

Experiencing Revival Today - Part 2

by Charles Finney

Charles Finney's sermon emphasizes the necessity of unity and pure motives in prayer for experiencing genuine revival in the church.

Scripture: Matthew 18:19

Topics: "Revival", "Unity in Prayer"

Description

Charles Finney emphasizes the necessity of godly unity in seeking revival, stressing that true revival can only occur when believers are united in their motives and desires for the glory of God. He warns against the dangers of selfish motives and the importance of prevailing in prayer with a shared faith and understanding. Finney also highlights the role of the Holy Spirit in revival, urging the church to remove hindrances and to be in a state of readiness to receive the Spirit's guidance. He calls for a collective effort in prayer and action, reminding that the church must be prepared to fulfill its role in promoting revival and not rely solely on ministers. Ultimately, Finney asserts that a genuine revival is contingent upon the church's commitment to unity, holiness, and the active pursuit of God's presence.

Transcript

compiled by greg gordon

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Chapter three

Godly Unity In Seeking Revival

"Nothing can save Boston - from the dry-rot of indifference, but a mighty baptism with the Holy Spirit for righteousness and true holiness." - Charles Finney

Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth, as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of My Father which is in heaven. Matthew 17:19

The design of our Lord, in this text, was to teach the importance and influence of union in prayer and effort to promote religion. He states the strongest possible case, by taking the number "two" as the least number between whom there can be an agreement. It is the fact of their agreement upon which He lays the stress.

We Are To Be Agreed In Prayer

That is we should agree in our desires for the object. It is necessary to have desires for the object, and to be agreed in those desires. Very often individuals pray in words for the same thing, when they are by no means agreed in desiring that thing.

We must agree in the motive from which we desire the object. It is not enough that our desires for an object should be the same, but the reason why must be the same. An individual may desire a revival, for the glory of God, and the salvation of sinners. Another member of the church may also desire a revival, but from very different motives. Some, perhaps, desire a revival for the sake of having the church increased so as to be more numerous and more respectable. Sometimes people desire a revival from mere natural affection, so as to have their friends converted and saved.

We must be agreed in desiring it for good reasons. These desires must not only be united, and from the same motives, but they must be from good motives. The supreme motive must be to honor and glorify God. People may even desire a revival, and agree in desiring it, and agree in the motives, and yet if these motives be not good, God will not grant their desires.

Wrong Motives with Revival

I have had a multitude of letters and requests that I should visit such and such places, and endeavour to promote a revival, and many reasons have been urged why I should go; but when I came to weigh their reasons, I have sometimes found every one of them selfish. And God would look upon every one with abhorrence.

There are a great many things often said in favour of the cause of missions, which are of this character, appealing to wrong motives. How often are we told of six hundred millions of heathens, who are in danger of going to hell, and how little is said of the guilt of six hundred millions engaged and banded together as rebels against God, or of the dishonour and contempt poured upon God our Maker by such a world of outlaws.

Until the Church will look at the dishonour done to God, little will be done. It is this which must be made to stand out before the world, it is this which must be deeply felt by the Church, it is this which must be fully exhibited to sinners, before the world can ever be converted.

Parents never agree in praying for the conversion of their children in such a way as to have their prayers answered, until they feel that their children are rebels. If they would have their prayers prevail, they must come to take God's part against their children, even though for their perverseness and incorrigible wickedness he should be obliged to send them to hell.

Prevailing in Prayer

If we would be so united as to prevail in prayer, we must agree in faith. That is, we must concur in expecting the blessing prayed for. We must understand the reason why it is to be expected, we must see the evidence on which faith ought to rest, and must absolutely believe that the blessing will come, or we do not bring ourselves within the promise.

So, again, we must be agreed as to the time when we desire the blessing to come. Suppose a church should undertake to pray for a revival, and should all be agreed in desiring a revival, but not as to the time when it shall be. Suppose some wish to have the revival come now, and are all prepared, and have their hearts waiting for the Spirit of God to come down, and are willing to give time and attention and labour to it NOW; but others are not quite ready, they have something else to attend to just at present, some worldly object which they want to accomplish, some piece of business in hand, and want to finish this thing, and then. But they cannot possibly find time to attend to it now.

Obtaining the Blessing we Seek

You see that the language of the text: "If two of you shall agree as touching anything that they shall ask." That is, the agreement or union must comprise everything that is essential to the bestowment and reception of the blessing.

They must be agreed in understanding that revivals are not miracles, but that they are brought about by the use of means, like other events.

They must be agreed in understanding that human agency is just as indispensable to a revival as divine agency. God has put the Gospel treasure in earthen vessels. He has seen fit to employ men in preaching the Word; that is, He has seen that human agency is that which He can best employ in saving sinners. And there is not one in a thousand, if one in a million, converted in any other way than through the truth, made known and urged by human instrumentality.

It is important that there should be union in regard to the measures essential to the promotion of a revival. Let individuals agree to do anything whatever, and if they are not agreed in their measures, they will run into confusion, and counteract one another.

They must be agreed in the manner of dealing with impenitent sinners. It is a point immensely important that the church should be agreed in their treatment of sinners. Suppose that they are not agreed, and one will tell a sinner one thing and another, another. What confusion! Every Christian ought to have a clear understand of this subject, and all speak the same thing and give the same directions; and then the sinner will find no one to take his part, and get no relief or comfort until he repents.

They must be agreed in removing the impediments to a revival. If a church expects a revival, they must take up the stumbling-blocks out of the way. If there be rotten members in the church, they should be removed, and the church should all agree to cut them off.

In mutual confessions. Whenever wrong has been done to any, there should be a full confession. Let the members of the church be truly agreed, in breaking down, and confessing their own faults, and in cherishing a tender, merciful, forgiving, Christ-like spirit, towards those who they think have done them wrong, and then the Spirit will come down upon them without measure.

