

*The Witnesses of the SPIRIT.*

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A  
S E R M O N  
Preached at *Newark*

I N  
N E W - J E R S E Y,

*May, 7th.* 1740.

Wherein is distinctly shewn, in what  
Way and Manner the *Spirit himself*  
*beareth Witness* to the Adoption of the  
Children of GOD.

On Occasion of a wonderful Progress of converting  
Grace in those Parts.

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By *Jonathan Dickinson, M. A.* \*

Minister of the Gospel at *Elizabeth Town* in *New-Jersey*.

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Gal. iv. 6. *And because ye are Sons, God hath sent forth  
the Spirit of his Son into your Hearts, crying Abba  
Father.*

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Mr. *Dickinson's*

S E R M O N

ON THE

Witness of the SPIRIT.





## The Witness of the SPIRIT of GOD to the ADOPTION of his Children.



ROM. VIII. 16.

*The Spirit it self beareth Witness with our Spirit, that  
we are the Children of God.*



**E**VERY individual Person of this numerous Audience that are here before the Lord, are going into an eternal State, where they must be unspeakably happy, or intolerably miserable throughout an endless and unchangeable Duration. Such of my Hearers as have a saving Interest in Christ by Faith, and are *created in Christ Jesus unto good Works, that they walk in them*, have an undoubted Title to *the Inheritance of the Saints in Light*; and shall certainly spend a blessed Eternity, in the enjoyment of what *Eye has not seen, nor Ear heard, nor has entred into the Heart of Man*. But they who are in a State of Impenitence and Unbelief, under the Power of their Lusts, and Guilt of their Sins, are all of them Heirs of eternal Perdition; and if they  
continue

continue in their present State, must eternally lament their dreadful Condition among Devils and damned Spirits, where *the Smoke of their Torments must ascend for ever and ever, and they have no Rest Day nor Night.* Since therefore we are all Candidates for Heaven or Hell, for eternal Salvation or eternal Damnation; and our State must be quickly fixed beyond possibility of Change or Alteration for ever; it is of infinite Concernment, that we don't deceive our selves in an Affair of such unutterable Consequence, and that we ben't ashamed of our Hope when it's too late to rectify the fatal Mistake.

But what Security can we obtain that may be safely depended upon, in this State of Darkness and Ignorance, Temptation, and Imperfection? How shall our Foundation be so laid, that we may with Joy and Comfort expect the last decisive Trial? The Words of our Text are an Answer to this Demand. They set before us a clear & safe Evidence of our good Estate; and shew us how we shall know *what is the Hope of our Calling, and what is our Title to the Riches of the Glory of an Inheritance with the Saints.* We are safe, if we have *the Spirit it self witnessing with our Spirit, that we are the Children of God.* This therefore we are concerned to seek, with a most earnest and assiduous Application. Without this we should by no Means content and satisfy our selves, since there is so much depending upon it.

Let me then endeavour to assist you in the pursuit of this blessed Attainment, by considering the following Things.

I. What we are to understand by *the Spirit it self.*

II. How the Spirit *beareth witness with our Spirit,* that we are the Children of God.

Under which Head, I shall take Occasion to consider, whether all the Children of God have a clear and satisfying Evidence of their Adoption.

And then

III. Conclude with some Improvement.

I. Then

I. Then, I am to consider, what we are to understand by the Spirit it self.

To this I answer in one Word,

We are hereby to understand the *Holy Ghost*, the third Person in the adorable Trinity; the same God, in all the Perfections of his infinite Nature, with the Father and the Son. --- I may here remark, that the Words before us might be more properly rendered, *the Spirit himself*. For this is not only agreeable with the Original; but more directly leads our Minds to contemplate the Personality of the blessed Spirit, here spoken of. 'Tis he himself, that is the eternal God, that is of the same Nature & Essence with the other Persons of the God-Head, who must work all the good Pleasure of his Goodness in our Souls, who must begin and carry on the Work of Grace in us, if ever we are sanctified; and he himself also must give us the comforting View of his own gracious Operations; must confirm and establish us, by enabling us to see the Evidence of this gracious Change, if ever we find *Joy and Peace in believing*.

II. I am to consider how the Spirit himself beareth witness with our Spirit, that we are the Children of God.

Now that I may set this in a clear Light, it will be proper to observe to you, that there are two Ways by which the holy Spirit beareth this witness with the Spirit of a Believer: the one ordinary, mediate and common to the most, if not all true Believers; the other extraordinary, immediate and less common, even to those that are the sincere Children of God. It may be proper to consider each of these distinctly.

I. Then, the Spirit beareth witness with our Spirit, in a more ORDINARY and MEDIATE Way, that we are the Children of God.

I shall mention some of those ordinary Means and Methods, by which the Spirit witnesseth our Adoption; and by which we may obtain the most clear and satisfying Evidences of it.

And I shall first observe, that one of the ordinary Means, by which the Spirit beareth witness in our favour, is the *Word of God*. The blessed Book of God contains the immediate Dictates of his Holy Spirit: *All Scripture is given by Inspiration of God; and is profitable for Doctrine, for Reproof, for Correction, for Instruction in Righteousness, that the Man of God may be perfect*, 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17. Whatsoever therefore is written in the divine Oracles, is witnessed by the Spirit himself; for he is the Author of them. And we must receive nothing as the *witness of the Spirit*, which is not agreeable to this sure and infallible Standard; and only sufficient Rule of Faith and Practice. By this Rule we must try our State, and all our Qualifications for future Glory. By this Rule we must discover all sorts of false Confidences and vain Hopes; in our selves and others. *If any Man or an Angel from Heaven, preach any other Gospel to you, let him be accursed*. If any Man pretend to any Qualifications, Experiences, or spiritual Impressions, as necessary to our Comfort and Safety, which are not consonant to, or warranted by these Oracles of Truth, we have no business to regard them or take any notice of them. This is a Caution well worthy of our special Attention in these present Times. As the Spirit of God has been in a glorious Manner displaying his Power and Goodness, in exciting a solemn Inquiry after the Way of Salvation in many of our People in these Parts of the World, we must not wonder if the Adversary should sow Tares among the Wheat. We must not be stumbled at it, if we meet with some Pretensions to spiritual Influences, which want a new Bible for their justification. *We must not believe every Spirit; but try the Spirits*

