

The background of the cover is a detailed illustration of a shield and a sword. The shield is the central focus, featuring intricate golden-brown scrollwork and floral patterns. A sword with a silver blade and a dark hilt is positioned vertically on the left side, partially overlapping the shield. The overall color palette is dominated by warm, earthy tones like gold, brown, and bronze, with some highlights of silver and white.

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THE COMBAT BETWEEN
**THE FLESH
AND THE
SPIRIT**

CHRISTOPHER LOVE



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AND THE
SPIRIT**

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The Combat Between the Flesh and the Spirit

by Christopher Love

AND ALSO The sorrowful departure of the Spirit of God, with its causes: And living in, and after the Spirit, along with its blessedness.

This is a collection of 27 sermons preached shortly before his death by the devoted servant of Christ, Mr. CHRISTOPHER LOVE, Former Minister of the Gospel at Lawrence Jury in London.

Additionally, there is The CHRISTIANS DIRECTORY included, aiming to guide the Christian in the different situations that God may lead them into. It consists of 15 sermons.

Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. - Ephes. 4.30.

Res delicatula est Spiritu Dei, ità nos tractat sicut tractatur. Tertull.

London, Printed by T R. & E. M. for John Rothwell, at the Fountain and Bear in Goldsmiths-row, in Cheapside. 1654.

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To the HONOURABLE Mr. EDWARD BRADSHAW, Mayor of the City of CHESTER, and Mrs. MARY BRADSHAW, his wife.

Honourable and Respected Friends,

I would kindly ask for your indulgence as I provide a brief explanation for why I am presenting this Treatise to you in such a public manner. It is not because the works of this esteemed Author require any endorsement; the warm reception that many of his already published books have received from devout and experienced Christians bears ample testimony to the value and usefulness of his efforts. His name shall be held in everlasting remembrance, and for those who fear the Lord, it is a fragrant and precious ointment. However, the reason for this Dedication (in addition to expressing my deep respect for both of you) is the recognition of your special connection to Master Love. Your connection, Sir, is unquestionable in relation to this Treatise, as you have married his widow, and by God's providence, have provided solace and rest to a lonely widow, causing her mournful sorrows to be forgotten. And, dear Mistress Bradshaw, your rightful claim to the works of this noble man is profound, as you had the honour of being the wife of this distinguished servant and Ambassador of Jesus Christ for several years.

My hope is that just as your union in this cherished relationship was an answer to many prayers, you will continue to live together

harmoniously as heirs of the grace of life, fortified by the strength of prayer.

To assist you in progressing along the paths of genuine piety, I recommend that you earnestly study this treatise, along with other practical and valuable works by this revered Author. While it may be expected that these Sermons may not be presented with the same precision and polish as if the Author himself had lived to publish them, I assure you that they have been diligently compared with his own papers, and the notes have been transcribed by a skilled and perceptive writer.

The world, I must confess, is currently inundated, even to the point of satiation and excess, with unproductive Pamphlets. These have given rise to numerous foolish questions and disputes, breeding conflicts. Many opinions have been expressed that only serve to fuel ungodliness. However, the book I now present to you is straightforward, practical, and spiritually oriented. I sincerely hope that it will be of great benefit to Christians, aiding them in gaining a proper understanding of their spiritual condition. These Sermons (as indicated by their date) were preached by Mr. LOVE just a few months before his imprisonment and death. It is evident that his gracious heart was, until the very end, focused on the significant task of promoting godliness in the souls of his listeners. Consequently, I believe these sermons will be especially well-received, as they represent some of the last and most mature fruits of his flourishing and evolving Ministry. These are the sermons that he gave his consent to be published. Furthermore, they are being printed because they were eagerly anticipated and strongly desired by many individuals whose souls have every reason to bless God for Mr. LOVE'S faithful Ministry, throughout eternity.

Within these pages, you will encounter remedies against the accursed belief that, under the guise of elevating the Spirit, undermines both the Scriptures and the ordinances of Christ. This belief attributes their most blasphemous and atheistic doctrines to

the Holy Spirit of truth, God, who is blessed forever. You will discover the sorrowful consequences when God's Spirit withdraws His presence and influence from the ordinances. May this serve as a warning to Professors not to grieve or extinguish the Spirit, lest He withdraw from the soul, leaving it devoid of life, grace, and comfort.

You will also learn about the precious and potent influence of the Holy Ghost when, through His presence, He brings efficacy to the ordinances. Therefore, let this be your prayer: "Awake, O north wind, and come, south wind! Blow upon my garden, that its spices may flow out. Let my beloved come to his garden and eat its pleasant fruits."

You will discover comforting guidance on how to walk in the Spirit and follow the leading of the Holy Ghost, who is capable of guiding you into all truth.

Lastly, within these pages, you will find a remarkable depiction of the conflict between the Flesh and the Spirit. Every Christian's heart (similar to Rebecca's womb) harbors two opposing factions engaged in a struggle. However, our comfort lies in the fact that "the elder shall serve the younger." Corruption, akin to the house of Saul, will gradually weaken, while grace, like that of David, will grow stronger and stronger. In conclusion, I offer heartfelt prayers to God for both of you. May your conscientious reading of this book bring great benefit to your souls, fortifying you in your most sacred faith. May you live many joyful days together, walking in the fear of the Lord and finding solace in the comfort of the Holy Ghost. This is my sincere desire,

Your devoted friend and servant in the Lord, William Taylor

London, January 25, 1653.

