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# The Love of the Spirit

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Thomas M'Crie, D.D.

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## THOMAS M'CRIE, D.D.

Thomas M'Crie (1772–1835) was a renowned early nineteenth century Presbyterian church historian and preacher. He attended Edinburgh University in 1788, and the divinity hall of the General Associate Synod of Scotland in 1791. In 1796, he was ordained to the Associate congregation in Potterrow, Edinburgh. Ten years later, he, his primary theological teacher, Archibald Bruce, and two other ministers, formed the Constitutional Associate Presbytery. They were popularly known as the Old Light Antiburghers. After the death of Bruce in 1816, M'Crie conducted the Presbytery's divinity hall until 1818.

M'Crie became best known for his books of church history, most notably, a classic biography of John Knox (2 vols, 1811), which remains in print until today at least in abridged form. He also wrote a major biography on Andrew Melville and an important work on the unity of the church.

## The Love of the Spirit

*“Now I beseech you, brethren,  
for the love of the Spirit...”*

— Romans 15:30

The volume of nature has the name of its Author inscribed upon it, and everything bears the most distinct and legible marks of His Godhead and perfections; but it conveys no information to us of His subsistence in three Persons. In the unity of design apparent in the works of nature, and in the nice and admirable adaptation of all parts of the universe to accomplish the same grand ends which we perceive the more clearly in proportion to the increase of our knowledge, we have a proof of the unity of God which yields satisfaction to a plain and unsophisticated understanding.

But there is nothing either in the work of creation or in the works of common providence that indicates any personal distinctions in the Godhead—or, in other words, makes known the doctrine of the Trinity. The knowledge of this mystery we owe to the volume of inspiration which not only teaches it doctrinally, but reveals and describes a work calculated to illustrate it and to give us clear though, from its nature, necessarily inadequate conceptions of the subject. Redemption is the work of one God, but of that one Being existing according to distinct relations of an intrinsic kind, which we, for want of a better word, and to guard against the opinions of those who would explain away the whole mystery, are forced to call personal.

The doctrine of the Trinity, as revealed in the Bible, is far from being a mere speculative truth. It lies at the foundation of our hope; our blessedness is wrapped up in “the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ,

and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost" (2 Cor. 13:14). It is supposed in all acceptable worship, for we have access to the Father through the Son by one Spirit (Eph. 2:18); "our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ" (1 John 1:3), and this is the fellowship of the Spirit. As our worship is animated by the distinct consideration of what each Person has done for our salvation, so the duties of obedience are enforced upon our minds by the same consideration. Hence, the apostle, in entreating the prayers of the Christians at Rome on his behalf, employs the plea in our text: "for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit."

By the "love of the Spirit," I understand that love which the third person of the Godhead has displayed in the economy of redemption. Some indeed are of the opinion that it refers to that brotherly love which is produced by the Holy Spirit in the hearts of believers and binds

them together as members of the same mystical body so as to feel a deep interest in one another's welfare. Even though it should be allowed that this was the more immediate meaning of the word in this passage, we might still take occasion from it to speak of the love that is the spring of all the Spirit's operations.

We judge of the qualities of a fountain from the waters which it sends forth, and of a tree from its fruits. "The fruit of the Spirit is love" (Gal. 5:22); and what must be the love resident in and flowing from that divine Person, who is the author of every affectionate feeling toward God or toward man! But I apprehend the connection in which the words stand fully justifies the other interpretation: "I beseech you from regard to what the Lord has done for you, and the love which the Holy Spirit has shown to you, that you strive together with me in your prayers to God for me."

We often speak of the love of the Fa-

ther in not sparing His Son, and the love of the Son in giving Himself for us; and we do well, for we cannot speak of them too often nor with too much fervor of gratitude and admiration. But the love of the Spirit is more rarely the topic of public discourse or private conversation, and there is reason to fear that it is too little in our thoughts, for "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh" (Matt. 12:34). May not this deficiency have a hurtful effect upon Christian experience? God draws His children to Himself "by the cords of love," meaning His own love; but if one of the threads in this threefold cord be lax, must not the influence of divine love upon our hearts be weakened and impaired? If we are deficient in this part of Christian exercise, it assuredly does not arise from any defect in the proofs and illustration of love on the part of this divine Agent. The subject seems entitled to our particular attention. Let us then, trusting in the aid of the Spirit,

without whom we can neither speak nor hear aright, in the *first* place, contemplate the manifestations of the love of the Holy Ghost; and *secondly*, exhibit the influence which a due sense of this love would have on our minds and conduct.

