

Let us introduce this very solemn, sacred, important subject by suggesting the necessary divisions so we may explore what is before us. In the first place there is a tremendous incentive not to grieve the Holy Spirit of God indwelling us, because we are thereby sealed unto the day of redemption. It means we are to seek to please Him, not to grieve Him. How wonderful if by the sacred efficacy of divine grace we seek to do always those things that please Him. One said concerning this holy relationship; "In pleasing Him their pleasure's placed." (as). This is a principle and it is that which is derived from the principle of life, which is the principle of holiness. If we possess the principle of divine life,- that which is communicable of the divine nature of Christ because He partook of our nature, a holy humanity, then we have a principle and a capacity to seek only and always to do that which is pleasing in His sight. This has priority in the soul and spirit and life and affections and will and understanding of a child of God. Everything in your life, your thought, vocabulary, utterance, speech, the use of every faculty and every member and all we perpetrate has this holy caution on from God. It goes into the scale-pan to see if it is consistent with the will, mind, and pleasure of God. For that reason, "he that believeth shall not make haste." (Isa.28.16) How many have made haste and then repented over years of suffering and sorrow! This applies to the use of the tongue. A wise man is of few words, and his words are seasoned with salt. How solemn to be hasty in spirit, premature in judgment and to take matters in our own hands rather than leave them in the hands of the Lord. These things are written for our admonition and learning, that we might be partakers of the divine nature.

Let me give you a summary. What does the Scripture read as text addup

to? An overwhelming, absorbing desire to be completely conformed to the likeness of Christ. "Let me bear Thy image." "I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness. (Psa.17.15) You want to be like Him. Excuses are lame. I cannot take excuses to my God. I cannot tell Him that temperamentally I have failings and therefore I can be excused. If you are prone to wander in this direction let me suggest to you that you read the account of the fall of man. When the Lord walked in the garden in the cool of the day,- and He does in this garden, and He will come to us all in the cool of the day and bring us to judgment in our consciences and He will say; (you may be hiding) "Adam, where art thou? What have you been doing? What has been your conduct? Have you been transgressing My law?" He brings us to judgment. It is a blessing He brings His people to, and their sins are brought to judgment before death and not after. We are chastened with strong pain on our beds. Wonderful it is when the Lord deals with us in mercy.

I have suggested to you if you take the easy way,- it is really the hard way.- you will seek to excuse yourself. This is what our first parents did. Adam blamed his wife. He did not stand like a man and own it. He said; "The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat."- most unmanly. He tried to shield behind his wife. "She gave me." Never try to excuse yourself to God. Be an honest man or woman to your Maker and to your fellows. Take what belongs to you. The woman was equally base: she blamed the serpent. God will not take excuses. He pronounced what was due to them because of disobedience. So we cannot say we have failings, and so claim some diminution in responsibility for what we have done. The best thing is to smite on your breast and say; "God be merciful to me a sinner." (Luke 18.13) This is it, and if you are a child of God you will be brought to fall before God a guilty sinner. It will be you, not anyone else. When the Lord sent Nathan to David with a parable he unwittingly condemned himself to death. He said to Nathan; "The man that hath done this thing shall surely die;" Nathan said to David; "Thou art the man." (2 Samuel 12) My friends, you may not be guilty of specific crimes, but before God you are a guilty sinner, and you will know it. I like people who plead guilty and yet

plead for mercy.

I said this powerful Scripture may be thus translated. We have a complete manual of how and wherein the Spirit of God is grieved,- not by the ungodly, but His own children. Let us make a further inquiry. Have we this single motivation to seek to do always those things that please Him? You have thoughts, plans, motives: put them in the scale-pan and wait for the smile of God before you move further. Take the tongue. O the havoc it causes in the earth! A terrible member the tongue is, and it is largely because such a small minority of people know how to control it. There are few who know the first rudiments of how to control the tongue. Think of that small member; it expresses the whole of the mechanism of the body. It is wonderful to be able to speak: many are incapable of it. There are those who have lost the area and function of speech and never speak another word. We need special wisdom and grace from God in the control of the tongue. O the damage that is caused in governments, countries, Churches, families by that little member! The longer you live the more you realise how few know how to control it. You may say; "Surely a professed Christian will know." They are often remiss indeed. What a blessing to know what it is to pray to God that He would keep the door of our lips!

So are we seeking always to do that which is pleasing in His sight? Do we weigh our words before we utter them? An old contemporary,- not in the House of God,- a man I have known for years of great integrity in business, made a comment on a younger man. He said to me; "Well, he has a tongue that will get him anywhere." It is true. Some people have a tongue that will talk them anywhere. God tries the heart. You can slant a sentence so that you say what is true but give an incorrect projection of use, so although you have said what is true the inference may be a ~~direct~~ deliberate lie. I dread the tongue. I would say to the glory of God over the many years of my ministry I have had noble souls who knew how to control the tongue. They have gone through their profession and come to death, and I have stood by the grave and committed them to their resting-place, and I have been able to say they never caused me a moment's anxiety or pain. What an example for those who

follow on!

Are we seeking always to do that which is pleasing in His sight? This is the testimony concerning Enoch; "By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God." (Heb. 11.5) This was his testimony from God. I would emphasise with all the power God gives me the importance of this to you as His people, - he, or she, pleased God. If this is your memorial it is a blessed memorial..... There can never be a working out of what is not wrought in us, so He works in us to will and to do of His good pleasure and it will be worked out. In the last part of the subject we see how God's dear people are taught to please Him; to avoid the vices tabulated. They are root vices to which we are measurably exposed; to which we are tempted and our wicked heart has a capacity for. There is a word concerning these vices. We are taught by the Spirit to please God, and we are to seek to emulate the blessed examples of Christian virtues in the last verse. This is tantamount to saying; "Be conformed to Christ's image." This will be the overwhelming wish of your soul.