In a word, if Christians expect to unite in prayer and effort, so as to prevail with God, they must be agreed in speaking and doing the same things, in walking by the same rule, and maintaining the same principles, and in persevering until they obtain the blessing, so as not to hinder or thwart each other's efforts. All this is evidently implied in being agreed "as touching" the things for which they are praying.

How can Churches help Ministers By all means keep clear of the idea, both in theory and practice, that a minister is to promote revivals alone. I will mention one case. A minister, some years since, was labouring where there was a revival; and was visited by an elder of a church at some distance, who wanted him to go and preach there. There was no revival there, and never had been; and the elder complained about their state, and said they had had two excellent ministers, one had worn himself completely out, and died; and the other had exhausted himself, and got discouraged, and left them; and they were a poor and feeble church, and their prospects very dark, unless they could have a revival, and so he begged this minister to go and help them.

He seemed to be very sorrowful, and the minister heard his whining, and at last replied by asking, "Why did you never have a revival?" "I do not know," said the elder: "Our minister laboured very hard, but the church did not seem to wake up, and somehow there seemed to be no revival." "Well, now," said the minister: "I see what you want; you have killed one of God's ministers, and broke down another, so that he had to leave you; and now you want to get another there and kill him, and the devil has sent you here to get me to go and rock your cradle for you.

God forbid that you should ever have a minister until the church will wake up to duty." The elder was affected, for he was a good man. The tears came in his eyes, and he said it was no more than they deserved: "And now," said the minister, "will you be faithful, and go home and tell the church what I say? If you will, and they will be faithful and wake up to duty, they shall have a minister, I will warrant them that." The elder said he would, and he was true to his word; he went home and told the church how cruel it was for them to ask another minister to come among them, unless they would wake up.

They felt it, and confessed their sins, and waked up to duty, and a minister was sent to them, and a precious and powerful revival followed. Pray for your minister. Ministers do not ask people to pray for them simply as men, nor that they may be filled with an abundance of the Spirit's influences, merely to promote their personal enjoyment. But they know, that unless the church greatly desire a blessing upon the labour of a minister, it is tempting God for him to expect it. I have known a church bear their minister on their arms in prayer from day to day, and watch with anxiety unutterable, to see that he has the Holy Ghost with him in his labours!

When they feel and pray thus, O what feelings and what looks are manifest in the congregation! They have felt anxiety unutterable to have the Word come with power and take effect; and when they see their prayer answered, and they hear a word or a sentence, come warm from the heart, and taking effect among the people, you can see their whole souls look out of their eyes! A minister should be provided for by the church, and his support guaranteed irrespective of the ungodly. See that everything is so arranged that people can sit comfortably in meeting.

If people do not sit easy, it is difficult, to get or keep their attention. And if they be not attentive, they cannot be converted. See that the house of God is kept clean. The house of God should be kept as clean as you want your own house to be kept. It is important that the house should be just warm enough and not too warm. The house should be well ventilated. Of all houses, a church should be the most perfectly ventilated. The church should watch for the effect of preaching.

I do not mean that they should be just stretching their necks and staring about the house; but they should observe, as they may, and if they find any person affected by the preaching, throw themselves in his way, and guide him to the Saviour. Church members ought to study and inquire what they can do, and then do it. Christians should be trained like a band of soldiers. It is the duty and office of a minister to train them for usefulness, to teach and direct them, and lead them on, in such a way as to produce the greatest amount of moral influence; and then they should stand their ground and do their duty, otherwise they will be right in the way.

Hindrances to Revivals A revival will cease when Christians consent that it should cease. Sometimes Christians see that the revival is in danger of ceasing, and that if something effectual be not done, it will come to a stand. If this fact distress them, and drive them to prayer, and to fresh efforts, the work will not cease. A revival will cease whenever Christians become mechanical in their attempts to promote it. When their faith is strong, and their hearts are warm and mellow, and their prayers full of holy emotion, and their words with power, then the work goes on.

But when their prayers begin to be cold and without emotion, and their deep-toned feeling is gone, and they begin to labour mechanically, and to use words without feeling, then the revival will cease. When Christians get proud of their great revival, it will cease. I mean those Christians who have before been instrumental in promoting it. When the part of the Church, who work, begin to think what a great revival they have had, and how they have laboured and prayed, and how bold and how zealous they have been, and how much good they have done, then the Spirit withdraws from them, and the revival ceases.

The revival will stop when the Church get exhausted by labour. Multitudes of Christians commit a great mistake here in time of revival. They are so thoughtless, and have so little judgment, that they will break up all their habits of living, neglect to eat and sleep at the proper hours, and let the excitement run away with them, so that they overdo their bodies, and are so imprudent that they soon become exhausted, and it is impossible for them to continue in the work. Revivals often cease, and declension follow, from negligence and imprudence, in this respect, on the part of those engaged in carrying them on.

The Spirit may be grieved by a spirit of boasting of the revival. Sometimes, as soon as a revival commences, you will see it blazed out in the newspapers. And most commonly this will kill the revival. So the Spirit is grieved by saying or publishing things that are calculated to undervalue the work of God. When a blessed work of God is spoken lightly of, not rendering to God the glory due to His name. A revival will decline and cease, unless Christians are frequently re-converted.

By this I mean, that Christians, in order to keep in the spirit of a revival, commonly need to be frequently convicted, and humbled and broken down before God. I have never laboured in revivals in company with any one who would keep in the work and be fit to manage a revival continually, who did not pass through this process of breaking down as often as once in two or three weeks. Revivals decline, commonly, because it is found impossible to make the Church feel their guilt and their dependence, so as to break down before God.

It is important that ministers should understand this, and learn how to break down the Church, and break down themselves when they need it, or else Christians will soon become mechanical in their work, and lose their fervour and their power with God. We see what glorious things may be expected for Zion, whenever the churches generally shall be agreed on these subjects. Only let them feel as the heart of one man, and be agreed as to what ought to be done for the salvation of the world, and the Millennium will come at once.