I. Contemplate the manifestations of the love of the Spirit. The work of redemption and recovering man from the ruin into which he has fallen by his transgression is traced to the spontaneous and boundless love of God. This wonderful love is exhibited in distinct acts by the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. To the Father we ascribe the purpose and superintendence of the plan of redemption, to the Son its purchase, and to the Spirit its application. The love from which the Spirit acts is equally divine with that from which the Father and Son act; indeed, it is the same, for the love of God, like His will, is one. "There is none good but one, that is God" (Matt. 19:17); this epithet is



repeatedly applied to the third Person in an absolute sense: "Thou gavest also thy good spirit to instruct them" (Neh. 9:20) and "Thy Spirit is good" (Ps. 143:10). The love of the Spirit is eternal, unchangeable, sovereign, and independent; in its breadth, length, depth, and height, it surpasses knowledge.

1. *The Holy Spirit displayed His love in the readiness with which He undertook His mission and work.* We speak of the covenant of grace as made between the Father and Son because, in contemplation of the Son's assuming human nature, there was an engagement and a promise, a work and reward. But we must not overlook the concurrence of the blessed Spirit and the delight which He took in the prospect of His work of grace and power. As the Son was sent by the Father, so the Spirit is sent by the Father and the Son, and on this account is economically called their Spirit; but He was as free and cheerful in

undertaking and engaging in His work as He who said, "Lo, I come,...to do thy will, O my God" (Ps. 40:7–8).

When Jesus was about to leave His disciples, He said, "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter" (John 14:16); "if I go not away the Comforter will not come, but if I depart, I will send him unto you" (John 16:17). Observe that He is not only said to be "sent," to intimate the established order of the economy of grace and the certainty of the gift, but He is said to "come," in order to point out His willingness to engage in the work. "And when he is come, he will reprove the world..." (John 16:8). Hence the prayer of the Old Testament church: "Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out" (Song 4:16). And hence on the day of Pentecost, "Suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind.... And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like

as of fire, and it sat upon each of them" (Acts 2:23). These were the emblems of the love of the Spirit in its ardor, impetuosity, and irresistible power.

As He was voluntary in undertaking, so He is sovereign in carrying on His work, "dividing severally to every man as he will." When we pray the Father to give us the Holy Spirit, we should remember that He whom we ask to dwell in us is a free and independent agent. "Uphold me with thy free Spirit" (Ps. 51:12).

2. *The love of the Spirit appeared in dictating the Scriptures.* Saints in every age have loved the Word of God, and from the time that it was first committed to writing, they have not ceased to take the highest delight in reading and meditating on its contents. In the Bible they find their meat and their drink, the life and the health of their souls. They could not live without it, and, having it, they can be contented with a slender portion.

“Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever; for they are the rejoicing of my heart” (Ps. 119:3). The longest psalm that David ever composed is entirely occupied in expressing his esteem for the written law; there are few of his spiritual songs in which he does not commend it—and remember, brethren, his Bible was a small one compared with ours.

All Scripture was given by inspiration, or dictated to the sacred penmen, by the Spirit. “For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (2 Pet. 1:21), and as they spake they wrote. This is true, not only of strict prophecy, or the prediction of future events, but of all the contents of His inspired volume, whether given in the form of doctrine, reproof, exhortation, promise, or even history. Hence the formula used in quoting from any of the books of the Old Testament, “The Holy Ghost saith...” whatever prophet was the penman (Mark

12:36; Acts 28:25; Heb. 3:7, 9:8). Even those parts of Scripture which proceeded immediately from the mouth of the Redeemer Himself come to us through the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, who brought them to the remembrance of the evangelists; and to each of the letters which Christ ordered His servant John to send to the seven churches of Asia is subjoined the same admonition: "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches" (Rev. 2:7).