rits, whether they be of God, i Joh. iv. i. And how shall we try them, but by the Word of God? This we know to be the Witness of the Spirit himself; and thence we also know, that whoever speak not according to this Word, it is because they have no Light in them. Isa. viii. 20 --- We have no Cause to be distressed by any new Lights; or new Pretences, that are not to be found in the Bible; nor any Cause to quiet ourselves with any imaginary Attainments, which are not there represented as the sure Marks and Characters of a Child of God. If the Spirit of God does by the Scriptures witness in our Favour, we are out of Danger of miscarrying. If he there witnesseth against us, we can have no grounded Hope of Salvation, whatever Pretences we may make; whatever Experiences we may boast of.

I may further observe to you, that another ordinary and mediate Way by which *the Spirit himself beareth Witness with our Spirit*; is by his sanctifying and renewing Influences upon our Hearts. If we are renewed in the Spirit of our Mind; if old Things are passed away, and all Things are become new in our Souls; if we have put on the new Man, which is renewed in Knowledge, after the Image of him that created us; we have then the witness of the Spirit himself to our Adoption. Such a Change as this cannot be the Production of any created Power; but must be the powerful Operation of the Spirit himself, and is a better Witness in our Favour, than if an Angel from Heaven should testify to us our Title to the Kingdom of God. I would here therefore take Liberty to be something distinct and particular, in setting before you what are these sanctifying Influences of the blessed Spirit, by which he beareth Witness that we are the Children of God.

The first Thing wrought in the Heart of a Sinner; in order to his Conversion to God, is a Conviction of  
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*his Sin and Misery, and a deep Impression of his dangerous perishing Circumstance, whilst an Enemy to God, and an Heir of eternal Perdition. ---- While Sinners are in an Estate of carnal Security, they will not know and consider the Things of their Peace, they will not endeavour to flee from the Wrath to come, nor to lay hold on the Hope set before them. No Means will prevail with them, no Arguments will persuade them to come to Christ, that they might have Life. This is a sad Truth, open to our continual Observation & Experience. We see a poor secure World going on boldly, in the Paths of Destruction and Death, notwithstanding all the Terrors of the Law of God, notwithstanding all the faithful Warnings of the Ministers of Christ, and all the shocking Dispensations of Providence. What an astonishing Thought is this! Can rational Creatures cast themselves down the dreadful Precipice with their Eyes open! Can they run upon the flaming Sword, when it's brandished before their Breasts! Can they venture upon Hell & eternal Damnation, without Care or Fear! When seriously consider'd, it seems impossible: and yet it's obvious to every Observer, that this is the Conduct of the far greatest Part of the World of Mankind; and it will continue to be the Conduct of every unconverted Sinner, until the Spirit of God opens their Eyes, sets their Danger in View, and awakens them out of this stupid and dead State. It is accordingly the first Operation of the blessed Spirit in order to a Sinner's Sanctification, to convince him of Sin. (Joh. xvi 8.) This he sometimes does more suddenly; and by a more foreseeable Impression, filling the Soul with the greatest Agony & Distress, from the most lively Views of his aggravated Sins, and of the amazing Wrath of God. This alarms all the Powers and Passions of the Soul, pricks the poor Sinner to the Heart, with St. Peter's Hearers (Acts ii. 37.) causeth him to tremble with the Jailor (Acts xvi. 29) to*

*shrink and be astonished* with Saul at his Conversion. (Acts ix. 6.) -- But in others these Convictions are more gradually brought on ; and with lower Degrees of Terror and Amazement. These have such a Sense of their Sin and Danger, as makes them in earnest inquire *what they shall do to be saved*, tho' they do not approach so near to Desperation, from the astonishing Prospect of their dreadful Deserts. Some Sinners agonize long under these Distresses, before they can find Rest in Christ. Others are sooner brought to act Faith in him ; and to the comfortable Evidences of it. But all must hereby be brought to such a discovery of their Guilt & Misery, that they can no longer rest in their present Condition ; nor be easy without an Interest in Christ and the Favour of God.

And now my Brethren ! It's your Business to consider, whether you have had this *witness of the Spirit with your Spirit*, or not. If you have been thus awaken'd out of your carnal Security, you have the Testimony of *the Spirit himself*, that he has begun a good Work in you. It is true, that this is a certain Evidence of a sanctifying Change. Many have been brought thus far, that have worn off these Impressions ; and return'd to Folly, like a Dog to his Vomit, and like the Sow that was washed to her wallowing in the Mire. And it therefore infinitely concerns you to take Care, that you don't begin in the Spirit, and end in the Flesh ; that you don't quench the Spirit of God ; and cause him to withdraw, and leave you to your former Security and Stupidity. But as for such of you that have had no Experience of these awak'ning Influences of the blessed Spirit, the Case is at once determined against you. There needs no other Evidence, that you are yet in your Sins, and under a dreadful Sentence of Death and Condemnation.