There is a vast ignorance in the churches on the subject of revivals. After all the revivals that have been enjoyed, and all that has been said and written and printed concerning revivals, there are very few who have any real, consistent knowledge on the subject. And when there is a revival, how few there are who can take hold to labour and promote it as if they understood what they were about. How few persons are to be found, who have ever taken up revivals of religion as a subject to be studied and understood.

How important it is that the Church should be trained and instructed, so as to know what to do in a revival. They should be trained and disciplined like an army; each one having a place to fill, and something to do, and knowing where he belongs, and what he has to do, and how to do it. We see why revivals are often so short, and why they so often produce a reaction. It is because the Church do not understand the subject. We see the guilt of ministers, in not informing themselves, and rightly and speedily instructing the churches upon this momentous subject. No minister has yet begun to understand or do his duty, if he has neglected to teach his church to work for God in the promotion of revivals.

Chapter four

The Holy Spirit of Promise

"If the presence of God is in the church, the church will draw the world in. If the presence of God is not in the church, the world will draw the church out." - Charles Finney

Text. Gal. 3:14.--That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. Before I conclude what I wish to say upon the promises, I will notice the relation which the New Covenant sustains to the Covenant made with Abraham. And I am to show, That the blessing of Abraham has come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ. In the 12th chapter of Genesis, we have the first mention of the covenant which God made with Abraham.

In the last clause of the third verse it is said, "In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed." In Gen. 17:4, it is written, "As for me, behold, my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations." Verse 7, "I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee, in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee;" and 18:18, the same promise is noticed again; and 22:18, "And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed," and 26:4, the same words are repeated.

Now it should be remembered in regard to the covenant made with Abraham, that there were two things promised. Temporal Canaan or Palestine was promised to the Jews or natural descendants of Abraham. There was also a blessing promised through Abraham to all the nations of the earth.--This covenant was not only made with Abraham, but, through his seed, as we shall see, with all the nations of the earth. This was a spiritual blessing, and that which the text says has come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ.

I will quote several other passages to show that this spiritual blessing was intended for, and has come on the Gentiles. In Rom. 4:13, it is said, "For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith."--and verse 16, "Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed: not to that only which is of the law, but to that which is of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all."

This epistle to the Romans was written to the Gentiles. And the Apostle here expressly affirms that the Gentiles who had faith are of the seed of Abraham, and that he is the father of us all. Gal. 3:7, 9, 14, 29. "Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham. That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." Here again it is manifest that the Apostle in writing to the Gentiles, expressly includes them in the covenant made with Abraham, and affirms that if they are Christians, then they are "Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." And 4:28, he says "Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise."--Here then he affirms that the Gentiles are as absolutely within the promise made to Abraham as Isaac was.

In Eph. 2:12-22, we have it declared in full that the Gentiles inherit all the promises of spiritual blessings made to Abraham and the fathers--that there is no distinction in this respect between Jews and Gentiles, that all who have faith are entitled to the promises of spiritual blessings. "That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world. But now, in Christ Jesus, ye who sometime were far off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ.

For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us: Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby; And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.

Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God, And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone; In whom all the building, fitly framed together, groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." I might quote many more passages to the same import, but these must suffice.

What Blessing This Is It is not merely a promise that Christ should be of his seed, for the Apostle affirms in Gal. 3:16, 19 that the promise was made to Christ through Abraham. "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds as of many, but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ. Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgression, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator."

And in the text it is said "that the blessing might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ." This blessing then promised was not Christ himself, but some promise to Christ, and through Christ to all the nations of the earth. The text informs us that this blessing promised to Abraham, and to his seed, and through Christ his seed, to all the nations of the earth, is the Holy Spirit. This is the grand thing upon which the prophets and the inspired writers seem to have had their eye all along under the old dispensation.

And by a careful examination of the scriptures, it will be found that the promises are one unbroken chain from Abraham to Christ, and even to the time when the canon of the scripture was complete, everywhere pointing out this particular blessing. It was promised sometimes in figurative language, where the Spirit of God is represented as water. But in most instances the prophets have spoken without a figure and promised the Spirit by name. Isa. 32:15, "Until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest."--and 44:3, "For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring;" and 59:21, "As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the Lord; My Spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever."

Jer. 31:33, "But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people." and 32:40, "And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." Ezek. 11:19, "And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh;" and 36:27, "And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them;" and the text; "That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith."

Acts 1:4, 5, "And being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptised with water; but ye shall be baptised with the Holy Ghost not many days hence." John 7:38, 39, "He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive; for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)" and 16:7, 13: "Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you."

"Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come." and 14:16, 17: "And I will pray the Father, and he shall 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: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you."

A careful examination of these passages will show what the great blessing under the eye of inspiration was. The great thing promised to Abraham as affirmed in the text, and in these passages which I have now quoted, with numerous other passages that might be quoted, demonstrate that the great thing promised was the Holy Spirit. This was the spiritual blessing that belonged to all nations, while temporal Canaan belonged only to the Jews. In Eph. 1:13, the Holy Spirit is expressly called the "Holy Spirit of promise."

This blessing is to be received by faith. This is expressly asserted in the text. "That we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." In the second verse of this same chapter the Apostle inquires, "Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law or by the hearing of faith?" John 7:28-29 [38-39]Christ

says, "He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive."

Other passages might be quoted to the same effect. (1) into the nature of faith. (2) what it is to receive the Holy Ghost. The three elements of faith are, (a) An intellectual perception of the truth. (b) A realization of the truth. (c) That trust or confidence of the heart that yields all our voluntary powers up to the control of truth. These are the essential elements of faith. (2) To receive the Holy Spirit is to take him for our Parakletos, our Comforter, Guide, Instructor.

