

Grieve Not the Holy Spirit

by Robert Murray M'Cheyne

The sermon emphasizes the importance of not grieving the Holy Spirit, who is our friend and guide, and warns of the consequences of doing so.

Scripture: John 14:16, Ephesians 4:30

Topics: "The Holy Spirit", "Friendship with God"

Description

Robert Murray M'Cheyne emphasizes the profound friendship between the Holy Spirit and believers, urging them not to grieve this divine companion. He explains that grieving the Holy Spirit can occur through various actions, such as neglecting prayer, despising ordinances, or relying on oneself instead of leaning on the Spirit for strength and guidance. M'Cheyne highlights the importance of recognizing the Spirit's role in teaching, guiding, and sealing believers, and he calls for a return to a close relationship with the Holy Spirit to restore peace and avoid the pitfalls of sin. The sermon serves as a reminder of the intimate connection believers have with the Holy Spirit and the need to honor that relationship.

Transcript

THE UNCONVERTED DO NOT LIKE to hear much about the Holy Ghost. The world cannot receive him because it seeth him not, neither knows him. Unconverted ministers do not often like to preach about the Holy Spirit. Unconverted hearers do not often like to hear about the Holy Spirit. How very foolish to many must such a command as this appear to be! If it had been said, 'Grieve not a father or mother', you could have understood it, but when it says, 'Grieve not the Holy Spirit', you do not know its meaning.

Paul is here advising Christians to let no vile communications proceed out of their mouth, and the argument he uses is one of the most wonderful that ever proceeded from the pen of man. It is, 'Grieve not the Holy Spirit, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.'

From these words, consider: (1) The holy friendship of the Spirit. (2) Some of the ways in which we may grieve this Friend. (3) Application.

Let me show you the holy friendship that subsists between the Holy Spirit and the believers soul.

It is implied in the word, 'Grieve not the Holy Spirit', it is only a friend we can grieve. If he was an enemy he would rejoice if we fell. And this shows that he is a true friend, because when we fall the Holy Spirit is grieved. It is quite true that the infinite God does not grieve in the same sense as we do, for that would

imply that he was not infinitely happy; but it is quite as true that there is something analogous between his grief and ours.

The Holy Spirit comes and dwells in a believer's heart.

'I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them' (Ezekiel 36:27). And so the Lord Jesus says in John 14:16: 'I will pray the Father, and he will give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever, even the spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him.' And accordingly the apostle Paul says in 1 Corinthians 6:19: 'What! Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God?' And in like manner we find God saying in Leviticus 26:12: 'I will walk among you and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people.' And again, he says, 'This is my rest, here will I stay, for I have desired it' (Psalm 132:14).

O my brethren! what an intimate friendship this is! Can any friendship be compared with this? Another friend may dwell in our neighborhood; he may dwell in our family; but, ah! here is a friend that dwells in us. Can there be greater friendship than this? When the Lord Jesus came from heaven, and dwelt among us - when he dealt with Martha and Mary, and Lazarus - when he sat down to meat in the Pharisee's house, and permitted the woman that was a sinner to wash his feet with her tears and to wipe them with her hairs of her head - that was a friendship. But it was still greater friendship for the Holy Spirit to come and dwell in a clay cottage, the walls which are covered over with leprosy; and this is the friendship of the Holy Spirit to a believing soul.

The Holy Spirit teaches believing souls.

This is his great office. See John 16:12,13: 'I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now, Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth.' Then 1 John 2:20: 'But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.' Verse 27: 'But the anointed which ye have received of him abideth in you; and ye need not that any man teach you...' Now, brethren, there is no greater mark of friendship, than to teach one - to bear with a slow scholar. This is the friendship of the Holy Spirit to a believing soul. There can be no greater condescension than for a man of gigantic mind to teach a child the alphabet. It was condescension in Christ to teach people when he sat in the boat by the side of the lake. But it is greater friendship when the Holy Spirit comes and teaches you all things; it is greater friendship when he bears your stupidity, and when he opens your hearts to receive the truth in the love of it. This is friendship.

He teaches the believer to pray, and he prays in the believer.

'Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father' (Romans 8:15). 'Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities (the Greek word is very remarkable: He helps our infirmities by coming under the burden) 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. And he that searcheth the hearts (that is the Lord) knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God' (Romans 8:26-27). And the same thing you are taught in the little Epistle of Jude, 20th verse: 'But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost.'

So, brethren, this is another mark of the Holy Spirit's friendship, that he not only dwells in the soul, but he teaches the soul to say, 'Abba' - he teaches the soul to 'pray in the Holy Ghost.' It is true friendship to teach one another to pray. It is a believing mother's part to teach her little children to pray. But the Holy Spirit's love is greater than this, he not only puts the words in our mouth, but he puts the desire in our heart. It is great friendship to pray together, but oh! It is greater friendship to pray in one, and this is the friendship of the Holy Spirit of God.

He seals the believing heart.

Read the text, 'Grieve not the Holy Spirit, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.' And again, in the first chapter of the same book, the 13th verse, 'In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.' You know, my brethren, the effect that ones habits have on others, that often the colour of the life is taken from those among whom we live. And you cannot be in the company of a holy man without receiving your impressions from him. But how much more an impression does the Spirit make: it is like the mark that the seal makes on the wax, and it is to the day of redemption, and cannot be broken, if we are sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.