Another Method of the Spirit is by his *humbling* and *Soul-abasing* Influences. --- A Sinner must be bro't out of himself, or he will never fly to Christ for Refuge, and receive him upon his own Terms. Convictions will awaken him to a solemn Concern about his State ; will drive him to Duty, and produce a Reformation of his external Behaviour. But it's too common that these Attainments quiet the Conscience, and procure Peace to the Soul, short of an Interest in Christ, and a real sanctifying Change of Heart & Life. But if the Spirit of God carry on his Work to purpose, he will bring the convinced Sinner to see the infinite Defect of all his Performances and of all his Attainments, of all his Duties, Reformations, Promises, religious Frames, and moral Carriages, and of all he does or can do, to render him acceptable to God. He will bring him to see, that he is undone, and cannot help himself ; and that he is utterly unworthy that God should help him. He will bring him to see, that it is a wonder of God's Patience that he is out of Hell ; and that it will be a Wonder indeed of sovereign free Grace, if such a polluted guilty Rebel finally escapes eternal Ruin. He will bring him to lie at God's Footstool, as a guilty condemned Malefactor with the Halter about his Neck, having nothing to plead in his own Favour, nothing to depend upon, but abused and forfeited Grace and Mercy. --- Convinced Sinners commonly struggle a great while to get out of their Distresses, by some *self righteous Attempt* or other. One while they'll make *Promises*, and take up Resolutions to watch their Hearts, and to reform their Lives : but alas ! they find their Hearts are an inexhaustible Fountain of Corruption, which they cannot cleanse ; Their Lusts get the Victory over all their good Designs and strongest Resolutions. Then they'll be ready to fly to *Duty* ; and perhaps add new Duties to their old Courses ; and hope by these

to recommend themselves to God. But here also their Confidence withers away; they find so much deadness and dulness, so many sinful Thoughts and straying Affections in their best Performances, that they cannot hope for Safety from this Refuge. In this Distress, they'll perhaps be ready to flatter themselves with Safety from their *Convictions*, from a Sense of their Vileness and Misery. They vainly hope that such Distress for their Sins, such Sorrow and Mourning, such earnest Desires of deliverance from their guilty perishing State, will move God to pity and relieve 'em. But alas! this Bed also will be found too short to stretch themselves upon. The blessed Spirit will still make them sensible that their *Convictions*, legal Terrors, and Sense of their own vileness and sinfulness, will no more serve to justify them in the Sight of God, than their Resolutions, their Reformati<sup>o</sup>ns, or their Duties. And what shall they do in this Case? They now see that there is *no Refuge* but CHRIST only; and to Him they would therefore repair, were it not for the same *self-righteous* Principles still obtaining in them. They would commit their Souls to Christ for Salvation; but they can't think he will receive such poor guilty sinful Creatures as they are: They have hard Hearts, and corrupt Affections: They have not been sufficiently convinced of their Sins, or not sufficiently humbled: They have not the necessary Qualifications for coming to Christ and believing in him; and are therefore yet striving in their own Strength to obtain some Preparations, some Fitness of Soul for coming to Christ. But the Spirit of God won't leave those he designs for Mercy, in these unhappy Toils. He'll shew 'em, that they are not to hope, that the Case will ever be better, by any Thing they do or can do; that they neither have, nor ever will have any *Qualifications* at all to recommend them to Christ; that it's in vain to strive with their own Hearts, in vain to work in their own Strength, or with a de-

pendance on Creature-Helps. *In vain is Salvation hoped for from the Hills, or Multitude of Mountains.* He will shew them, that they justly deserve to perish; and cannot help themselves: that if ever they come to Christ at all, they must come as they are, *wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked*; that if ever he saves them, he must have all the Glory; and that the whole of their Salvation must be ascribed to the Riches of his infinite free Grace and sovereign Mercy, to helpless, unworthy, perishing Sinners.--- If my Hearers would now *apply* this to *themselves*, it may shew them, whether they have this *Witness of the Spirit*, in their Favour, or not. If you are thus humbled, and brought to the Foot of God's sovereign Grace; if you have had this discovery of your own spiritual Impotency, of your desert of God's Wrath, and of your just exposedness to perish, notwithstanding all your own Refuges that you can possibly betake your selves to; it is the *Spirit himself* that has thus humbled you. It is He that has knock'd all your false Foundations from under your Feet, and has given you this humbling View of your lost Condition. And tho' the greatest Degree of Humiliation alone is not a sufficient Evidence of a saving Conversion to God, it is however the *Witness of the Spirit himself* of such a good Work begun in your Soul, without which you could never be saved; and by which there is a hopeful Prospect, that you will be brought to give up your selves to Christ, and depend upon his Righteousness only for Justification and eternal Salvation. *Blessed are the poor in Spirit; for theirs is the Kingdom of God. The Hungry shall be filled with good Things, while the Rich are sent away empty. He will deliver the Needy, when he crieth; the Poor also, and him that hath no Helper.* But how lamentable, how dreadfully dangerous is the State of those of whom it may be said, that *they are not humbled unto this Day!* Whatever Attainments these may have, whatever

Confidence

Confidence they may entertain, they will quickly be convinced, that their Hopes are built upon the Sand, and must fall before the approaching Tempest.

I proceed to shew you in the next Place, that the *Spirit of God* does in an especial manner *bear Witness* to our Adoption, by working in us *a lively Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ*. We read in Gal. iii. 26. that *we are all the Children of God by Faith in Jesus Christ*. If therefore the Sense of our indigent helpless and hopeless Estate in our selves, which I have described, brings us to look to the Fulness and Sufficiency that there is in *Christ*, to receive him upon his own Terms, as revealed in the Gospel, and to depend upon him only as the *Author of our eternal Salvation*; we have therein good Evidence of a glorious Change wrought in us by the Spirit of God, and that *we are the Children of God*; for we are such *by Faith in Jesus Christ*.