Would you have a sensible sign and proof of the love of the Spirit? Here it is. Could there be a greater proof of love than the giving of this Book, so stored with everything that is necessary and able to make wise to salvation the most simple? There are three distinguishing gifts of God—the gift of His Son, the gift of His Spirit, and the gift of His Word—and as to each of them we may say, "Herein is love." Without the Scriptures, you would have been sitting in the region

and shadow of death. Without the Scriptures, you would have known nothing of the plan of mercy and way of salvation; you would never have heard of the love of God, of the person, the undertaking, the incarnation, the sacrifice, the sufferings and glory of Christ; you would never have heard of remission of sins, of peace with God, of the adoption of children, of the inheritance laid up in heaven.

If, then, at any time you have felt your consciences pacified, your difficulties cleared up, your fears dissipated, your minds fortified against temptation, strengthened for duty, or comforted in tribulation, your faith increased, your hope quickened, your love inflamed, your patience promoted, by anything contained in this precious volume—oh! think of the love of the Spirit. Christian children, who have been taught the first principles of the oracles of God, think on the love of the Spirit. Christian young men, who from your earliest years have

known the Scriptures, think on the love of the Spirit. Christian fathers, who are strong because the Word of God abideth in you, think on the love of the Spirit.

3. *The love of the Spirit was manifested in preparing and endowing the human nature of the Savior.* All the operations of the divine Spirit in forming those holy men who were raised up for carrying on the work of God under the Old Testament, such as Moses, David, Solomon, Isaiah, Zerubbabel, and Joshua, who were eminently furnished with gifts and graces for the faithful and wise discharge of their important functions, were nothing compared with this. In the miraculous conception, the Spirit "created a new thing in the earth," bringing "a clean thing out of an unclean," and from a corrupt mass forming a body which was without the least taint of or tendency to sin, and thus fitted for becoming the immaculate and blessed body of the Son of

God. "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35). This was the beginning of those miracles of love which were wrought with such heavenly profusion and during our Savior's abode on earth.

According to ancient predictions, the Spirit descended upon and dwelt in that holy nature which He had formed: "And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD" (Isa. 11:1-3). And the miracle accompanying our Lord's baptism held forth emblematically the source, the nature, and the design of this unction. "The heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove" the emblem of love "and lighting upon him" (Matt. 3:16). In the glorious



person of the Redeemer, the grace of unction is the most wonderful object of contemplation next to the grace of union, which is the effect of the assumption of human nature by the Son of God. "Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my Spirit upon him" (Isa. 42:1).

If the oil poured on the head of Aaron, which descended to the skirts of his garment, was precious, how much more precious was this heavenly oil which was poured on the Head, and was to descend to the lowest and least member of the mystical body; for God gave not the Spirit by measure to Him, and He was given to be imparted to all that believe on Him. "Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows" (Ps. 45:7). This was the holy anointing oil which was poured on His sacrifice; as it was through the Eternal Spirit that

He offered Himself without spot to God, so was He “justified in the Spirit” by His resurrection from the dead.

4. *The love of the Spirit is shown in the first visit which He pays to the soul of a sinner, when He comes to take possession of it.* When the Spirit first enters the place of His future residence, He finds it in a very wretched and repulsive condition. The sinner, accustomed to his own impurity, can form no conception of the disgust which this heavenly visitor must feel on approaching it, and is apt to wonder at the strong terms with which He describes it. No dungeon, dark and cold and filthy—no leper who from the sole of the foot to the crown of the head is covered with wounds and bruises and sores—no corpse that has lain for days in the earth, is half so loathsome to the senses as such a soul is to the Holy Spirit, who is “of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity” (Hab. 1:13).

The Spirit finds the heart dead to all that is good, yet alive to all that is evil; the mind filled with ignorance of God and enmity to Him; the whole man as proud as poor, as obstinate as foolish, as impenitent as guilty. His first approaches are shunned, His overtures rejected, His convictions stifled, His entreaties despised. Yet He perseveres in His gracious design until He has conquered all opposition, won the soul to Jesus Christ, and formed the heart for a habitation to Himself—"the temple of the living God!"

5. *The love of this blessed Spirit is further seen in keeping possession of the soul.* There is more love displayed here than in taking possession of the soul at first. We expect nothing but resistance and hostility from an enemy, but "a man that hath friends, must shew himself friendly" (Prov. 18:24). Is this what the saint offers to his merciful deliverer? Alas, no! How often has the Holy Spirit reason

to say, "Is this how you treat a friend?" Who but the blessed Guest Himself can tell what indignities and provocations He meets with from the time that He takes up His habitation in the heart of a believer? We can scarcely read the history of the unbelieving, ungrateful, and rebellious conduct of the Israelites in the wilderness without being provoked; yet, it is a true picture of our own conduct: He gave them his good Spirit to instruct them, "but they rebelled, and vexed his Holy Spirit" (Isa. 63:10).

