrupt nature of man, will never be embraced until our nature is renewed by the Holy Spirit through the use of holy means that He sanctifies for that purpose. It is through this process that a person becomes a saint, and civil virtues become graces, elevating things that are otherwise common to a higher level of excellence. This is to a Christian what reason is to a man—it gives him a distinct existence and beauty unlike any other. It transforms every action we perform in obedience to God into a service and imbues all our actions with a religious reverence, directing them towards the highest end.

Now, the apostle's admonition is to refrain from grieving such a holy Spirit. These truths are presupposed:

First, the Holy Spirit is not personally within us as the second person is within Christ as man. Otherwise, the Holy Spirit and we would be one person. Nor is the Holy Spirit in us merely in an essential sense, for in that case, He would be in all creatures. Neither is He in us solely by stirring up holy motions; rather, He is in us mystically, as if we were temples dedicated to Him. Christ's human nature is the first temple in which the Spirit dwells, and we become temples by being united with Him. The difference between His presence in Christ and in us is that the Spirit dwells in Christ to a greater degree, for as the head, He imparts the Spirit to all His members. Secondly, the Spirit is in Christ completely, without anything opposing Him. However, the Spirit always encounters something within us that does not belong to Him and is ready to resist Him. Thirdly, the Spirit is in us derivatively from Christ. We receive grace as a secondary measure from Him, corresponding to the grace in Him. The Holy Spirit was immediately present in Adam before his fall, but now He is first in Christ, and then for Christ in us as members of the body of which Christ is the head. It is advantageous for us that He first dwells in Christ and then in us. This ensures that His communion with us is inseparable, just as it is with Christ Himself, with whom the Spirit unites us. The Holy Spirit dwells in those who belong to Christ in a different manner than in others. While He is in others with common gifts, in His own He is present as holy and as the one who sanctifies them. It is similar to how the soul resides throughout the entire body concerning various operations, but it is only in the head that the soul understands and governs the whole body. Similarly, the Holy Spirit is present in His own in terms of nobler operations, and His person is accompanied by His work, though not personally. Although the whole person is the temple of the Holy Spirit, the soul is especially so, and within the soul, it is the spirit of our minds that is most suitable to Him, being a Spirit. Hence, the apostle desires "the grace of Christ to be with our spirits" (2 Tim. 4:22). The best spirits take



the greatest delight in the best part of us, which is our spirits. In the temple, the further one proceeds, the greater the holiness until reaching the Holy of Holies. Similarly, in a Christian, the most inward part, the spirit, is akin to the "Holy of Holies," where incense is continually offered to God. What a mercy it is that He who possesses the heaven of heavens as His dwelling place can transform a dungeon into a temple, a prison into a paradise, and even turn hell into heaven. We should marvel at the love of the Holy Ghost, who willingly takes up residence within such defiled souls, next to the love of Christ in assuming our nature and dwelling within it.

2. The second presupposition is that once the Holy Spirit has prepared us as a dwelling for Himself and takes pleasure in residing in us, He becomes our counselor in all our doubts, our comforter in all our distress, our encourager in all our duties, and our guide throughout our entire lives until we dwell with Him eternally in heaven—the ultimate purpose of His dwelling in us. He goes before us just as Christ did in the pillar of cloud and fire before the Israelites, acting as our defense by day and our guidance by night. When we sin, what else are we doing but grieving this guide?
3. The third foundation is that even the best of us are prone to grieve this Holy Spirit. Otherwise, what purpose would this warning serve? We have ample evidence of this in our own hearts. Within us, we possess that which is enmity towards the Spirit—sin—and an adversary to the Spirit and ourselves—Satan. These two, working in tandem, and maintaining a connection, incite us to engage in actions that grieve this good Spirit.
4. The fourth presupposition is that by exercising Christian care and watchfulness, we can walk in a steady and pleasing manner,

so as not to deeply offend the Spirit or distress our own spirits. We can avoid many lashes, blows, and heavy days for which we have only ourselves to blame. God delights in the prosperity of His children and desires us to walk in the comfort of the Holy Spirit. He is grieved when we grieve Him, for then He must grieve us in order to prevent greater sorrow. The appropriate and inherent act of a Christian in this life is to please Christ, find comfort within ourselves, and thus be prepared for all forms of service.

## **Of Grieving the Spirit**

These points being clarified, it is easy to understand the reason behind the apostle's discouragement from grieving the Holy Spirit. To provide further insight into this matter, we will address these four aspects: First, what does it mean to grieve the Spirit? Secondly, how do we specifically grieve the Spirit? Thirdly, how can we recognize when we have grieved the Spirit? Fourthly, what steps should we take to prevent this grief?

1. Regarding the first point: The Holy Spirit cannot be genuinely grieved in His own person because grief implies a deficiency of happiness that we wish to be removed. It suggests a lack of foresight in preventing what may cause grief. It involves passion, which can quickly arise and dissipate. God is immutable and not subject to change. It implies an inability to remove that which we perceive as burdensome. Therefore, it is not fitting for the majesty of the Spirit to be susceptible to such grief. Thus, we must consider it in relation to the majesty of God, eliminating all

imperfections from our thoughts. Firstly, we are said to grieve God when we engage in actions that inherently cause grief. Just as we are said to destroy our weaker brother when our actions offend him and mislead him to his destruction. Secondly, we grieve the Spirit when our actions lead the Spirit to respond as a grieved person would, withdrawing His presence, expressing disapproval, and returning grief in turn. Thirdly, although the Holy Ghost does not experience the passion of grief, His holy nature harbors pure displeasure and hatred towards sin, with such a degree of abhorrence that, though it does not lead to the destruction of the offender, it results in severe correction. Thus, grief is manifest in God's righteous hatred in a manner befitting His character. Fourthly, we can perceive the Spirit both as He exists in Himself in heaven and as He dwells and works within us. Similarly, we can perceive God the Father hidden within Himself and revealed in His Son and His Word. Likewise, we can view Christ as the second person of the Trinity and as incarnate. Therefore, we can also understand the Holy Spirit as both existing in Himself and dwelling within us. God, in the person of His Son, and His Son as both man and minister, experienced grief over the rebellion and destruction of His own people. The Holy Spirit, dwelling within us, grieves with us, bears witness with us, rejoices in us and with us. The Spirit in Himself and as He works within us bears the same name. The gifts, graces, and comforts bestowed by the Spirit are referred to as the Spirit, just as the beams of the sun shining on the earth are called the sun. When we welcome or reject these motions of grace and comfort, we are said to welcome or grieve the Spirit. Thus, we can grieve the Spirit when we grieve Him as He works grace and offers comfort to us. The graces of the Spirit are named after the Spirit from which they originate, such as the Spirit of love and wisdom. Furthermore, our own spirits, insofar

as they are sanctified, are referred to as the Spirit of God. Thus, the Spirit of God, not in Himself but within us, contended with the old world in Noah's time (1 Pet. 3:19). Therefore, we grieve the Spirit when we grieve our own or others' spirits, to the extent that they are sanctified by the Spirit.

Now, the Spirit, while dwelling within us, works in accordance with the principles of human nature as understanding and free beings. He maintains the freedom inherent to human action and does not always exercise absolute power. Instead, He deals with us through gentle and pleasant motions and persuasions, allowing us the freedom to embrace or reject these lesser works of the Spirit. Our hearts tell us that we have the power to accept or reject these motions, and when we, in our own perception, churlishly offend the Spirit who seeks to lead us towards better paths, we can only interpret it as grieving Him. In His dealings with humanity, God entrusts His cause to us so that, through our prayers and other means, we can assist or hinder Him in His divine work against mighty forces. Likewise, Christ entrusts Himself to us in the form of His ministers and the poor, considering Himself either acknowledged or neglected through them. Thus, the Holy Spirit, as it were, places His delight and contentment in our power. When we welcome His motions of grace or comfort, we welcome Him, and when we reject them, we grieve Him. The Holy Ghost desires us to interpret our refusal of His motion as a rejection not only of Him but also of the Son and the Father, whose Spirit He is. If we truly comprehend how grave it is to disregard a gracious motion, even to the point of slighting God Himself, it should compel us to give them greater consideration. As we treat these motions, so we would treat the Spirit Himself if He were within our power. They are not only messengers but also the royal offspring of the Spirit within us. When

we violate them, we undermine the royal seed of the Spirit to the best of our ability.

Objection: It may be objected that when we do wrong, we do not intentionally aim to grieve the Spirit.

Answer: It is true that unless we were incarnate devils, we would not purposely and directly seek to grieve the Spirit. However, when we sin, we ultimately desire the grief it causes. No one hates their own soul or is enamored with death, yet people willingly engage in actions that, if they truly despised their own souls and loved death, they could not do worse. God questions, "Why will you perish, O house of Israel?" (Jer. 27:13). They do not intend to bring about their own destruction, but God's intention is to question why they persist in such destructive behavior that will ultimately lead to their downfall. If we truly despised hell in its cause and the path to it as much as we despise hell itself, we would never find ourselves there.

2. As for the second point, the specific ways in which we grieve the Spirit can be understood through the concepts of antipathy and opposition, as well as the separation of naturally joined elements. In the case of greater individuals, grief arises from any form of disrespect, neglect, or indignity. This applies even more so when unkindness follows the manifestation of favor. Similarly, we grieve the Holy Spirit through actions that are contrary to holiness, such as sin, which God abhors, even in the devil himself. However, when we add the element of unkindness to the contrariety of sin, it intensifies the sinfulness. What greater disrespect can we show the Holy Spirit than to prioritize base desires over His motions that lead us towards holiness and happiness? What greater unkindness, even treachery, is there than abandoning the guidance of a friend to follow the counsel

of an enemy? It is akin to Balaam, who disregarded a clear revelation of God's will in favor of personal gain. Such actions inevitably leave the Holy Spirit ashamed, considering our folly in rejecting the fountain and digging cisterns, as described in Jeremiah 2:13. It reflects our departure from a true guide to follow a pirate. Individuals feel particularly grieved when they are disrespected in their roles and positions. It is the Spirit's role to enlighten, soften, quicken, and sanctify. When we find contentment in Satan's offerings, it disqualifies the Holy Ghost from fulfilling His role. The Holy Spirit's role also involves providing comfort. Consequently, it grieves the Holy Spirit when we either forget about "the consolations of the Almighty" or consider them insignificant in the petulance of our spirits. Instead of wrestling with God through prayer, we engage in arguments that prevent us from finding comfort. Some individuals derive pleasure from raising objections, rather than submitting to higher reasoning that could bring them comfort. They take sides with Satan against the Holy Spirit and their own spirits, opposing arguments presented by those more knowledgeable in the ways of salvation. The Holy Spirit is deeply disappointed by such individuals, who take pleasure in being contrary. Yet, the Holy Spirit, with great patience, overcomes many of them through His goodness, prompting them to eventually silence themselves with shame. However, this is also the reason why they remain entangled in temptations for extended periods and experience prolonged periods of "a spirit of bondage." Presumptuous sins, in particular, greatly grieve the Spirit, as they involve the abuse of the Spirit's sweetest attribute, His goodness. This tendency is prevalent in the current age. Sins committed with knowledge, especially those marked by malicious opposition, deeply grieve the Spirit. By committing such sins, we misuse God's graciousness, essentially turning His

grace into licentiousness. Sins against knowledge leave no room for excuses. The malice of the will magnifies the gravity of the sin and contradicts the Spirit's essence of goodness. Therefore, it is no wonder that presumptuous sins cause significant grief to the Spirit, as they involve the abuse of God's attribute of goodness. By engaging in such sins, we become evil because He is good.

Objection: It may be objected that when we act improperly, our intention is not to grieve the Spirit.

Answer: It is true that when there is passion, there may be some justification for sin, such as pursuing profit, pleasure, or fear of displeasing others. When there is ignorance, it signifies a lack of knowledge that could aid in understanding. However, in cases where neither passion nor ignorance is present, and a person willingly sins, they act directly against God's command and will. No external factors prompt them to sin; instead, they consider it an insignificant matter, disregarding God's good pleasure and will.

As habitual swearers, can they plead ignorance? They know the commandment, "God will not hold them guiltless that take His name in vain" (Exodus 20:7). Can they plead confusion? They often do it proudly, even when not provoked. Their sinful behavior stems not from a desire for profit or pleasure, but from a voluntary excess of pride. They want others to know that they have no regard for God Himself; let God and His ministers take offense as they please. Even though I derive no pleasure or gain from it, I will assert my freedom. A heart that has been so wicked finds it difficult to accept comfort when it is in need of it.

We are not considered evil because we possess knowledge of evil, but because we choose and consent to evil. It is the act of the will that

solidifies the agreement; otherwise, sin would not be sin. God has entrusted us with the guardianship of our own souls, and as long as we faithfully hold the keys and do not betray our souls to Satan, we retain possession of our souls and our comforts. However, when Satan suggests, "Do this, or speak this," and we consent, he takes complete and unhindered possession of us, to the fullest extent of our ability, and in His judgment, God says "Amen" to it. God says, "Take him, Satan. Since he refuses to let My Spirit rule over him, it is fitting that he should have an even worse master." The more willing we are, the more sinful we become, and the less defense we have. God's justice is satisfied by punishing those who have sinned the most willingly, even against their own wills. The clearer the light is and the more advantages we have, the more we sin.

In this regard, sins against the second table of the Ten Commandments cause more distress than sins against the first table, as the conscience is more awakened in the former. These sins go against a multiplied light, which includes the light of nature, the light of the Word, and the light of the Spirit. Such sins are contrary to human society, as they undermine the bonds that even fallen human nature seeks to maintain. Although corrupt nature lacks inherent goodness, as we deserve to be like devils, God, who intends to establish civil society from which He often gathers His church, preserves in human nature a hatred for sins that disrupt society. Therefore, sins committed against greater light inflict deeper wounds, such as murder, perjury, theft, and so on.

For this reason, God often allows individuals who have violated the first table of the commandments to also transgress the second table, so that they may experience greater grief and shame as breakers of both tables. No one falls into the transgression of the second table without first transgressing the first. No one despises human laws



without first despising God's law. No one violates the law of nature without despising the God of nature. Profane and atheistic individuals who take pride in their violation of the third commandment through swearing are met by God, who delivers them over to abominable sins against the second table. These sins vex them more, even though they should not, than sins against the first table, exposing them not only to inward grief but also to open shame. Then God awakens their consciences to remind them that they are to blame not only for their gross sins but also for the root sins of atheism, profanity, and licentiousness, which violate the first table of the commandments. This serves as an aggravation of sins committed with knowledge, especially when that knowledge has been aided and strengthened by education, the examples of others, personal observation, and past experiences of resistance to the very sin being committed. It is an even greater aggravation when warned by others. As Reuben said to his brothers, "Did I not tell you?" (Genesis 42:22), so may the Spirit of God and conscience say to individuals, "Did I not acquaint you with the dangers of sin? You are now in misery and tormented by your conscience, but did you not disregard previous warnings, help, and means? Conscience is an inferior light of the Spirit; to act against conscience is to act against the Spirit. God spoke to me, and I paid no attention. How does God speak? When conscience speaks and declares, 'This is good, this is bad,' then God speaks. Conscience contains something divine within it. It is a small deity. It speaks on behalf of God. Especially when the Spirit joins with conscience, that is when God truly speaks; then there is light upon light."