This, my Brethren, is the great Concern, this the grand Point that we should be especially careful to clear up to ourselves. If this Foundation be well laid, we are happy for ever: But a Mistake here is the eternal Loss of our immortal Souls. Have we been bro't to yield our unfeigned Assent to Gospel-Truths, and our unfeigned Consent to Gospel-Terms, and to *live by the Faith of the Son of God*? Have we been brought to *rejoyce in Christ Jesus, and to have no Confidence in the Flesh*? Have we esteem'd all Things as Loss and Dung, in Comparison of *Christ*, that we may be found in him, not having our own Righteousness which is of the Law, but that which is through the Faith of *Christ*, the Righteousness which is of God by Faith? Have we valued an Interest in *Christ* above all the World; and chosen Him for the Portion of our Souls? Have we received the Lord *Jesus Christ* in all his Offices, and for all his Benefits? Have we depended only upon the Influences of his Blessed Spirit, to renew, sanctify and quicken us;

and upon his Righteousness alone, to justify us in the Sight of God? Have we submitted to him as our Lord, as well as our Saviour? Is his Throne set up in our Hearts; and do all the Powers of our Souls bow down to him? Do we desire him as our Saviour from future Sin, as well as from past Guilt; from the Pollution and Dominion, as well as from the damning Effects of our Lusts? In a Word, Do we depend upon the Lord Jesus Christ, to be *of God made unto us Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification, and Redemption?* Do we depend upon him to do all in us, all for us; and to be all to us? And do we constantly in the solemn Practice of all religious Duties, thus commit our Souls to him as the *Lord our Righteousness*; and as the only Foundation of our Hope for eternal Salvation? Do we lament the Imperfections of our Faith, and all the Actings of Unbelief in our Hearts; and do we repair to this great Advocate to interceed for us, and cover the Defects of our Graces and Services, as well as of our Persons? --- Happy beyond Comparison is that Person, who upon an impartial Trial can find these Operations of a saving Faith in his Soul. It is the *Spirit himself*, that has according to his abundant Mercy, begotten him again to a lively Hope; and he has a Witness from Heaven to his Adoption & Justification; a Witness that cannot possibly deceive him: He may depend upon it, that *He which hath begun this good Work in him, will perform it unto the Day of Jesus Christ.* The Match is concluded between Christ and his Soul. He may look upon this precious Saviour as his own for ever.

I must yet further go on to shew you, that *the Spirit witnesseth with our Spirits, that we are the Children of God*, by working in us a true sincere Love to God. Alas, Our carnal Minds are Enmity against God; and this Enmity will remain and reign in the Heart of every Unbeliever, until the Spirit of God by his

powerful

powerful Influences, renews the Sinner's Nature, sanctifies the Affections, and enables the Soul to live in the Love of God. And whenever this Change is wrought in us, we have thereby *the Witness of the Spirit himself*, to the Safety and Goodness of our State and Hope: Let us make sure of this; and the Case is plain: All Darkness and Doubts will vanish before the clear shining of this Evidence. --- If upon a strict Inquisition into our own Hearts we can find, that we sincerely admire and adore the glorious Perfections of God's excellent Nature; and uprightly endeavour universal Conformity to his imitable Properties; and in particular, that we endeavour to be *holy, as our Father which in Heaven is holy*: If we esteem *God's Favour as Life*, and his *Loving-Kindness as better than Life*: If we love what God loveth, and hate what he hateth: If we love his Ordinances, and delight in drawing near to him: If we delight in Communion with God, and cannot content ourselves with an empty Ordinance, without God's special Presence with us therein: If we are greatly uneasy, when he hides his Face from us; and the *Light of his Countenance* is the greatest Joy, Satisfaction, and Comfort of our Souls: If our Imperfections and Sins are our Burthen, peculiarly because dishonourable to God, because against such Love and Compassion as he has manifested to us, and because of the base Ingratitude we are therein chargeable with: If we have much at Heart the Flourishing and Prosperity of his Kingdom and Interest in the World, and exert ourselves with Diligence in our respective Stations to promote it: If herein we labour to *glorify our heavenly Father, by bearing much Fruit*: If we love his Image, where ever we see it; and manifest *our abiding in his Love*, by a constant Endeavour to *keep his Commandments*: In a Word, If we cannot rest contented with our Defects and Imperfections in any of these Instances, but greatly lament them before

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God,

God, and mourn all our want of Conformity to him, all our want of Affection and Devotion to him, and all our want of Communion with him: Then we may conclude we have the *Witness in ourselves*, that we are the Children of God.---- Can these Things be the Productions of Nature? Are these the Fruits of that Fountain of Enmity to God, which we have formerly experienced in our own Hearts? No, It cannot be! *The Spirit himself* has wrought these gracious Affections and Dispositions in our Souls. And he thereby gives an incontestable Evidence of our renewed Natures. *If we love him, it is because he has first loved us*, 1 Joh. iv. 19 --- O that all my Hearers could upon good Grounds take the Comfort of what has been said! But alas! there is just Cause to fear, that the greatest Part of them are *Lovers of themselves*, and not of God; Lovers of their Lusts and sinful Pleasures, Lovers of the World, Neglecters of Godliness; or at the best but formal Professors: and therefore whatever their Hopes and Expectations are, they can have *no Part or Lot in this Matter*. These do not love the Lord *Jesus Christ*; and therefore must be *Anathema Maranatha*, accused when the Lord comes, 1 Cor. xvi. 22 -- Oh how different are these two Sorts of Persons; and how very different ought their Views and Expectations to be!