To the Reader

The esteemed Author of this following Treatise, our dear and worthy friend, entrusted us with the task of overseeing the publication of his works that were deemed suitable for public use. While our busy schedules prevented us from personally reviewing the various pieces that have already been published (some of our fellow brethren have done so), we sincerely thank God and rejoice in the positive reception and success they have found among serious and devout Christians. Among these works, this Treatise, which formed the basis of some of his final sermons, held a special place in the Author's heart and received his highest approval. He expressed this to two of us just a few days before his passing. Truly, the effects of this discourse, depicting the triumphant outcome of his spiritual struggle, were remarkably evident in his own heart through the radiant influence of God's Holy Spirit. As his known death drew near, he was lifted above all earthly comforts, adversities, loves, sorrows, hopes, and fears. Although he was a man filled with deep affections and had great tenderness towards his beloved wife and children, he had not only conquered the sinful inclinations that often afflict ordinary professing Christians, but he had also risen above natural human weaknesses. By placing his closest family members in the embrace of his God and Father through faith and prayer, he proceeded to the executioner's block without any sign of turmoil. May his experience inspire the efforts and aspirations of other Christians to attain a similar gracious disposition of heart. Such a disposition would greatly enhance the reputation of the Gospel. To this end, we commend you, as you engage with this book (and all other holy resources), to the blessings of the Almighty, and we request your prayers.

Your Friends and Servants in Christ,

EDMUND CALAMY. SIMON ASHE. JEREMIAH WHITAKER.

January 26, 1653.

SERMON I.

At Lawrence Jury, London, October 27, 1650.

Then the Lord said, "My Spirit shall not always strive with man, for he is indeed flesh; yet his days shall be one hundred and twenty years." - Genesis 6:3

This chapter consists of two parts.

1. God's decision to destroy the world through a flood.
2. God's provision for the salvation of Noah and his family by preparing an Ark in this universal judgment.

The text falls under the first category, God's determination to destroy the world by a flood. Regarding this judgment, the cause behind it is presented here. As the population increased (due to the introduction of polygamy by Lamech), so did sin. Therefore, God intends to decrease the population of the world in order to decrease the sins within it. The specific sin mentioned as the reason for God's decision to destroy the world is described in the second verse, which states that the "sons of God" saw that the "daughters of men" were attractive and took them as wives freely.

However, the term "sons of God" in this context does not refer to angels, as some of the Ancient scholars like Tertullian believed (although angels are referred to as such elsewhere). When speaking of angels, Jesus Himself stated that "the angels of God do not marry nor are given in marriage."

Now, the question arises: Who are the "sons of God" mentioned in this passage?

The answer is that reputable interpreters suggest that it refers to the descendants of the righteous Seth, who were called the "sons of God" because they practiced true worship of God. These "sons of God" saw the "daughters of men," meaning the descendants of the wicked Cain. They entered into marriages with them, and through these unions and mixtures between the wicked Cainites and those who professed to worship the true God, religion began to decline, and wickedness increased in the world, leading to God's resolve to destroy it.

The entire verse can be divided into three parts.

1. A general judgment and severe punishment are threatened, as the Lord said, "My Spirit shall not always strive with man."
2. The reason for this punishment is given, "For he also is flesh."
3. There is a mitigating factor and a postponement of this punishment, as it is declared, "Yet his days shall be one hundred and twenty years."

There are certain difficulties in the text that need explanation, such as:

1. What is meant by "My Spirit shall not always strive with man"?
2. What is the meaning of the reason given, "For he also is flesh"? One would think it should be a reason to show indulgence towards man, yet here it is given as a reason for punishment, although in other instances it serves as a reason for mercy.
3. What is intended by "Yet his days shall be one hundred and twenty years"?

[Question 1] What is meant by "My Spirit shall not, etc."?

[Answer] Some understand "Spirit" to refer to the soul of man, and the Vulgate Latin translation renders it as such, interpreting it as the soul of man. They argue that it is called "my Spirit" because God

infused the soul into man. They take the sense to be that "my Spirit," meaning the soul of man, shall not always remain in man, but that man shall die. However, this interpretation is rejected by our best interpreters. Without delving into other opinions on this text, the consensus among reputable interpreters such as Mercer, Musculus, Rivet, and others is as follows: "My Spirit shall not always strive with man." The term "Spirit" does not refer to man's spirit, but to God's Spirit, the third person of the blessed Trinity. When it says that His Spirit shall not strive with man, it is referring to the operations and workings of the Spirit. It signifies that the Spirit will no longer accompany the ministry of Noah, who preached righteousness, and the patriarchs. It is as if God is saying, "I will now withdraw my Spirit from my ordinances; it shall not always strive with man." It is as if God is expressing more explicitly, "I see that despite my servant Noah's protests and preaching against the increasing wickedness of the world, it is all in vain. I am weary of their rebellious obstinacy, and therefore I have reached a final decision to completely destroy them. I will no longer bear with them, My Spirit shall no longer strive, etc."

Question 2: What is the significance of the reason given, "for he also is flesh"? One would think this should not be a reason for such a severe judgment. God remembers that we are only flesh, so why should He be so harsh?

Answer: In response to this, we must understand that by "flesh" mentioned here, it does not refer to the physical substance of the human body, but to corrupt nature. God declares, "I will withdraw my Spirit, why? Because you are entirely given up to the desires and dictates of the flesh. You are fleshly and carnal, surrendered to the cravings of the flesh. Therefore, my Spirit shall not strive with you."

Question 3: What is the meaning of the phrase "yet his days shall be one hundred and twenty years"? What is intended by this?

Answer: Firstly, it should not be understood (as suggested by Tostatus and others) to refer to the lifespan of humans, as if people's lives would be shortened due to their wickedness. After the flood, people lived longer than one hundred and twenty years. For example, Shem lived 600 years, Arphaxad 425 years, Serug 230 years, Abraham 175 years, and Isaac 180 years. The meaning, then, is this: even though I will withdraw my Spirit from my ordinances, it will be one hundred and twenty years before the flood comes upon them.