Now it is manifest on the very face of it, that the Holy Spirit can only be received by the mind, by that act which constitutes faith. Perception of the truth, is not itself faith. A realization of the truth is not itself faith. Though both these are indispensable to its existence, yet faith itself is an act of the will--a trust--a confiding in--a yielding up of the whole being to the influence of truth.--Faith then is the yielding up of our voluntary powers to the guidance, instruction, influences and government of the Holy Spirit.

This is receiving him, and this is the only possible way in which he can be received. The mere perception of truth respecting him is not faith, nor is it a receiving of him. For the truth respecting him may be perceived, and often has been perceived and yet rejected. Nor is a realization of the truth respecting him, however deep and intense either faith, or a receiving of him. But when his offers of guidance are perceived and realized, faith is that act of the mind that lays hold upon these offers--that yields up the whole being to his influences and control.

Not Abolished The Abrahamic covenant is not abolished. Nor is it yet fulfilled to all the world. It has been supposed by some that the Abrahamic covenant was fulfilled at the coming of Christ, and was then abolished. This notion arises out of the mistaken opinion that Christ was the particular blessing promised. But it has been shown that Christ was not the thing promised, but that the promise was made to him, and through him to all the nations of the earth. This covenant then is not abrogated nor set aside, nor can it be till all the nations of the earth are blessed by the outpouring of the Holy Ghost.

And it is manifest that this covenant not only concerns all the nations of some one generation, but extends its provisions to the end of time. This promise made to Abraham, and all those others founded upon it and promising the same things, are now due, i.e. the time has come when they are to be considered as promises in the present tense. They may now be claimed by the Church for themselves and for all the nations of the earth. These promises were not due in Abraham's day. They were promises to him and to all the Old Testament saints of future good.

And it is expressly said of Abraham and of the Old Testament saints that they "all died in faith not having received the promises but having seen them afar off." And again in Heb. 11:39.[,] 40.[:] "And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise; God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect." Here it is plainly declared that these promises are due to us and available to us in a higher sense than they were to Abraham and the Old Testament saints.

The New Covenant so often quoted, and so largely dwelt upon, is the fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant to those who receive it. It consists in the Holy Spirit taking up his abode in the heart and writing his law there. Let it be understood then that the New Covenant sustains the same relation to the Abrahamic Covenant that the fulfillment of a promise does to the promise itself. The Abrahamic Covenant and the New Covenant are not identical, but the one is the fulfillment of the other.

This blessing of the Holy Spirit is to be received at once, by faith, irrespective of all works. No work whatever, performed without his influences prepares us, in the least degree, to receive him, or at all puts us in more favorable circumstances in respect to our salvation or sanctification. All preparation on our part to receive him and all delay, however earnest we may suppose ourselves to be in seeking and preparing to receive his influences, are only self-righteousness and rebellion--a vain and God provoking attempt to get grace by works and to purchase by our Pharisaical efforts the gift of the Holy Ghost.

It does seem to be one of the most difficult things in the world, for the self-righteous spirit of man to understand the simplicity of Gospel faith. He is continually seeking salvation and sanctification by works of law without being aware of it. I have already said that since the seed has come, to whom the promise was made, i.e. Christ, that we are to regard the promise of the universal effusion of the Holy Spirit, as a promise in the present tense, to be so understood, and plead, and its present fulfillment urged by the Church.

Until the Church come to understand this as a promise actually made to all nations and as having actually become due, and now to be received and treated by them as a promise in the present tense, the Millennium will never come. When God had promised the restoration of Israel, after seventy years' captivity in Babylon, it is said that Daniel learned by books, i.e. by the prophets, that the captivity should continue but seventy years. At the end of the seventy years therefore he set his face, by prayer and supplication with sackcloth and ashes, to the Lord for the fulfillment of his promise.

And he wrestled with God until he prevailed. When God had expressly promised to Elijah that if he would go and show himself to Ahab he would send rain upon the earth, he regarded the promise, after he had shown himself to Ahab, as in the present tense, as he had a right to do. But he did not expect the fulfillment without prayer. But on the contrary he gave himself to mighty wrestlings with God, and did not leave his knees until the cloud was seen to arise that watered all the land.

Outpouring of the Spirit So God in the promise of the outpouring of his [S]pirit in Ezek. 36:25, 27 has added in the 37th verse, "I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them." Now the Church are praying, and have been for a long time, for the Millennium to come, and for the fulfillment of this promise. But let me inquire. Do they understand these as promises now due, which they have a right to plead in faith for all the nations of the earth. It would seem as if they supposed the promise still future, and do not understand that a promise which is due at some specified future time, is ever after that time, to all intents and purposes, a promise in the present tense.

And until it is so regarded, and treated, and plead, and the requisite means used for its accomplishment, it can never be fulfilled. Christians seem to pray as if they supposed it questionable whether God's time had come to convert the world. They ask him to do it in his own time and way, &c. Now it should be understood that he has bound himself by a promise to give his Spirit to all the nations of the earth, when the seed to whom the promise was made had come, and prepared the way for the bestowment of the blessing.

Now God says, he "will be inquired of by the house of Israel." It is not enough that some one, or some few should understand these promises aright, and plead them. A few can never use a sufficient amount of means to bring about their fulfillment. They must be understood by Christians generally, in their proper import and as being now due, and they must resolve not to hold their peace, nor give God rest until he makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth. They must insist upon their fulfillment now, and not consent that it should be put off any longer.

Hundreds of millions have gone to hell since these promises have become due, and should have been so regarded and pleaded and means used for their fulfillment. How long shall the Church make it an act of piety and think themselves submitting to the will of God, in letting these promises rot in their Bible while God is waiting to fulfill them, and commanding them not to give him rest until he does fulfill them? The Old Testament saints were saved not by works of law, but by faith in the covenant made with Abraham.