I will pause so you can take your examination. It will not take long to arrive at the correct answer before God, You will know if it is the overwhelming desire of your soul to do always the things that please Him and to be preserved from that which grieves Him. If we do the things that grieve Him He withdraws measurably from us and others suffer as a consequence. A number may suffer; it is far-reaching. The wheels of God move slowly but surely. It is sad and solemn when the sins of the fathers are visited on the children to the third and fourth generations. These are the facts of life. You cannot take sour grapes and your teeth not be set on edge. So the subject is exceedingly solemn.

Let us see the table here concerning the main channels of evils that are so grieving to Him. "Let all bitterness." In the centre of the chapter a synonymous term is used. "That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind;" You may wonder as to the interpretation and definition of this. The old man, as

you know, is this body of sin and death. How is it possible to put it off until the hand of death closes your eyes? God will dethrone the power of evil in you so it has not the supremacy. The old man loses supremacy: grace reigns. You will desire to put off the old man and put on the new man. Are we successful? or rather is not the Spirit of God eminently successful in us in the blessed work? There are channels of evil; let all these be put away from you. You know it is a fact that the human body rejects foreign bodies and always endeavours to throw off extraneous matter. There is an inbuilt mechanism in Creation and it will make a bold attempt to filter out poison and throw it off. If it were not for this we should not live long. If this is, as it is, an established and a basic fact, what about your soul? If you are regenerated by the Spirit of Christ there is an inbuilt power to cast off all poison. I have used the coverage of the term extraneous. If you have life in your soul it will throw off poison. What happens to your spiritual life if you retain poison? It will slowly become moribund; it will be barren, unfruitful, far off; it will deteriorate. It is no good if we retain poison. We shall never prosper or be holy. A fluid ounce of poison in the spirit will ruin your spiritual life.

"Let all bitterness!" These are things a human being is capable of. Bitterness means the behaviour, the speech is biting; acrid. It is the opposite to love and sweetness. I read where I did because of the beautiful example of the last verse. Joseph's brethren were bitter enough, their behaviour was. They did not know how to be bitter enough. This does not belong to a Christian, yet there is much of it. "Let all bitterness, and wrath." Wrath is vindictive, cruel anger, spite; and wrath seeks revenge. The Lord says; "I will revenge." and we are taught to "consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds." (Heb.12.3) We are taught concerning Him, "when he was reviled, he reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously."

"Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger." Anger means here an attitude of resentment; to resent others. This is addressed to the living family of God. "and clamour," Clamour means uproar; to get in a rage, and there is an uproar: to overpower by noise. Of course, there is

such a thing, alas, as neighbours knowing there is an uproar in some houses; they can hear it in the street. You would never think these evils would menace a child of God. It is true. The devil makes a determined attempt to make you angry, or to seduce you. It is very sad. "And clamour, and evil speaking." It means defamatory speaking, slander: to say things to defame the character of the person referred to deliberately. I wish I could say it was only to be found in the world, and not among the people of God or in the Church of God. These words are addressed to the people of God. "with all malice" Malice is an evil spirit of hatred. The sad conclusion is there a number of professed Christians who spend most of their time in this channel. If walls could speak! if the Telephone Exchange could speak! How solemn to spend time in this channel! You want to weigh up a person's spirit and speech and attitude: to say; "Have they the Spirit of Christ? and their speech, is it mainly occupied with other people?" If it is, have little association with such. Tell them faithfully if they have the life of God, the Word of God concerning such behaviour. Cleave to those who have a Christ-like spirit and are of few words.

"And be ye kind," live to the glory of God: to be kind; to do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith." (Gal. 6.10) I have told the Sunday School children how my heart was touched on one occasion at Kensal Green. I arrived to take the Anniversary Services: in the morning there had been torrential rain and the gutters were like rivers. Some poor children were pulling along a raft in the water and gaining a lot of pleasure from it. I went to park my car outside the Chapel and this interfered with their pleasure. They asked me if I could park further down. I was deeply touched by these children: they had never known the seaside. I complied with their wishes and gave them some money. I have never seen a greater response of affection, appreciation, and courtesy. I went into the service with my heart broken. "Be ye kind" to animals, to human beings, to sinners and to saints, the feeble, the difficult, the trying. the Lord may bring one and say to you; "Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee." (Luke 10.35)

"Be ye kind," This is a beautiful way to live. Stretch yourself to make others happy, to relieve, to show sympathy and understanding; to build bridges by acts of kindness. I like to build bridges by the Spirit between my soul and yours; to get near you in the Lord. You cannot be too kind. I am thinking chiefly of the good Samaritan,- chiefly of our Saviour, to the afflicted, the suffering, the distressed, and to the mothers of Salem. "Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me."(Matt.19.14)

"Tenderhearted" This is of course, opposite to an obdurate heart: to be sensitive, feeling to others; not to pass by on the other side, hard and indifferent. And the whole is wound up in this beautiful word; "forgiving one another" You will never want to go out of the world without, nor want the sun to go down on your wrath. "Be ye angry, and sin not." There is a righteous anger; not-against a person; against sin. God will never allow you to manifest anger to a person: you will against your own sin. "Let not the sun go down on your wrath," The sunset was with the Jews a time of prayer; for seeking the Lord, so, let not the sun go down on your wrath. You cannot go to prayer with such things in your heart.

"Forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." I hope you will be able to put your heart and head on the bosom divine this night and feel you bear no grudge, hold nothing against any. As the Saviour paid your debt, so you have forgiven others. Amen.