However, there is an objection raised regarding how it could be one hundred and twenty years before the flood when these words were spoken while Noah was five hundred years old, and the flood occurred when he was six hundred years old. Therefore, there seems to be a twenty-year discrepancy from God's promise.

This is a complex matter, and interpreters have worked hard to unravel this intricate puzzle and uphold the faithfulness of God. Let God be true, though every person may be a liar. Jerome provides an answer, stating that it is true that God promised one hundred and twenty years between the declaration and its fulfillment. However, due to the enormity of mankind's wickedness and their provocation of God, He shortened the promised time by twenty years. Musculus also supports this view, further stating that when God makes a promise, He reserves the conditions in His own sovereignty. Just as God may withhold a threatened judgment upon a people if they genuinely repent, as seen in the case of the Ninevites, He is likewise not obliged to grant a promised mercy in the case of willful, obstinate, and uncorrectable wickedness, as in the situation of Eli's family. God said to Eli, "I said that your house and the house of your father should walk before me forever. But now the Lord declares, 'Far be it from me, etc.'"

But the best and accurate response to this is as follows: The promise was made to Noah not when he was five hundred years old, but when he was four hundred and eighty years old. Although it is mentioned in the fifth chapter, last verse, that Noah was five hundred years old,

that passage does not indicate that he was that age when the promise was given. Rivet, Mercer, and others hold this view. However, there is a difficulty with this answer: one may object that the promise was made after Noah was said to be five hundred years old.

To this, I answer that in Scripture, it is common when recounting historical events not to strictly adhere to chronological order. Some things may be mentioned earlier than they occurred, and some things later than they occurred. For example, you read about the creation of woman after the seventh day. Moses did not strictly follow a linear order but arranged events according to his purpose. Another instance is found in the case of Terah, where it is stated that he was two hundred and five years old when he died. However, the birth of Isaac is not mentioned until about ten chapters later, even though Terah lived for about thirty-five years after Isaac's birth. I mention this to demonstrate the consistency of this answer with other passages of Scripture. Additionally, the wise Calvin provides an explanation for this doubt. Although it is said that Noah was six hundred years old, he was actually five hundred and eighty years old. However, because he was approaching his six hundredth year and was within twenty years of it, the Holy Spirit states that Noah was six hundred years old, expressing his age as a whole number. Thus, the difficulties are explained.

"My Spirit shall not always strive with man," etc. It can be observed from the entirety of the text that when God threatened the judgment of a flood, He had already threatened an even worse judgment before it. This signifies that God's withdrawal of His ordinances or the efficacy of His Spirit from His ordinances is a more severe punishment than any physical punishment. I mention this in the introduction to the main point so that when you hear me discuss the severity of this judgment, you may perceive it as an exceedingly sorrowful and weighty one.

And yet, before I present the doctrine, I must clarify for you the two different aspects of God's Spirit being withdrawn. When the

Scripture says, "My Spirit shall not always strive with man," it encompasses two things:

1. My Spirit shall not always strive in the ministry of the word through effective working.
2. My Spirit shall not always strive through inward motions and checks upon the conscience.

I will address the point from both perspectives. Firstly,

It is indeed a very grievous and lamentable judgment for God to withhold or withdraw the workings of His Spirit from the outward ministry of the word.

I could mention, as a side note, that the word "strive" implies that the work of conversion is difficult. It is not an easy task to convince someone. However, I will focus on the doctrine I have presented, and in its explanation, I will cover two things:

1. I will show you that it is a severe judgment to have the Spirit withdrawn or withheld from the ministry of the word.
2. I will explain the reasons why God sends this judgment upon any part of the world.

First, to establish the truth of the first point, I will present only this evidence: It is evident that the withdrawal of the Spirit is a severe judgment because when the Spirit is absent from the ordinances, they have no power to convert a soul. A sword in the hand of a living person can pierce and wound, but a painted sword in the hand of a painted figure on a wall can do nothing at all. Similarly, the preached word without the Spirit of God can do no more than a sword in the hand of a knight on horseback—it may please the imagination and entertain the ear, but it will not penetrate the heart. It is the Spirit of God that works upon the heart. The Apostle says, "You are the epistle of Christ, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God." And as the same Apostle declares, "My preaching was not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the

Spirit and power." It is the mighty power of God that works upon the heart. The ministry of the word is like the pool of Bethesda—there was no inherent power in the water to heal, but when the Angel stirred the water, the first person to step in was healed of any disease they had. Similarly, the ordinances are like this pool; mere preaching and listening have no inherent power, but it is the Spirit of God that must move upon these waters, otherwise, they remain ineffective. "The letter kills, but the Spirit gives life." These words should not be understood in Origen's sense, where the letter refers to the literal sense and the Spirit to the allegorical sense. Nor does it mean that the letter represents the Old Testament and the Spirit the New Testament, as the Antinomians claim. Rather, it means that the letter, representing the word of God without the Spirit, brings death and leaves a person in a spiritually dead state. But it is the Spirit that gives life, meaning that the Spirit, working alongside the ministry of the word, makes it effective in giving spiritual life. Thus, it is evident that it is a severe judgment when the Spirit is absent from the ordinances of God because without the Spirit, there can be no benefit at all from the ordinances.

Second, the next point is to explain the reasons why God sends this severe judgment upon any people.

In response to this, I will provide some general reasons and then some specific ones.

In general, the reason why God withholds or withdraws the operation and working of His Spirit in His ordinances is due to the injury or offense that people have caused to the Spirit of God. If individuals grieve the Spirit and extinguish its promptings, it is just for God to withhold its workings and operations. The Scripture mentions six ways in which the Spirit of God can be wronged, and for one or all of these, the Lord may withdraw His Spirit.

