

THE224 Christian Narrative 2 Redemption

Unit 4 Reading

Simpson, “Walking in the Spirit”

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CHAPTER XIII. CO-OPERATING WITH THE HOLY GHOST.

"Receive ye the Holy Ghost" John xx: 22.
"Be filled with the Spirit." Eph. v: 18.

While we recognize the sovereign power of the Holy Ghost, visiting the heart at His pleasure, and working according to His will upon the objects of His grace, yet God has ordained certain laws of operation and co-operation in connection with the application of redemption; and He Himself most delicately recognizes His own laws, and respects the freedom of the human will; not forcing His blessings upon unwilling hearts, but knocking at the door of our heart, waiting to be recognized and claimed, and then working in the soul as we heartily cooperate, hearken, and obey. There is, therefore, a very solemn and responsible part for every man in co-operating with, or resisting and hindering the Holy Spirit.

"The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal," that is to say, it rests with the man who receives the first movement of the Holy Spirit to determine how far he will embrace his opportunity, co-operate with his heavenly Friend, and enter into all the fullness of the good and perfect will of God.

Perhaps the pound, represented in the parable as given to every one of the servants, was meant to express that gift of the Spirit which every Christian receives, and the various uses which the servants made of this common endowment may represent the degrees with which the children of God do use and use their spiritual advantages.

One improved his pound until it had become ten; another until it had increased five-fold, and another neglected it and hid it in the earth. So, three men receiving in the beginning of their experience an equal measure of spiritual things, may show in the end just as great a diversity in the use that they have made of the precious trust. By a diligent and vigilant obedience the one has grown to be a Paul, crowned with ransomed souls, and clothed with all the fullness of heavenly power. The other has become, perhaps, a proud Diotrephes, seeking chiefly his personal ambition and using the divine grace for his own advantage.

The Holy Spirit is especially sensitive to the reception He finds in the human heart; never intruding as an unwelcome guest, but gladly entering every open door, and following up every invitation with His faithful love and power. How are we to co-operate with Him, and how may we grieve and hinder Him?

1. We are commanded to receive the Holy Ghost.

This denotes an active and positive taking of His life and power into our hearts and lives. It is not a mere acquiescence in His coming, or passive assent unto His will, but an active appropriating and absorbing of His blessed person and influences into our whole person.

It is one thing to have our dinner brought to us, and it is another thing to eat it, drink it, assimilate it, and be nourished by it.

It is thus that we are to receive the Holy Ghost, with an open, yielding, hungering, thirsting, believing, accepting and absorbing heart, even as the dry sand receives the rain, as the empty sponge receives the moisture, as the negative cloud receives the current from the positive, as the vacuum receives the air, and the babe drinks in the mother's life from her offered breast.

There are spiritual organs of reception as well as physical. There are vessels of heart-hunger and absorption which can be cultivated and exercised, and there are those who, "by reason of us," have their senses thus exercised to receive the grace of God.

Are we receiving the Holy Ghost? are we taking the water of life freely? are we putting forth our hand grasping the tree of life and eating of its fruit?

Let us remember that we are receiving a person, and that in order to do so we must recognize that person individually, and treat Him as we would a welcome guest.

Have we thus received the Holy Spirit as a person, invited Him into our hearts, believed that He really came, and then begun to treat Him as an actual person; to talk to Him, to commune with Him, to enjoy His fellowship, to call upon His help, and practically recognize Him as a present Guest.

Not only do we receive the Holy Spirit as a person, but having thus recognized Him we are to receive His influences as He imparts them, to be open to His touch, attentive to His voice, responsive to His love, and empty vessels for His constant use and filling.

2. We are to be filled with the Spirit.

While it is true that there is a definite moment when the Holy Spirit comes to reside in the heart, yet there are repeated experiences of His renewing, quickening, reviving, refreshing influences; these are called by the apostle, in Jude, "the renewings of the Holy Ghost," which He sheds on us abundantly, and by Peter, in the Acts of the Apostles, "the times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord." The expression, "baptized of the Spirit" may be applied perhaps to our first marked experience of this kind, and in this connection we are glad that the term baptism means a very thorough and complete immersion in the ocean of His love and fullness. But it is not once that He is asked to manifest His love and power.