Now, brethren, let me ask, 'Do you know anything of this friend?' The world cannot receive him; if you are of the world, you cannot receive him. Do you know anything of Spirit making groanings within you which cannot be uttered? Nothing? Then, dear friends, you are far from God. 'The world cannot receive him....neither know him.' (John 14:17). How do you feel at the question? What! do you think it foolishness? 'The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them: for they are spiritually discerned' (1 Corinthians 2:14). If you do not mind these things, the reason is, you are a friend of the world, and will perish with the world.

The ways in which the Spirit may be grieved.

When Christ was on earth, we are told that on one occasion he looked round on the Pharisees, being grieved at the hardness of their hearts (Mark 3:5). Now, what Jesus then felt, the Holy Spirit feels at the sight of sin. We are told that when Christ looked on Peter, he wept. We are not told what kind of look it was, but no doubt it was one of grief - no doubt his eye said, 'Did I deserve this, Peter? Did I deserve that thou shouldst act thus? Have I been an enemy to thee Peter? Have I offended thee, Peter? No doubt this was what his eye said.

By putting the Spirit's work in the place of Christ's work.

The office of the Spirit is to glorify the work of Christ. 'He shall glorify me; for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you' (John 16:14,15). This is the office of the Spirit. He delights not to show himself, but Christ. When three thousand were converted on that day of Pentecost, it was the Spirit that did it; he showed them divine excellency of the work of Christ. And why does he this? Because it gives glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, and goodwill to men. But sometimes a believer looks away from the work of Christ to the work of the Spirit in him, and begins to rest on that as the ground of peace. Now this grieves the Spirit. If he were a selfish Spirit, he would rejoice at this: but he is not a selfish Spirit, therefore, nothing grieves him so much as this. 'Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.'

When you do not lean all on Him.

When do you not take all your holiness from him. This is the great work of the Spirit within you, to make you holy. 'Thy spirit is good, lead me to the land of uprightness' (Psalm 143:10). God promises in Ezekiel 26:27: 'I will put my spirit in you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them.' Now, as long as you lean on the spirit for holiness, you and he are friends, but the moment you cease to lean on him, you grieve him. Suppose you were to cross some deep and rapid stream with one who was much stronger and abler to stand against it than you, and he said, 'Lean on me when you cross.' Now, when you came to the middle of the stream, if you were to say, 'I cannot lean', and began to swim yourself, would you not grieve your friend? Now, this is the way in which we grieve the Spirit; for he has said, 'Even to your old age I am he; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you' (Isaiah 46:4). Now, when temptations and trials, and lusts come crowding in, if we do not lean upon the spirit, we grieve him. Or, if we lean upon another, if you lean upon your education, your good resolutions, your past experiences. Or, suppose you run into temptation, and say, I was well brought up, I am able to resist it. In these ways you grieve the Spirit.

You grieve the Spirit when you do not follow his leadings.

You remember when Christ was on earth, he said to his disciples, 'Follow me.' He would have been grieved if they had not followed him. It is so with the other Comforter; he leads us to the wilderness - he sometimes causes groanings within us. Do you resist prayer time? Then you grieve the Spirit. Do you go into temptations against the strivings of your conscience? Then you grieve the Spirit. When he sees you run into temptation, he warns you - he pricks your heart, and yet you go. Ah! in this way you grieve the Spirit.

You grieve the Spirit by despising ordinances.

Ordinances are the channels through which the Holy Spirit pours all blessings into the believing hearts. Do you despise ordinances? Then you grieve the Holy Spirit. Suppose you agreed to meet a friend at a certain time; if you were not to go would you not grieve that friend? Now, this is just the way in which we grieve the Spirit, when you do not go to ordinances. How many of you come to the meetings on Thursday evenings? Are there not some who slight the friendship of the Spirit? Ah! you will feel the disadvantage of it to your soul.

Application

To those here who have grieved the Spirit. I am deeply persuaded that many here have grieved the Spirit in a remarkable manner. Does he deserve this at your hand? Has he ever been a wilderness to you, or a land of darkness? 'Do ye thus requite the Lord, O foolish people and unwise? Is not he thy father that hath bought thee? Hath he not made thee and established thee? (Deuteronomy 32:6). Do ye provoke the Lord the Spirit of jealousy? Consider how ungrateful it is to grieve him. Consider what he has done for thee. Did he not convince you of sin? Has he not breathed upon your soul like a gentle gales of wind from the south? It is not, then, ungrateful so to grieve him?

Consider how, in grieving the Holy Spirit, you have lost your peace with God. I have often told you that you cannot live in sin, and retain peace. 'There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked' (Isaiah 57:21). You have a guilty conscience; and a guilty conscience cannot come into his presence. Return sinner!

You will go deeper into sin. 'Without me ye can do nothing' (John 15:5); you cannot resist self - you cannot overcome sin. O holy quenchers of the Spirit! where is this to end you? The Holy Spirit ebbs out of your heart and leaves you like a stranded vessel, dry upon land. Return!

I would say to those who are receiving the refreshing gales of the Spirit, grieve him not; walk softly with this friend. When he draws, run after him. Above all, follow his warnings. When he says, Do not go with this companion, go not with him. When he says, Go not into that path, go not. 'Thou shalt hear a voice behind thee saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left.' Happy souls that grieve not the Holy Spirit. Soon he shall fill that soul, and leave nothing in it but himself. Soon we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. Amen.

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