I must furthermore proceed to shew you, that the *Spirit of God beareth Witness with our Spirit*, to our Adoption, and to our Interest in the Favour of God, by giving us a *Love to his Children*. We read 1 Joh iii 14 *We know that we are passed from Death to Life, because we love the Brethren*. This cannot imply, that a natural Affection to the Children of God, because of any Relation to 'em, or any personal Friendship, or because of their Kindness to us, their good Neighbourhood, or the like, is an Evidence of our Sanctification. Nor on the other  
Hand,

Hand, does it imply, that as an Evidence of our Adoption, we must love or approve the Faults and Mistakes, the Errors and Imperfections of those whom we esteem the Children of God. But it implies, that if we love the Persons, and especially the gracious Qualifications of those whom we have Reason to conclude the Children of God, for his Sake ; if we love the Image of Christ wherever we see it, or wherever we think we see it (for there can be no infallible certainty in this Case) if we love the Brethren as Brethren, love their Company, love Communion and Fellowship with them in religious Exercises ; and love an Imitation of them, labour after a Conformity to them in their Graces, their Piety, and vertuous Demeanour ; it is a Witness for us, that we are born of God. *The Spirit himself* has wrought these gracious Affections in us. We were naturally in love with Sinners ; and how comes it to pass, that their sinful Practices & their sinful Company and Fellowship become so grievous & burdensome to us ? On the other Hand, we are naturally full of Enmity to the gracious Attainments, spiritual Dispositions, and religious Lives of the Saints ; and how come they to be so delightful to us now ? How come they to be our only chosen Companions ? How come they to appear to us the only excellent ones of the Earth ? How come we not only to love their Persons, but their Piety ; and to be transform'd into the like spiritual Affections, Dispositions, and Conversations, which were before so contrary to us ? Is it not most evident, that this Change is from *the Spirit himself* ; and that he himself does hereby *bear Witness*, that we are among *the Children of God*, having the same sanctified Habit of Soul, that we so highly value and esteem in them ? This certainly must be the Case ; and they that find these Qualifications in themselves, should take the Comfort of them ; while others (poor Souls ! ) are like to spend their Eternity with such Companions

as are most agreeable to them now, but will prove their Tormentors in the End.

I go on to add, that the *Spirit beareth Witness with our Spirit*, by giving us a *Victory over the World*; and by making us *spiritually minded*. We are naturally of the *Earth earthy*; and we *mind earthly Things*. Our Cares, Thoughts, and Affections are chiefly exercised about, and in a great Measure limited to, the Affairs and Interests of Time and Sense. This we have found by Experience. And is it otherwise with us now? Does the World shrink to nothing in our Sight, when compar'd with the Favour of God, and the Concerns of a future State? Do we look, not to the Things which are seen and temporal; but to those Things that are unseen and eternal? Are these Things the Subjects of our principal Care and Concern, of our chief Affections, Meditations, and Pursuits? Are these the first and the last with us? Do we endeavour so to use the World, as not to abuse it; and to have our Conversation in Heaven, from whence we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ? Is it our chief Concern to secure a better World than this; and to lay up a good Foundation against the Time to come, that we may lay hold on eternal Life? Do we take more Delight in the Service of God, than in the Pleasures of Sense; and when others are saying, *Who will shew us any Good!* do we rejoice more in the Light of God's Countenance, than they do when their Corn, and Wine, and Oil increase? Whence then comes this great & wonderful Change? The Answer is prepared for us; It is because we are risen with Christ, that we seek those Things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the Right Hand of God. It is because we are dead, and our Life is hid with Christ in God, that we set our Affections on Things above; and not on Things on the Earth. (Col. iii. 1, 2, 3) It is the Spirit himself that has thus raised us above sensible and worldly Views; and he thereby bear-

eth Witness for us, that *to be thus spiritually minded is Life and Peace.* (Rom. viii. 6.) --- And now, my Brethren! if you can find upon a serious and impartial Search into your own Hearts, that you have thus *overcome the World*, that you thus *mind the Things of the Spirit*, and that in the midst of your worldly Incumbrances and necessary Concerns, your Hearts and Affections are raised above the World and it's Enjoyments; If you can find, that you are out of your Element while necessarily intangled with worldly Things; you may expect the Acceptance and Approbation of your Judge; when those *who mind earthly Things*, will have their *End Destruction*, and will receive a dreadful Conviction, that they have *so loved the World, and the Things of the World*, as that *the Love of the Father was not in them.*

I must once more subjoin, that the *Spirit beareth Witness with our Spirit*, by being in us a *Spirit of Supplication.* Prayer is the very Breath & vital Air of a Child of God. No sooner is *Saul* converted, but the next News is, *Behold, he prayeth!* He doubtless had pray'd as a *Pharisee* before; but now as a *Christian.* He might before have offered many formal and hypocritical Prayers to God; but now he prays in Faith and Sincerity. And thus every one that is truly converted to God, employs himself with a special Diligence and Delight in this Duty of Prayer. He prays, not only to quiet his Conscience; but that in this delightful Ordinance he may obtain *Fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.* He prays, that he may thereby get more Victory over his Corruptions, more Evidences of God's Favour, more of the gracious Influences of God's Spirit; and be ripen'd for more near intimate and eternal Communion with God. Real Saints can't content themselves with a bare Performance of the external Duty. They can't (as before their Conversion) quiet themselves by

*flattering God with their Lips, and lying to him with their Tongues, when their Hearts are far from him. But they follow hard after God; their Hearts burn within them, and pant after God, the living God; after his gracious Presence with them in the Duty. And tho' they often find Occasion to complain of the deadness of their Hearts, and the wandering of their Thoughts and Affections in their nearest Approaches to God; This is their greatest Burthen, and gives them Pain and Distress, like a Bone out of Joynt. This will quicken them to more Earnestness and Diligence in their Addresses to God. In this Case their Desire is before God, and their Groaning is not hid from him, that when their Souls thus cleave to the Dust, he would quicken them according to his Word.*