We read in the Acts of the Apostles that after the day of Pentecost there came another day when the disciples were assembled in a time of peril and trial in prayer before the Master for His interposition, and that when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they had assembled, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and the mighty power of God was manifested afresh in their midst.

And so the Apostle says in Ephesians, "Be not drunk with wine, but be filled with the Spirit." The filling of the Spirit is here contrasted with the exciting influence of earthly stimulants, as if he had said, there is one draught of which you can never drink too much; you can safely be intoxicated with the Holy Ghost.

In the twelfth chapter of 1 Cor., Paul uses the same expression in connection with the figure of baptism: "By one Spirit have we all been baptized into one body, and been made to drink of that one Spirit." It is the figure of being submerged in the ocean, and then, when lost in the depths of the sea, opening our mouths and beginning to drink of its depth and fullness. We are plunged in the Holy Spirit until He becomes the element of our being, like the air in which we move, and then we open all the faculties of our being and drink from His inexhaustible supplies.

How great the capacity of the human soul to be filled with the life of God it is impossible to say. Surely, if the sun can fill a flower with its glorious light in all the many-tinted colors; surely, if the cloud can drink in his rays until they grow with all the tints of light, O, surely the human soul can absorb all there is in God and then give it forth in the reflected light of holiness. Surely, if the earth can drink in the rain, and then give it out in the plants, and fruits, and flowers of summer, the human heart can draw from God the elements of His very being, and turn them into all the fruits of holy living and useful deeds. Surely, if His own beloved Son could dwell in His bosom ages upon ages before an angel ever sang or a planet swept along its heavenly way, or an object of creation filled the plains of immensity, and found in His Father's heart the rapture of His joy, so that He could say, "I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him," O, surely, the human soul can fill all its little vessels and satisfy the measure of its capacities in His divine love and benignity.

Let us receive Him in all His fullness, let us be filled with the Spirit, let us drink of the ocean in which we have been baptized. A Christian friend wrote the other day that his old neighbors had got up a report that he had turned out badly in his Christian life and taken to drinking. He replied, very happily, that it was true he had taken to drinking of late, but that if his old friends could only know what he was drinking they they would all join him, for he had found the fountain of living waters, and was drinking from the Holy Spirit and could say, "He that drinketh of this water shall never thirst again."

3. Let us trust the Holy Spirit.

We must believe in the Spirit as well as in the Son, and treat Him with confidence, expecting Him to meet us and bless us, and communicate unto Him all our needs, perplexities, and even our temptations and sins. He was the anti-type of the water of Horeb's ancient rock, and it is as wrong today as it was for Moses to strike that rock in unbelieving violence, when God bids us simply to speak to it in gentleness and trust, and expect its waters to gush forth at our whispered call and satisfy out every need.

The Holy Spirit is sensitive to our distrust. Many persons cry for Him and pray to Him as though He were a distant and selfish tyrant, insensible to His children's cry. It is a mother

heart to whom we speak, and one who is always within whispering distance of her little ones.

Let us nestle beneath her wings, let us walk in the light of her love, let us trust the Holy Ghost with implicit, childlike confidence, and always expect the answering voice and presence of the Comforter, and it shall be true, "Before they call I will answer, while they are yet speaking I will hear." The apostle asks the Galatians, "Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?" and adds after, "we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith."

This is the only way that we can receive a person-by treating him with confidence, believing that he comes to us in sincerity, and opening the door to him at once, recognize him as a friend, and treat him as a welcome guest. So let us treat the Holy Spirit.

4. Let us obey the Spirit.

The first thing in obedience is to hearken. Especially is this necessary with the gentle Comforter. So gentle is this mother that her voice is not often loud, and may be missed by the inattentive ear; therefore, the beautiful expression is used by the apostle Paul in the 8th chapter of Romans, which reminds us of a mother's voice; "The minding of the Spirit is life and peace." We are to mind the Spirit, we are to pay attention to His counsels, commands, and slightest intimations. God never speaks an idle word, or gives a lesson that we can afford to slight or forget. They who will listen will have much to listen to, but they who slight the voice of God need not wonder that they are often left in silence.

