

the weather, that he may improve every falling shower or gleam of sunshine. How vastly more alert should we be to watch the gracious influences of the Spirit, that we may cast in the precious seed and reap the better harvest.

Let us bear in mind, that the Spirit operates on the soul through means of divine truth, which is attended to, and loved, and believed there. If we, therefore, leave the Bible neglected, or the Gospel unheard, we are shutting out the Spirit from the heart, by neglecting the instrument with which he works. The Spirit enlightens the mind and sanctifies the soul, through means of Gospel ordinances. If, then, we forsake these, we are refusing the help of the Spirit, by withdrawing from his instrument. It matters not how willing he is to bless us. It matters not how ready he is to be gracious to us. If we reject or stand apart from the truth by which he operates, we are grieving and setting aside the great Agent from his beloved work in our hearts.

And here we must remark, that none of all the appointed means of grace can be wilfully neglected, without grieving the Holy Spirit, and sinning against our own souls. To return to our former illustration. You may set a plant in a rich soil. You may give it abundance of moisture. Yet if you deprive it of light and heat, it will die; and why? It is not because earth, and light, and moisture of themselves make plants to grow; but because, through these substances combined, the God of nature sustains life in the vegetable kingdom. So, if we neglect any of the means through which the Spirit operates, it matters not how diligent we may be in the use of all others. We may attend on the public ordinances of religion, but if we restrain prayer before God, or refuse to read his word in private, we are contravening the laws of heaven, and the effect will be a grieving of the Spirit of God, and the certain loss of our soul's salvation. "Blessed is he that soweth beside *all* waters"—not only by the free river, but by the secluded fountain. Blessed, indeed, are ye who are constant in your place in the sanctuary, and daily on your knees in the closet—who are regular in your reading of the Scriptures, and habitual in your meditation, alone with God.

Reader, be watchful against all those ways of grieving the Holy Spirit of God. If grieved, he may depart, and, alas, what becomes of you then? Your privileges may remain, but the living Agent, who alone gives them effect, has gone. The outward framework of ordinances may continue, but the gracious Spirit, who imparts interest and power to them, is away. Then ministers may preach to you, the Bible may lie before you, and the Sabbath offer you its hallowed rest—but not a solitary blessing will come from any of these to your heart, after the Spirit is grieved away. You can only feel then, the weight of that awful woe which God utters over his ancient people, "Woe be to them when *I* depart from them." Alas, we have all done much to incur this woe. We require this day to deprecate its endurance. It becomes us each one to offer this prayer from our heart:—

"O stay, thou grieved Spirit, stay.  
Though I have done thee such despite,  
Cast not the sinner quite away,  
Nor take thine everlasting flight!

"Though I have most ungrateful been,  
Of all who e'er thy grace received,  
Ten thousand times thy goodness seen,  
Ten thousand times thy goodness grieved!

"Yet, O, the chief of sinners spare,  
In honour of our great High Priest;  
Nor in thy righteous anger swear,  
'I shall not see thy people's rest!'"

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