And now, my dear Friends! Is this your Case? Have you this Delight in Prayer? Have you these holy Ends in performing it? Can you call God for your *Witness*, that you serve him with your Spirit in this Ordinance? Are your Affections engaged, and your Graces exercised, in your Applications to the Throne of Grace? Do your Enlargements in the Duty afford you the greatest Comfort & Satisfaction; and is your want of such Enlargements the Grief and Burthen of your Soul? Are you humble, as well as spiritual, in your Addresses to God? Do you come to him with deep Impressions of your own Nothingness; and with high Apprehensions of the Fulness and Sufficiency that there is in Christ? Do you mourn for, loath and abhor that Pride and Selfishness, that is ready to creep into this Duty, even in your most watchful Periods? — Happy are those Souls, who have truly experienced such Attainments. This is not a Production of Nature; but proceedeth from *the Spirit himself*. It is from the *Spirit of Adoption*, that they are thus able to cry, *Abba, Father*. *The Spirit helpeth their Infirmities; for they know not what they should pray for as they ought: but the Spirit himself maketh Intercession for*

for them with Groanings which cannot be uttered. (Rom. viii. 26) — But then on the contrary, to what Purpose are the dead, dull, and hypocritical Prayers of those, that rest in a meer Round of Duty; and raise their Hopes of Salvation from their superficial Performances? *When these spread forth their Hands, God will hide his Eyes; and when they make many Prayers, he will not bear.* (Isai. i. 15)

Thus I have in some particular Instances set before you, how *the Spirit himself beareth Witness* to our Adoption, by his ordinary sanctifying Operations.

But you will now perhaps be ready to inquire, *How shall we know that we are not deceived?* Many have flattered themselves in their own Eyes, imagining themselves possess'd of these Attainments, when really they had them not; and we are as liable to be deceived as others. What therefore shall we do, that we may not be fatally and eternally ashamed of our Hope? ---- I answer; You must not only seriously, impartially, and frequently *examine yourselves*, whether you have these Characters of the Children of God in your Souls: but must depend upon *the Spirit himself* to give you the Evidences of it. For he must not only work these Qualifications in your Souls; but also give you the happy Discovery that they are there, and keep you from a fatal Mistake about them. To him therefore you must repair with most earnest and constant Application, in such Language as that (Psal. cxxxix. 23, 24) *Search me, O God, and know my Heart; try me, and know my Thoughts, and see if there be any wicked Way in me; and lead me in the Way everlasting.* ---- And now I'm prepar'd to say, in the next Place,

2. The Spirit of God doth sometimes bear Witness, in an IMMEDIATE and more EXTRAORDINARY Way, to  
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*the Adoption of his Children.*—And here I must confess, I am at once nonplus'd, in any Attempt to describe the unspeakable Light and Joy, that flows from this wonderful *Love of God shed abroad in the Heart of a Believer, by the Holy Ghost.* This is a *new Name written, which no Man knoweth, saving he that receiveth it.* (Rev. ii. 17.) As no Idea of sensible Objects can possibly be communicated to those that have not the proper Senses to perceive them; so neither can any just Conceptions of this *Fellowship of the Spirit, this Joy of the Holy Ghost,* be communicated to any but to those that have had the happy Experience of it in themselves. Thence it is, that some Persons from enthusiastick Heats, from working up their animal Affections and Passions, or else from diabolical Delusions, have pretended to these immediate Influences of the Spirit of God, where the Consequence has evidently shewn, they have been *Strangers, that have never intermedled with these Divine Joys.* This *Witness of the Spirit* is nevertheless distinguishable from any Counterfeits, or false Pretences whatsoever, not only by *its own Light,* which dispels all Doubts and Darkness of the Soul, and gives it an Earnest and Foretaste of its future Blessedness: But it may be also distinguish'd by the *concomitant Graces* of the Holy Spirit. If the Person thus signally favoured of God, has *before* experienced the ordinary Influences of the Grace of God, *renewing his Nature, enlightning his Mind, and sanctifying his Heart;* if this blessed Experience *bumbles the Soul at God's Foot,* in an abasing Sense of his own Vileness and Unworthiness, and in an adoring View of God's distinguishing Mercy and Love to such a base and worthless Worm; if this *purifies the Heart, and purges the Conscience from dead Works to serve the living God;* if this mortifies remaining Lusts, makes the Affections more spiritual and heavenly, excites more ardent breathings after the eternal Inheritance; and inkindles a greater Zeal  
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for the Glory of God, as the highest End ; and if this be attained in a *Way of Duty* ; and makes all the *Ordinances* of God more pleasant to the Soul ; if it increases Devotion to God, and Benignity to Men : I say, if the Case be thus with any, he hath doubtless *the Witness of the Spirit himself*, and may well rejoice with *Joy unspeakable and full of Glory*. — But all Pretences to this extraordinary *Witness of the Spirit*, which are *not* accompanied with these gracious Dispositions of Mind, are false and counterfeit, and are like to end in a dreadful Disappointment.

But before I dismiss this Head, I must remember my Promise ; and take Time briefly to consider *whether all the Children of God have a clear and satisfying Evidence of their Adoption, and whether the Evidence of a sanctified State be absolutely necessary to the Truth of Grace*.

In Answer to this I would first observe, that the Influences of the Spirit of God upon our Souls are in themselves *sensible* or *perceptible* Operations ; that they may certainly be felt and perceived by all that have had them. It is impossible (for Instance) for any Person at an Age of Observation to be ignorant of his *Convictions*, if he has been brought out of a State of carnal Security, and had any lively Impressions of his Guilt and Danger. It is impossible but he must feel the *bumbling* Sense of his own Unworthiness, Impotence, and Desert of God's Wrath, if ever he has been brought out of himself to the Footstool of God's Sovereignty. It is impossible but he must know the *Actings of his own Mind*, when he has exercised *Repentance* toward God, and *Faith* toward our Lord Jesus Christ. It is impossible but he must know the *Comforts* which he has enjoy'd, if he hath found *Peace in Believing*. And it is impossible but he must know the *Fruits* of his Faith and Hope in the Mortification of his Lusts, and

and the Renovation of his Heart and Life. These Things are (I think) certain, even to Demonstration. How vain therefore is the Confidence, and how fallie the Peace, of those that know nothing of these Things, and who have never felt the Agency of the Spirit of God, *creating them anew in Christ Jesus!*