1. One way is by quenching the Spirit: "Quench not the Spirit." Quenching the Spirit refers to any act of omission or neglecting

of the Spirit's promptings in our hearts. Therefore, be cautious not to neglect good duties or disregard its motions. For how can you be certain that the Lord may not withdraw His Spirit from you? The wind may cease to blow if we fail to prepare our sails when it does.

2. Another offense of a more serious nature is grieving the Spirit: "And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." You grieve the Spirit when you commit a sinful act for which the Spirit convicts you, yet you persist in committing it. When you heed the motions of sin rather than the motions of the Spirit, when you follow Satanic delusions rather than the Spirit's promptings, this greatly grieves the Spirit. It is similar to grieving a friend when we disregard their advice and instead follow the counsel of an enemy.
3. Another injury against the Spirit is vexing the Spirit: "They rebelled, and vexed His Holy Spirit." This is a higher degree of offense. A person can be said to vex the Spirit when they quench and grieve the Spirit through repeated acts. By doing so, the Spirit is grieved. When someone continues to commit discourteous acts against a friend, it causes vexation. The same applies to the Spirit of God. When we disregard its motions and, despite its warnings, still venture into sin, we not only grieve but also vex the Spirit. As the Prophet says, "They rebelled, and vexed His Spirit."
4. Another expression in Scripture for wronging the Spirit is resisting the Spirit: "Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost." This is a higher degree than the previous ones. Resisting the Spirit occurs when a person recognizes that certain motions come from the Spirit but stubbornly opposes its persuasions and promptings.

5. Another expression in Scripture is tempting the Spirit: "How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord?" Calvin explains this passage and states that the tempting of the Spirit occurred when Ananias and Sapphira, after selling a possession, brought only a portion of the price and laid it at the Apostles' feet, while keeping the rest for themselves. They did this secretly, testing whether the Holy Spirit was an all-knowing God capable of punishing their hidden sin. This was an even more wicked act and a desperate display of atheism, attempting to challenge the omniscience of the Spirit of God.

6. Lastly, another injury expressed in Scripture is doing despite to the Spirit of Grace. This is the pinnacle, the highest offense that a devil in hell or a person on earth can commit against the Spirit. This is the sin against the Holy Ghost, which shall never be forgiven. But what does it mean to do despite? It cannot simply be neglecting good motions, as even godly individuals may at times overlook them. Neglecting a friend's suggestion is not an act of despite against them. Therefore, to do despite to the Spirit of God, certain ingredients must be present:
 - It is a sin committed not only out of unavoidable weakness but out of willfulness. For if we sin willfully after having received the knowledge of the truth, there remains no more sacrifice for sin.
 - It is a sin knowingly committed, not done in ignorance.
 - It is a sin not only committed willfully and knowingly, for even regenerate individuals sin partly with their will. The distinguishing factor is that it is a sin committed out of malice and hatred towards the Spirit of God. Divines apply this to the Pharisees, who, despite knowing and being convinced by the miracles performed by Christ, that He was the Son of God, maliciously put Him to death out of hatred towards His divinity. In summary, the general reason why

God does not allow His Spirit to strive with people is because of the injuries they inflict upon the Spirit of God. The specific reasons may be as follows.

1. Disregarding the Ministry's Ordinance. I won't say that it applies to the individuals serving as ministers, although that is an evil that God will punish. However, despising the Ministry itself, the Ordinance of Preaching, can provoke God to withdraw the workings of His Spirit. If you despise prophesying, you also quench the Spirit, and then the Spirit will not have the same impact on you as it would otherwise. God will not accompany the Word with effectiveness for those who either scorn or deny its Ministry.
2. Another reason may be that people excessively rely on the act of hearing the preached Word. They come to hear the Word preached relying solely on their own strength, and as a result, God will not grant them the workings of His Spirit. When individuals depend on the Ordinances alone, it is just for God to deny them the benefits of those Ordinances. Just as the Israelites, after suffering defeat by the Philistines and losing about four thousand men, considered the absence of the Ark of God among them as the cause, but when they had the Ark with them, it is said that on the second day, thirty thousand Israelite men fell. Thus, God punished their sinful dependence on the external symbol of His presence, and consequently, they experienced less success when they possessed the Ark than when they were without it. God may withhold the operations of His Spirit in His Ordinances because people sinfully rely on them instead of seeking the blessing of His Spirit, the God of the Ordinances. We must regard the Ordinances as the means, but the Spirit of God as the Source of grace. The Ordinances cannot benefit us without the Spirit, and the Spirit ordinarily does not act without the Ordinances. Therefore, we must neither reject the Ordinances nor find our ultimate satisfaction in them, lest God's Spirit departs from us.

3. God may withhold His Spirit from the Word because people fail to prepare themselves for the Word they hear. "With what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you again." This verse specifically refers to the act of hearing the Word. As you measure your commitment to preparing for hearing, God, by His Spirit, will provide you with a corresponding blessing in your hearing.
4. Another cause could be general unfruitfulness despite the presence of fruitful Ordinances. When individuals sit under the heavenly teachings, so to speak, and yet remain spiritually unproductive, this may provoke God to take away His protective care and allow destruction to come upon them, just as He did with His Vineyard. It is as if He removes the hedge and lets the beasts of the field destroy it, withholding the rain from falling upon it.
5. Additionally, when people who attend the Ministry of the Word continue to increase in sin, this can lead to God withdrawing His Spirit. This was the case with the people of the ancient world who had the privilege of receiving the Ministry of Noah, Methuselah, and other righteous individuals. Despite this, their wickedness grew to an exceedingly great extent, greatly provoking God and causing Him to withdraw His Spirit, no longer striving with them.