In other words Abraham himself together with all that were saved before and after him, under the Old Testament dispensation, were saved by faith in Christ. The ceremonial law was a shadow of the Gospel, and it is expressly said in Gal. 3:8 that, "the Scripture foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying in thee shall all nations be blessed." Here then this covenant with Abraham is called the Gospel, a preaching before or foretelling the Gospel to Abraham.

The difference then between the old dispensation and the new, does not lie in the fact that under the old dispensation the saints were saved by works, while under the new they are saved by grace. All that ever were saved were saved by grace through faith in Christ. But under the old dispensation the Holy Ghost was neither promised nor enjoyed to such an extent as he is promised and enjoyed under the new dispensation. The thing that Abraham and the Old Testament saints did not receive was that measure of the Holy Spirit which constitutes the New Covenant, and produces the entire sanctification of the soul.

Finally. Every individual Christian may receive and is bound to receive this gift of the Holy Ghost through faith at the present moment. It must not be supposed that every Christian has of course received the Holy Ghost in such a sense as it is promised in these passages of Scripture or in any higher sense than he was received by the Old Testament saints who had actually been regenerated and were real saints, of whom it is said, that "they all died in faith not having received the promises."

Now it would seem as if there were thousands of Christians who have not received the promises on account of their ignorance and unbelief. It is said that "after we believe we are sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise." Now beloved the thing that we need is to understand and get hold of this promise to Abraham, and through Abraham to Christ, and through Christ and by Christ to the whole Church of God. Now remember it is to be received by simple faith in these promises. "Be it unto thee according to thy faith." "For it is written the just shall live by faith."

Chapter five

Grieving the Holy Spirit of God

"Sin is the most expensive thing in the universe. Nothing else can cost so much." - Charles Finney

Text. Eph. 4:30--"Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption."

The Holy Spirit can be, and often is grieved.

The Bible, in this text and in various other texts, represents him as being grieved. God is a moral being, and consequently he has the susceptibilities and feelings of a moral being, and must therefore be grieved with whatever is naturally grievous to a moral being.

His entire character is love or benevolence, and therefore he cannot but be grieved with whatever is wrong.

But as I have recently published a sermon on the emotions of God, showing that God necessarily exercises the feelings ascribed to him in the Bible, I need not enlarge upon the subject at this time.

How and when the Holy Spirit is Grieved The great object of the Holy Spirit, as revealed in the Bible, is to sanctify the souls of men. Men are to be saved by "the sanctification of the Spirit through the belief of the truth." He can sanctify men only with the truth. Sanctification is holiness. Holiness is voluntary obedience to God. Voluntary obedience certainly cannot be produced but by the influence of the truth. Hence Christ prays, "Sanctify them through thy truth." The Holy Spirit himself has no other means of sanctifying the soul but truth.

A moral agent can resist any and every truth. Moral agency implies power to resist any degree of motive that may be brought to bear upon the mind. Wherever force begins, moral agency ends. Were it possible for motive to force the mind the forced action would have no moral character any more than the operations of the physical universe. Action must be free to be moral action. Necessary action is therefore neither virtuous nor vicious. I repeat it then, that moral agency implies the power to resist any and every truth.* Whether any man ever did or ever will as a matter of fact, resist all truth, is entirely another question.

But certain it is, that men are able to resist the utmost influence that the truth can exert upon them; and therefore have ability to defeat the wisest, most benevolent, and most powerful exertions which the Holy Spirit can make to effect their sanctification. Every moral evil must be counteracted by truth, and can be counteracted in no other way. Whatever, therefore, hinders the truth from producing its sanctifying effect, grieves the Holy Spirit just in proportion to his desire to have it produce that effect.

In preaching this sermon, and in all my sermons, I design to be personal in what I say, so far as this is consistent with addressing so many persons at once. I am not one of those who feel as if I should be convicted of wrong of course, if found to have adapted my discourse to the state of the audience before and around me. I never feel called upon to make an apology for being as personal as I can in "giving to each one a portion in due season." I wish, therefore, my hearers and my readers, to consider me as speaking to them individually.

And as I cannot call you by name I beseech you by all that you hold dear, to pause at every step of this part of my discourse and solemnly ask yourselves, "Is it I?" Have I thus grieved the Holy Spirit? With these remarks, I am prepared to notice some of the many ways in which the Holy Spirit is grieved. By neglecting the truth. Men have the command of their attention and can take up any subject for contemplation they please. If they will not attend to truth they cannot be sanctified nor saved.

Now how many of you are employing your thoughts about any thing and every thing else than that truth, which is infinitely important to you and wholly indispensable to your salvation? O, if your neglected Bible were allowed now to speak to you, what an overwhelming testimony would it bear! And when it shall rise up in the judgment against you, of what gross and ruinous neglect will it convict you! Me-thinks I can almost hear it crying out to you as you go about in the neglect of it--at one time wooing and beseeching you in the melting accents of eternal love to search it, to be instructed by it, and be saved--at another time it mutters, as you pass through [the] room where it is, its curses against you for neglecting it, or perhaps it cries out to you from some corner of the house, in the language of warning, and expostulation; and yet you heed it not!

Of what are you thinking? Would you not be grieved and afflicted, if you should write letters of great importance to some beloved friend of yours, and he should neglect to read and understand them? And do

you think that the Holy Spirit has less susceptibility upon this subject than you have. Levity of mind, and conduct, and conversation grieves the Holy Spirit. Levity of conduct would certainly be very unbecoming in the presence of an earthly judge or sovereign. And how much less tolerable is it in the presence of the infinitely holy God?

Are you a trifler? And about what are you trifling--and in whose presence--and under what circumstances? Few things in the universe can appear more shocking to one who has any faith in God, than to see a human being whose eternal destiny hangs as upon a moment's point, filled with levity right under the searching gaze of his omniscient judge. Especially does this appear horrible and abominable when we consider the Holy Spirit as wooing, and beseeching, and following you towards the depths of hell, and pleading with constant and earnest importunity that you will turn and live!