Certain sins may grieve more or less than others for various reasons. Just as the Holy Spirit is a spiritual being, spiritual sins—such as pride and envy—grieve the most, leaving an imprint on the soul as if it bears the mark of the opposing evil spirit. On the other hand,

carnal sins, which drown the soul in bodily pleasure, may grieve the Spirit in a different way, defiling His temple and taking away a portion of the soul. Love and delight draw the soul along, and the deeper such sins penetrate the individual, apart from the defilement they cause, the weaker the individual becomes in performing spiritual duties. Grace resides within the faculties of human nature. Carnal sins, however, disable nature and create a greater distance from grace, taking away the heart (Hosea 4:11). This is why the apostle contrasts being "filled with wine" with being "filled with the Spirit" (Ephesians 5:18). Consequently, the apostle also prohibits "corrupt communication" in the preceding verses. The Holy Spirit is a Spirit of truth who detests hypocrisy, likening it to whitewashed tombs. Likewise, as a Spirit of purity, He detests immoral living and foul speech, viewing them as "open" tombs. Therefore, those who indulge in corrupt desires and seek to satisfy the flesh, to which they owe no service and have no obligation, grievously offend the Spirit. By sowing to the flesh, from which we can only reap corruption (Galatians 6:8), we pay tribute with the strength and vigor of our affections to the sworn enemy of God's Spirit and our own souls. When our thoughts are consumed with satisfying the desires of the outward self and solely planning for worldly matters, it is equivalent to paying tribute to an enemy, giving better treatment and showing more favor to our enemy than to ourselves. When we prioritize the impulses of corrupt nature over the motions of the Spirit, it is contrary to our heavenly calling and our glorious hopes.

Christians indeed have their imperfections, but if a true Christian examines their heart, they will acknowledge that every day they intend to bring glory to God and benefit to the society in which they live. They possess a broader perspective than a base worldling who confines their thoughts to themselves, expending all their mental energy there, and only consulting with flesh and blood, profit and

pleasure, to hear what they have to say. Such base behavior cannot help but grieve the Spirit, as it contradicts our heavenly calling and our hopes, which are glorious.

It is a dangerous grieving of the Spirit when, instead of drawing ourselves to the Spirit, we try to draw the Spirit to us and study the Scriptures to justify our corrupt ways. We attempt to make God conform to our desires so that we can continue with greater freedom. Many people, especially those in positions of power, seek out teachers who will satisfy their own sinful desires. They do not conform themselves to the rule and standard but rather manipulate it to suit their own purposes. Just as Ahab did not lack his four hundred false prophets, there are many who follow a similar path. Some individuals have already made up their minds about what they want to do but still seek counsel. If they receive an answer that aligns with their own desires, they are satisfied. If not, they dismiss it by saying, "That is your opinion, but others hold a contrary view." In this way, they seek to manipulate the Spirit of God in His ministers to serve their own purposes. This was also the case with the Jews during Jeremiah's time (Jeremiah 42:2, etc.).

Others attribute sinful affections that arise from the flesh and are fueled by Satan to the Holy Spirit. They mistake the wrath kindled from hell for a holy zeal that comes from heaven. The enemies of true religion believe they are doing God a service through their acts of violence. Likewise, there are those who wickedly oppose the ways of God while proclaiming, "Glory be to the Lord." They pretend to pursue holiness outwardly while seeking to undermine it inwardly, using religion as a cover for their wicked actions.

Furthermore, there are those who blame their unhappiness and discontent on religion itself, claiming that their discomfort is due to

not being religious enough. They fail to recognize that "the ways of wisdom are ways of pleasantness" (Proverbs 3:17).

In these times, which mark a renewed flourishing of the gospel, we must be cautious of sins against the gospel. Neglecting or misusing great benefits leads to greater judgment. The Holy Spirit's role, through the ministry, is to reveal the riches of Christ and the glory of God's grace in Him. When we neglect such a great salvation and consider God's favor to be ordinary, we sin against the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, who desire to be glorified. There are those who command the clouds not to rain, the winds not to blow, and the prophets not to prophesy. They seek to obstruct the light of truth and sin against it, fearing that it will expose and awaken them, hindering their pursuit of worldly pleasures. By doing so, they not only deprive themselves of inward comfort but also expose themselves to the removal of truth, which they do not consider a blessing but rather a burden. They become weary of it and oppose it.

The Holy Spirit's role is to magnify Christ and God's favor and mercy in Him. When we disregard Christ in the gospel, which is the means through which the Holy Spirit works goodness in us, we also disregard and grieve the Holy Spirit. It is our unfortunate natural state, and we compound this wretchedness by adding sin upon sin since our birth. Do we not continue to grow in sin as we grow in years? Is not God just, and is not hell terrible? Yet out of infinite mercy, God has provided a way to deliver us from the danger of sin and to exalt us to eternal life. To ensure that we are not unaware of what He has done for us, He has established an ordinance in which the Holy Spirit reveals His love. When we disregard and consider it a common favor or even a burden, and when we think that the unveiling of divine mysteries can be dispensed with, that there is too much preaching, and that all this effort is unnecessary, we grieve the

Spirit. However, the Spirit's role is to disclose the "unsearchable riches of Christ" (Ephesians 3:8), the infinite and glorious mercy and goodness of God in Christ. In this, God manifests Himself in all His attributes to triumph and be glorified. We grieve the entire Holy Trinity: the Father is grieved to see His mercy disregarded, the Son is grieved to see His blood treated as common, and the Holy Spirit, whose role is to reveal these truths, is grieved as well. This is a prevailing sin of the present times and kingdom, which threatens judgment more than anything else. When the gospel, the blessed truth of salvation, is proclaimed, "the axe is laid to the root of the tree" (Matthew 3:10), symbolizing the instrument of destruction. If people despise God's mercies, reject Christ, and fail to walk worthy of the gospel, they will experience the blow of God's fierce anger. The red horse of blood and destruction follows the white horse, which represents the proclamation of the gospel. When God seeks to glorify Himself in mercy and in the greatest benefits, but we consider them as nothing more than common favors, God removes the candlestick. What man would tolerate having his greatest favors and kindnesses disregarded?

Another way of grieving the Spirit is when individuals refuse to fully acknowledge their own sinful condition and the infinite love and mercy of God in Christ, which pardons them. When God, through His Spirit in the ministry or through specific reproof, reveals to people their natural condition and tells them that they are worse than they perceive themselves to be, they oppose it and seek revenge. As the Apostle Paul said, "Have I now become your enemy by telling you the truth?" (Galatians 4:16). Surely, this must grieve the Spirit.

Furthermore, the Holy Spirit is grieved when we have a distorted judgment of things, failing to weigh them in the right balance and value them according to their true worth. When we esteem any

knowledge above divine knowledge and prioritize other truths over those that concern Christ, when we regard grace as contemptible and prefer other things over it, when we scoff at holiness and say, "Give us gifts and abilities," we diminish the importance of a gracious heart. Alas, what are all gifts and abilities without a heart transformed by grace? Do not the devils possess greater abilities than any human being? Are they not called "dæmones" due to the vastness of their understanding? If gifts and abilities were truly superior, then the devils would be better than us. How degrading it is to the Holy Spirit to think it better to be regarded as clever and shrewd than to be holy and full of grace!

Moreover, the Holy Spirit is grieved by sins that involve plotting and scheming, for they are committed with premeditation. David deeply wounded his conscience and grieved the Spirit when he devised the death of Uriah, an act that tarnished David's reputation and led Scripture to say that he was good in all things except in the matter of Uriah (1 Kings 15:5). Why? Because it was in this matter that he most grieved the Spirit, plotting and scheming the cruel murder of a good man. How can those who plot and undermine others' possessions to achieve their own unjust goals claim to possess the Spirit of God? Even if they do possess the Spirit, can they do so without grieving Him? The Spirit will continually prompt them toward the opposite course of action.

Additionally, we grieve the Holy Spirit when we commit sins that we could have avoided, sins for which we have some means of resistance and little provocation. There is a general rule that the easier it is not to sin, the greater the sin itself. Therefore, when we are tempted to sin, we should consider what our conscience tells us. We have heard the word; what has the Spirit of God revealed and exposed to us? He has shown that this is a sin. Whom do I grieve by committing it? The

Spirit of God, and I wound my own conscience. Then consider, will the satisfaction gained from sin outweigh its cost? Am I not paying too high a price for my sins? Sins are dearly bought at the expense of grieving the Spirit of God. Thus, it is wise to contemplate in advance what sin will truly cost us.

Men also grieve the Spirit by cavilling against the truth. Even a pagan could acknowledge that it is a harmful practice to cavil against religion, whether sincerely or in jest. Yet there exists a sect, a group of men who are followers of all religions and of no religion at all. They possess a contradictory spirit, always taking the opposing viewpoint and finding fault with the truth to display their intellectual abilities. This is all too common among the worldly intellectuals.

The Holy Spirit is further grieved when men usurp His role. This occurs when we rely on our own strength and understanding to accomplish things, as if we were gods unto ourselves. Humans naturally desire a kind of divinity. This was Adam's failing. Until God drives us out of ourselves through His Spirit and through afflictions, we place great value on our own abilities and intellect. As a result, we neglect prayer and dependence on God, as if the Spirit has no role to play in our lives. When individuals embark on actions relying solely on their natural abilities, they may progress in their endeavors as ordinary people, but never as Christians who can find comfort in their actions because they seek to be their own guides and gods. If a person truly belongs to God, He will thwart their efforts when they refuse to honor Him and give Him His rightful place. They will fail, while others may experience success, although it may only harden them further toward their destruction. This is a subtle way in which Satan deceives people. The life of a Christian is dependent on a higher principle than oneself, ruling and guiding them.

Another way in which we commonly grieve the Spirit of God is when our minds are burdened with an overwhelming amount of work. It's like our souls become noisy mills, where one cannot hear another due to the incessant noise that hinders all communication. Giving in to a multitude of tasks diminishes our reverence for the Holy Spirit. This is because the multitude of tasks breeds numerous passions and distractions. When the Spirit of God inspires us with what is best for our comfort and peace, we have no time to pay attention to His counsel. Therefore, we should moderate our obligations and affairs in such a way that we are always ready to receive good guidance. If a person wants to lose themselves, let them lose themselves in Christ and in heavenly matters. For if we become consumed by the world, it will breed discomfort.

Lastly, neglecting or half-heartedly performing our duties also grieves the Spirit. The Spirit, who comes from the Father and the Son, from God Himself, is great in His own being because He is God. As Malachi said, "Offer it then to your governor!" (Malachi 1:8), when he saw people approaching the worship of God negligently and carelessly. When people listen drowsily or partake in the sacrament without adequate preparation, this grieves the Spirit because it stems from irreverence and disrespect. The reason why so many have lifeless hearts is that they pay no heed to their omissions, their drowsiness, or their negligently performed duties. Such Christians hardly differ from worldly individuals in their performance of duties, for they may listen, pray, and partake in sacraments. The best Christian is the most reverent Christian, the most conscientious Christian, and the one who is most vigilant over their own heart. Usually, those who are most careful and watchful over themselves receive the greatest blessings. Therefore, let us listen attentively and receive the sacrament with a proper disposition, as stated in 1 Corinthians 11:28. The Scripture emphasizes a reverent regard



before performing our duties, suitable for the majesty of the great God we are worshiping.

In addition to grieving the Spirit of God within ourselves, we bear a heavy guilt for grieving the Spirit in others, which can occur in various ways.

Firstly, we grieve the spirits of others by neglecting the grace of God within them or despising them for some weaknesses that love should cover. Contempt is something that human nature is more intolerant of than any other form of injury. Those who habitually wrong others in this manner are met with general disdain.

Furthermore, we grieve the spirits of others through harsh criticisms. The greater our authority, the deeper the grief caused by our censures. Many weaker individuals cannot find peace while being subjected to such severity. They feel as though they have been excommunicated from the hearts of those with whom they desire to find favor.

Moreover, those who hold positions of authority grieve the spirits of those under their care by issuing unjust commands. This occurs when masters compel their servants to act in ways that conflict with their conscience, forcing them to sin and violating their sensitive hearts.

Additionally, we grieve the spirits of others when those who are subordinate display resistance to those above them in positions of authority or ministry, causing them to expend their strength in vain. Thus, the Spirit of God strove with the people of Noah's time (1 Peter 3:19). It is our duty, therefore, to act wisely in consideration of others. If it is our obligation to please others in all lawful matters out of human courtesy, then we should even more so strive to please

fellow Christians in matters that do not displease God. After all, we are united with them in the same Spirit. However, we must remember that it is one thing to oppose someone's disposition and offend their pride, and another to grieve the Spirit within them. No healing can be accomplished without experiencing some grief in that regard. If we fail to grieve their spirits when such dispositions prevail, we will grieve our own spirits due to our neglect of duty.

Lastly, this causes another form of grief when good individuals fail to watch over their own conduct. The Spirit is grieved by the reproaches against religion that come from the wicked. For what do they say? "Does religion and the Spirit teach you this?" Thus, Christians bring ill-repute upon the name of God, which grieves the Spirit and will grieve those who belong to God. Oh, wretched am I, that I should give others reason to speak ill and grieve the Spirit of God not only within myself but also in others because of my actions!

Engaging in scandalous behavior, either through an unreasonable exercise of our liberty without considering the weaknesses of others or through actions that are inherently evil or disreputable, also grieves the spirits of others. An evil example always either grieves or infects. Lot's spirit was grieved by the immoral conduct of the Sodomites, which undoubtedly hastened their ruin (2 Peter 2:7).

How can we know when we grieve the Spirit? We can recognize it by the aforementioned sins that cause grief. Moreover, the Spirit will make known its own grief. Just as we can discern when we have offended a friend because they distance themselves from us, we can understand that we have caused discontent to the Spirit through spiritual desertions. This includes a lack of assistance in performing our duties, an increased susceptibility to temptation, and difficulty in enduring afflictions. It also pertains to a loss of comfort, such as

feeling distant and emotionally numb, unless such feelings are due to some bodily ailment. In such cases, we should fear that all is not well.