The Spirit's voice is "a still small voice." The heart in which He loves to dwell is a quiet one, where the voice of passion and the world's loud tumult is stilled, and His whisper is watched for with delight and attention.

But not only must we hearken; when we know we must obey. The voice of the Spirit is imperative; there can be no compromise, and there should be no delay. God will not excuse us from His commandments. His word is very deliberately spoken and for our good always, and when the command is given it cannot be recalled. Therefore, if we do not obey we must be involved in darkness, difficulty, and separation from Him. We may plunge on, but the Spirit waits at that point, on the crossroads of life, and we can make no progress until we return and obey Him. Many a bitter experience, many a tear of brokenhearted disappointment and failure have come from refusing to obey. Indeed, such disobedience must be fatal if persisted in. It was just there that Saul halted and lost his kingdom, through disobedience and willfulness in neglecting the voice of God. It was there that Israel found the fatal crisis of their history at Kadesh Barnea. It was there that, in the apostolic days, a nation was about to reap the same fatal error, and the apostle pleaded with his countrymen so solemnly and gently: "Today if ye will hear His voice harden not your hearts."

Happy the heart that promptly obeys the voice of God. The Spirit delights to lead such a soul. How beautifully we see this illustrated in the experience of Paul! At one period of

his ministry he was in danger of pressing on in his work beyond the divine command, and so, we are told, he was forbidden of the Spirit to preach the Word in Asia, and essayed to go into Bithynia but the Spirit suffered him not. Happy for him that he obeyed both these restraints. Had he persisted. in his way, and even succeeded in getting down to Ephesus, he would have found every door closed, and his visit would have been premature. Waiting on God's bidding and way a year longer he was permitted to go afterwards and found the door wide open, and his next and perhaps most successful ministry was given to him at Ephesus, while in obedience, that led him now into Europe, he was permitted to establish the Gospel in that mighty continent.

A little later, we see the very opposite lesson exemplified in his life. We are told that he purposed in Spirit to go to Jerusalem and Rome. This was a personal direction of the Holy Ghost to him, and in consequence he determined upon the greatest purpose of his life, to carry the gospel to his countrymen at Jerusalem, and then to establish Christianity in the capital of the world.

It was well that he proposed it in the Spirit, and that he was sure of God's command, for the difficulties that afterwards met him would have been insuperable on any human line.

First, the very servants of God met him all along the way, and even prophetic messengers warned him not to go to Jerusalem, but the brave apostle kept to his promise and pressed divinely on..

Next, the whole power of unbelieving Judaism arrayed itself against him, tried to mob him at Jerusalem, to assassinate him on the way to Caesarea, and then to condemn him before the tribunal of Felix, Festus and Agrippa, but still he pressed steadfastly on.

Next, the intriguing policy and imperial power of Rome itself confronted him, and held him two years a prisoner at Caesarea, but he never for a moment abandoned his purpose.

At length he was on his way to Rome, but then the very elements of nature and the powers of hell combined in one last effort to destroy him. The fierce Euroclydon of the Mediterranean wrecked his ship, and on Malta's shore the viper from the flames fastened upon his hand, but he still pressed on in indomitable might, in obedience to the Holy Ghost, and so he reached Rome and planted the standard of the cross before the palace of the Caesars, witnessed for Christ in the face of imprisonment and martyrdom, and at last looked down from heaven on the spectacle of Christianity the established religion of the whole "Roman empire three hundred years later.

Thus let us obey the Holy Ghost, whether it be in silence or in activity, and we shall find that if He be to us our Wonderful Counsellor, He shall certainly prove our mighty God.

