

“Three Warnings”
(Ephesians 4:29-32)

I. Introduction.

A. Orientation.

1. In Acts 9:31, we read, “So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria enjoyed peace, being built up; and going on in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it continued to increase.”
 - a. This brings out clearly what we’ve seen regarding the Spirit’s work: He comforts us.
 - b. During the times of greatest difficulty, He restores and refreshes our souls.
2. The way He does this is by assuring us that we have something good that far outweighs any bad we have to face.
 - a. Paul writes, “For just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, so also our comfort is abundant through Christ” (2 Cor. 1:5).
 - b. To comfort us in our trials, the Spirit comes and applies all that we’ve seen.
 - (i) He reminds us that God loves us, that we are children of God, that He accepts us, that we are set apart as God’s own, that we will inherit all of God’s promises.
 - (ii) These things are our only comfort in life, but they are so powerful there’s really no situation in which they can’t comfort us.
 - (iii) The Spirit reminds and applies that good to us.
 - (iv) That’s why we should cherish our communion with the Spirit.

B. Preview.

1. That’s also why we need to be careful not to do anything to hinder this communion.
2. This morning, we’re going to look at three things we need to avoid so that we don’t hinder it:
 - a. There are three things the Spirit does:
 - (i) He loves us.
 - (ii) He works in us to move us forward in holiness.
 - (iii) And He leads us through the Word.
 - b. And so there are three things we must not do:
 - (i) First, we must not grieve Him.
 - (ii) Second, we must not quench His work in us.
 - (iii) And third, we must not resist Him.

II. Sermon.

- A. First, because the Spirit loves us, we must not grieve Him. Paul writes, “Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption” (Eph. 4:30).

1. We saw how serious this sin is in our Scripture reading. After all the Lord did for His people, “They rebelled and grieved His Holy Spirit; therefore He turned Himself to become their enemy, He fought against them” (Isa. 63:10).
2. To grieve someone means to do something to injure that person or make them sad.
 - a. Are we able to grieve the Spirit in this sense? Not really.
 - (i) Because the Spirit is God, He is infinitely blessed, infinitely happy. It’s impossible to make Him sad.
 - (ii) But just because He can’t be hurt by us, doesn’t mean that we can’t do the things that would injure Him if that was possible.
 - (iii) The same thing is true with regard to the Spirit’s happiness:
 - (a) We can’t make the Spirit any happier than He is now.
 - (b) But that doesn’t mean we shouldn’t do the things that please Him or that would make Him happier, if that were possible.
 - b. There’s two things we need to understand:
 - (i) The first is that the Spirit loves us.
 - (a) He’s concerned for our well-being; He wants us to do what’s right.
 - (b) When we do things that offend or dishonor Him, He is said to be grieved, as anyone who loves us would be if we did the same to them. (Anthropomorphism).
 - (ii) The second thing is, if we do what grieves Him, we are as guilty as if those things actually did grieve Him.
 - (a) The Spirit is moving us forward to grow in holiness and spiritual maturity: He does this because He loves us.
 - (b) At the same, He is trying to persuade us to turn from the sin that is not only dangerous but hinders our growth.
 - (c) When we refuse Him, He is grieved and His work is stifled.
 - (d) When this happens, we lose something of our precious communion with the Spirit.
 - (iii) The Spirit loves us – He rejoices when we obey, and He is grieved when we disobey – what more do we need to motivate us to press forward in love?
 - (iv) When we add to this the fact that when we grieve the Spirit, we lose several precious things: 1) Something of His presence and His power to do what’s right; 2) something of the enjoyment we have obeying Him; 3) and something of His gracious comfort; how much should we avoid grieving Him?
 - (v) Let’s consider how much we need His love and His comfort; how we couldn’t have a happy moment in this world without Him; and let’s be warned first against grieving Him.
 - (vi) Grieving Him weakens our communion.