When we feel inclined to seek comfort from other sources and engage in correspondence with worldly individuals, and when we no longer delight in the fellowship of believers as we once did, but instead feel indifferent towards any acquaintances, or when we encounter difficulties and our efforts fail, and our wheels come off track, and when our conscience compels us not to neglect our duties but we lack the oil of the Spirit to make us strong and agile in performing them, causing them to fall short of being acceptable to God or to our own spirits—these indications reveal that we have not treated the Spirit properly, whom otherwise we would find to be a Spirit of strength, a Spirit of comfort, and a revitalizing Spirit.

The consequences of grieving the Spirit will prove very dangerous, for the Spirit may rightfully abandon us to our own spirits and deceitful hearts, which, as they are expert flatterers, will ultimately betray us and allow an even worse influence to enter our souls. The evil spirit is always ready to take immediate possession, and by aligning with the current of our corruptions, it may please us for a time but will ultimately lead to our eternal destruction.

When we grieve the good Spirit of God and cause Him to depart from us, our soul is left in a state akin to hell, for what is hell but the absence of God's favor and mercy?

Furthermore, we cannot grieve the Spirit of God without experiencing grief in return. As a Spirit, He can fill our spirits with such grief that it can make our earthly conditions resemble a kind of hell. Few reprobates feel the same terrors in this life as the godly often do due to their bold actions. Besides the terrors of a natural conscience, they have the Spirit to incite them, and the Spirit, having

previously bestowed great favors upon them, only increases the horror and shame. In hell itself, the most bitter torment will be the realization of having rejected mercy, mercy that was offered and pressed upon them with love. A careless spirit often becomes a wounded spirit, and who can bear it? (Proverbs 18:14) Unless the wound is healed by the grace that afflicts us and by patiently waiting for the Spirit's compassionate intervention, it remains unbearable. What we say about conscience is true: it is both our greatest friend and our worst enemy. If a person's conscience is their friend, it will make everyone friendly towards them. It will make God their friend and affliction their friend, and nothing can deeply grieve them. But if a person's conscience becomes their enemy, they need not seek out any other enemies, for they have enough within their own heart—a tormenting conscience tearing itself apart. The same can be said of the Spirit of God, who is above conscience. If we do not make Him our greatest friend, then we are certain to have Him as our worst enemy, the one who unleashes all other enemies upon us. Displeasure corresponds to the person. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Hebrews 10:31). "Who knows the power of His wrath?" (Psalm 90:11) It is a powerful wrath. No creature possesses immediate power over the spirit except for this Spirit of spirits, who can completely fill the soul, every nook and cranny of it. Being commensurate with the soul, as vast as the soul and even larger, He can fill it with a burning wrath that extends to hell. And once the Spirit of God sets it in motion, who can remove the wrath of God?

Question: Why is it that we grieve the Spirit?

Answer: Because there is a cursed principle within us that is always active and not fully subdued in this life. Death marks the accomplishment of mortification, but as long as we are here, this

corruption within us will always be at work. "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit" (Galatians 5:17). The flesh is a restless and active entity. It stirs itself. Now, when contrary forces such as the flesh and the Spirit exist in the same soul, they are bound to continually oppose and grieve each other.

Question: It may be asked to what extent a child of God may grieve the Spirit and yet remain a child of God?

Answer: In response to this, it should be understood that we should not judge sin based on the matter in which it is committed, but rather on the spirit from which it arises. There is no sin so gross that the saints of God may not fall into it. However, the child of God is hindered by the opposing law of the Spirit from fully consenting to or finding complete delight in sin, and from allowing or persisting in it. And although the sin of a godly person may be more aggravated due to ingratitude, setting that aside, their sin itself is lesser because their temptations are stronger, Satan's malice is more vehement against them, and their resistance to sin is greater. All of these factors diminish the enormity of their guilt. The greater resistance from within indicates a stronger inner force within the godly individual, and the power of sin is weakened from within. Even at their worst, there is some work of the Spirit within them that corresponds, to some extent, with the counsels and promptings of the Spirit outside of them. The Holy Spirit has a grip on them and can reclaim them. A wicked person progresses from grieving to quenching, and from quenching to resisting. The Spirit has no influence or side within them, and therefore, when the Spirit is gone, they bid farewell. They are glad because now they can freely indulge in their desires and sins without restraint.

At times, God leads His children to heaven through foul paths, allowing them to recognize their need for cleansing through the blood and Spirit of Christ, which they may not otherwise appreciate. It is when they grieve the Spirit and the Spirit, in turn, grieves them that this grief becomes medicinal. The grief that sin engenders consumes the sin itself. We are in a covenant with such a wise and powerful God that He can even utilize sin itself to fulfill His purpose of bringing His chosen ones to heaven. They possess within them a hatred for the sin they commit and a love for the goodness they do not possess, whereas others hate the good they have to some extent and love the evil they dare not commit. Although they may be drawn into sin, they will never sever the conjugal bond between Christ and their souls to the extent that sin would reign in them as a commanding lord. They will not forsake their oath of allegiance to willingly serve an opposing king. They may sometimes presume upon Christ, thinking that they have a ready balm to heal their wounds—as some demonstrate the efficacy of their oils by inflicting wounds upon themselves—thus falling victim to the deceitfulness of sin. Yet God always chastises this boldness and deals with them in a manner that brings even greater shame upon themselves, so that their presumption proves increasingly futile. The loss of comfort and the sense of sorrow they experience make them realize, through personal experience, that nothing is gained by sin and that it ultimately becomes bitter in the end.

Moreover, even though they may be kept from committing presumptuous sins in one sense, they are always kept from committing "the great offense." While they may commit a sin against the Holy Spirit, they can never commit the sin against the Holy Spirit, for that is a sin characterized by malice after strong conviction. It is expressed through words steeped in malice, like "a tongue set on fire by hell" (James 3:6), and through actions

stemming from an opposing spirit and leading to opposition and bitter persecution, unless their malice outweighs their power. And it always ends in impenitence because they despise that grace and reject that remedy through which they could be restored. Their pride prevents them from embracing God's way.

Thirdly, After such fearful relapses, ignorance in the understanding and rebellion in the will increase. Sin grows stronger while they grow weaker and weaker in their ability to resist.

Fourthly, Once Satan has been expelled to some degree through illumination and reformation, he brings "seven devils after, worse than himself" (Matthew 12:45). When individuals realize that their former ways are incompatible with their desires and hopes, they adopt a contrary course that ultimately leads to bitterness.

There are two types of misjudgment concerning this sin.

(1) Some are too hasty in their judgment of others, especially those whose spirits they are not thoroughly acquainted with. The greater the sin, the more cautious one should be in attributing it to anyone, considering the various factors involved.

(2) The second misjudgment is an unfounded self-condemnation. There are three dangers that fear protects us from. First, the fear that our conversion time has passed due to repeatedly grieving the Spirit, when in fact, if their time had truly passed, they would be given over to careless indifference. Second, the fear of some impending judgment that God stirs in the heart to prevent us from experiencing the judgment we fear. Fear prompts us to be cautious, and caution leads to diligence in avoiding what we fear. Third, the fear of having committed the sin against the Holy Spirit, which itself indicates that we have not committed that sin. It is never committed without fear

and with delight. In these cases, those who fear themselves the most need to fear them the least.

The fourth point is, what steps should we take to prevent grieving the Spirit?

1. Let us surrender the governance of our souls to the Spirit of God. It is for our safety to do so, as He is wiser than us, and we are incapable of directing our own paths. It is our liberty to be under a wisdom and goodness greater than our own. Let the Spirit think, desire, pray, live, and do everything within us. Strive to be in such a state that we are receptive to the Spirit's work. As Nazianzen said of himself, "Lord, I am an instrument for You to touch." A musical instrument, even when in tune, produces no sound unless it is touched. Let us expose ourselves to the Spirit's touch. Just as Saint Paul did not live, but rather Christ lived in him (Galatians 2:20). This requires significant self-denial to entrust ourselves to the guidance of the Spirit. But if we truly understood how much we are our own enemies, it would not be so difficult.
2. Secondly, strive to walk in complete obedience to the Spirit in all things. This necessitates carefulness in knowing and considering our ways. Then we will find the Spirit ready to guide us and say, "This is the way, walk in it" (Isaiah 30:21). When we obey, the Spirit will affirm us through a secret indication that we have done well. This was exemplified in the case of Paul when he was said to be "bound in Spirit" (Acts 20:22). The Spirit compelled him to the point where he could not resist the prompting until it was carried out. We must be extremely cautious not to disregard any prompting, as they are messengers of the Spirit. They are ambassadors sent by God to prepare the way for Him into our



hearts. Therefore, give them a warm reception. Many people, rather than being troubled by holy promptings, suffocate them at their inception, just as harlots, to avoid the pain of childbirth, kill their offspring in the womb. Let us beware of murdering these manifestations of the Spirit. However, since Satan often interrupts good promptings with other seemingly good promptings to hinder both,

Question: How can we discern the source of these promptings?

Answer: 1. When two seemingly good promptings arise, the one that the Spirit of God strongly impels us towards is from God, more so than the other. Good promptings either originate within us or are sent to us by the Spirit. Both, if they are from the Spirit, will lead us to God. They will rise as high as their source. What originates from ourselves ends with ourselves.

Answer: 2. Promptings stirred up by the Spirit arise from a sanctified judgment and understanding of what we are prompted to do. Other promptings are impulsive and vanish before their purpose is fulfilled. Holy promptings are persistent, being strengthened by constant grace within us, until they see the outcome of what they were prompted to do. Other promptings are like lightning and sudden flashes that leave the soul even more bewildered and in darkness. Holy promptings are aligned with the duties of our calling, while other promptings often lead us beyond the boundaries of our calling.

Answer: 3. The Spirit moves in the godly by dwelling in them and working through their sanctified abilities, prompting them to good actions. However, the Spirit does not dwell in others or produce sanctified abilities within them. It only prompts them to good actions at times, without effecting any change in them.

Answer: 4. The promptings of the Holy Spirit are timely. Other promptings often intrude upon us, disturbing our holy duties. The breath of the Spirit within us corresponds to the Spirit's inspiration in the Scriptures. The same Spirit does not inspire contradictory promptings.

Answer: 5. The promptings of the Spirit carry their own evidence, just as light does. They are gentle and mild, leading us in a gentle manner. They are not usually violent raptures that take the soul out of itself but leave a discernment of them and other things within the soul.

Answer: 6. Furthermore, the Spirit prompts us to religious duties that align with ethical conduct and love towards our neighbors. Therefore, those who, under the pretext of zeal, act uncivilly and cruelly, revealing that they are not led by the Spirit that appeared in the form of a dove, do not understand the spirit by which they are driven. Both aspects of the commandments are united, as they originate from the same Spirit, and the second commandment is like the first, requiring love. Since all graces and duties come from the same Spirit, one duty never contradicts another. The wisdom of the Spirit prompts us to all holy duties in their respective and suitable places.

Answer: 7. Promptings, though good in content, may be tainted by self-confidence in terms of their source. What Peter resolved to do was good, but self-confidence marred it. Promptings stirred up by the Spirit are accompanied by a reliance on assisting grace. These are the considerations regarding that question.

3. Again, if we do not want to grieve the Spirit, let us be cautious of neglecting the Spirit's guidance. The flesh may object, "We can only do what we can."

Answer: The Spirit is always ahead of us, preempting us with some knowledge and ability. If we join with the Spirit in putting forth these gifts, the Spirit is ready to cooperate with us and lead us further. Our conscience will confirm that if we act otherwise, it is not due to a lack of present assistance or knowledge that the Spirit would deny us strength if we rely on it. Our own hearts, though deceitful, will inform us that we do what we do willingly, prioritizing some apparent good over the prompting of the Spirit. In doing so, we carry within our conscience that which absolves God and condemns ourselves. Even the worst individuals, whose hearts turn away from God, are pursued by God for a long time with gracious promptings, although the invincible stubbornness of their hearts prevents them from yielding. This removes any excuse, as Saint Augustine argues convincingly. If I had known, a wicked person may say, I would not have done this. To which he replies, it is the pride of your heart that suggests that. Didn't you have motions and admonitions warning you of the danger? If the Spirit, even in the worst actions, cooperates to the extent that they are actions and motions, can we not assume that the Spirit is much more ready to concur with holy motions that are first stirred up by Himself? If the Spirit is willing to cooperate in natural actions, how much more so in spiritual actions, where it is the primary mover? The Spirit does not abandon us until we abandon the Spirit.

4. When the Spirit suggests good motions, immediately turn them into holy resolutions. Is this my duty and something that brings me comfort? Certainly, I will do it. Let these motions not perish within us. How many holy motions are ignited when we hear the word or partake in the sacraments, only to fade away as soon as they are kindled due to a lack of resolution! Therefore, let us not give up until these motions are transformed into purposes, and those good purposes are matured into holy actions. Let us

ensure that they are not thwarted in their early stages but instead bring forth abundant fruit. Let us strive to make the most of these talents for the purpose for which they are given. If they are motions of comfort, let us use them for comfort. If they are motions leading to duty, let us conscientiously fulfill our duties. Let not our despairing hearts oppose the Spirit in His comforts, nor stubbornly resist our duty, for that is to go against God and nip His motions in the bud.

5. Give the Spirit full scope, both in the ordinances and in the promptings stirred up by the ordinances. This is the way to make the ordinances and the times glorious. However, the liberties of the gospel are contrary to the liberties of the flesh. They turn everything upside down and take people out of themselves. Hence, the spirit of the world opposes the purity and power of the gospel the most, which is a clear indication of the poor condition of those who oppose it. But gracious individuals possess a different spirit. They are the children of light and love it. If we do not want to grieve the Spirit, we must be willing to subject ourselves to all the advantages of the Spirit's work. This includes associating with those who are spiritual and, above all, attending the ordinances where the Spirit breathes and where we may encounter the Spirit. The paths of God's Spirit are found in the means of salvation: hearing the preached word and communing with fellow believers. The word and Spirit go hand in hand. Therefore, if we desire the comforts of the Spirit, we must attend to the word. People grieve the Spirit when they neglect the word and holy conversations. The relationship between the word and the Spirit is like that of veins and arteries. The veins carry the blood, while the arteries carry the spirits that invigorate the blood. The word is lifeless without the Spirit, so attend to the word. And then

wait for the Spirit to enliven the word so that both the word and the Spirit may guide us to eternal life. Motions of this kind originate from the Spirit, as it is said of old Simeon that he entered the temple by the motion of the Spirit (Luke 2:27). John was "in the Spirit" on the Lord's day (Rev. 1:10). Our spiritual nourishment is most abundant during these times. Christ's Spirit and word coexist in the heart. Therefore, the apostle uses the expression "Christ dwells in us" and "the word dwells in us" indiscriminately. Faith, produced by the word, lays hold of Christ and brings Him into the soul, keeping Him there. It is a blessed thing when the Spirit in the ordinance and the Spirit in our hearts come together. This is how we nurture and sustain the Spirit within us, as if we were adding oil to our lamps. Because the Spirit, though self-sufficient, finds nourishment in us here below, just as fire, though it can sustain itself in its own element, requires fuel in our earthly realm. Beware of despising any help of faith that God provides, as wicked Ahaz did (Isaiah 7:3ff). God offered him a sign from heaven or earth or any other creature to strengthen his faith. But no, he would not test God. He seemed pious, refusing to test God. However, what does the prophet say? "Is it a small thing for you to weary men, that you weary my God also?" insinuating that when we despise the help that God has given us, we grieve the Spirit of God. Those who neglect the word and the sacrament, what do they despise? A mere minister? Neglecting bread and wine? No, they despise God Himself, who knows better than we do our need for these helps.