5. Let us honor the Holy Ghost.

Less than any other person does He honor Himself. His constant business is to exalt Christ and hide behind His person. Therefore, the Father is pleased when we exalt and

honor Him, and He Himself will especially use the instrument which gives Him the glory. "Honor the Holy Ghost and He will honor you," was the counsel of an aged Christian patriarch who had seen many a mighty awakening in the church of God.

It is indeed true and specially important in this material and rationalistic age, when even the ministers of Christ sometimes seem to wish to eliminate the supernatural from the Scriptures and the church, and find any other explanation than the power of God for His supernatural working.

The special dispensation of the Holy Ghost is drawing to its close. We may therefore expect that He will manifest His power in unusual methods and degrees as the age draws to its close.

Let us understand Him and be in sympathy with His divine thought, and ready to follow His wise and mighty leadership unto the last campaign of Christianity. Why should we ever be looking back to Pentecost? Why should we not expect His mightiest triumphs in the immediate future, and, as Joel has prophesied, "before the great and terrible day of the Lord."

CHAPTER XIV.
HINDERING THE HOLY SPIRIT.

"Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God."--Eph. iv: 80.
"Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost."--Acts vii: 51.
"Quench not the Spirit."-1 Thess. v: 19.

It is very touching and solemn that while the Holy Ghost might, in the exercise of His omnipotence, coerce our will, and compel us to submit to His authority, yet He approaches us with the most deferential regard for our feelings and independence, even suffering us to resist and disobey Him, and bearing long with our willfulness and waywardness.

There are several terms used in the Scriptures to denote the manner in which we may sin against the Holy Spirit.

I.

We May Quench the Spirit.

This has reference, perhaps, mainly to the hindrance we offer to His work in others, rather than to our resistance of His personal dealings with our own souls.

Among the various hindrances which we may offer to the Holy Spirit may be mentioned such as these:

1. We may refuse to obey His impulses in us when He bids us speak or act for Him. We may be conscious of a distinct impression of the Spirit of God bidding us to testify for Christ, and by disobedience, or timidity, or procrastination, we may quench His working, both in our own soul and in the heart of another
2. We must suppress His voice in others, either by using our authority to restrain His messages, when He speaks through His servants or refusing to allow the liberty of testimony. Many hold the reins of ecclesiastical authority unduly, and thus lose the free and effectual working of the Holy Ghost in their churches and in their work.

There is a less direct way, however, of politely silencing Him by forcing Him out, and so filling the atmosphere with the spirit of stiffness, criticism, and a certain air of respectability and rigidness that He gently withdraws from the uncongenial scene, and refuses to thrust His messages upon unwilling hearts.

3. The Spirit may be grieved by the method of public worship in a congregation.

It may be either so stiff and formal that there is no room for His spontaneous working, or so full of worldly and unscriptural elements as to repel and offend Him from taking any

part in a pompous ritual. An operatic choir and a ritualistic service will effectually quench all the fire of God's altar, and send the gentle dove to seek a simpler nest.

4. The Spirit may be quenched by the preacher, and his spirit and method.

His own manner may be so intellectual and self-conscious, and his own spirit so thoroughly cold and vain that the Holy Ghost is neither recognized nor known in his work. His sermons may be on themes in which the Spirit has no interest, for He only witnesses to the Holy Scriptures and the person of Christ, and wearily turns away from the discussion of philosophy, and the stale show of critical brilliancy over the questions of the day or the speculations of man's own vain reason.

Perhaps his address is so rigidly written down that the Holy Spirit could not find a opportunity for even a suggestion, if He so desired, and His promptings and leading so coolly set aside by a course of elaborate preparation which leaves no room for God.

5. The spirit of error in the teachings of the pulpit will always quench the Holy Spirit.

He is jealous for His own inspired Word and when vain man attempts to set it aside He looks on with indignation, and expose such teachers to humiliation and failure.

The spirit of self-assertion and self-consciousness is always fatal to the free working of the Holy Ghost.

When a man stands up in the sacred desk to air his eloquence and call attention to his intellectual brilliancy, or to preach himself in any sense, he will always be deserted by the Holy Spirit. He uses the things "that are not to bring to naught the things that are." And before we can expect to become the instruments of His power, we must wholly cease from self and be lost in the person and glory of Jesus.