How can you--how dare you trifle? You would be shocked to see an individual, on trial for his life, trifle just as the judge was about to pronounce sentence upon him. But such conduct, and under such circumstances, would be decency and propriety, when compared with the unutterable abomination of trifling in the presence of the great Jehovah who stands, and commands, and exhorts, and urges, and threatens, and expostulates, and pleads, and, in every way, endeavors to get your solemn attention to the subject of your soul's salvation.

The reading of light and trifling publications grieves the Holy Spirit. Woman, Man, dare you spend an hour in defiling your mind with some vain novel or foolish story, when so much truth of infinite weight and importance urges your investigation and instant attention? Can Jesus Christ--can eternal life and death--can the glory of God and the salvation of the souls of men--can the commandments of God be solemnly weighed--can the blood, and groans, and mercy of Calvary be duly considered, when novels, and plays, and frivolous reading have gotten possession of your mind?

O! you poor, wicked, helpless, loathsome, miserable sinner, what do you mean? No matter whether you are a professor of religion or not. You are a miserable sinner before God, and the law of your own conscience, if you spend your time in such reading. What is your name? Let me visit your chamber, your parlor, or wherever you keep your books. What is here? Byron, Scott and Shakespeare, and a host of triflers and blasphemers of God, and despisers of the Holy Ghost. Are these your companions--these the spirits with whom you commune--this the way in which you spend your time?

And you a professor of religion? Do you not know that you are a great hypocrite to neglect your Bible and communion with the Holy Spirit, and give your mind up to communion with such earthly, sensual and devilish works as these? But do you say I do not profess to be a christian? Then I reply, you are never likely to be a christian in such company. You might as well expect to be weaned from habits of intoxication by sitting in the bar-room with drunkards or while holding communion with a pipe of brandy, as to expect to become religious surrounded with such companions as these.

Vain conversation grieves the Holy Spirit Vain conversation grieves the Holy Spirit. Christ says, "Let your yea be yea, and your nay, nay, for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil." "And, for every idle word that men shall speak they shall give an account thereof in the judgment." In the chapter of which the text is a part, the Apostle warns christians not to be guilty of "vain conversation and foolish jesting." Would you spend your time in vain and idle conversation, if you knew you had but one hour to live?

And perhaps you have not. But suppose you have, are your circumstances those in which it becomes an immortal being to spend his time in vain conversation? Do you not know that God is listening to every

word you say? He is pouring the blaze of his eye through your inmost soul, as if he would speak out and rebuke you. Why are you not using your conversational powers in instructing those around you in the way of life? Perhaps those of your own house-hold, and your nearest friends need to be reprov'd and warn'd, exhorted and instructed in regard to their salvation.

Professor of religion, how do you spend your time, when in the midst of your impenitent friends, and what is your conversation when in the midst of professing christians? I beg of you to answer to your own heart and to God. And if you doubt just how you appear to them, will you show them this sermon, and ask them to read this paragraph and then give their candid opinion of what you ought to think of yourself and of your conversation? Now if your conversation has hitherto been vain and trifling or useless, and in any way unbecoming in a christian, will you immediately repent and confess to those before whom you have laid a stumbling block--confess to the Holy Ghost whom you have grieved, and beseech him to forgive you, and return and take up his dwelling in your heart?

But perhaps you are not a professor of religion. Then I ask, Why are you not? And I add that you probably never will be, unless you make a false profession, if you are in the habit of indulging in vain conversation. Do you expect the Holy Spirit to strive with you, and wait upon you day after day, month after month, and year after year, while you keep up your incessant and senseless babble, regardless of his solemn presence, his awful holiness, and of his great and infinite love and desire to get your serious attention that he may save you?

Too much study, I mean too much mental application to those arts and sciences that have no direct reference to the sanctification of your souls, grieves the Holy Spirit. This is particularly a sin of students, into which they are sometimes betrayed by ambition, and into which, at other times, they are almost crowded by their teachers. Their whole mind is swallowed up from day to day in literary and scientific pursuits to the neglect of the solemn calls, and warnings, and strivings of the Holy Spirit.

So did not James B. Taylor. With him it was the first and principal thing to obey the calls of the Holy Spirit. This was his determination, and a practical adherence to this rule was the secret of all his piety. Neglect of study grieves the Holy Spirit. Where study is your employment, and you are negligent and attend to less than is consistent with all your other duties, you err quite as much as if you studied too much.

Too much business grieves the Holy Spirit Too much business grieves the Holy Spirit. In my last lecture, I spoke of the necessity of diligence in business and the sin of idleness; and also of the danger of engaging in too much business. Suppose your father should visit you on some most important business, and that you should suffer yourself to be so much employed as to be unable to give him any part of your time. This certainly would be entirely inexcusable. But what is this when compared with the wickedness of being too busy to converse with God?

Not business enough grieves the Holy Spirit. Idleness is one of the greatest of sins, and wholly inconsistent, as I showed in my last, with either the spirit or duties of religion. Intemperance of every kind grieves the Holy Spirit. In its largest sense, intemperance is any violation of the laws of life and health, in eating, and drinking, or dress, or exercise, in any thing and every thing that is injurious to the body. Every man is bound to understand, so far as he is able, the structure and laws of his whole being, body and mind, and to conform most rigidly and conscientiously to those laws upon which his health and highest usefulness depend.

And yet how many of you are neglecting, and perhaps refusing to give your attention to the examination of the structure and laws of your own being; and in the indulgence of your filthy lusts are injuring your health and beclouding and stupifying your minds, and are following in the footsteps of those "whose God is their belly, whose end is destruction, and who glory in" that which ought to be "their shame." Self-justification grieves the Holy Spirit. Many persons seem to be as anxious to justify their conduct, as if they expected to be saved by their own works, and knew that to be found guilty in any thing were to insure their damnation.