6. Furthermore, when we find that the Spirit is not assisting and comforting us as before, it is necessary to examine the cause. We may discover that we have neglected holy promptings or the means that foster them, or that we have yielded to some

particular corruption to which we are prone, or that there is some unrepented sin that we have failed to acknowledge. It is good, therefore, to thoroughly search our souls. There may be hidden corruptions lurking within us, undermining our grace and comfort. There may be secret thieves robbing us of everything. Apart from secret sins, it is also beneficial to reflect on past sins that we may have previously regarded superficially. God, through a sense of spiritual deadness and trouble, intends to remind us to renew our sorrow for them. Due to our failure to keep a strict account with ourselves, God calls us to settle these arrears and reckonings, as seen in the case of Joseph's brothers (Genesis 50:15). If we no longer experience the sweetness of communion with the Spirit that we once enjoyed, let us reflect on when and how we lost it, so that we may encounter the Spirit again in the ways in which we previously found Him, and let us be cautious of the paths that caused us to lose Him.

7. Again, be cautious of minor sins, which we perhaps consider to be lesser sins than God does. We evaluate sin using our own scale, rather than His. However, no sin should be regarded as insignificant, for if it were placed upon our conscience and the rightful wrath were revealed, it would rob us of all comfort. Therefore, we must judge sin as the Spirit does, if we do not want to grieve the Spirit. Just as the communion with the Spirit is the sweetest of all, preserving it requires the utmost vigilance and a deep understanding of ourselves. Beware of the onset of sin. When any desire arises, pray it down immediately, reject it, do not give it consent, and humble yourself promptly. Otherwise, by yielding, we are in danger of grieving, by grieving, of resisting, by resisting, of quenching, and by quenching, of maliciously opposing the Spirit. Sin has no boundaries except those set by the Spirit, whom we should not grieve. Let us focus

on the root and source of sins, through which we grieve the Spirit of God, rather than merely dwelling on the act itself. We may be angry with ourselves for being passionate, but what is the cause of the passion? It stems from pride. Jonah was a passionate man; to the extent that he was passionate, he was proud. He was reluctant to be shamed when he had proclaimed, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!" (Jonah 4:11). He thought that sparing them would bring discredit upon himself, prioritizing his reputation over the destruction of a populous city. Likewise, there is much slander and strife in the world, leading to quarrels and divisions. What is the cause? A spirit of envy and often a spirit of pride. People harm others by wronging them. What is the cause? Worldliness and a base, earthly-minded disposition. People do not reflect on the root of sin but focus solely on the outward act. We should be led from the distant streams to the spring and source of all and mourn that above all else.

This mindfulness will be aided by spiritual wisdom, enabling us to discern both how we have grieved the Spirit and how we may avoid doing so in the future. We cannot maintain a friendship in perfect and harmonious terms with someone whose disposition we do not know—what pleases or displeases them. Therefore, we should study the nature and delight of the Spirit and identify where we are prone to forget ourselves and the Spirit. We do not value the friendship of those who are primarily friends to themselves, indifferent to whether others are content or discontent. The Spirit dwells most abundantly in the heart that has emptied itself of self. The Israelites did not taste the sweetness of the manna until they had exhausted their supply of meat and other provisions from Egypt. The nature of God's Spirit is holy; it delights exclusively in holy temples. Those who erect any "idol of jealousy" in their souls against God, failing to "keep their

vessels in holiness," cannot expect communion with the Spirit. The Spirit is jealous of our affections and will not tolerate anything exalted above God in our hearts. Though the Spirit condescends to dwell in us, we must not forget the respect owed to such a great superior but rather reverently receive everything that comes from Him. Reverence and obedience are the appropriate demeanor towards a superior, and when the proper distance is not maintained, a breach will occur. We should hold ourselves in reverence for the sake of the Spirit and consider ourselves too noble for any base desire to take residence within us. The heart that the Spirit has chosen for Himself should reject all contrary impulses with abhorrence. What place should pride, envy, and passion have in a heart dedicated to the Spirit of meekness and holiness?

Upon any breach, we must look to renewing repentance and faith in Christ to restore our peace with God before we can expect the grace and comfort of the Spirit. Just as the Spirit comes from the Father and the Son and is obtained through the death and satisfaction of the Son to the Father, without which we could never have expected the gift of the Spirit, we must continually have our eyes on this satisfaction through Christ and the reconciliation it brings in order to regain communion with the Spirit, as it is the greatest fruit of the love of God reconciled through Christ. We see David in Psalm 51 first imploring God's mercy repeatedly and then asking for the Spirit and the joy of salvation.

Also, be careful that nothing enters or exits our souls that may grieve the Spirit of God. Some things enter us that grieve the Spirit—corruptions we receive from others. Some things come out of our hearts that grieve God's Spirit, such as corrupt thoughts and speech. This is indeed the purpose of this passage, "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth," and then follows, "And



do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God." Furthermore, the author adds, "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and clamour be put away," suggesting that one way to grieve the Spirit is through improper and corrupt language. Whenever we engage in conversation with those who are not spiritually minded, they will either vex and sadden us or contaminate and defile us, unless it is in such instances of our calling that necessitate interaction. But I am referring to the voluntary choice of associating with those who do not cherish what is good. Many people, in order to please their own carnal spirits and the carnal spirits of others, utter things that go against conscience and defy that which is higher than conscience—a more divine principle, the Holy Spirit of God. Loose and carnal speakers lack the power of true religion.

Objection: Some may say, "This is quite a lot! Duty upon duty. This will make our lives troublesome."

Answer: The life of a Christian is an honorable, comforting, and sweet life. Indeed, it requires the most care and vigilance of any life in the world, as it is the best life. It begins here and is perfected in an eternal life in heaven. Nothing in this world—neither our possessions nor our favor with influential people—can be preserved without watchfulness. So how can we expect to preserve the chief happiness of our souls without it, when there are so many enemies both external and internal that seek to ensnare us in a cursed state?

Therefore, to encourage us to practice these duties and bring contentment to such a sweet guest, let us consider the reasons why we should value the Spirit and His promptings, based on the benefits we receive from them.

The Holy Spirit of God is our guide. Who would displease their guide, a sweet and comforting guide who leads us through the wilderness of

this world? Just as the cloud guided the Israelites by day and the pillar of fire by night, He leads us to the heavenly Canaan. If we grieve our guide, we cause Him to abandon us to ourselves. The Israelites would not proceed further than the angel of God went before them. It is futile for us to journey towards heaven without our blessed guide. We cannot do, say, or think anything that is holy and good without Him. Whatever is holy and pious does not originate in our own nature but is implanted by the Spirit.

There is no friend in the world as great and beneficial as the Spirit, if we receive Him. Indeed, He must rule; we must submit to His governance. And when He resides in our hearts, He gradually subdues all lofty thoughts, rebellious impulses, and despairing fears. This will be our eternal happiness when we are entirely spiritual, when "God will be all in all." We will be perfectly obedient to the Spirit in our understanding, will, and affections. The Spirit will then dwell abundantly in us, making the space where He resides joyful, bright, and free, suppressing whatever is contrary and bringing fullness of peace, joy, and comfort. In the meantime, whatever condition we may find ourselves in, we will receive suitable help from the Spirit. We are partly flesh and partly spirit. God is not yet all in all; the flesh has a share in us. We often experience afflictions and clouds. Therefore, let us cherish our fellowship with the Spirit. For when we are in darkness, He is a Spirit of light. When we are spiritually lifeless, He is a Spirit of life. When we are in a desolate state, He is a Spirit of consolation. When we are perplexed and do not know what to do, He is a Spirit of wisdom. When we struggle with corruption, He is a sanctifying, conquering, and mortifying Spirit. In whatever condition we may find ourselves, He will never leave us until He has raised us from the grave and taken full possession of our bodies and souls in heaven. He will be a comforter when friends, riches, and all else in the world fail to comfort us. How

diligent should we be in bringing contentment to this sweet Spirit of God!

No Christian is as blessed as the watchful Christian who is attentive to their duty and the preservation of communion with the Holy Spirit of God. By welcoming Him, we are assured of communion with the Father and the Son. It is the most joyful condition in the world when the soul is the temple of the Holy Spirit, when the heart is like the "holy of holies," where prayers and praises are offered to God. The soul is like a sacred ark, and the memory preserves heavenly truths like the pot of manna. It is a heavenly condition. A person prospers on the path to heaven when the Spirit of God is with them. You may recall Obed-Edom, who prospered greatly when the ark was in his house (2 Samuel 6:12). Likewise, as long as the Spirit and His promptings are welcomed by us, we will be blessed in life, blessed in death, and blessed for eternity. For it is by the Spirit that we are "sealed for the day of redemption."

The apostle seals this grave admonition with an argument drawn from the Spirit's sealing of believers "for the day of redemption."

We are all by nature in bondage to sin and corruption. We have all been redeemed from sin through the first coming of Christ, and we will be redeemed from corruption through His second coming.

There is a designated day for this glorious work. In the meantime, God wants us to have prior assurance of it. This assurance comes through "sealing," and this sealing is done "by the Spirit." No one else needs to do it; no lesser person can do it.

And what respect is owed to the Spirit for accomplishing such a gracious work? That we do not grieve Him, and not only that, but

that we also strive to please Him in such a way that He can joyfully continue with this blessed work that He has undertaken.

Just as the duty is spiritual, the arguments that support it are also spiritual. The argument here is derived from that which carries the most compelling force: love expressed through its sweetest fruit and its enduring nature—sealing, and sealing until the day of redemption. It is as if the apostle were reasoning in this manner: God the Father has ordained your salvation through the redemption of His Son, Christ. And so that you may have comfort in this salvation along the way, despite any discouragements you may encounter, the Holy Spirit has assured you of it and set His seal upon you as those who are set apart for such great salvation. The sense of this love should generate love in you in return, and love should inspire a genuine desire not to offend such a gracious Spirit.

The Holy Spirit, by whom you are sealed,

The Holy Spirit delights in speaking our language. Since we cannot ascend to Him, He stoops down to us.

This "sealing" can refer to either the sealing of individuals or the sealing of the good things intended for those individuals. Sealing is not only a witness to us but also a work upon us and within us, reflecting the image of the One who seals us. Through this, we are not only assured of the promised blessings but also prepared to receive them. God does not prepare good things for anyone unless He also prepares and equips them for those blessings. It involves not only an external authorization of the great promises we have through oath, sacrament, and the word, but also an internal persuasion by the Spirit of our own personal stake in them. This work enables us to lay claim to them, just as a seal serves both to confirm and represent the one who affixed it.

# Of the Sealing of the Spirit

The individuals who are sealed are, firstly, Christ, and then those who are given to Christ.

## I. Christ is sealed,

1. By the Father. Christ was ordained by Him to be a saviour in our human nature, predestined to be the head of the church. Therefore, He often said He came to do His Father's will: "Him the Father has sealed" (John 6:27), anointing Him, calling Him, commissioning Him, sanctifying Him by the Spirit, and equipping Him with all the necessary grace to be a saviour.
2. He was sealed by the fullness of the divine nature dwelling in flesh, humbled and exalted for us, so that His flesh is the flesh of the Son of God, and His blood is the "blood of God" (Acts 20:28).
3. Sealed by a testimony from heaven given by all three persons: by the Father, who declared, "This is My beloved Son"; by the Holy Spirit, descending like a dove; by Christ Himself, who, in His human nature, dwells fully in Him. Christ is sealed by the miracles performed upon Him and by Him, by His baptism and inauguration into His office, and by His willingness to shed His blood for sin, through which the covenant is established and sealed.

4. By being justified in the Spirit, raised from the dead, and "declared to be the Son of God with power" (Romans 1:4), then exalted to the right hand of God, so that through Him our faith and trust might be in God (2 Peter 3:14). His eternal presence there assures us not only of His ability and willingness to save us but also that it has already been accomplished. We can see everything we could hope for in ourselves fulfilled in our head, bringing us comfort.

II. Just as Christ was sealed and prepared for us, we are also sealed and prepared for Christ. There is a secret seal in predestination. This is known only to God Himself: "The Lord knows those who are His" (2 Timothy 2:19). This knowledge of God regarding us remains hidden, like a river flowing underground, until He calls and separates us from the rest of humanity. It is at this point, through His Spirit, that He convicts us of our true condition and reveals to us the cursed state in which we find ourselves. This leads to sorrow and humility for sin as the greatest evil. At this stage, pardon means more to us than a crown; we begin to wait for mercy and continue to do so. We beg for mercy, basing our requests on Christ's own terms, by denying and renouncing anything of our own. It is then that Christ becomes Christ to us. After this, it pleases Christ, by His Spirit, to open "a door of hope" and give us glimpses of His mercy. He allows some beams of love to enter and, at the same time, raises the soul through the spirit of faith to embrace the specific mercy that is revealed and offered by the Spirit. This causes the soul to seal its acceptance of the truth of the promise. As John 3:33 states, "Whoever believes in Him has set his seal to this, that God is true." It is astonishing that God should stoop so low as to receive confirmation through our belief. Yet, this is how God condescends, as described in Scripture, just as we are said to help God: "Curse Meroz, says the angel of the Lord, curse its inhabitants thoroughly,

because they did not come to the help of the Lord" (Judges 5:23). God stoops to be helped by us and to have His truth, power, goodness, and wisdom ratified and confirmed by us. When we believe in the promise of God through Christ—though it is by the help of the Spirit—we confirm the truth of God. Then God honors our sealing by sealing us with His Spirit. As the apostle says, "Having believed, you were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit" (Ephesians 1:13). This further confirms the gracious love of Christ towards us. Among all the graces, God honors faith the most. Why? Because it honors God above all else. It gives God the honor of His mercy, goodness, wisdom, power, and truth. Above all, those who believe in God, by believing, confirm that God is true. In turn, God honors that soul by sealing it until the day of redemption. God has promised, "Those who honor Me, I will honor" (John 12:26). Therefore, "Whoever believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself" (1 John 5:10). That promised grace belongs to him, for he carries within his heart the evidence of the promises. He who confesses and believes will receive mercy. The soul says, "I believe; therefore, the promise belongs to me." My faith affirms God's love in the promise to me. The Spirit not only reveals Christ and the promises in general but also, through the means of attending to the ordinances, illuminates our understanding with a heavenly light. The Spirit reveals to us our specific interest in God's salvation and says to the soul, "God is your salvation." The Spirit enables the soul to declare, "I am God's. I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine" (Song of Solomon 2:16). "Christ loved me and gave Himself for me" (Galatians 2:20). Where did Saint Paul's voice come from? It was the quiet voice of the Spirit of God, who, together with the general truth of the gospel, specifically revealed Christ's love to him. It is not a general faith that will lead us to heaven. Rather, there is a special work of the Spirit, accomplished through the use of means, that discloses and

seals God's good intentions toward us and convinces our hearts to believe in God and love Him as our God and Christ as our Christ.