6. The spirit of pride, fashion and worldly display in the pews, is just as fatal as ambition in the pulpit.

Such an atmosphere seems to freeze out the spirit of devotion, and erect on the throne of the lowly Nazarene a goddess of carnal pride and pleasure, like the foul Venus that the Parisian mob set up in the Madeleine at Paris in the days of the revolution, as an object of worship. From such an atmosphere the Holy Ghost turns away grieved and disgusted.

7. The quickening and reviving influences of the Holy Ghost are often quenched in the very hour of promise by wrong methods in the work of Christ's church.

How often, on the eve of a real revival, the minds of the people have been led away by some public entertainment in connection with the house of God, or its after-fruits withered by a series of unholy fairs and secular bids for money, and the introduction of the broker and the cattle-vender into the cleansed temple of Jehovah, as in the days of Christ.

8. The spirit of criticism and controversy is fatal to the working of the Holy Ghost.

The gentle dove will not remain in an atmosphere of strife. If we would cherish His power we must possess His love, and frown down all wrangling gossip, evil speaking, malice, envy, and public controversy in the preaching of the Word.

Sometimes a single word of criticism after an impressive service will dispel all its blessed influence upon the heart of some interested hearer, and counteract the gracious work that would have resulted in the salvation of the soul.

A frivolous Christian woman returning one night from church with her unsaved husband, was laughing lightly at some of the mistakes and eccentricities of the speaker. Suddenly she felt his arm trembling; she looked in his face and his tears were falling. He gently turned to her, and said: "Pray for me; I have seen myself tonight as I never did before." She suddenly awoke with an awful shudder to realize that she had been frivolously wrecking his soul's salvation, and quenching the Holy Ghost.

And so, public controversy is as fatal to the Spirit's working as personal criticism.

It is when the children of God unite at the feet of Jesus, and together seek His blessing, that He comes in all the fullness of His life-power.

At the Council of Nice it is said that a great number of grievances were sent unto Constantine, the presiding officer. After the opening of the great Council, he ordered them to be gathered into the centre of the large hall, and then a fire kindled under them, and as they went up in smoke and flame, the Spirit of God fell upon the assembled multitude, and they all felt that in the burning of their strifes and selfish grievances they had received the very baptism of the Holy Ghost.

The Spirit may be quenched in the hearts of our friends by unwise counsel, or ungodly influence.

The little child may be discouraged from seeking Christ by a worldly parent, or the ignorant assumption that it is too young to be a Christian, or too busy with its studies, or its social enjoyments, for such things.

The attractions of the world and claims and pressures of business, may be interposed in the way of some seeking heart, and we find in eternity that we put a stumbling-block in our friend's way, from which he fell into perdition.

Let us be very careful lest, in our willfulness and pride, we not only miss ourselves the inner chambers of the kingdom of heaven, but hinder those that would enter from going in.

Oh! if we would cherish the faintest breath of life in the rescued waif that has been snatched from a watery grave, if we could fan the expiring flame of life in a friend's

bosom, let us be careful lest we quench the spark of everlasting life in a human soul, and stand at the last, responsible for the murder of immortal beings, and crimson with the blood of souls. "Quench not the Spirit."

II.

We May Grieve the Spirit.

This is a very tender expression; it suggests His gentleness and patience; grieved rather than angry with His unfaithful and distrustful children.

1. We may grieve Him by our doubts and distrust of His love and promises. Thus Moses grieved Him when he struck the rock instead of gently speaking.

Many are afraid of the Holy Ghost and think Him a despot and a terror; shrinking even from His too close approach, as though He would consume us by His holiness. He wants us to love Him, and come near to Him as the gentle mother; to believe in His promises, to count Him faithful, and to treat Him as one who does come to us and dwell within us.

2. We grieve the Holy Spirit when we refuse to wholly yield ourselves to Him, and hold back from entire abandonment and surrender, or when, having so surrendered ourselves, we shrink back from His actual leading and refuse to meet the tests He brings, and lie upon the wheel in stillness while He moulds the plaster in clay.