SERMON II.

At St. Lawrence Jewry, London. November 3, 1650.

And the Lord said, My Spirit shall not always strive with man,
etc. - Genesis 6:3

After having expounded and explained these words, and demonstrated the grievousness of God withholding or withdrawing the workings and operations of His Spirit from the Ministry of the Word, and having presented the reasons for this, I now proceed to apply it, which will have a twofold reference.

1. To those who experience the strivings and workings of the Spirit in the Ministry of the Word.
2. To those who have the Spirit withheld from the ministry they participate in.

[Application 1] To those who are convinced that they experience the working of the Spirit of God upon their hearts in the Ministry of the Word, I would offer two cautions or positions.

[Position 1] Be careful not to mistake moral persuasion for the special working of the Spirit within you. When reason is convinced by the power of Scriptural arguments, it is a moral persuasion, and the Word of God can have a significant impact in this way. However, it may only be a common work of the Spirit. Reason can be convinced, and the affections may be greatly stirred up, yet the Spirit's effective working may be absent. There may be fleeting moments of joy, as seen in John the Baptist's hearers who rejoiced in him for a time; moments of fear, like Felix experienced; or bouts of sorrow, as with Esau and Ahab. Moral persuasions closely resemble the workings of the Spirit, and to distinguish between the two, I will present three distinctions.

1. Moral persuasions only reach the external aspects of a person, while the workings of the Spirit extend to the internal being. They penetrate the heart and the innermost parts. As David said, "You desire truth in the inward parts; in the hidden part, you will make me to know wisdom."
2. Moral persuasions merely restrain sinful actions, but the Spirit's workings weaken the power of sinful habits. This is where the

strength and effectiveness of the Spirit's workings are evident, as it transforms the habits and weakens the inclination towards evil.

3. Moral persuasions only lead a person to abstain from sin out of fear of punishment, rather than out of love for holiness or a hatred of sin with regard to God. On the other hand, the operations of the Spirit affect the heart, changing it and cultivating a love for holiness, causing us to hate sin more than we fear its consequences. This is because of its opposition to God's goodness, holiness, and authority.

[Position 2] For those who have experienced the Spirit of God working on their hearts in the Ministry of the Word, attribute the glory to God alone. Do not attribute it to the means or to yourselves in using the means. Neither give glory to the Minister nor to the Ministry, nor to yourselves, but only to God. "You are our letter, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God," says the Apostle. He compares the people to paper, the Ministry to ink, and the Minister to the pen. But it is the Spirit of God that must write through it. Through the workings of the Spirit, the Ministry becomes effective. "The weapons of our warfare are powerful through God for the demolition of strongholds," he says. He does not say, "We are powerful," but rather, "The Gospel is powerful." Not in itself, but through the operations of the Spirit of God. Similarly, the Apostle says, "I labored more abundantly than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me." Ministers must say, like Peter in Acts 3:12, "Why do you stare at us as if by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk?" Verse 16, "No, but it is the name of Jesus Christ that has made this man strong." Therefore, do not attribute praise to the Minister or to yourselves. You have not converted yourselves, nor have you given yourselves your initial existence in nature, let alone your existence in grace. It is not you, but the grace of God. As the servant in the Parable said, "Your pound has gained ten pounds, and your pound has gained five pounds." Not my efforts, but your pound. So you say to God regarding all the good you have

received through Ordinances, "Your Spirit has been the worker and accomplisher of it, and to you be given all the glory. Not to us, but to your Name be the glory."

[Position 3] For those who have experienced the workings of the Spirit in the Ministry of the Word, be sure to be thankful for it. Consider that the Spirit works upon people more clearly and effectively now under the Gospel than it ever did under the Law, and this is a very comforting position. The Spirit of God works more clearly and effectively.

1. More clearly, in the latter days the Spirit speaks explicitly, and holy men of God wrote as they were directed by the Spirit of God. The closer it was to Christ's coming in the flesh, the clearer the things of the Covenant of grace were known. So, when the Evangelist Saint Luke wrote to Theophilus, he said, "Most excellent Theophilus, the things which we write are most surely believed among us." In previous times, things were hardly believed because they were delivered in a mysterious manner. Therefore, it is stated that in other ages, the Ministry of Christ was not made known to the sons of men as it is now revealed to us by His Spirit. It was a Mystery hidden from the foundation of the world, meaning it was not completely hidden in comparison to the present revelation, but there was not such a clear manifestation made of it by the Spirit. Here, I want you to observe that under the Old Testament, the Spirit revealed things gradually, a little at a time, and kept the full manifestation of the glory of Christ until He came in the flesh.

For instance, in Adam's time, it was only known to the world that the Savior of mankind would be born of a woman. Then, in Abraham's time, it was further revealed that Christ, who would save the world, would come from Abraham's descendants. But all this time, although it was known that He would be from the seed of a woman and the seed of Abraham, it was not revealed of which tribe He would come. That was revealed in Jacob's time, specifically from the tribe of

Judah. However, even during this time, it was not mentioned how He would be born. Therefore, in Isaiah's time, it was said, "A Virgin shall conceive and bear a Son." But where He would be born was not revealed until Micah's time when it was said, "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to Me the One to be Ruler in Israel, whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting." The exact time was not revealed until Daniel received it through revelation.

Thus, you see and it is true what the Apostle tells you, that at various times and in various ways, the Lord has revealed Himself to the sons of men. So, in this regard, we have every reason to bless God that we were not born in ancient days but in those in which the Spirit of God clearly and plainly reveals the Mysteries of Religion.