This is excellently expressed in the beautiful union of marriage. The Spirit acts as the wedding intermediary, the matchmaker, between Christ and the soul. It is not enough to know that God and Christ have goodwill towards all believers (though that forms the foundation and general basis of everything, and it greatly prepares us for the special sealing of the Spirit). However, it is when the Spirit comes and declares, "Christ has a special goodwill towards me," and stirs within me an affectionate response towards Him, prompting me to accept Him on His own terms despite the conflicts with corruption and the world's scorn, and so the mutual marriage is established between Christ and us. This work is the "sealing of the Spirit."

There are many privileges that a Christian receives through this sealing, as the use of a seal in human affairs is diverse.

1. Seals serve for confirmation and validation. They are used to seal measures for that purpose. God is said to seal instruction (Job 33:16). Confirmation can be achieved through empowerment or through the authority of those who are capable of fulfilling their promises and are willing to do so. They demonstrate this by putting their seal, which possesses the same power to confirm to the one to whom the promise is made as they have the will and ability to fulfill it. Among people, there is the writing, and there is the seal affixed to the writing. When the seal is added to the writing, it becomes a complete ratification. Similarly, there are numerous gracious promises in the Scriptures. However, when the Spirit comes and seals them to the soul, they become sure to us. The Spirit affixes the seal to the promises.



2. Furthermore, seals are used for distinction from others who do not bear that mark. Similarly, the sealing of the Spirit distinguishes a Christian from all other individuals. There is a distinction among people in God's eternal purpose, but it is not for us to delve into it beyond knowing it in a general sense. God "knows those who are His" (2 Timothy 2:19) and those who are not His. However, in time, the Holy Spirit distinguishes and classifies people as they were distinguished before the creation of the world and as they will be on the Day of Judgment. The beginning of that distinction, which will be fully realized later on, takes place in this life.

A seal impresses an image, and the image of the ruler is typically found in their seal. Similarly, God's image is present in His seal, which destroys the old image and imprint that existed within us previously. Through the work of the Spirit, holy and good individuals are distinguished in the following ways:

1. They are distinguished from secular individuals by the work of holiness, which purely secular individuals do not possess and even despise.
2. They are also distinguished from superficially pious individuals by the depth of their spiritual work. The Spirit of God works a new nature within them, setting them apart. Every creature's nature is inclined more towards one thing than another. A pious individual has a distinct inclination towards God, grace, and goodness. Their goals and aspirations are distinct, and as a result, their hearts are more expansive, suited to their lofty aims. They look beyond the world and those who are solely concerned with worldly matters. Even the best among them have narrow, low, and base spirits.

3. Natural things operate from within. This is how painted hypocrites are distinguished from genuinely devout Christians. The latter work from an inward principle, while the former are moved like automata, mechanical objects such as clocks and other similar devices that are set in motion by external weights. If they do any good, it is because of external factors that influence their aims and objectives, rather than an internal principle. Nature operates from an inner principle, with light things moving upward and heavy things moving downward naturally. Artificial things, on the other hand, are compelled. Thus, good individuals are distinguished from those who only appear to be holy. A new nature is formed within them.
  
4. Nature is constant. What occurs naturally is constant. Heavy objects always move downward, and light objects move upward. Every creature operates according to its nature. A holy individual is consistently engaged in holiness because they do so from an inward principle, from a work and impression within. Different things may appear similar, such as wild herbs that may resemble cultivated plants in terms of appearance and form, but there is a difference in their properties. The apparent graces and actions of a hypocrite have no virtue in them, similar to how there are some drugs devoid of virtue, lifeless objects. However, there is a distinguishing virtue in the faith of a Christian, enabling them to overcome the world and their desires. This faith enables them to perform all their duties, pray, listen, and lead a fruitful life. All their graces possess a comforting and empowering virtue. True gold possesses the virtue of comforting and strengthening the heart, which alchemical gold lacks. True grace possesses a working, comforting virtue. The formal and artificial actions of another person have no virtue in them, nor is it intended, as they are only carried out to serve a purpose. Two

individuals may perform the same actions, yet there can be a significant difference: one does them by the seal of the Spirit, from a deeper dye and impression of the Spirit, while the other, even if they are influenced by the Spirit, does so only through a common work at best. Some dyes cannot withstand weather conditions and rapidly change color, while others possess a deeper tint that remains intact. The graces of a genuine Christian endure all types of weather, be it winter or summer, prosperity or adversity, whereas superficial counterfeit holiness will falter. Thus, we see that the seal of the Spirit serves for distinction.

3. The purpose of a seal also includes ownership. Merchants seal their goods to establish their exclusive rights to them.

A Christian belongs to God in a more distinctive manner than others. It is not only a testimony of the Spirit that God is his, but the Spirit also works within him an agreement to accept God in return. There is a mutual sense of ownership: "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine" (Song of Solomon 2:16). When the soul can say, "You are my God," it is not in vain, for God declares beforehand, "I am your salvation" (Psalm 35:3). Where the Spirit seals, God appropriates. "God chooses the righteous person for Himself" (Psalm 4:3). And we can recognize this ownership through our own appropriation of God. "Whom have I in heaven but You? And there is none upon earth that I desire besides You" (Psalm 73:25). Every action that God performs in the soul is met with a reciprocal action by the Spirit towards God. If God chooses and loves us, we choose and love Him in return. God appropriates us first. We belong to Him, and we belong to Christ. We are God's because He has given Christ for us. We are Christ's because He has given Himself for us. As the apostle says, we are a people acquired, a people purchased (Acts 20:28) — purchased at a great

cost by the blood of Christ. The Spirit appropriates those who belong to Christ. This appropriation happens through sealing.

4. Furthermore, we usually set our seal only on things that we hold in high esteem. The church in the Song of Solomon exclaims, "Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm" (Song of Solomon 8:6), desiring to be valued and cherished. The witness and work of the Spirit demonstrate God's estimation of us. The Scriptures abundantly express the great value that God places on His children. They are referred to as His children, His spouse, His friends, His portion, His treasure, and His coin. He sets His mark, His likeness, on them. They are consecrated and set apart. They are the first fruits. "Israel is a holy thing" (Jeremiah 2:3). Their titles reveal the esteem that God holds for them. He values them more than anything else in the world, which is compared to chaff and dross. "The righteous person is more excellent than his neighbor" (Proverbs 12:26). Just as there is a distinction in excellence between precious stones and common stones, or fruitful trees and barren trees, there is also a distinction among people. For this reason, God places a higher value on some individuals, which is why they receive honourable and glorious titles in Scripture, such as "sons," "heirs," "kings," and "co-heirs with Christ." Meanwhile, others are described as "dross," "dung," and "thorns," receiving all sorts of derogatory terms.

This estimation, through sealing, becomes evident to us through the grace that God works within us. Common gifts, privileges, and worldly favours are not a seal of God's estimation. If God were to grant a person kingdoms and great monarchies, it would not seal God's love for them at all. However, when God makes a person a spiritual ruler who triumphs over their base desires, this becomes a

seal of God's valuation of them above others. Therefore, we should learn to value others and ourselves not based on common things that anyone can possess, but based on the stamp of God placed upon us by the Spirit. This stamp is evidence that God intends to store us as treasures for another treasury — heaven. It is a common and grave error of our time to be led astray by false evidence. Many think that God loves them because He spares them, exercises patience with them, and enables them to prosper in the world. But are these the fruits of God's special love? What grace has He worked in their hearts through His Spirit? "He gives His Spirit to those who pray" (Luke 11:13), implying that, next to the gift of His Son, the greatest gift is the Spirit, who shapes and prepares us to be members of His Son. This is an indication of God's love and esteem.

5. Seals are also employed for secrecy, such as in letters. Similarly, the seal of the Spirit is a hidden work. God knows who belongs to Him. They are known only to Him and to their own hearts. "The white stone and the hidden manna" (Revelation 2:17) are known exclusively by the one who possesses them. No one can know the state of grace as infallibly as those who have experienced the work of grace themselves. Holy individuals are somewhat known to one another, making the communion of saints more delightful. There is a great deal of spiritual likeness among Christians, with one person having strong confidence in the salvation of another. However, the absolute certainty of one's spiritual state is known only to God and the individual themselves. Sometimes it may even be hidden from the individual. Due to the abundance of weaknesses, humiliations, and trials in the world, this life is described as a "hidden life" in Scripture. "Our life is hidden with Christ in God" (Colossians 3:3). It is unknown to the saints themselves at times and

perpetually unknown to the world. "They neither know Him who begets, nor those who are begotten" (1 John 5:1).

6. Moreover, seals are used to ensure inviolability. Thus, the church is compared to a "sealed fountain" (Song of Solomon 4:12). Sealing demonstrates a commitment to preserving something from common harm. By sealing, the Spirit of God secures His children, just as the blood sprinkled on the doorposts protected the Israelites from the destroying angel. In Ezekiel 9:4, a mark was placed on those who were to be preserved, providing them with security. In Revelation 7:3, the "sealed ones" are not to be harmed. Therefore, when the seal of the Spirit is present, it signifies that God intends to protect such an individual from eternal destruction and from prevailing dangers in this world. They are God's sealed ones, and no one can harm them without wronging God Himself. "Touch not My anointed ones, and do My prophets no harm" (Psalm 105:15). They are also safeguarded from devouring sins and perilous apostasy. A person who is genuinely sealed by the Spirit of God never becomes a member of antichrist, a branded papist (for antichrist also has its own seal). They are kept safe from soul-destructive errors, assured by the work and testimony of God's Spirit. Whatever purposes a seal serves in human affairs, God wants us to apply them in our heavenly relationship between Him and us.

Whereby you are sealed

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

1. Faith; "He who believes has the witness in himself" (1 John 5:10). The believer carries in their heart the confirmation of all the promises. This grace is initially planted in the heart and

corresponds to God's love and purpose towards us in granting eternal life. The act of believing is also a seal to us, as it is among the gifts that "accompany salvation" (Hebrews 6:9), which God never revokes. It is a "seed that abides forever."

2. The work of sanctifying grace upon the heart is a seal. Whom the Spirit sanctifies, He saves. "The Lord knows those who are His" (2 Timothy 2:19). But how can we know it? Through this seal: "Let everyone who names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity" — not only in heart and affection, but also in conduct. This will serve as a seal of their sonship. Only those who are children of God by adoption are also children through regeneration. Only those who are born anew are heirs of heaven. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope" (1 Peter 1:3). This seal of sanctification leaves upon the soul the likeness of Jesus Christ, grace upon grace.

However, during times of desertion and temptation, when we find ourselves in a fog, we cannot discern our own faith and graces. At that time, it pleases Christ, after some trial and exercise, to shine upon His own graces in our hearts, enabling us to recognize our belief and love. Until then, the heart sees nothing good within itself and seems to be nothing but objections and doubts. We may find ourselves in a state similar to Paul and his companions in the ship (Acts 27:20), when they "saw neither sun nor stars for many days." Hope may be almost lost. Similarly, a Christian may go through many days without seeing any light from heaven or within their own heart, with no grace emanating from God and no grace carrying their soul to God. Yet, even in those times, God sends a beam of light through the thickest clouds, giving the soul enough to prevent utter despair, though not enough to bring peace. In this dark condition, if

we, like St. Paul and his companions, cast anchor even in the dark night of temptation and continue to pray for daylight, God will appear, and everything will become clear. We will see light both externally and internally, as the day-star arises in our hearts.

Though we can discern a spirit of faith by reflecting upon our souls, God may hide Himself from the soul in terms of comfort. Moreover, a Christian may know themselves to be in a state of grace yet still experience affliction. Just as in Job's case, he knew that his Redeemer lived, and he resolved to trust in Him, even if it meant his death (Job 13:15). He knew he was not a hypocrite, and he knew his graces were genuine. Despite the accusations of his friends, they could not dispute his sincerity: "You shall not take my uprightness from me" (Job 27:6). Yet, at that time, he saw no heavenly light until God chose to reveal Himself in special favor to him. There is always peace and joy in believing, but not to the extent that satisfies the soul, until by continuing to believe in God and waiting for His timing, He bestows upon us a further sense of His favor and pours out His Spirit upon us, manifesting His special love. This is an advanced degree of sealing, which strengthens our confirmation.

The reason why we cannot have the grace to believe, know that we believe, or enjoy comfort without a fresh new act of the Spirit is because the entire journey of the soul towards heaven is beyond natural capabilities. When the Spirit comes to a standstill, we also come to a standstill and can go no further. We cannot draw conclusions from correct grounds without the Spirit's assistance. Doubts and fears may hinder our application to ourselves, just as those who engage in damnable sin cannot deny that those living in such sin will never inherit heaven. Their conscience tells them they are engaged in such sin, yet self-love blinds them from concluding



that they will be damned. Similarly, true believers cannot conclude for themselves without divine light and help.

God pleases to keep every degree and act of sealing in His own hands, ensuring our perpetual dependence on Him and cautioning us not to grieve the Spirit of grace or cause Him to suspend acts of grace or comfort.

Joy and strong comfort arise from an additional seal of the Spirit. The works of the Spirit have a twofold nature: either within us, through the imprint of sanctifying grace, or upon us, by shining upon our souls with delightful feelings of joy. What the Spirit works within us is more constant, like a new nature that remains consistent and works uniformly. However, comfort and joy are privileges that God bestows at one time and not at another, upon some individuals and not others.