He is grieved at our willfulness and rebellion and resistance. He knows we are losing a blessing, and that we must again go through the same discipline if we are to have our blessings from Him.

He sees in it the spirit of distrust and unbelief, and He feels wounded and slighted by our shrinking.

3. We grieve the Holy Spirit when we fail to enter into the fullness of His grace, and receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our complete Saviour.

He has not written one word that we can afford to allow to become of none effect. It is an insult to His wisdom and love to treat the higher visions of His grace as if they were not binding upon our life.

They should fully honor Him, press forward into all His will, and feel they owe to Him as well as themselves that they should lose nothing of all that He has wrought, nor seem to come short of entering into His rest.

Oh, how many of His children are grieving Him as a mother would be grieved, if after having, at great cost and toil, provided bountifully for her children, they should refuse her bounty or despise her rich provision!

4. We grieve the Holy Spirit when we fail to hearken to His voice.

He is constantly calling upon us to listen, and He never speaks in vain, nor can we ever afford to miss the slightest whisper. When, therefore, we fail to hearken, and dash along with heedless impulsiveness, He is deeply grieved, and has to call in the loud and painful tones of trial and chastening.

How He bewails His ancient people for their refusing to listen to His living voice: "Oh, that my people had hearkened to my commandments, then had their peace been like a river, and their righteousness as the waves of the sea."

5. We grieve the Holy Spirit when, having heard, we presume to disobey His voice.

This is very serious, and full of terrible danger. It is an awful thing willfully to neglect or defy the distinct command of the Holy Ghost. We cannot do it without losing the sense of His presence, and being conscious that He has withdrawn the manifestation of His love, until we deeply and penitently recognize our sin, and step into the path of obedience where we separated from His companionship.

6. Nothing grieves the Holy Spirit more than a divided heart and the cherishing of any idols in our affections which separate our supreme love from Christ.

There is a remarkable passage in the book of James which declares that "the Spirit which dwelleth in us loveth us to jealousy" (marginal reading), and in the same connection it is added, "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? that is, a heart set upon earthly things is guilty of spiritual adultery, the Holy Ghost looks upon it with jealous love, grieved and insulted by the dishonor done to our divine husband by our unfaithful affections.

7. We grieve the Holy Spirit whenever we neglect, pervert, or dishonor the Holy Scriptures.

This is His word, and not one utterance or one jot shall fall to the ground. How we grieve Him when we explain its precious promises, and make of none effect its exact commands; and how He loves the heart that feeds upon the truth and honors the Bible in its least promise and command!

8. Especially do we grieve the Holy Ghost when we dishonor Jesus, or let anything separate us from Him, or cloud our conception of Him, and interrupt our devotion to Him.

He is jealous for the honor of Christ; therefore, whenever self, or any human being comes between us and Christ, whenever the glory of the Master is obscured by the glory of the servant, whenever even truth or work becomes more distinct than Christ Himself, the Holy Ghost is grieved; and He is pleased when we exalt the Saviour, and give Him all the glory.

9. The Holy Spirit is grieved when we ignore Him.

He longs after our love and trust.

10. The Holy Spirit is especially grieved by a spirit of bitterness toward any human being, and therefore the apostle says, "Let all bitternesses, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you with all malice. And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby we are sealed unto the day of redemption."

III.

We May Resist the Holy Spirit.

This has special reference to the attitude of the unbeliever, with whom the Holy Ghost is striving with a view to convict him of sin and lead Him to the Saviour.

1. The sinner resists the Holy Spirit when he tries to shake off religious impressions.

This may be done in many ways. Sometimes the soul, under the Spirit's striving, tries to quench its impressions in pleasure, excitement or business. Sometimes it treats them as nervous depression, low spirits or ill-health, and seeks a remedy in change of scene or thought; very often it resorts to light reading, worldly amusements, frivolous society, perhaps indulgence in sin, and the devil always has plenty of auxiliaries to suggest distracting thoughts, and help to dispel the sacred influences that God is gathering around the heart.