How often do professing Christians and genuine saints themselves rebel, and vex and grieve the Spirit by their slowness of heart to understand and believe the word He spoke and brought to their remembrance, by despising the hidden manna with which He fed their souls, by indulging the wish to return to spiritual Egypt, by questioning those promises which He sealed on their hearts, and by quenching His motions and acting con-

trary to those principles which He has implanted within them! On these accounts, He is provoked to withhold His comforting influence, and threatens to withdraw from them. And yet He abides with them. "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together" (Hos. 11:8). "Many waters cannot quench His love, neither can the floods drown it" (Song 8:7).

6. *We have an additional proof of the love of the Spirit in the peculiar work of sanctification which He carries on in the hearts of believers.* "The sanctification of the Spirit" is the comprehensive phrase under which His gracious work is held forth in Scripture. "We are bound always to give thanks for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God has chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit"

(2 Thess. 2:13). The blood of Jesus is the meritorious and procuring cause of our title to eternal life, but there is a meetness for, as well as a title to, eternal life, and both are necessary to our enjoyment of this beatitude. It is the work of the Spirit to renew us after the image of God, to conform us to the image of His Son, to make us partakers of a divine nature, and thus fit us for divine fellowship. He renders all the means of producing this effectual, whether the word, sacraments, or prayer. "We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Cor. 3:18). Those who preach the gospel or dispense the sacraments have only a ministerial instrumentality in advancing this work of God; the Spirit is the efficient agent and author of it. "Ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not

with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God" (2 Cor. 3:3).

There are many things comprehended in this work by which the Spirit manifests His love. He takes of the things of Christ—His atonement and righteousness—and shows them unto believers, giving them fellowship with the Redeemer in His death and resurrection. He sheds abroad the love of God in their hearts. He gives them access to God with boldness and confidence, enabling them to cry, "Abba Father," and helping them in their prayers. He seals them as the chosen of the Father and the redeemed of the Son and preserves them from the allurements of the world, the temptations of Satan, and everything which would entangle or draw them aside in their Christian course. His residence in their hearts is an earnest of the heavenly inheritance to which they have been predestinated, and his operations are the first-fruits of that glory that awaits them.

Here we are particularly to call to mind His character as the Comforter, in which He was promised by Christ, and the manner in which He discharges it in all the distresses, afflictions, and tribulations, outward and inward, to which believers are exposed in the present state. In none of these is the Comforter, who only can relieve their souls, far off. All the peace, solace, and joy which they feel under their trials, and by which they are sometimes made to glory in them, are to be traced to this source. Hence we read of "the comfort of the Holy Ghost," and "joy in the Holy Ghost."

The Spirit manifests His love by the termination to which He brings His work in believers. "He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1:6). He will make their souls perfect in holiness at death, and their bodies, in which He has resided here as a temple, He will raise up at the last day, fashioning them



according to the glorious body of Christ. "If the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you" (Rom. 8:11).

II. I now proceed to exhibit the influence which the love of the Spirit ought to have upon us. It is calculated to have an influence upon the whole of our life and exercise. The person who feels it will "live in the Spirit" and "walk in the Spirit." There is no duty which it will not enforce, no sin from which it will not dissuade. I will select a few instances as examples.

1. *It should excite us to love the Spirit.* Love begets love: "We love him because he first loved us" (1 John 4:10). Love and gratitude, flowing toward the Holy Spirit and created by His gracious acts, is no less a Christian grace than love to the Father and Son. Indeed, love to the Spirit is in-

cluded in love to the Father and the Son. It is the work of the Spirit to open up the fountain of redeeming love and the wide and deep channel in which it flows to sinners in all its refreshing and salutary streams. He cannot be dishonored or His work be condemned, if the Father and the Son are loved and glorified. Yet, there is an honor and a duty which we owe to Him that ought not to be withheld.

