

Trinity XIX (18-10-09)

“grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, in whom ye were sealed” (Epistle)

Another year, if we count from St. Luke's day, has been completed. As the world, and the worldly churches, see it, not a successful one. But what matters is how God sees us. *Have we been faithful?* Granted that we were right to separate ourselves from determined error, that decision alone will not save us; so here are some considerations on our present danger from John Wesley.

“The title "holy," applied to the Spirit of God, does not only denote that he is holy in his own nature, but that he makes us so; that he is the great fountain of holiness to his church; the Spirit from whence flows all the grace and virtue, by which the stains of guilt are cleansed, and we are renewed in all holy dispositions, and again bear the image of our Creator.

We are said to grieve the Holy Spirit by our sins, because of his immediate presence with us. He is pleased to look upon professing Christians as more peculiarly separated to his honour; nay, we are so closely united to him, that we are said to be "one spirit with him;" and, therefore, every sin which we now commit, besides its own proper guilt, carries in it a fresh and infinitely high provocation. When, therefore, we set up the idols of earthly inclinations in our hearts, (which are properly his altar,) and bow down ourselves to serve those vicious passions which we ought to sacrifice to his will, - this must needs be, in the highest degree, offensive and grievous to him.

We grieve the Holy Spirit by our sins, because they are so many contempts of the highest expression of his love, and disappoint him in his last remedy whereby he is pleased to endeavour our recovery. And thus every sin we now commit is done in despite of all his powerful assistances, in defiance of his reproofs, - an ungrateful return for infinite lovingkindness!

For men thus to disappoint the Holy Spirit of Love, to make him thus wait that he may be gracious, and pay attendance on us through our whole course of folly and vanity, and to stand by, and be a witness of our stubbornness, with the importunate offers of infinite kindness in his hands, - is a practice of such a nature that no gracious mind can hear the thoughts of it. It is an argument of God's unbounded mercy, that he is pleased to express, that he is only grieved at it; that his indignation does not flame out against those who are thus basely ungrateful, and consume them in a moment. And the more frequently we offend him, the more we weaken his influences in our souls.

I come now to consider by what kinds of sin the Holy Spirit is more especially grieved. These sins are, in general, such as either at first wholly disappoint his grace of its due effect upon our souls, or are afterwards directly contrary to his gracious and merciful assistances. Of the former sort, I shall only mention, at present, inconsiderateness; of the latter, sins of presumption.

I come now to show the force of the Apostle's argument against grieving the Holy Spirit, - Because we "are sealed to the day of redemption."

By receiving his real stamp upon our souls; by being made the partakers of the divine nature. This likeness to God, this conformity of our will and affections to his will, is, properly speaking, holiness; and to produce this in us, is the proper end and design of all the influences of the Holy Spirit.

By receiving him as a mark of God's property; as a sign that we belong to Christ. The Holy Spirit within us is the security of our salvation; he is likewise an earnest of it, and assures our spirits that we have a title to eternal happiness. "The Spirit of God beareth witness with our spirits that we are the children of God."

As an earnest and assurance to our own spirits, that we have a title to eternal happiness. It is absolutely necessary to attend carefully to the secret operation of the Holy Spirit within us; who, by infusing his holy consolations into our souls, by enlivening our drooping spirits, and giving us a quick relish of his promises, raises bright and joyous sensations in us, and gives a man, beforehand, a taste of the bliss to which he is going.

Now, if the Holy Spirit be the sign, the seal, and the security of our salvation, then, by grieving him by our sins, we break up this seal with our own hands, we cancel our firmest security, and, as much as in us lies, reverse our own title to eternal life.”