But all this notwithstanding, there are doubtless many that have really felt all these divine Influences in their Souls, who remain nevertheless *uncertain of their Conversion*. Sometimes the humbling Views of their own *Unworthiness*, make them afraid to apply the Comfort to their Souls, that *belongs* to them, and that would result from the manifest Marks of Grace, which they could not but see, did they not think it was too good News for them, and what they dare not flatter themselves with. Sometimes the actual *Prevalence of their Corruptions* darkens all their Hopes; and they are ready to imagine their Imperfections inconsistent with a State of Grace. They know it is hard to distinguish between the *Remains* of Sin in the Children of God, and the *Reign* of Sin in Unbelievers; and they are afraid of being deceived; and therefore dare not conclude in their own Favour. They know that there's an Eternity depending, and if they are deceived, it may prove an eternal Disappointment. — Sometimes a Sense of the *Deceitfulness of their own Hearts* renders all their Evidences doubtful; and makes them afraid peremptorily to conclude upon what they even see and feel. They can't but acknowledge, that they have experienced what *looks like* Grace in their Souls: But their Hearts being so deceitful, they dare not trust them. Others have been deceived; and they are equally liable to the same Mistakes that have ruined so many others; and they dread to think what would become of their Souls for ever, if a *deceived Heart should turn them aside, and they should be found with a Lie in their right Hand.* — Sometimes the fre-

quent Return of *Deadness and Dulness in Duty*, keep them under a *Spirit of Bondage*. They are afraid whether this can be consistent with a sanctified State; and are therefore afraid, that what they have experienced, has been but counterfeit Grace.--- Sometimes a *melancholy Habit of Body* keeps the Believer under an unhappy Course of *Darkness & Fear*, and prompts him unreasonably to argue against himself. — Sometimes one and sometimes another of these Difficulties may arise in the Mind of a sincere Christian; and perhaps all of them together, with many others of the like Kind, may conspire to darken his Evidences, and bring him into a most uncomfortable Suspence about his spiritual State.

Whoever therefore teach such Doctrine, that every converted Person must necessarily know that he is converted, do offend against the Generation of God's Children, go contrary to the constant Doctrine of the most eminent Protestant Divines from the Reformation to this Day, and contrary to the blessed Oracles of Truth. — How sad, how dark and melancholy does *Heman* represent his Case, in *Psalms* 88th thro' out? How does he complain, that his *Soul was full of Troubles*; that *he was laid in the lowest Pit, in Darkness, in the Deeps*; that *God's fierce Wrath went over him*; and *his Terrors had cut him off*; and the like? And this was not a sudden or short Deser-tion; but *he had been thus afflicted and ready to die from his Youth up*. Now why may it not be as well supposed, that true Believers may in these Days meet with the same Trials? To whom but such doubting Believers, is that Exhortation given (*Isai. l. 10*) *Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the Voice of his Servant, that walketh in Darkness and hath no Light? Let him trust in the Name of the Lord, & stay upon his God*. Christ came to deliver such, who through fear of Death, were all their Life Time subject to Bondage. (*Heb. ii. 15.*) Read also to the same Purpose the Beginning of the 32d, with the Beginning of the 38th

and the 77th *Psalms* ; and it will appear, that many which sow in Tears, shall reap in Joy; and they who go forth weeping, bearing precious Seed, shall come again rejoicing, bringing their Sheaves with them, according to *Psal. cxxvi. 5,6.* — But it's Time I should make some more particular APPLICATION of what you have heard. And

1. *This teaches us the Folly of those, that content themselves without clear and sure Evidences of their Sanctification and Adoption.* The most of our Professors seem to be easy and quiet with a general Hope of Salvation, without any special Evidences of their Title to it. They seem to suppose, that Assurance is not attainable, or at least that it is not attainable by them; and therefore satisfy themselves with Expectations of Acceptance with God, they don't know why. But consider (I entreat you, my dear Brethren) what the Consequence will be, if you are mistaken. What Comfort will it be to you, if in the Day of Judgment you should be found at the left Hand of Christ, to say, "I expected better Things than this; alais! I never thought it would have come to this; I am dreadfully disappointed." What Comfort will it afford you, to plead at that Bar, that you have eaten and drank in Christ's Presence, and that he has taught in your Streets, if you must then be rejected of your LORD, and meet with that dreadful Repulse from him, *I tell you, I know you not whence you are, Depart from me all ye Workers of Iniquity!* (*Luke xiii. 27*) Can you be easy and secure, when you don't know but you must be damn'd to all Eternity; when you don't know but Weeping, and Wailing, and Grasping of Teeth under the unutterable Anguish of God's terrible Indignation, must be your eternal Portion. Would you be satisfied with no better Security of a Title to your Houses and Lands? Can you in these Cases be contented with a general Hope, that no Body will take

them from you, while you don't know that you have any Claim that will secure your Possession? And are not your Souls and your Eternity (my dear Friends) of infinitely more Consequence and Concern, than these vanishing Treasures, which must perish with the using. O why (dear Souls!) why will you rest in such a dreadful Uncertainty? What may be, may not be; and there is infinite Danger, that your present Uncertainty of Salvation, will issue in an absolute Certainty of your missing Heaven, and falling into eternal Perdition.