- B. The second warning is against quenching the Holy Spirit. Paul writes, “Do not quench the Spirit” (1 Thes. 5:19). What does he mean?
1. The Spirit is often represented in Scripture as fire.
 - a. John the Baptist said when Jesus came, He would baptize those who believed with the Holy Spirit and fire (Matt. 3:11).
 - b. When the Spirit was poured out at Pentecost, He appeared as tongues of fire resting on each of the disciples (Acts 2:3).
 - c. That fire is the zeal He produces in us for God’s glory. He’s the One who empowered the disciples to speak the Gospel with great power and boldness (Acts 4:31).
 2. We saw in the first warning that we are not to grieve the Spirit, because it is a sin against His love. Here we see that we are not to quench the Spirit, because it is a sin against His work of creating this holy fire in our souls.
 - a. The Spirit moves us from within, pushing us forward, stirring up His grace and gifts in us, giving us fresh supplies of grace, causing us to grow in grace, making us bear the fruits of holiness.
 - b. This is something we must encourage, not discourage.
 - (i) We need to be aware of what He’s doing; we need to consider not only what it cost Jesus Christ to give us this blessing, but also who it is that’s working these things in us.
 - (ii) We need to remember that He is the source of every good in us – the reason we want to do anything good, the reason we resist anything bad.
 - (iii) We need to remember these things come from Him, and submit to Him, yield to His work, allow Him to move us forward, cherish every motion of the Spirit in our souls.
 - (iv) Our sins quench the fire of the Spirit’s work within us, in the same way that water quenches fire.
 - c. This holy fervency the Spirit creates in our souls is another part of our communion with the Holy Spirit.
 - (i) We need to be careful not to quench His work by giving in to our lusts and temptations which grieve His love and stifle His work in our souls.
 - (ii) This will weaken our communion with the Spirit and so our zeal to serve Him.
- C. The third and final warning is against resisting the Spirit’s leading.
1. To grieve the Spirit is to sin against His love; to quench the Spirit is to sin against His work of giving us zeal, but to resist the Spirit is to sin against His authority.
 - a. Stephen said to the Jews, “You men who are stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears are always resisting the Holy Spirit; you are doing just as your fathers did. Which one of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? They killed those who had previously announced the coming of the Righteous One, whose betrayers and murderers you have now become; you

who received the law as ordained by angels, and yet did not keep it” (Acts 7:51-53).

- (i) How did the Jewish fathers resist the Spirit? They persecuted the prophets and killed them.
 - (ii) They refused to listen to the Spirit of Christ preaching the Gospel through the prophets, the same thing these Jews were now doing.
- b. When the Spirit establishes the ministry of the Word in the church, when He gives gifted men to proclaim His truth, when that Word is preached, when we listen to it, and submit to it and obey it, this is one of the ways we have communion with Him.
 - c. But when we don’t listen to it, when we don’t submit to and obey it, we are resisting the Holy Spirit.
 - (i) Part of the Spirit’s work is to communicate God’s Word through inspiration – writing His Word through men – and by using men He has gifted to preach it.
 - (ii) When we resist Him, when we refuse to listen, we are weakening our communion with Him.
2. Since the Lord gives us all His blessings through our communion with the Holy Spirit, let’s be exhorted to repent of these three things:
- a. Instead of grieving Him, let’s receive His love and seek to do the things that please Him.
 - b. Instead of quenching His work in our souls through our sins, let’s encourage His fire of holiness to burn strongly in our hearts through obedience and the means of grace.
 - c. Instead of resisting Him, let’s submit to His Word as He preaches it to us from Lord’s Day to Lord’s Day.
 - d. Let’s especially submit to His command to turn from our sins and trust in Jesus Christ. If you hear the Spirit speaking to you this morning – and He is speaking to you – don’t harden your hearts, but trust in Him.
 - e. For those of us who have trusted Jesus Christ, we need the Spirit’s help to keep these commands. So let’s prepare to come to the Table now to meet our Lord who will give us His help if we will look to Him and receive it through faith. Amen.