Perhaps the believer's experience in this matter may be illustrated by a familiar example. If a stranger should come to any of you with letters detailing the safety of a son in a foreign land, whom you had given up as dead, you would be so overjoyed with the message and so occupied in reading the letters and looking on the pledges transmitted by your absent child that you might forget the messenger and allow him to stand at the door. But no sooner would your joy subside than you would recollect yourself, receive the messenger with due respect, and load

him with marks of gratitude for the kind service he performed. In like manner, the believer may at first be so rapt in the contemplation of God the Father who loved us, and of the Son who gave Himself for us, as to temporarily overlook the divine Agent who opened his eyes upon such a discovery of grace. But when he recollects himself, he cries out, "Is it Thou, Lord? Come in, Thou blessed of the Lord! Why dost thou stand outside?"

The self-evidencing light of the gospel, shining into the soul in the day of conversion, may be so strong and overpowering that the person may wonder that he should ever have resisted it for a moment; his conviction of its truth may be so clear and his reception of it so cordial that he may be apt to overlook the supernatural agency on his soul and think that he can never again call it in question. It is not until he has lost sight of it and relapsed into partial unbelief and darkness that he becomes

thoroughly aware that he owed his discoveries to the illumination of the Spirit, and that this is necessary to preserve and revive them. Then he is ready to say, "O blessed Spirit, Thou didst visit me when I was an outcast. I was dead in trespasses and sins, and Thou didst quicken me. I was blind to the things which belonged to my peace, and Thou didst unseal the eyes of my understanding. My heart was filled with enmity to God, and Thou didst cleanse me in the washing of regeneration. I was diseased as well as loathsome, and Thou didst heal all my diseases by the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus and by Thy precious ointments. By Thy grace, I am what I am. What shall I render unto Thee for all Thy benefits unto me?"

2. *It should beget love to the brethren.* All true saints are in common the offspring and workmanship of the Spirit; and "every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him" (1 John 5:1).

There is a union among true Christians, and this is the unity of the Spirit. "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body being many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body...and have been all made to drink into one Spirit" (1 Cor. 12:12-13).

True believers are all united to Christ by the same Spirit. They are brought to the knowledge of the truth, and the love of the truth, and the comfort of the truth, by the same Spirit. By the same Spirit, they live and move and have their being in Christ. The love of the Spirit is, as it were, the common blood which flows in all their veins, binding them together as one family and affectionately causing them to cleave to and sympathize with one another. "If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit...be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind" (Phil. 2:1-2).

In vain do we pretend to have the Spirit if we have bitter envying and strife dwelling in us; the love of the Spirit cannot dwell with these malevolent passions. But “if we love one another, God dwelleth in us...hereby we know that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit” (1 John 4:12–13).

3. *It should encourage us to depend upon and apply for the influences of the Spirit.* Without Him, we can do nothing; He works in us both “to will and to do of his good pleasure” (Phil. 2:13). Everything that is good about any person—faith, love, purity, patience—is of His production. When a Christian thinks of the duties incumbent upon him, their number and importance, and at the same time reflects on his own weakness, he is ready to exclaim, “Who is sufficient for these things?” In such circumstances, let him think of the love of the Spirit and that He is not only able but willing to “do exceed-

ing abundantly above all that we ask or think" (Eph. 3:20).

The Spirit is promised, and we are encouraged to pray the Father for Him. "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him" (Luke 11:13). Oh, is not this encouraging, that so far from being reluctant to the work, He is as ready to go as the Father or the Son is to send?

Christians complain of their unfitness for duty, and they sometimes make this an excuse for neglecting it. There might have been some show of reason in this excuse had not God made such rich and suitable provision to relieve our necessities and help our infirmities. You are unfit for duty, even indisposed to it! Granted; but is not the Spirit able to strengthen you with all might in the inner man (Eph. 3:16)? And is He not willing and waiting for employment? Have you applied to

Him particularly? If not, you have not received, and justly, because you have not asked. Or, if you have asked, you have not asked in the faith of His love; you have had doubts of this, and these doubts have prevented you from relying on His influences.

4. *It should excite us to abound in prayer.* It is in reference to this duty that the apostle in our text avails himself of the argument from the love of the Spirit. "I beseech you, brethren, for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me." There is a two-fold argument here—one bearing on the duty of praying for one another, founded on the Spirit's being the bond of union among all the members of the mystical body we have already adverted to; the other bearing on prayer in general, whether for ourselves or others.