2. In these days of the Gospel, as the Spirit makes things known more plainly and clearly, it also operates more powerfully on people's emotions. Therefore, in the days of John the Baptist, it is said that the Kingdom of Heaven suffered violence, and the violent took it by force. This means that the Spirit, through its effective working, made people more eager and passionate for heaven than they were under the Law. There will be a more glorious manifestation of the Spirit in its operations. This is evident in the promise in the Prophet Isaiah regarding the abundance of Gospel grace, where it is said that the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be seven-fold, like the light of seven days. In the times of the Gospel, there is a full revelation of the Spirit, and therefore, it is mentioned that when Ezekiel described the holy city in his prophecy, and Saint John described the New Jerusalem in his revelations, John's description of the city is much larger than Ezekiel's. This signifies that God reveals more through His Spirit now than He did in the past.

[Position 4] For those who have experienced the Spirit of God's efficacy in the Ministry, consider that the Spirit, to bestow dignity

upon the Ministry of the Word, does not work directly on individuals but mediately. The Spirit does not teach people directly but directs them to an external ministry, which elevates its significance. I will provide three notable examples where the Spirit refuses to teach people directly but directs them to an external ministry. One of these examples is concerning the Ethiopian eunuch who was reading the prophecy of Isaiah in his chariot. The Spirit observed him struggling to understand and instructed Philip to approach and explain the passage to him. The Spirit did not teach the eunuch directly but instructed Philip to do so. From this, interpreters observe the great dignity that the Spirit of God bestows upon the Ministry of the Word, as even in times when visions and revelations were common, God established the Ministry.

Another example is Paul at his conversion when he saw that vision and heard that voice saying, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" and he cried out, "Lord, what do you want me to do?" Now, Christ did not immediately tell Paul, but he said, "Go to Damascus, and there you will meet Ananias, and he will tell you what you should do." Thus, Christ did not directly teach Paul but sent him to Ananias to uphold the greater dignity of the Gospel Ministry. Therefore, those who expect the Spirit must attend to the ordinances, just as those who want to be healed must step into the pool when the angel stirs the water.

Another example is Cornelius, who saw the angel and was afraid, asking, "What is it, Lord?" The Lord instructed him to send for Peter, who would show him what he should do. Thus, the Lord dignifies the Ministry of the Gospel.

I mention this particular point to highlight the vanity of enthusiasm that seeks to abolish the Ministry and exalts the Spirit's immediate teaching. But here we see the great dignity that the Spirit bestows upon the Ministry of poor, weak, and fallible humans, as the Spirit does not teach people directly but sends them to the Ministry of the Gospel.

[Position 5] Although the Spirit, who is completely free in its operations, has sometimes worked without the Word, the Spirit has never worked against the Word in anyone's heart. To the Law and to the testimony, if they do not speak according to the Word, it is because there is no light in them. I mention this position to condemn the vain impulses of the Spirit that people nowadays pretend to have. Let them remember that to claim a spiritual impulse contrary to the Word of God is not from God but an instigation from the Devil. Yet many have forsaken the bright lamp of God's Word to follow the deceptive light of their own imagination.

[Position 6] You who have experienced the efficacious working of the Spirit in the Ministry of the Word, bless God who has not left you with a naked, empty, and ineffective Ministry to rely on. The word, as it is spoken by us without the operation of the Spirit, is weak and empty. It can often harden and mislead people. But you, who have witnessed the Spirit empowering the Word in its Ministry, bless God who has entrusted such rich treasure in frail vessels. What the Apostle said to the Corinthians holds true for you: "Our preaching did not come with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power." Bless God who has unleashed such power in the Ministry of the Word for the good of your souls. This is the first application for those who have experienced the Ministry of the Word accompanied by the efficacy of the Spirit.

[Use 2] For those who have the efficacy and operation of the Spirit withheld from the Ministry they attend upon, I want to highlight seven things for them to consider.

1. Understand that God's Spirit is a free agent and cannot be bound to an outward Ministry. He should be left free to work in whatever manner, time, and way He pleases. The wind blows where it wishes, and so it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit. The wind here symbolises the Spirit. There is sovereignty and freedom in the Spirit of God to work as He pleases or to withhold His work from whomever He pleases. Therefore, the

Spirit of God is referred to as a free Spirit in Psalm 51:12, "Uphold me with a willing spirit," and in James 1:18, "He chose to give us birth through the word of truth."

2. Consider that God does not withhold His Spirit from the outward Ministry simply as an act of His sovereignty, but as an act of His justice, due to your sins that have provoked Him. Your sins provoke Him to withhold the efficacy of His Spirit from His Ordinances, and as a result, you are hardened and do not receive benefit from them. You commit the injurious acts against the Spirit that I mentioned earlier, such as quenching, grieving, resisting, vexing, tempting, and despising the Spirit. Therefore, do not think poorly of God, but examine yourselves. Sin was the cause for the Lord withdrawing His Spirit from striving with the people of the old world; it was their disobedience, as the Apostle Peter speaks of it: "For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive in the Spirit. After being made alive, he went and made proclamation to the imprisoned spirits—to those who were disobedient long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah" (1 Peter 3:18-20). Their disobedience led God to withdraw the efficacy of His Spirit. Therefore, if the Spirit is not working in you, do not blame God, but rather thank yourselves, for you have provoked Him to do so. Just as God departed from the Israelites due to their sinful provocations, as stated in Psalm 81:11-12: "But my people would not listen to me; Israel would not submit to me. So I gave them over to their stubborn hearts to follow their own devices." The Spirit in Scripture is compared to a dove; now, a dove will always stay in the house where it is bred, unless the dovecote is kept filthy. The Spirit of God can be aptly likened to a dove in this sense; keep your hearts clean, and the Spirit will remain with you; let them become unclean, and the Spirit will soon depart from you. Sin is the reason why the Spirit withdraws from the Ordinances, and why people are left to themselves. God does this as an act of His justice, punishing sin.