This degree of sealing, with regard to joy, also has various degrees. Sometimes it is so clear and strong that the soul never questions its state of grace thereafter but continues triumphantly toward the glory it awaits. At other times, after this sealing, there may be interruptions in comfortable communion to the extent that we question our condition. However, this questioning does not come from the Spirit. Once the Spirit bears witness for us, He never bears witness against us. Rather, it is a result of the flesh, which is not yet fully subdued. It is a sin itself, typically stemming from a previous sin. While we should not doubt after a previous witness of the Spirit, there will be a weakening of our assurance commensurate with the extent to which we yield to any lust. The knowledge of our condition in grace and the comfort derived from it may be weakened by neglecting our vigilance, but it still carries the weight of an argument to assure us when the Spirit chooses to guide us to rely on it, for

God's love does not change as our feelings do. A temporary condition does not alter our state. Just as an unborn child does not always stir but still lives, this can be deduced from previous movements.

This degree of sealing by way of witness and comfort is attributed to the Holy Spirit. Each person in the blessed Trinity has their distinct work. The Father chooses us and establishes a decree regarding the foundation of our salvation. The Son carries it out completely. The Spirit applies it and testifies to our involvement in it by leading our souls to lay hold of Him, by raising our souls in assurance, and by fostering sweet communion with the Father and the Son, who both seal us through the Spirit. This joy and comfort are so closely associated with the Spirit that they bear His very name and are one of the three witnesses on earth, not only testifying that Christ is a Savior but our Savior (1 John 5:7). The three witnesses on earth are the "Spirit, water, and blood." To better understand this passage, we must recognize that the significant work of Christ's redemption and justification was foreshadowed in the Old Testament through blood, while the work of our sanctification was symbolized by washing. In correspondence with these symbols, when Christ's side was pierced, both blood and water flowed, indicating that Christ came not only by blood to justify us but by water to sanctify us. Therefore, blood and water have the power to bear witness. The blood of Christ, when sprinkled on the heart by the Spirit, pacifies the conscience, assuring it that God is pacified by the blood offered through the eternal Spirit (Hebrews 9:14). This soothing power demonstrates that it was the blood of God, shed for me in particular.

The witness of water comes from the Spirit's ability to cleanse our nature, a task no creature can accomplish but the Spirit of God. The transformation of nature is unique to the Author of nature. Therefore, if we sense that our natures have been changed and have

become holy to some extent, we may recognize that we are children of God, having been begotten by the Spirit of Christ, conforming us to His holiness. Our sanctified spirit can bear witness to us that we belong to Christ.

However, it often happens that our own sanctified spirits cannot withstand a subtly enforced temptation. In such instances, God adds His own Spirit. Guilt often prevails over the testimony of blood, while the stirring corruptions disturb the witness of water. Therefore, the immediate testimony of the Spirit is necessary to witness the Father's love to us, individually proclaiming, "I am your salvation" (Psalm 35:3), "your sins are forgiven" (Matthew 9:2). The Word echoes this testimony, stirring and comforting the heart with indescribable joy. Thus, the witness of our own spirits and consciences, along with the witness of the Spirit of Christ, strongly testifies to our condition in grace, affirming that we are the children of God.

In this threefold testimony, the order is as follows: blood begets water; satisfaction through blood procures the Spirit from God as a witness of God's love; and by experiencing the power of blood and water, we come to have the Spirit testifying and sealing our adoption, establishing us in the state of grace against opposing storms of temptation. The Spirit persuades us to look to the blood, convinces our hearts of its efficacy, and then quiets the soul when it surrenders itself wholly to Christ and the complete work of Christ. As a result, the heart remains steadfast against carnal reasoning, as it can and does oppose Christ's blood to all arising guilt. This comforting witness of the Spirit is the most intimate and profound.

If we do not feel it, as often is the case, then, in the absence of this spiritual joy, we should turn our attention to water and examine the

work of the Spirit in cleansing our souls. And if we find that these waters do not flow clearly enough for us to discern our condition in them, then let us turn to the witness of blood and immerse our souls in it. In doing so, we will find peace in the free grace obtained through the blood. For there are times when a Christian is driven to a point where nothing, either within or outside of them, in heaven or on earth, can bring comfort except the free and infinite mercy of God in the blood of Christ. In such moments, the soul relies on the satisfaction accomplished by Christ's blood, even when it lacks inner peace, the work of the Spirit, or a visible sanctification. Then the soul must rest on the assurance of forgiveness procured by the blood of Christ, as it can say to God, "If we confess our sins, You are faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). Consequently, even if I do not experience inward peace or the work of the Spirit, I will cast myself upon Your mercy in Christ. In due time, God will make the witness of water and the Spirit more evident to us.

The Spirit testifies with blood and testifies with water, and through water, it testifies to whatever belongs to Christ and is applied to us by the Spirit. Yet, in addition to testifying with these witnesses, the Spirit provides a distinct testimony by expanding the soul, which is manifested in the joy derived from the apprehension of God's fatherly love and the liberation set forth by Christ. The Spirit does not always testify to our condition through arguments based on sanctification; sometimes it testifies immediately through presence, just as the sight of a friend brings comfort without the need for words. The joy derived from the sight itself surpasses the need for discourse.

This testimony of the Spirit encompasses the power of the Word, promise, oath, seal, and more. It surpasses the promise, just as a seal

surpasses a hand, and an oath surpasses a person's mere word. The same can be said of this sealing in comparison to other testimonies, as it serves to more abundantly assure the heirs of promise regarding their salvation. Just as God added an oath for that purpose (Hebrews 6:18), He also added the Spirit as a seal to the promise and other testimonies. Indeed, our own graces, if we were vigilant enough, would satisfy us. The fountain is open, as in the case of Hagar, but she does not see it (Genesis 21:17, etc.). However, if the Spirit arrives, it overcomes all doubts.

Just as God swears by Himself in His oath and does not involve anyone else, in this witness, He does not rely on any other testimony for confirmation but testifies by Himself. Consequently, "unspeakable and glorious joy" (1 Peter 1:8) and "peace that surpasses all understanding" (Philippians 4:7) arise, for it is a glimpse of heaven when we perceive our state of grace, not only in its effects but also as being in the bosom of God Himself.

Question: How can we distinguish this witness from an enthusiastic imagination and illusion?

Answer: We can recognize this witness of the Spirit by its strong conviction, which weighs on the soul and compels it to believe. However, it is true that there are strong delusions. Therefore, bring them to the test of discernment. Bring all your joy, peace, and confidence to the Word. They go hand in hand, like a pair of indentures where one complements the other. In the transfiguration of Christ on the mount, Moses and Elijah appeared together with Him. Therefore, in any experience of transformation and rapture, if Moses, Elijah, and Christ are not present—that is, if what we find within ourselves is not in accordance with the Scriptures—then we may rightly suspect it as an illusion.

To discern the voice of the Spirit of God from the carnal confidence of our own spirits, consider the following:

1. What precedes it.
2. What accompanies it.
3. What follows after this ecstatic joy.
4. The Word must come before it, accepted by faith and followed by obedient actions. "In whom, after you believed" the promise of the Word, "you were sealed." Thus, if there is no:

(1.) Belief in the promise of the Word, there is no sealing. "The God of peace gives you joy in believing" (1 Thessalonians 5:23). Belief and walking in accordance with the Word are necessary for joy and peace to be present. If we cannot align the Word with our hearts, then the sealing is not from God but from Satan, leading to groundless presumption that eventually leads to despair. Just as Christ came by water and blood, this testimony follows the other two. First, the heart is drawn to the blood, finding quietness there; then comes the water, washing and transforming our nature; and after that comes the testimony of the Spirit. Though it is not based on their testimony, it follows after them. When we find this progression of work, we can recognize its correctness by its order.

(2.) It comes after deep humility and abasement. Although we know ourselves to be children of God to some extent, such that we would not trade our condition for anything in the world, we desire more evidence and a greater manifestation of God's favor toward us. We are not satisfied but wait. After a prolonged period of fasting, with melted and softened hearts, God pours water upon the dry

wilderness, satisfying and comforting the hungry soul. God will not allow the spirit of His children to fail.

(3.) Similarly, it follows self-denial of things that please us. This denial is accompanied by inward comfort. If this self-denial arises from a desire for closer communion with God, He will not disappoint that desire. There are people in the world who indulge their sinful nature without restraint. If they have a tendency towards pride, they will be proud. If they have a lust for wealth, a desire to live in pleasure, or an inclination to follow worldly vanities, they will do so. They will not resist corrupt nature in anything. Will God grant true joy or spiritual comfort to such individuals? No. Those who unleash their nature without restraint will never taste of this hidden manna. However, when we deny ourselves and refuse to listen or delight in that which feeds our corruption, when we deny ourselves the pleasures that we could indulge in if we followed the ways of the world, there is a corresponding measure of joy, peace, and comfort of a higher nature bestowed upon the soul. God is so good that we lose nothing by parting with anything for His sake.

(4.) It is usually found after conflict and victory, serving as a reward. "To him who overcomes, I will give to eat of the hidden manna" (Revelation 2:17). God's children, after engaging in fierce battles against temptations or inward corruptions, especially those that align with their dispositions and temperaments, experience sweet spiritual enlargement. Struggling against these temptations is a sign of grace, but gaining victory over them, subduing the enemies that rise up against us, brings true peace and joy.

(5.) After we exert our spiritual strength in holy duties, God crowns our efforts with increased comfort. A Christian who diligently tends to their heart and refuses to serve God with what costs them nothing

enjoys what the spiritually sluggish long for but do not attain. God is just, and those who strive to live according to the principles of nature find a contentment commensurate with their efforts. Pleasure accompanies every good action as a reward before the ultimate reward.

2. Besides these preceding factors, there are also accompanying factors if this joy and testimony are genuine:

(1.) This spiritual comfort expands our hearts and increases our appreciation for the ordinances. It does not detract from our dependence on them. Since it finds comfort from God in the Word and other means, it delights in continually meeting God through His appointed ways. The eyes of the soul are strengthened, enabling us to grasp truths more deeply and understand them more spiritually. The Spirit by which we are sealed is the Spirit of illumination, revealing nothing different from the Word but granting a greater understanding and internal knowledge of the same truths we already knew.

(2.) It grants us freedom and boldness in our relationship with God. "Where the Spirit is, there is gracious liberty." This freedom extends beyond the realm of law, guilt, and the fear of God's wrath. We can approach God's throne with confidence, freely opening our souls in prayer before Him. This does not depend on an abundance of words or specific expressions but rather on a son-like boldness in our prayers. The hypocrite, especially in times of extremity, cannot pray; their conscience silences them. However, where the Spirit provides its seal, it grants this liberty to openly and honestly present our case before God, even under a sense of displeasure.

(3.) This sealing of the Spirit is usually accompanied by the malice and opposition of Satan, who, having been cast down from heaven



himself, envies the heavenly joy experienced by creatures of lower rank than himself. We should not expect to enjoy pure joy without facing opposition. If there is a danger of being exalted too highly, we should anticipate some messenger of Satan.

3. Following this witness, the soul becomes more humble. None are more self-abased than those who have the closest communion with God. As we see in the example of the angels who stand before God and cover their faces, and as illustrated by Isaiah in his response to encountering God's glory (Isaiah 6:2ff), Job, after God had revealed Himself to him, abhorred himself and repented in dust and ashes (Job 42:6). The witness of the Spirit engenders a greater desire for sanctification and heavenly-mindedness. Just as Elijah ascended to heaven, leaving behind his cloak, the more our spirits are raised, the more we shed affections for earthly things.

(2.) Furthermore, this further manifestation of the Spirit aims to encourage us in our duties and to endure suffering for a good cause. It strengthens the soul, infusing it with increased spiritual mettle. Those who are sealed find themselves fortified against opposition. With the wind filling their sails, they move forward swiftly and are not frightened by obstacles in their path. Look at how believers triumph in the witness of the Spirit to their spirits, affirming that they are children of God (Romans 8:16-33, etc.). God usually reserves such comforts for the most challenging times, as it is written, "Give wine to those who are of heavy heart" (Proverbs 31:6). The sense of Christ's love is better than wine. Paul experienced this refreshing in the dungeon and sang praises at midnight. Therefore, after this witnessing, anticipate being called to some form of service or trial.

Much must be entrusted to God's paternal wisdom in this matter. He knows whom to encourage, when to do so, in what degree, and for what purpose and service. Remember always that these spiritual enlargements are occasional refreshments along the way, not daily sustenance. We maintain our spiritual life by faith, not by sight or feeling. Feasting is not for every day, except for the feast of a good conscience, which is continuous. However, I refer here to grand occasions and elevated feasts. Such experiences are ordained by God according to His discretion.

(3.) Where the sealing of the Spirit occurs, there is also an anticipation of our future end. It prompts us to think joyfully about the times to come, as the Holy Spirit mentions the day of redemption as a motive for not grieving the Spirit. This implies that we should contemplate the day of redemption with great joy and comfort. The saints are described in Scripture as those who "look for the appearing of Christ" (2 Peter 3:12). They belong to Christ, and in Him, their accounts are settled. Therefore, they can often meditate upon and delight in the blessed times that lie ahead.

There are various levels of sealing that correspond to different degrees of revelation. Initially, God reveals His goodwill to all believers through His promises. This is a privilege of the Church, particularly in these later times. Then, by His Spirit, He reveals saving truths to those who belong to Him, illuminating their understanding with divine light. As a result, they can confirm, based on the power they feel from these truths, their divine nature in searching secrets, casting down, raising up, and sustaining the soul.

The same Spirit that reveals the power of the Word to me also reveals my personal connection to all those truths when I hear them. Consequently, they are etched in my heart as if they were specifically

designed for me. The comforting truths in the Word are transcribed into my heart in accordance with its content. Thus, God in Christ becomes mine, forgiveness becomes mine, grace becomes mine. This confirms my adoption in Christ, which God further seals to my soul by increasing my comfort as He deems fit for encouragement. The same Spirit that manifests the truth of God's Word in me, both in what I hear and read, also teaches me to apply it and seals it within me.

Therefore, we should desire to be sealed by the Spirit, seeking a holy impression upon our hearts. We should also desire the Holy Spirit to shine upon His own graces within us so that we may clearly see the supernatural work happening within us. Since this is facilitated by the revelation of God's love in Christ and our adoption, we should ask God to grant us the Spirit of revelation to unveil the mysteries of His truth to us, our personal portion in them, and our adoption. Meanwhile, we must wait and attentively engage in all the proper means. As we wait, God will progressively reveal His love to us, assuring us of His affection and igniting our love in return. The same Spirit who reveals Himself through revelation will also sanctify us and confirm our adoption. Dignity and the fitting qualities corresponding to that dignity go hand in hand.