This implies that the consideration of the love of the Spirit is a great induce-



ment to prayer. And how? Because one way in which He manifests His love is by assisting us in our addresses to the throne of grace. Thus He is called the "Spirit of supplication" (Zech. 12:10), and is said to help our infirmities in this duty. "The Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered" (Rom. 8:26).

The Spirit sheds abroad the love of God in the heart, and thereby encourages us to come to Him as our heavenly Father. By His mediation, Christ has procured access for us to God; the Spirit gives us access by discovering to us the living way consecrated by the blood of Christ, and powerfully brings us near: Through Christ we have access by one Spirit unto the Father (Eph. 2:18). The Holy Spirit is promised in the character of a Comforter, or, as the word also signifies, a patron or advocate.

What rich and superabundant provision has a God of grace made for us in the new covenant! How inexcusable if we do not come to the throne of grace! We have an advocate outside of us and within us, in heaven and in our own hearts. It is a great encouragement to prayer that we have in Christ an advocate with the Father, who is ready to present our petitions and to obtain a hearing for us. But is it not an additional incentive that in the Holy Spirit we have One who will draw up our petitions, and help us to put them into the hands of Christ? And this last is agreeable to the will of God, as well as the former: "And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God" (Rom. 8:27).

How great an encouragement to prayer this is those only know who have felt enlargement of heart and confidence in prayer, and who have also felt the

absence of these. Formerly they were dragged or driven to the throne of grace by conscience or the urgency of external circumstances; now they come to it of their own accord and cheerfully. Formerly, they thought it enough that they prayed publicly and at stated times; now they embrace every opportunity of engaging in the exercise, and pray always. Formerly, their prayers were formal and cold; now they pour out their hearts to God, order their cause before him, and fill their mouths with arguments. This is prayer—"praying in the Holy Ghost."

5. *It should make us careful to avoid everything that may grieve the Spirit.* We are uncommonly tender of offending a person who has done us a kindness; we will deny ourselves many agreeable things simply due to an apprehension that our indulging in them would grieve him. The very expression, "grieving the Spirit," points to His love. An enemy is provoked

if we injure him, and he is gratified if he see us injuring ourselves; only a friend—one who really loves us and wishes our welfare—can be *grieved* at our improper conduct. Unbelievers vex the Spirit; believers grieve Him. “Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption” (Eph. 4:30).

A persuasion and feeling of the love of the Spirit will lead believers to act in such a way as is pleasing to Him, and to avoid everything which grieves Him. It is not difficult to know what pleases Him on the one hand, or what offends Him on the other. Saints know it by a divine instinct—the Spirit witnesses to it with their spirit. The fruit of the Spirit and the works of the flesh are as much opposed as light and darkness. All sin is displeasing to Him, but there are some sins which are eminently offensive in His sight. He is the “good Spirit,” and therefore all wrath, malice, and envy are opposed to Him. He is “the Spirit of

truth," and therefore all falsehood and lying are dishonoring to Him. He is "the Holy Spirit," and therefore all impurity in heart, speech, and behavior are offensive to Him. You will see all these sins warned against, as grieving to the Spirit, in Ephesians 4.

This subject offers much for self-examination and exhortation. Let me ask you, what do you know of the love of the Spirit? There are some, I am afraid, who have no part or lot in this matter, who "have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost" (Acts 19:2); who never saw any need for His gracious influences; who never were concerned to obtain them; who never read or prayed or performed any other duty in the Spirit. "These be they who are sensual, having not the Spirit" (Jude 19). Let such consider the solemn declaration of an inspired writer: "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his" (Rom. 8:9). Those who are strang-

ers to the work of the Spirit are strangers to the work of the Savior. All who are in Christ, and to whom there is no condemnation, “walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” (Rom. 8:1,4).

But though you know Him not, you have to do with Him, and He with you. He speaks to you in the Scriptures and by the preaching of the gospel, which is the “ministration of the Spirit.” The apostle Peter tells us that Christ was “put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit; by which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah” (1 Pet. 3:18–20). The inhabitants of the antediluvian world thought that they had to do only with Noah and that it was easy for them to contend with him and despise his warnings and exhortations. But it turned out at last that they had been resisting someone infinitely greater: “And the LORD said, My spirit

shall not always strive with man" (Gen. 6:3); and this added greatly to their sin and condemnation. This was the great sin of the Israelites in the wilderness, and it is still the sin of gospel despisers: "Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost" (Acts 7:51).