2. *This shews us the dreadful and amazing Condition of all those, who cannot but know, that they have never yet experienced the sanctifying Influences of the Spirit of God in their Souls.* Without Breach of Charity, I am afraid, that this is the State of the greatest Part of this numerous Audience. I would appeal to your own Consciences; and summon them in the Name and Fear of God, to deal impartially with you, and to determine, whether this be not truly your Case. And if it be, what an astonishing Case is it! Do you know that you are yet in your Sins, that you are under the Power of Satan, under the Condemnation of the Law, under the Wrath of the eternal God; and under a dreadful exposedness to the Horrors of his infinite & eternal Vengeance? Do you know, that *there is but a Step between you and Death*, between you and the Fire that shall never be quenched? Do you know, if you should be suddenly snatch'd out of the World in your present Condition, that there would be no Hope, no Help, no Possibility of recovering your lost Soul to all Eternity? And can you sleep in such a State as this? Can you rest secure, when you are condemn'd already, and the Wrath of God abides on you? What are your Hearts made of! *Who hath bewitched you*, that you can thus venture upon the thick Bosses of God's Buckler! Is Damnation so light a Matter; that you can fear-

lessly rush upon it? Can your Hearts endure, or your Hands be strong, when the Lord shall deal with you? O consider this, you that forget God, lest he tear you in Pieces; and there be none to deliver! Awake, you that sleep; and arise from the Dead, that Christ may give you Light!

g. I would improve this Subject by way of earnest Exhortation to every one, to apply yourselves with the utmost Concern and Industry, in all possible Endeavours to obtain this *Witness of the Spirit himself, that you are the Children of God.* O my Brethren, be intreated to give Diligence, to make your *Calling and Election sure!* How much Comfort and unspeakable Joy would this blessed Attainment afford your Souls! How would it fill you with admiring and adoring Views of the Love of God in Christ Jesus to you! How would it quicken you in your spiritual Course, mortify your Corruptions, render all the Ordinances of God delightful to you; all the Ways of Wisdom Pleasantness, and all her Paths Peace! What Safety, as well as Comfort, would redound to your Souls, from your being thus *sealed by the blessed Spirit, unto the Day of Redemption!* --- Attend therefore to the following Directions and Advices.

1. Take it for granted, that this Witness of the Spirit is *attainable.* Others have attained it: And why may not you, as well as others? If you do not obtain this blessed Privilege, the Fault must be in your selves. Be not therefore discouraged in the Attempt: but press after it with Hope and unfainting Expectation. God would not have made it your Duty to seek the Witness of your Adoption, if such Assurance were not to be hoped for. I am afraid that many lose this blessed Privilege and Comfort, by giving up the Case as hopeless, and sitting down in Despair.

2. If you would obtain this *Witness of the Spirit,* strive for it in *all the Ways of God's Appointment.* In  
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this Case it is eminently true, that *the diligent Hand maketh Rich.* If you are slothful & remiss, you must expect to be dark and doubtful about your State. But *up and be doing*; and you may hope that *the Lord will be with you.* Be in earnest in attending upon all the Means of Grace & Life; and wrestle with God; with insatiable Desire & Importunity, that he would *lift up the Light of his Countenance* upon your Souls; and give you the *Spirit of Adoption.* And be not discouraged, if you don't presently find Success; but still *follow on to know and seek the Lord.*

3. Be constant in solemn *Self-Examination.* Make it a daily Business to *examine your Selves, whether you be in the Faith.* Search & try whether you have these gracious Influences of the Spirit in your Soul, or not; Set apart Time on purpose. You will do well to take the Help and Assistance of some good Book; that most plainly and clearly sets the genuine Marks of the new Creature before you; and to your Self-Examination join fervent Prayer, that God would graciously shew you your State as it is. In this Way a truly sanctified Person will be like to discover that he is such.

4. Be very *watchful.* Watch over your Hearts, your Thoughts & Affections. Watch over your Conversations. Watch over your Duties. *Watch and pray, that you enter not into Temptation.* Watch lest the Prevalence of your Corruptions, the Formality of your Duties, the deadness of your Spirits, and the decay of your Graces, intercept the Light of God's Countenance, and leave your Souls in Darkness and Distress.

5. Labour to evidence the *Truth of Grace* in your Hearts, by the *present Exercise of it.* Thus, for Instance, if you doubt the sincerity of your *Repentance,* go roundly to work with your Souls: Labour now to get them under the Power of Conviction, & a thorough Humiliation: Review your Sins both of Nature and Practice: Confess 'em to God with Shame & Sorrow;

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**Cry for Pardon & Cleansing in the Blood of Christ: Resolve against 'em, & renounce 'em for ever: And be importunate with Him, who is exalted at God's Right Hand for that End, that He would give you *Repentance unto Life*. --- If you doubt the sincerity of your *Faith*, endeavour now to commit your Soul to Christ, to come empty-handed to him, and to depend upon him only for Justification & Life. Endeavour to see the Fulness & Sufficiency there is in him, and so cheerfully venture your Soul and your Eternity in his Hands. --- If you doubt the sincerity of your *Love* to God, endeavour now to raise your Affections to him; and to make it sure to your selves that you love him, by your Love to his Ordinances, and to his People, by your seeking Communion with him, by your studying a Conformity to his Will, and by your imitating of Him as dear Children. In this Road, you gain Ground by going it over again.**

Finally, *Acknowledge the Evidences* of your gracious State so far as you see them. As on the one Hand, you should be awfully careful not to take up with false Appearances and counterfeit Graces, lest you be ashamed of your Hope: So on the other Hand, you must take Care not to deny God the Glory, and your selves the Comfort, of his gracious Operations in your Souls. Don't conclude, by a false Humility, that this *Witness of the Spirit*, is a Priviledge too great and good for you to pretend to; and that you dare not flatter your selves with having such peculiar and distinguishing Attainments; but rather let this blessed Discovery inflame your Souls to the highest Elevations of Gratitude, Love, and Praise; and now begin the joyful Song, that shall be your eternal Employment, *To him that has loved you and washed you from your Sins in his own Blood, and hath made you Kings & Priests to God and his Father:*

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*To Him be Glory & Dominion for ever & ever. AMEN.***F I N I S.**