In the significant inquiry about our condition, there is a great error when people begin with the first work of the Father in election, then proceed to Christ's redemption, proclaiming, "I belong to God, and Christ has redeemed me," without considering the action of the third person in sanctification. This third person, who is closest to us, has the nearest impact on the soul. Consequently, they initiate their search where they should conclude it. Instead, we should commence our inquiry with the work of the third person, who is nearest to us,

and then, based on solid grounds, we can discern our redemption and election.

As previously mentioned, the Holy Spirit serves as both a spirit of revelation and sanctification, for in addition to unveiling the love of the Father and the Son, He also prepares us by His grace to commune with them.

Due to self-love, some individuals entertain ideas about the love of the Father and the Son that are detached from the work of the Spirit in their hearts, which can be a perilous illusion. While the entire work of grace by the Spirit originates from the love of the Father and the Son, which the Spirit testifies to, the proof of the Father's love for us individually arises from some understanding of the Spirit's work. The error lies not in contemplating the love of the Father and the Son but rather in relying on a pleasing yet powerless thought of it to resist the work of grace by the Spirit, which their corrupt nature opposes. Thus, they shape their understanding of the Trinity to align with their desires. However, if their hearts were upright, they would think of God's love and Christ's love for the very purpose of invigorating them for duty and equipping them to combat corruption.

## **To the Day of Redemption**

1. There is a twofold redemption: the redemption of the soul through Christ's initial coming, where He shed His blood for us, and the redemption of our bodies from corruption through His second coming. We do not experience the complete fulfillment

and accomplishment of what Christ achieved in His first coming until His second coming. At that time, there will be a complete redemption of our souls, bodies, and circumstances. The concept of twofold redemption parallels the two comings of Christ: the first to redeem our souls from sin and Satan and grant us access to heaven, and the second to redeem our bodies from corruption when Christ comes "to be glorified in His saints" (2 Thessalonians 1:10). Similarly, there is a twofold resurrection, the first and the second, and a twofold regeneration of the soul and body.

In times of sickness and physical weakness, or as we approach old age when our time on earth grows shorter and the prospect of the grave, a dark abode, presents itself to us, let us remember that there will be a redemption not only of our souls but also of our bodies. Just as Christ came to effect the redemption of our souls from sin and death, He will also redeem our bodies from corruption. He who redeems our bodies from the grave will also redeem His Church from misery. He will restore the Jews as well, for if He can accomplish the greater task, He can surely achieve the lesser. As we hear of this, let us draw comfort from all the promises that are yet to be fulfilled.

2. Secondly, full redemption has not yet taken place. I need not provide scriptural evidence to prove this; it is a fact that every person's experience attests to. Alas! Let our bodies speak for themselves: we are not free from sickness and disease. Moreover, what is our life but a journey towards corruption? The sentence has been passed upon us: "For dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return" (Genesis 3:19). Until death, we are progressing towards death. Thus, in addition to the presence of sickness and physical weakness in this life, we must ultimately face death and succumb to corruption. The apostle refers to our

bodies as "vile bodies" (Philippians 3:21). As for our souls, although they have been freed from the guilt and damnation of sin, remnants of corruption remain and generate fear and dread. While our souls are liberated from Satan's dominion, they are still subject to his harassment and temptations. In a nutshell, our entire state and condition in this world is one of misery. We are beset by numerous afflictions, so there is no complete redemption yet, whether we consider the body, soul, or overall condition. The body is vulnerable to disease, the soul to infirmities, and the state to misery.

However, there is a designated "day" for complete redemption.

When we speak of a "day," we are not referring to a period of twenty-four hours measured by the course of the sun. In the scriptural sense, a day signifies a predetermined time of mercy or judgment. Just as there was a momentous day, the "fulness of time," for the accomplishment of the first redemption, there is also an appointed time for the second redemption. During this time, all the children of God will be gathered together, and those who lie in the dust will be raised and eternally glorified. It is the ultimate day, referred to as "that day" with unparalleled eminence in the Scriptures and as "the day of the Lord" (Matthew 12:8). We should contemplate this day every day, particularly during sickness, trouble, adversity, temptation from the wicked world, and in the awareness of the remnants of corruption. The day of redemption, which will compensate for everything, should be a frequent source of comfort, preventing us from faltering in the face of affliction and trouble. It should motivate us to conduct ourselves in a manner consistent with our hopes and instill in us a desire for the necessary preparation for that great day.

Yet, how little of our time is spent contemplating this! If we were to frequently reflect upon the day of redemption, our lives would be different, both in terms of gracious behavior and comfort. Why should we be disheartened by every loss, setback, illness, and the thought of death, knowing that we will return to our original state, the earth, when we consider the day of redemption, when everything will be restored, and all the effects of decay and the image of God will be perfectly renewed? The contemplation of this truth would enable us to willingly embrace our graves, recognizing that all of this is mere preparation for the great day of redemption. The first day of redemption, when Christ came to redeem our souls and grant us access to heaven, was eagerly anticipated by all the faithful before Christ's incarnation. They were described as "waiting for the consolation of Israel" (Luke 2:25). Similarly, the distinguishing mark of believers today should be their anticipation of the second coming of Christ. It is frequently emphasized in the epistles of St. Paul: "There is a crown of righteousness laid up for me, and not for me only but also for all who have loved his appearing" (2 Timothy 4:8).

There was a year of jubilee among the Jews every fifty years. During this time, all those who were in bondage were set free. Similarly, in this blessed jubilee, this glorious day of redemption, all those who are in the bondage of death and under corruption will be set free for eternity. Undoubtedly, the poor servants who were vexed by harsh masters thought of the jubilee, and those who had their possessions taken away looked forward to the jubilee as a day of restoration. So let us frequently contemplate this everlasting jubilee when we will regain all that we have lost, keeping it forever without ever losing it again as we did in the first creation. Let us often meditate on this day. It will infuse vigour and strength into all our conduct. However, for 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 will be exposed and they will receive a corresponding sentence.

Alas! There is such a great amount of atheism in the world, and even the best individuals carry the seeds of it unless they continually work it out. We forget the God of vengeance and the day of vengeance. Would people persist in their sins against their conscience if they constantly thought about this final day? It is impossible. Such behavior stems from the abominable root of atheism and unbelief. If they possessed even a slight faith, it would be effective in altering their course to some extent. Thus, Scripture rightly calls them fools, although they may consider themselves the only wise ones. "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God" (Psalm 14:1). What follows? "Corrupt are they, and abominable." The cause of all this is that the fool insists in his heart that there is no God, hell, heaven, or judgment. Abominable behavior springs from such beliefs.

"Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption" (Ephesians 4:30).

From the considerations discussed earlier regarding the sealing of the Spirit until the day of redemption, we can draw the following four conclusions:

First, we can attain knowledge that we are in a state of grace.

Second, based on our present knowledge of our state in grace, we can be assured of our future complete redemption.

Third, this assured knowledge is wrought by the Spirit.

Fourth, contemplating this assurance wrought by the Spirit serves as a compelling argument against grieving the Spirit.



1. Regarding the first conclusion, we can know that we are in a state of grace because the apostle would not have used an argument to discourage grieving the Spirit if it were based on something unknown or mere speculation. It is illogical to argue from an unknown premise.
2. Sealing by the Spirit is not for God's sake but for our own. God knows who belongs to Him, but we do not know that we belong to Him except through the sealing.
3. The purpose of the Scriptures, inspired by the Spirit, is to provide comfort. The apostle explicitly states this. However, what comfort can be found in an uncertain condition where a person does not know whether they may be reprobates? Why did our Savior come into the world and assume our nature? Why did He become a curse for us? Why did He ascend to heaven with our human nature and intercede for us until He brings us home to Himself? It is so that, once we have received Him by faith, we may be free from any doubt regarding His love for us. Why are there commands to believe, rebukes for unbelief, commendations for those who believe, and reproaches for doubting, if we are meant to doubt God's love, especially when, in addition to the sealing of the promises given to us, we are also sealed by the Spirit of promise?

Objection: This is true if we know that we do believe.

Answer: It is the role of the Spirit not only to work faith and other graces but also to reveal them to us. Every grace of God is like a light that comes from the Father of lights. It is the nature of light not only to illuminate other things but also itself. Likewise, it is the role of the Spirit to shed further light on His own grace within us. An excellent passage that supports this is 1 Corinthians 2:12: "Now we have

received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God." In the mouth of two or three witnesses, every matter shall be established. One witness is the spirit of man, which knows the things that pertain to man, and the other witness is the Spirit of God, who testifies to our spirits that we are children of God (Romans 8:14). Here, one light is added to another, one witness to another, with the greater witness of the Spirit affirming the lesser witness of our spirits. The apostle combines both: "My conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit" (Romans 9:1).

Objection: The human heart is deceitful.

Answer: However, the Spirit of God in the human heart is not deceitful. It is too holy to deceive and too wise to be deceived in this matter of assurance. We plow with the Spirit's heifer, otherwise, we would not be able to solve this riddle (Judges 14:18). Where there is an object to be seen, an eye to see, and light to reveal the object to the eye, sight will naturally follow. In a true believer, once they have been enlightened, they can see the grace within them, aided by the eye of faith, as well as the light of the Spirit revealing that grace to their inward sight. In the depths of a clear river, a clear-eyed individual can see anything. Nothing can be seen where there is nothing to be seen. It is evident that the proponents of doubt have little grace within them and great audacity in making themselves a standard for others. Those who are of lowly birth know their mothers better than their fathers. The Roman Catholic Church is focused on the mother, but the children of Christ know their Father. The remnants of corruption may indeed breed doubts, but it is the role of the Spirit of faith to quell them as they arise. During times of temptation, we are prone to doubt, but we should not aid the tempter

by considering doubt a duty. That would be like lighting a candle for the devil, as the saying goes.

Question: Can doubts exist in the presence of true faith? Can a genuine believer lack assurance?

Answer: There are three categories of Christians: First, some who are still under the spirit of bondage and, like little children, do everything out of fear. Second, those who are under the spirit of adoption and do many things well but are not entirely free from fear. They are like children who obey their parents out of reverence but find their commands somewhat burdensome. The third category includes those who, through the love of God poured into their hearts by the Spirit of adoption, are driven with willing spirits to obey their Father. They are akin to children who not only obey but delight in obedience based on the judgment that both obedience itself and the thing in which they obey are good. This is what we should strive for. However, we find many Christians in the second category. They truly believe in Christ to some extent due to the light shed into their hearts by the Spirit of adoption, but they are not yet fully assured of the love of Christ. There is an act of faith and the fruit of faith. The act of faith is to cast ourselves upon God's mercy in Christ, while the fruit of faith is the assurance that comes from believing. We must understand that faith and assurance are two different things. A person may have faith but lack a twofold assurance: first, the assurance of their faith, as they may not always be able to discern their own act; and second, the assurance of their state in grace, especially during times of desertion and temptation. At such times, the soul casts itself upon Christ, knowing that comfort can be found there even if it is not certain for themselves. The soul does this out of obedience, even without experiencing it fully, like the father in the Gospel who said, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief" (Mark 9:24).

The soul often cries out from the depths and trusts in God in the midst of darkness, based on the knowledge that comfort can be found there. This is the bold venture of faith, whose first object is Christ revealed in a promise, rather than assurance, which arises from the first act when God is pleased to shine upon the soul. Assurance is God's seal, while faith is our seal. When we set our seal by believing, He sets His seal, assuring us of our condition. We give our consent and assent through faith, and then God confirms the agreement. A good title must precede confirmation, planting before rooting and establishing, the bargain before the earnest. Some may argue that faith is an overpowering light of the soul, through which individuals undoubtedly believe themselves to be Christ and Christ to be theirs. However, this is more the result of strong faith than the act of weak faith, which struggles with doubt until it gains the upper hand. It is true that a sufficient amount of light must be shed into the soul for the soul to rely on Christ. This light must be revealed by the Spirit and must demonstrate a special love of Christ towards the soul. It is also true that we should not rest in the light until the heart is further subdued. Many are too quick to conclude about their good condition based on uncertain signs before they have obtained full assurance. However, we must not deny faith in cases where this strong assurance is lacking. We should not conclude against ourselves, especially when there are desires to resist unbelief, engage in conflict, and place a high value on God's favor in Christ, considering it above all else. Degrees may vary, but they do not change the nature. Weakness may coexist with truth, but where truth exists, there will be an incessant desire for further sealing.

2. The second conclusion: We may, based on the knowledge of our present state of grace, be assured for the future, as this sealing is until the 'day of redemption,' which signifies our complete possession of what we currently believe. Furthermore, sealing is

intended for securing the future, and our Savior's promise is that even though He departed from them, the Comforter would remain with them forever (John 14:16). So why are we certain of God's favor for our present comfort if we doubt it for the future?

Faith, love, and these graces never ultimately fail. Therefore, when the Scripture speaks of faith, it speaks of salvation by faith for the present, as if a person were in heaven immediately upon believing. The Scriptures say, "We are saved by faith" (Ephesians 2:8). This means that we are placed into a state of salvation through faith. By being united with Christ through faith, we have been raised up with Him and seated in heavenly places (Ephesians 1:3). Faith makes future things present, and it believes that neither present nor future things can separate us from the love of God in Christ (Romans 8:39). So our assurance is not only for the present but also for the future. We are sealed "to the day of redemption," and who can reverse God's seal or His act or deed? Grace is the guarantee of glory. God has made a covenant and given us earnest money. He will not lose it. The earnest money is never taken away but fulfilled. If we are assured of grace for the present, we can be sure that it will be fully realized in glory in the future. If the Spirit of Christ is in us, the same Spirit that raised Christ from the dead will also raise us up and not leave us until we experience full redemption. We will awaken filled with His image (Romans 8:11; Psalm 17:15).

No opposition can prevail. God has set His seal on His right hand to keep us, and even on His breast (like the high priest with the twelve tribes) to love us, and on His shoulder to support us. The marked and sealed ones in Ezekiel 9:4 and Revelation 7:2 were protected from all destruction. If we are in Christ, our rock, temptations and oppositions are like waves—they may crash against us, but they break themselves.

Question: Why, then, do we pray for the forgiveness of sins?

Answer: We pray for a clear evidence of what we already have. Secondly, as the end is ordained, so the means must be used. God does and will forgive sin, and therefore, we must pray for forgiveness as an ordained means. Thirdly, prayer does not undermine the certainty of a thing. Christ prayed for what He was most certain of: "I pray for them, for they are yours" (John 17:24).

An illustrative example of this point is found in Peter's words: "We have been born again to a living hope" (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 also kept for it.