3. If God withholds His Spirit from the Ministry of the Word, the fault is more likely to be attributed to yourself rather than to the Word. Many, like the woman in Seneca's tale, complain that the room is dark when they themselves are blind, and the place lacks no light, but they lack sight. Similarly, when individuals do not benefit from hearing the Word, the blame is often placed on the Minister. It is true that we Ministers have our faults, just like anyone else. If we do not preach plainly, methodically, and diligently, there is a fault in us. However, I say that you are more to blame yourselves than either the Word or the Minister. If the seed does not grow, the fault lies neither with the hand of the farmer nor the influence of the heavens, but with the poor quality of the soil. To understand where the fault lies, consider...
- If a Minister preaches plainly and impartially, and yet you do not benefit from his preaching, the fault lies with you, not with the Minister. It was the fault of the Herodians, not Christ's, that those individuals did not benefit from His preaching. In fact, they themselves testified to the truthfulness of Christ's teaching, as stated in Matthew 22:16: "Teacher, we know that you are true and teach the way of God truthfully."
 - If others derive benefit from the Minister's preaching, but you do not, the fault is yours, not the Minister's. If others are nourished at a feast while you remain hungry, the fault lies with your appetite, not the food.
 - If you previously benefitted from a Minister's teaching, but now you do not, if your affections were stirred, desires increased, and love inflamed before, but now no such effects are present, the fault lies with you. It was the fault of those who heard John the Baptist that they rejoiced only for a season. Similarly, it was the fault of the Galatians that they did not benefit from Paul's Ministry as they did before, as mentioned in Galatians 4:16. This is not due to any change in the seed itself but stems from the condition of the soil into which it is sown. If you do not benefit

from the Word you hear, you are to blame for your own corrupted heart, not the Word or the one who dispenses it.

- Although there is much dignity and excellence attributed to the Word of God in its naked form, it lacks the power to convert a soul without the concurrent work of the Spirit. Just as in the Pool of Bethesda, it was not the water or stepping into it that brought healing, but the stirring of the angels, as described in John 5:4. Similarly, it is not the Word alone or merely hearing it that brings about transformation; it is the work of the Spirit. As the Apostle Paul states, "The letter kills, but the Spirit gives life." This means that the Word without the Spirit can only bring death, while the Spirit without the Word does not typically bring about conversion. It is the working of the Spirit with the Word that makes the Word effective. Therefore, the Gospel is referred to as the Ministry of the Spirit, as stated in 2 Corinthians 3:8-9.
- It is a more severe judgment to have the Spirit withheld from the Word than to be without the Word altogether. The reason for this is that the Spirit can convert a person without the Word, but the Word cannot convert a person without the Spirit. Therefore, it is a harsher judgment for you to hear sermons every day and yet have the concurrent working of the Spirit withheld from those sermons, compared to if you were to never hear a sermon in your entire life. Therefore, pray to God that His Spirit may accompany His Word and ordinances to make them effective for the benefit of your soul.
- The Spirit of God may, for a time, be withheld from God's own people, causing it not to attend an outward ministry, and this is a deeply sorrowful judgment. It may be withheld from God's chosen ones in terms of their conversion. Just as the man lay at the pool of Bethesda for 38 years before he was healed, an elected vessel of God may remain in a state of unregeneracy for twenty, thirty, or forty years before experiencing conversion. Moreover, even after conversion, the Spirit of God may be

withheld from the ministry of the Word that God's own people attend, and this can happen in two ways.

1. In its comforting work, this was the case with David. He pleaded, "Lord, do not take your Holy Spirit from me; restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit." The Spirit was withdrawn from David in its comforting work. I do not suggest that the graces of God's children can be taken away, but the comfort of their graces and the comforting work of the Holy Spirit may be withdrawn from them.
2. God may withhold His Spirit in its quickening work. You may come to an ordinance with a hardened heart, and it may not soften you. Although the presence of God is never completely taken away from a godly person, the influences and quickenings of the Spirit may be withdrawn. The Spirit may be withdrawn in a way that hinders growth in grace and causes coldness and dullness in duties. However, the presence of God will never be fully taken away from a godly person. The same sun exists in the sky during winter as it does in summer, but its warm and invigorating influence may be lacking.
3. Lastly, the Spirit of God may be given to those who attend public ministry in its ordinary workings, yet withheld from them in its saving and effectual operations. This was the case with the Corinthians. Many of them had the Spirit accompanying Paul's ministry in its ordinary workings, but not in its saving effects. Therefore, Paul said to them, "Although you have all the spiritual gifts, I still consider you as worldly. Examine yourselves, for the Spirit may be present in its ordinary workings, filling you with knowledge, yet withheld in its saving operations."

SERMON III.

At St. Lawrence Jury, London, November 3, 1650.

And the Lord said, "My Spirit shall not always strive with man,"
etc. - Genesis 6:3

Having explained that it is a severe judgment to have the Spirit withheld from the Ministry of the Word, and presented various cautions and positions regarding this judgment, I will now address an objection.

[Objection] You may ask, "This is indeed a very distressing judgment, but how can we demonstrate or know if this judgment exists in any part of the world?"

[Answer] In response to this, you should understand that it is a difficult and obscure matter, and therefore many of the points I will present in answer to it will be probable conjectures rather than infallible demonstrations. There are many indications that make me fear that the saving operations of the Spirit are being withheld from the Ministry of the Word to some extent.