Very often it will become provoked and offended with some acts on the part of Christians, sometimes perhaps connected with the religious services, and will resolve to give up attending, or find some petty excuse for getting out of the way of the influences that are troubling its content. All these efforts to escape are but the stronger evidence of the Spirit's striving, and He patiently and lovingly continues to press the arrow still more keenly into the wounded heart, until it is laid prostrate at the feet of love.

2. The sinner resists the influences of the Holy Spirit in leading him to conviction of sin.

It is not enough to awaken concern in the soul, and even alarm-there must be a distinct working of Scriptural conviction in order to secure lasting peace and sound conversion; and, therefore, the Holy Ghost has promised to convict the world of sin.

He does this by bringing before the conscience the memory of actual transgressions-the recollection of any forgotten sins, the iniquities of youth and childhood, the secret sins known to God only, the aggravations of sin, the warnings and light against which it has been committed, the love that has been resisted, the threatenings of the divine law, the unchangeable holiness of the divine character, the tremendous sentence against all iniquity, the deep inward consciousness of guilt, the still more terrible sense of the wickedness of the sinner's heart, the hopeless depravity, the consciousness of willfulness and unbelief, and the dreadful fear of its hopelessness, the impossibility of its salvation.

Thus the Great Advocate sets in array our transgressions, until the heart seeks some escape from itself, and Satan is ready to suggest a thousand excuses, palliations and false hopes, through which the guilty spirit seeks to evade the force of its conviction.

It thinks of the faults of others, and plausibly reasons that it is no worse than they; it eagerly seizes upon the inconsistencies of Christians, and tries to excuse itself by their failure; it recalls its own miserable attempts at goodness, and tries to find some comfort in its own righteousness; it seeks false refuge in the mercy of God, and eagerly tries to persuade itself that the picture of Christ's anger against sin, and the stories of judgment and perdition, are fictions of obsolete theology.

It says peace, peace, when there is no peace, and heals slightly its hurt, resisting with all its might the blessed Spirit, who wounds only that He may heal.

Happy they who fail in the foolish attempt, and in whose hearts the arrows of the King are so sharp and keen that the wound can never be staunched save by the blood of Calvary.

3. The sinner resists the work of the Holy Ghost in leading him to decision.

Even after he has been driven from his previous refuges, and has been awakened to his profound concern, and thoroughly convicted of his sin, and fully admits the claims of religion and the justness of his condemnation, he seeks another door of escape in procrastination.

He will surrender, he will resist no more, he will accept the Saviour, but not now, he is not quite ready yet.

Perhaps he argues that he does not feel strongly enough, that he wants a deeper conviction, more light, a little more deliberate consideration, perhaps a little more time to alter his circumstances and change his life; but really what he is pleading for is a reprieve for his sinful heart, a little longer in the indulgence of his self-will, and disobedience to the gospel.

And his course is just as dangerous and just as truly a rejection of Christ as if he did it deliberately and directly; while at the same time it has the self-deceiving aspect of being a sort of yielding, at least a nominal consent, to all the pleadings of the Holy Ghost. He is resisting the Spirit, and his to-morrow often means, as the eyes of heaven read the words, NEVER.

4. The sinner resists the Holy Spirit in His gracious attempts to convict the soul of righteousness and lead it to believe on the Son of God.

The Spirit's object is not merely to produce concern, alarm, and even the profoundest repentance, but the blessed goal of all His gracious movements is the trust trustful acceptance of Jesus, and the believing assurance of His forgiveness and salvation.

It is here that Satan and self-will fight their hardest battle. The soul will consent to live a better life, will be willing to weep and mourn, will do anything rather than accept the very gift of salvation and believe the naked word of God, that its sins are forgiven for His name's sake, and that it is accepted in Jesus Christ, as He is accepted.

How desperately it fights against this simple act, clothing its unbelief in the guise of humanity and modesty, and thinking it presumption to dare to make such a claim!