Objection: But Satan is strong, and his malice exceeds his strength.

Answer: True, but we are kept as if by a garrison. We have a guard surrounding us.

Objection: All this is true as long as faith endures, but faith may fail.

Answer: No, we are kept by the power of God "through faith." God keeps our faith and keeps us by faith.

Objection: But the time between us and salvation is long, and many dangers may arise.

Answer: Even if the time is long, we are "kept unto salvation," until the "day of redemption." The Spirit, by virtue of the covenant, instills the fear of God in our hearts, ensuring that we will never depart from Him. God does not promise what we will do by ourselves, but what He will do in us and through us. The Holy Spirit shields us against objections and helps us overcome the doubts that may arise against this blessed hope. Therefore, this state of assurance is not only sure

to us, but God has assured us of it. God's gracious indulgence is such that as we journey through the wilderness and face various troubles, He wants us to be assured of the blessed condition that awaits us. God not only provides a glorious way of redemption through the blood of His Son, but He also reveals it to us during our pilgrimage, so that we may glorify Him and give praise in advance for the good He intends for us. Assurance of that blessed condition will stir up our spirits to bless God. Faith accomplishes in some measure what the thing itself would accomplish. Thus, Peter says, "Blessed be God who has caused us to be born again to a living hope of an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven" (1 Peter 1:3-4). Why does he bless God before we possess it? Because we are as sure of it as if we already had it. What is revealed in advance is praised in advance. God wants us to be assured so that He may receive glory.

Partly, it is to comfort us. Faith is effective in producing the comfort that the actual possession would bring, to some extent. What comfort would the soul experience if it were to see heaven open and itself entering into it, knowing that redemption is near? Faith produces a similar effect to some extent. What is more certain than the thing itself? What is more comforting than faith in it?

When the Israelites were in the wilderness on their way to Canaan, they received many promises that they would enter Canaan, and they were provided with extraordinary help—the pillar, cloud, and angel—to lead them there. Out of indulgence and condescension to their weakness, God even gave them some grapes from Canaan. He influenced the spies to bring back fruits. In the same way, God gives us the work of His blessed Spirit, by which He assures and seals us until the day of redemption.

3. The third conclusion is that the Spirit seals us. It cannot be otherwise, for who can establish us in the love of God but the Spirit who knows God's mind towards us? And who knows God's mind except the Spirit of God?

I am sealed when I not only believe but also, through a reflective act of the soul, know that I believe. This reflection, though enabled by reason, is empowered by the Spirit. Only our spirits, by the Spirit, can discern spiritual acts. We cannot comprehend things beyond nature without a cause that is beyond nature. None can understand the meaning of our broken desires and help us in our weaknesses except the Spirit who stirs up those desires. Likewise, no one knows the troubles of our spirits except our own spirits and the Spirit of God, who knows every aspect of the soul.

Who can mortify the strong corruptions that hinder us on the path to heaven but the Spirit, who clothes our spirit with heavenly power? Who purifies the conscience except the One who is above conscience? Who can elevate our spirits above all temptations and troubles but the Spirit of power, who is above them all?

The strength and vitality of any creature come from the spirits, and the strength of the spirits of all living beings comes from this Spirit, whose role is to infuse our spirits with His power.

Just as God redeemed us with His blood, He must also apply this blood to quiet our conscience. Only He can subdue the rebellion of our spirits, soften our hearts, and make them ready for sealing. Only the Spirit can report God's mercy to our souls in such a way as to persuade and work in our hearts to attain this assurance. Otherwise, we would never yield. The matter is so great, and our deserving is so small that it cannot be achieved without the glorious Spirit of God.



How earnest and desirous then both the Father and the Son are to save us! They are pleased to send such an eloquent speaker and ambassador who is equal to them in order to persuade us, assure us, and prepare us for salvation. The Spirit, in His grace, deigns to have communion with our sinful spirits. Shouldn't this move our hearts to be careful not to grieve the Holy Spirit? Thus, we come to the fourth conclusion.

4. The fourth conclusion is that the sealing of the Spirit for salvation should serve as a compelling argument not to grieve the Spirit, which means not to sin, for sin is the only thing that grieves the Spirit. Paul says to Titus, "For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation" (Titus 2:11-12). Christ has appeared, and what is Christ if not grace? Christ's appearance and the free favor of God in Christ assure us of salvation and instruct us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age. Even the consideration of the past benefits of Christ, which came with His first coming, calls for this care of holiness. But it doesn't end there. In verse 13, it says, "Looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ." The anticipation of Christ's second coming also enforces the same pursuit of holiness. Our conduct is heavenly, as stated in Philippians 3:20, in contrast to those mentioned in the preceding verse whose end is damnation, whose god is their belly, and who set their minds on earthly things. No, we set our minds on heavenly things. These heavenly desires spring from the certain expectation of our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly bodies, etc. (Philippians 3:21). In other words, He will fully redeem us, both our bodies and souls.

5. It is a compelling argument, whether we have not yet been sealed or have been sealed. If we haven't been sealed, then let us not grieve Him whose sole purpose is to seal us. Let us welcome His promptings, give Him room to work, and not oppose His reasons. Let us not heed any advice that contradicts His counsel. Let us no longer resist His persuasions but surrender our spirits to Him, lest He bring an end to His patience. He is long-suffering but not infinitely so. If He abandons us to our own spirits, we will only be clever in working out our own damnation. We are not given up to our own spirits until after many rejections of the Holy Spirit, and eventually, what now fails to persuade us will be used later as an argument to torment us. The Spirit will help our spirits recall all the motions for our good that we previously rejected. When conscience speaks in us, we should consider it as God speaking, and when the Spirit moves us, it is God who moves us. Every excuse will be cut off, and the answer will be, "Didn't I inform you of this through conscience, my representative? Didn't I prompt you to this good through my Spirit?" Beware of shutting out any light because where light does not enter and soften, it hardens. Those on whom the light has shined are the hardest-hearted. We can hope for more from a person with only a natural conscience than from someone whose heart and spirit have been exposed to many blows. It is just for God to seal up those who refuse to be sealed for their salvation to their own destruction. The soul without the Spirit is full of darkness and confusion, filled with self-accusation and self-tormenting thoughts. If we allow the Spirit to enter, it will dispel all darkness and bring a sweet calmness to the soul.

6. As for those who have been sealed by the Spirit but not fully to the point of silencing all doubts about their condition, they should, based on the beginning of comfort they feel, strive to be

pliable to the Spirit for further growth. The Spirit seals us gradually. As our concern for pleasing the Spirit increases, so does our comfort. Our light will increase like the morning light until it reaches full day. Yielding to the Spirit in one holy motion will prompt Him to lead us to another, and so on, until we become more deeply acquainted with the entire plan of God regarding our salvation. Otherwise, if we give in to any contrary lust, darkness will grow on our spirits without us realizing it, and we will be left in an unsettled condition, like travelers in the twilight who cannot find their way perfectly. We will be inconstant, not daring to fully yield to our lusts because of the work of grace that has begun, nor fully yielding to the Spirit because we have allowed some unruly affection to gain too much strength within us. As a result, our spirits will lack comfort, and our profession will lack glory.

We will be vulnerable to Satan if he is allowed to sift our faith, for if our condition comes into question, we will have nothing to rely on but the truth of our graces. If we haven't treated the Spirit well, we won't have the power to assert them or to focus on any grace wrought in us; instead, we will fixate on those lusts and sins by which we have grieved the Spirit. They will be arranged before us, staring us in the face, and we cannot help but fix our thoughts on them. And Satan will not miss such an opportunity but will tempt us to doubt the work of grace, which, though true, cannot be seen for our comfort due to the lack of the Spirit's illuminating light. Yet, if the Spirit were to testify to us the truth of our condition and the sincerity of our graces, we would be able to stand firm, and those temptations would vanish.

3. As for those on whom the Holy Spirit has placed a clearer and stronger seal, those who do not doubt their condition, they, above all others, should not grieve the Spirit.

(1.) A spirit of integrity will prevent and cause shame in them at the thought of repaying such a good friend so poorly. There is nothing as genuine as grace. What troubles our spirits more than the consciousness of being unkind to a friend who has done us well, making us unsure how to face them? And shouldn't unkindness towards the Spirit make us ashamed to lift our faces to heaven?

(2.) Benefits create obligations, and the greater the favor, the stronger the obligation. Now, what greater favor is there than for the Spirit to renew us according to the image of our glorious Savior, who formerly bore the image of Satan? By doing so, He appropriates us to God, to be stored in His treasure as those carrying His seal. This separates us from the vile condition of the world, even though we still carry within us the seeds of the same corruption as the worst sinners, differing from them only by God's free grace and its fruits. God esteems us in such a way that He makes our unworthiness a foil to highlight the freeness of His love in making us worthy, though we were not so by nature. The sealing of the Spirit secures us in the midst of all spiritual dangers and conceals us as His secret ones, so that the evil one cannot harm us. These favors, being of high nature, require increased diligence to walk worthy of them. We cannot forget ourselves and yield to anything that goes against the dignity to which the Spirit has sealed us.

(3.) Nature, aided by proper education, compels every person to conduct themselves in accordance with their position. A magistrate behaves as a magistrate, a subject as a subject, a child as a child. We consider it disgraceful to do otherwise. So, shouldn't it be even more disgraceful for those renewed by the Spirit to behave contrary to their new nature? In fact, we cannot grieve the Spirit to the extent that we are renewed (1 John 3:9). Our new nature prevents us from pretending, being worldly, or being carnal like the world. We cannot

help but pursue holiness, be devoted to God and His truth, and express who we are and to whom we belong.

It is impossible for a person to care about heaven if they do not care about the initial stages of heaven. One cannot claim to care about full redemption and glory if they do not care about the Spirit of grace. The abundance of grace is the greatest aspect of glory. Other things such as peace and joy are merely manifestations of this abundance of grace in glory.

Furthermore, when the Spirit assures us of God's love in its greatest expressions, as it does when assuring us of redemption, that love ignites love within us. Love compels us, by a sweet necessity, to willingly and cheerfully obey in all things. Love is an active and inventive affection, and it focuses on pleasing. It fears nothing more than causing discontent. It is a delicate emotion that cannot tolerate anything offensive, whether to itself or to the spirit of those we love. The Spirit teaches the heart this love, which not only teaches us our duty but also how to perform it in a loving and acceptable manner. Love carries the entire flow of the soul with it, ruling over everything and not allowing the soul to divert to other matters, let alone contradictory ones.

Moreover, the graces that pertain to the condition assured to us by the Spirit, such as faith and hope, are purging and purifying graces. They work to make the soul suitable for the things believed and hoped for. The excellence of the things believed and hoped for has such an effect on the soul that it will not allow itself to be defiled. Our hopes set on high will lead us to walk on high paths. Therefore, when these graces are exercised in relation to these objects, the soul cannot help but be in a pleasing disposition.

There has long been a complaint that certainty of salvation breeds complacency and loose living. But what is there that a wicked soul cannot twist into poison? One might as well say that the sea burns or the fire cools. Nothing enlivens a soul more to cheerful obedience than the assurance of God's love and the knowledge that our labor in the Lord will not be in vain (1 Corinthians 15:58). This is the logic and rhetoric of Scripture, compelling a holy life through the knowledge of our present state in grace. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God," says St. Paul (Romans 12:1). What mercies? The ones he had spoken of before—justification, sanctification, assurance that all things work together for good, and that nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ. All duties lead to assurance or spring from assurance.

God's intention is to bring us to heaven through love and cheerfulness, as all His ways toward us in our salvation are based on love. This is the purpose of the covenant of grace, and for this reason, He sends the Spirit of adoption into our hearts so that we may have a childlike freedom with God in all our approaches to Him. When He presents Himself to us as a Father, it is fitting that we offer ourselves to Him as children. Nature teaches a child that the more they desire their father's love, the more they fear displeasing him. And anyone who would venture to offend their father because they know he cannot and will not disinherit them is considered devoid of grace. Certainly, the more surely we know that God has begotten us to such a glorious inheritance, the more it will deeply affect us and cause us to take to heart anything that may in any way touch Him. This had an effect on David. When the prophet told him what God had done for him and what more He would have done if it had been too little (2 Samuel 12:8), David was immediately moved to humble confession. Those who have experienced the power of the Spirit of adoption in their hearts, guided by both divine instinct and sound reason, will be

inclined to pursue all those courses that will please their Father. Instinct strengthened by reason has great persuasive force.

In conclusion, let Christians be careful to preserve and nurture the work of assurance and sealing within them.

Means:

1. What God does for us, He does through grace within us. He will preserve us from falling away by instilling the grace of fear within us (Jeremiah 32:40). He will keep us, but by what means? "The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard our hearts" (Philippians 4:7). God makes our calling and election sure by stirring our hearts to diligently cultivate and grow in every grace (2 Peter 1:5). Therefore, we must attend to all spiritual means of growth and vitality. By doing so, we will have a greater assurance of our entrance into the kingdom of grace here and in the kingdom of glory hereafter. Those who neglect to do so will find no comfort in the past, as they will forget that they were cleansed from their sins, nor will they have a hopeful outlook for the future, as they will "not be able to see things far off."
2. Even if assurance is in a lesser degree, do not yield to temptations and carnal reasoning. Even if our evidence is not as clear, we will not relinquish our inheritance. Even old groats that have little of the original stamp left are still considered valid currency. We often lose our comfort because we yield too easily and do not have a strong and clear seal of salvation as we desire. It is a great weakness to be completely devoid of it. Therefore, exercise the little faith you have by contending against such objections, and it will help preserve the seal of the Spirit.

3. Since this sealing occurs gradually, we should pray, like Paul did in Ephesians 1:17, for a spirit of revelation that we may be more sealed. The Ephesians, for whom Paul prayed, were already sealed, as were the Colossians. Yet, he prays for God to reveal to their spirits more about their excellent condition. There are "riches of assurance" (Colossians 2:2), and the apostle desires them to labor not only for assurance but for the abundance of it. This will bring rich comfort, joy, and peace. Times of temptation and trial may come, and if we lack strong assurance, we may be greatly troubled and question everything. This may be the sad condition of God's own children who, during times of peace, contented themselves with a lesser degree of assurance and sealing.
  
4. Lastly, be watchful over your own hearts and ways so that, in accordance with what you have now learned, you do not grieve the Spirit, "by whom you were sealed" (Ephesians 4:30). This implies that if we resist and grieve the Spirit in anything, we will harm ourselves and suffer in the comfort and evidence of our sealing.

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ePub, .mobi & .pdf Editions June 2023. Requests for information should be addressed to: Monergism Books, PO Box 491, West Linn, OR 97068