There are two things which aggravate the guilt of those who remain unbelieving and impenitent under the gospel until the end of their lives, and render their doom unspeakably more dreadful than that of the heathen. First, they have despised and repudiated the love of God manifested in the death of His Son; secondly, they have resisted and quenched the motions of the Holy Spirit and poured contempt on His love in the application of redemption. "Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant,

wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?" (Heb. 10:29). Contemptuous resistance of the motions of the Holy Spirit is the crowning part of their sin. And justly so; for (and this is the reason why the sin against the Holy Ghost is unforgivable) it is an offence against the love of God in the last and most ample display of it. Oh, bring not down this fearful doom on your head, gospel hearer! There is only one way in which you can avert it: by yielding to the call of the gospel and believing on the name of the Son of God. Where can you run from the Spirit of God or flee from His presence? Though you should resolve never to hear another sermon or open a Bible, though you should resolve to leave a land of gospel privileges and hide yourself in the darkest jungle of heathenism, you would carry in your heart, like the stricken deer, the arrow of conviction and death. You have heard of a Savior and re-



jected Him; you have become the subject of the Spirit's calls and resisted them.

But my text leads me to employ the allurements of the gospel rather than the terrors of the law. "I beseech you by the love of the Spirit" to comply with the calls of grace—to come to the Savior. "The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Rev. 22:17).

Believers should not be content with owning the nature and work of the Spirit; they should seek to know and believe His love and to taste that He is gracious. Have you ever had the love of God shed abroad in your heart? Has Christ been precious to you? Has the Word been sweet to your taste? Have you had freedom at the throne of grace? Have you been made to eat at a communion table of the things wherewith the atonement was made? Have you been comforted under

affliction? These are just the fruits of the Spirit and the evidences of His love. Lay open your hearts to His benign influences; cherish His work and honor the Spirit, even as you honor the Father and the Son. Let others scoff at the doctrine of divine influences and the inhabitation of the Spirit as the effect of enthusiasm. "But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life" (Jude 1:20-21).

Finally, let us be instructed where to look for the cure and rectification of all the evils which afflict the church in our day: to the love of the Spirit. By our neglect and abuse of our privileges, our unchristian temper and carriage, and by our worldly spirit and brash conversation, we have provoked the Spirit to withdraw from us, and the consequence has been that the glory has departed from

our Israel. Ordinances have become in a great measure inefficacious and unsuccessful. "Who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the LORD been revealed?" (Isa. 53:1).

Who is convinced of sin? Who cries out, "What must I do to be saved?" Who receives the Word gladly? Who brings forth fruit to perfection? Where are the fruits of the gospel, even where it is purely preached? "Woe is me! for I am as when they have gathered the summer fruits, as the grape-gleanings of the vintage: there is no cluster to eat; my soul desired the first ripe fruit. The good man is perished out of the earth; and there is none upright among men" (Micah 7:1). Our carelessness, our conformity to the world, and our mournful divisions have wasted and nearly consumed the vitals of true Christianity, leaving us little more than a spiritless and unsightly skeleton. "Our leanness, our leanness, woe unto us! The treacherous dealers have dealt treacher-

ously; yea, the treacherous dealers have dealt very treacherously" (Isa. 24:16).

Yet, there is hope in the love of the Spirit. It is divine and therefore infinite, sovereign, and free. He is God and not man; He will turn again to have compassion on us; He will subdue our iniquities, and cast all our sins into the depths of the sea. Let us lament after the Lord, the Spirit, and implore His return. Come from the four winds, oh breath of the Lord, and breathe on us that we may live! Wilt Thou not revive us again, that we may rejoice in Thee?

The love of the Spirit shed abroad in the heart would quicken, restore, soften, and sanctify. It would correct all the evils among us, private and public. It would remove all grounds of division, and, what is more difficult still, it would remove all that spirit of alienation, enmity, and jealousy which our controversies have engendered—even in the hearts of those who have been contending for truth and

purity. It would be like oil poured upon the waters of strife, stilling the noise of their waves and the tumult they excited. It would induce the contending parties to confess their faults one to another, or, rather, bring both to their knees before God in joint confession, inspiring them with a holy emulation to strive to be the first to repair the desolations of Zion and to bring back the King of the church to His own house.





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