Many souls hold back at this point for months and years, and know not that in all their doubts and fears, their hard thoughts of themselves and of God, they are simply resisting the Holy Ghost, who is striving with them to lay their sins forever at the feet of Jesus, and go forth into His everlasting peace.

5. At this point the resisting soul is led by this great enemy to erect a whole line of false refuges, and run under their cover, instead of fleeing for refuge directly to the hope set before it in the gospel.

One of these refuges is outward reformation of life. The sinner will do better, will take the pledge, will turn over a new leaf, will make large promises and comfort his soul with the flattering unction that he is a changed man, while all the while he has the same evil heart, and it will produce the same fruits when the mere effort of will has spent itself.

Another refuge of lies is a religious profession. He will get confirmed or join the church and begin a life of formalism; perhaps give something to the cause of Christ, and even attempt some Christian work, but he is only a whitened Pharisee, and within the sepulchre are dead men's bones and all uncleanness; and he will find before long, that his old heart has still the same loves and hates, yet he has effectually suppressed the voice of the Spirit.

He meets every fear and conviction with the consciousness of his religious profession, and he will even go to the gates of the judgment hall saying, "Have we not eaten and drunken in Thy presence! and Thou hast taught in our streets;" but He will profess unto them, "I never knew you."

Poor Ignorance, in Pilgrim's Progress, went up to the very gates of heaven with an easy conscience; every conviction had been stifled by his shallow professions and imagined works of self-righteousness; and so multitudes have escaped the pain of an evil conscience, and the Spirit's striving, to find it turn in the hour of judgment into the remorseful horror of eternal condemnation.

And so we might speak of almost countless other false refuges, all of which have the effect of quieting the troubled heart, but not saving the soul. They are like sandbags thrown up in the outworks of our souls, in which the arrows of the Lord are lost or muffled, but which are no protection from the armies of destruction.

6. It is possible for the soul to resist the Holy Ghost openly, directly, willfully, and presumptuously, until it drives Him from its door and commits the fatal sin of willfully

rejecting the offered Saviour in the full light of the Holy Spirit's revealing, and perhaps with the full consciousness that it is defiantly refusing God.

There is such a thing referred to in the Scriptures, "If ye refuse and rebel ye shall be destroyed;" "I called and ye refused." "If we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses. 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? For we know Him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge His people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

The blasphemy of the Pharisees against the Holy Ghost seems to have consisted in rejecting Jesus after they had sufficient light to know that He was the Son of God.

It was, therefore, not only the rejection of Jesus, but the deliberate rejection of the Holy Ghost and His witness to Jesus, when they knew it to be His witness.

Essentially, therefore, it is the same sin as any soul may now commit, when in the full light of God, and conscious that He has directly called it to accept the Saviour, it defiantly refuses.

The effect of such an act may be, and perhaps usually is, the withdrawal of the Spirit from the soul until it is left, past feeling, to a hardened heart, and a doom on which the voice of divine appeal and the light of mercy will never fall again.

This is, perhaps, what is meant by the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost which never hath forgiveness.

Let no one think he has committed this sin if still in the heart there is a willingness to yield to God and accept the Saviour.

If there is even a fear that any reader may have committed this sin, and a great longing that it may not be so, rejoice exceedingly, and yield this moment even to His faint touch of heavenly influence, lest it should be withdrawn, and the soul left under the sad sentence, "He is joined to his idols, let him alone." The good Payson once said to his young friend, who had spoken of a slight religious influence, and wondered if it was enough to act upon, "A little cord has dropped from heaven, so fine that you can scarcely feel it or perceive it; it just touches your shoulder for a moment; dear friend, grasp it quickly, for it fastens to the throne of God, and it is for you perhaps the last strand of saving mercy; grasp it and never let it go, and it will grow into a cable of strength that will anchor you to the skies and keep your precious soul unto everlasting life."

Oh! let us be fearful and careful lest we sin against the Holy Ghost by quenching the Spirit, by grieving the Holy One, by resisting our best Friend, or by blaspheming His mighty name.