They are therefore continually resorting to apologies, and shifts, and self[-]justifying pleas, either in the way of entirely exculpating themselves from blame in any thing, or at least to bring their blame-worthiness into doubt; so as to be able to say, "if they have done wrong they are sorry." Now it should always be understood, that a spirit of self-justification is but adding insult to injury, first abusing God, and then justifying yourself in it. Such a course as this renders sanctification impossible.

Why do you not, at once, break down, confess and forsake your sin? Why do you go about to fritter away your guilt? It is unspeakably great. No human language can sufficiently describe it. No one ever has or can accuse you of half as much as you are guilty of before God. Probably you never were accused of any form of sin, of which in heart and in the sight of God you are not fully guilty. But however this may be it is certain, and you ought deeply to consider it, that the thousandth part of your real guilt, as it appears in the sight of God has never been named nor told nor conceived of by mortal man.

Your iniquities are infinite. They are broader than the earth, they are high as heaven, they are deep as hell, and black as the midnight of the second death. And why do you justify yourself, or spend your time or breath in making apologies for your sins?

Condemning others grieves the Holy Spirit Condemning others grieves the Holy Spirit. Perhaps some of you are judging and condemning those around you instead of judging and condemning yourselves. "Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye?"

Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye." Speaking evil of your brethren or of any human being, or even of the Devil himself, grieves the Holy Spirit. By evil speaking I do not mean speaking the truth when manifestly called to speak it. But speaking falsehood is always evil speaking, or telling truth in regard to the faults of others, when uncalled for, is also evil speaking. God is love.

He exercises infinite benevolence toward all his creatures whether holy or unholy. He is infinitely far from consenting to injustice in any case. And he is infinitely opposed to all injurious treatment of his friends or his foes. He would as fully resent, as sternly rebuke, and as promptly punish injustice done to the devil as to any soul on earth or in heaven. He will not, cannot, connive nor consent to any abusive treatment of the vilest sinners in the universe. You, therefore, as greatly grieve him, when you trifle with the name, the reputation, or the feelings of the wickedest sinner on earth or even the devil in hell, as if you were guilty of the same conduct toward any of his friends.

He is infinitely unlike sinful man in this respect. Wicked men will connive at the abuse of their enemies, and even secretly acquiesce in it. But it is infinitely otherwise with God. There is a great and universal mistake upon this subject. There are few if any who do not consider it wicked to speak evil of a brother.

But how many there are who throw up the rein when speaking of others than their brethren, and are guilty of absolute railing at and shocking abuse of the enemies of God; and perhaps also of the professed friends of God.

Now let me ask, what are your habits in this respect? Woman, when you have company do you sit down and serve up a dish of slander? Do you dissect and mangle the character of your neighbor? Man, are you a railer? Have you forgotten that God has said, "Speak evil of no man,"--"be no brawler, but be gentle showing all meekness unto all men"? Ah, but perhaps you are speaking of a political opponent, or of a competitor in business, or some opponent of religious views and practices.

You think him very wicked--an enemy of God, of truth, and righteousness, and perhaps think yourself "doing God service" in giving him over to all the curses of reprobation. Now stop! O stop! Pause as upon the brink of eternity! What are you saying? Of whom are you speaking? Of a man "made in the image of God." Suppose he is as bad or even immeasurably worse than you think he is; can the Holy Spirit be otherwise than grieved to hear such language as this? Remember that there is a sense in which all mankind are the children of God.

Suppose they do sin and rebel; will this afford an apology think you, in his view, for your abuse of them? I tell you nay. Infinitely far from it! And every time you do it, you grieve and provoke the Holy Spirit. And it is wonderful, that he does not turn away his face from you forever. Evil thinking, as well as evil speaking, grieves the Holy Spirit. God looks at the heart. Your thoughts and the secret movements of your mind, lie open before him. And your words and actions are no otherwise pleasing or offensive in his sight, than as they are the expression of what passes within.

You may, therefore, as effectually, and no doubt do more frequently grieve the Holy Spirit by your thoughts than by your words. All your silent and most secret musings, are distinctly observed, and marked, and pondered by the Holy Spirit. He weighs every thought of your heart in his balance. If you indulge evil, and unkind and unchristian thoughts of any being in the universe, he knows it and is as truly grieved and offended with them, although you may never have given utterance to them, as if they were penciled in sunbeams in every part of the universe.

Are you in the habit of taking up a strict scrutiny and searching into the secret thoughts, and purposes, and workings of your mind? O how much you may have grieved the Holy Spirit without scarcely being aware of it. You can see, that if all the thoughts you have entertained, had been spoken out, both God and man might have been grieved and had a just cause of offense. Now remember that to God's ear these thoughts have been as audibly expressed as if spoken in thunder-tones.

To God's eye they have been as open, and as black, and as grievous as if written in letters of darkness upon the very skies. Now do commune with your own heart, and be still, and take up the solemn question: what have I thought as well as what have I said? A disposition to retaliate, grieves the Holy Spirit. This temper of mind is as far as possible from the temper of Christ, and is the direct opposite of a state of sanctification. The spirit of Christ would be, to forgive enemies, and those who have injured you, and to labor, and suffer great self-denial for their good. But the spirit of retaliation is earthly, sensual, devilish.

Prejudice grieves the Holy Spirit Prejudice grieves the Holy Spirit. There are few things more astonishing than that prejudice should be regarded and spoken of as it often is by professors of religion. Prejudice, as the term imports, is to prejudge a case, to make up your mind without hearing both sides of a question. Now, as shameful as the truth is, few things are more disgustingly common than prejudice among

professors of religion. Making up their minds that this or that thing is right or wrong, and setting their faces, and using their influence accordingly, deaf and blind to every thing on the other side.

Scarcely any thing is more common than to find professors of religion of all denominations, on all the most solemn subjects in regard to men, and measures, and doctrines, in such a state of committal on one side or the other through prejudice as to render it useless to try to approach their mind and possess them of the real truth. And thus they go blindly and often madly forward in fighting against God, and the dearest interests of his kingdom. There is scarcely any thing I have witnessed since I became a professor of religion, at which I have been more frequently shocked, and made to groan in my inmost soul than the exhibition of this wicked spirit.

And what is worse than all the rest, this spirit is spoken of by almost all as a calamity rather than a crime. The most unreasonable conduct and the most wicked and persecuting temper seems to be sufficiently excused by saying, "O the individual is under the influence of prejudice." And if peradventure a man gets his eyes open upon any question where he has been in the wrong, he speaks of his former vices and conduct as, in a great measure, excusable on the ground of his having been prejudiced.

The truth is that prejudice is one of the most detestable sins that disgraces the Church and grieves the Holy Spirit of God. And now are any of you under its influence? Of course you will say, no, for the very fact that you are implies that you are ignorant of it. But let me ask you, if you are sure that upon every subject, that at present agitates the Church and the world especially upon those great and leading topics upon which the nation and the world are so much divided: Abolition, Moral Reform, Temperance, Holiness, Revivals of Religion, Measures, Doctrines, &c.--are you sure that you have attended to both sides of the question before you judge?

Have you taken sufficient pains to inform yourself in regard to men and measures, and the actual or probable results, to have made up an enlightened and unbiassed judgment in the case? And if not, what do you mean? Why are your feelings enlisted on one side? Why do you use your influence in the manner you do? How do you know but a view of the whole subject would entirely change your views and practice, and cause you to go sorrowing down to your grave because you had been found to fight against God?

O! how is the Holy Spirit grieved at the vast amount of prejudice which causes the jangling and misunderstanding and misrule of both the church and the world. Pride grieves the Holy Spirit. Pride is undue self-esteem, and vanity is the exhibition of it. Nothing is more preposterous and marvelous than human pride; and very few things are at a greater remove from the spirit of Christ. It manifests itself in ten thousand ways; but wherever it exists, it is an effectual barrier against the exhibition or existence even of the spirit of Christ.

Ill will grieves the Holy Spirit. This is the direct opposite of benevolence or the spirit and temper required by both the law and the Gospel. Benevolence is good-willing. Malevolence is ill-willing. To will evil to any being under the sun is the opposite of all that is lovely. And how can it be otherwise, than that a God of infinite benevolence, should be grieved with the malevolence of any of his great family? How would a parent feel to see one of his children manifest ill will to others of his offspring?

How this would enkindle his grief and indignation! And how must the infinite heart of God glow with grief and indignation when you are found with a spirit of retaliation or revenge rankling in your heart. Every neglect of duty grieves the Holy Spirit. In reading President Edwards' account of his wife's experience, I was struck with a remark to this effect, that when she was in the highest exercise of grace, she was deeply

impressed with the fact, that so much of religion consisted in the discharge of relative and social duties.

Many people seem to overlook this part of religion and content themselves with what they call devotion to God. What they mean by devotion is praying, reading the Bible, attending on the exercises of the Sabbath, giving their money to benevolent objects, and such like things, while in their temper they exhibit any thing but the spirit of Christ. Now Christianity wherever it truly exists, will, from its very nature, develop itself to the view of men mainly in its influence in making them discharge all their social and relative duties; and if it be not apparent here it is certain that it does not really exist.

There is such a vast amount of negligence among professors of religion as to render it almost certain were there nothing else forbidding in their history that multitudes of them have no religion at all. Some neglect to pay their debts. Not long since I published a sermon on "being in debt," since which I have seen several efforts in some of the religious periodicals to put down or set aside the principles of that sermon, and to remove the pressure from the conscience of the Church and the world in regard to their negligence in this respect.

Some have misconceived and of course misrepresented the doctrines of the sermon. Others, by criticisms upon the text, have endeavored to show that it was not a command to abstain from being in debt. It is not now the time or place to reply to those remarks. But I would here simply say that the doctrine of that sermon, that it is a sin to be in debt, is eternal and unalterable truth, whether that particular text prohibits it or not. To deny this is the same absurdity as to say that you may owe a man and be under no obligation to pay him, and the same contradiction as to say that you may neglect or refuse to discharge your obligation without sin.

Now what is sin but the violation of an obligation, and what is an obligation but to owe a man? To what then do all such criticisms amount as these to which I have alluded? Do such editors and newspaper-writers expect to set aside the principles of eternal justice, and to persuade mankind that it is not sinful to be in debt or to suffer their obligations to go uncanceled by mere criticisms upon a text? The doctrine of that sermon is true, and self-evident truth, entirely irrespective of its being taught in that or any other text in the Bible.

If there were no Bible, that is a truth which must stand forever, and to deny it is a palpable absurdity. But again let me say that many neglect to do things when and as they ought to be done. Now it is certainly a part of religion to do everything incumbent upon us at the right time and in the right manner, and any and every negligence in this respect is sin. Have you an appointment to meet a neighbor at a particular hour for the transaction of business; be there at the moment, lest you hinder him and all others associated with you in the affair.

Is there an appointment for a church or any other religious meeting, for worship or the transaction of business; be there at the moment, lest you interrupt or hinder the business or devotion of others. Have you engaged to do any thing for your neighbor or for any man or woman on earth, see that you do it just when and as it ought to be done. And in short, no man can keep a conscience void of offense--no man can fulfill the law of love--no man can abstain from grieving the Holy Spirit but by a most faithful and constant discharge of every duty to God or man. Every form of selfishness grieves the Holy Spirit. I have often taught in my sermons that selfishness and s

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