1. Firstly, we have reason to fear that the Spirit has been withdrawn from the Ministry of the Word to some extent among us because there are fewer people being converted through the preaching of the Word now compared to former times. When the disciples first preached the Gospel, Satan fell down like lightning before the Word. Three thousand people were converted in one day through Peter's sermon. How is it that we can preach thousands of times and not convert a single soul? Multitudes of people were brought in and converted during the early days of the Gospel, fulfilling the promise that "From the womb of the morning you have the dew of your youth," meaning

that a multitude of people would be converted upon the initial preaching of the Gospel, spreading throughout the earth like morning dew. But in our time, the number of converts has greatly diminished, not only compared to previous times, but even in comparison to our own time. How many young people came in upon the preaching of the Word in recent years? And yet now the work of conversion seems to have come to a halt. In the past, ministers would cast their nets and bring in many, but now it seems we are fishing with a single hook, with only one person coming in at a time. This could be a probable indication that the Spirit of God has been withdrawn in part from the Ministry of the Word.

2. Another conjecture is this: when people who live under the Ministry of the Word become worse and not better. For individuals to remain under the Ministry of the Word for many years and yet become increasingly blind, dull, stubborn, and profane, is a clear sign that the Spirit of God is certainly withheld from them and that their destruction is near. Just as the ground that receives frequent rain but remains unfruitful is close to being cursed and destined for burning, so those who have the rain of the Gospel withheld from them are under a curse, and their end will be destruction by fire.
3. You may fear that the Spirit has been withdrawn from the Ministry of the Word because more people are being led astray by error than being converted by the truth. Especially in recent years, since erroneous individuals have been given freedom and support, how many have been perverted and led astray by the errors of ungodly people? This is a sign of a judicial hardness upon the land. We have fallen into the times that the Apostle Peter spoke of, where false teachers arise and introduce destructive heresies, denying the Lord who bought them, and bringing swift destruction upon themselves. Many are following their harmful ways. How many in our present days have been perverted, following the destructive paths of false teachers? This

is surely an indication of the Spirit's withdrawal from the Ministry.

4. Another reason to believe that the Spirit has been withdrawn is that the Word of truth is so adulterated with error. This may be why the Word has so little impact on people's hearts. Just as seeds will not grow in a field overrun with weeds, the seed of God's Word will not thrive in a Church where numerous errors have arisen. The proliferation of damnable heresies hinders the work of God's Spirit in people's hearts. It is said of Christ that He taught the people with authority, unlike the Scribes. The reason, as given by Christ in the Gospel of Mark, was that they made the Word of God ineffective through their traditions. Their erroneous traditions rendered the Word of God powerless in the consciences of their followers. Similarly, in our present day, erroneous opinions eclipse the glory and splendor of the Word of God and hinder the work of the Spirit. Many people express their doubts: How can we believe ministers when we hear contradictory teachings from different congregations? This uncertainty greatly unsettles people and impedes the work of the Spirit in them. The Apostle Paul, when describing the power of his ministry, affirms that they do not handle the Word of God deceitfully. They do not mix or adulterate the Word like vintners do with wine. Instead, he states, "By the manifestation of the truth, we commend ourselves to every person's conscience in the sight of God." The Word, as preached by them, is truly and powerfully proclaimed, reaching even the consciences of individuals.
5. Another reason why God withholds His Spirit from the Ministry is because some men deny the calling of the Ministry. God will not grant His Spirit's efficacy to those who despise and deny the Ministry. There are many individuals who not only disrespect us as individuals, but also despise the Ministry itself, rejecting its calling and seeking to undermine the Office. It is just with God that those who do not believe in the Office of the Ministry will

not experience the Spirit's efficacy within it. The Apostle Paul, in his letter to the Thessalonians, says, "Our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power, in the Holy Spirit, and with full conviction. You know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake." In essence, he is saying that they believed in their Office and Calling, and therefore the Gospel came to them not merely as words, but with power and the Holy Spirit. It is worth noting that the people held John the Baptist in high regard as a prophet, and that is why he had such a profound impact on them. They believed in his Office, acknowledging that his baptism was from Heaven and not from men. Therefore, when individuals denigrate the Office of the Ministry and deny its legitimacy, it can render it ineffective and provoke God to withhold His Spirit from accompanying it.

6. Another reason why God withdraws His Spirit from the Ministry is because many people pursue the Office of the Ministry without a genuine call. Those who enter the ministry without God's sending will not receive His blessing upon the Word they proclaim for the benefit of the people. We can see this clearly in the words of the Prophet Jeremiah, where the Lord says, "I did not send the prophets, yet they ran; I did not speak to them, yet they prophesied." But what good will they do to the people they prophesy to? In verse 32, it is stated, "Therefore, behold, I am against the prophets, declares the Lord, who steal my words from one another." This indicates that their preaching will not benefit the people at all, as they are running upon the Office without a genuine call.
7. Lastly, another reason why the Spirit of God no longer supports the Ministry of the Word as it did in the past may be due to the presence of the judgment of the sword in the land. You may find this reason strange, but let me explain. Other forms of judgment, such as sickness, the plague, famine, or similar calamities, often work in conjunction with the preaching of the Word, leading people to reflect on God's hand in those

circumstances. However, the judgment of the sword causes men to become savage and brutal towards one another. Instead of recognizing God's hand, it turns them into adversaries. Consider how the English nation, known for its amiability and kindness, has been transformed by these wars into a state of barbarism. Prior to these conflicts, many converts were brought to the faith, but since the sword came upon us, it has engendered cruelty and hostility among neighbors. This is the woeful consequence of the Spirit being withdrawn from public Ministry.

Now, let us move on to the second part, where I will show you the sorrowful nature of this judgment when the Spirit is withheld from men in its inward workings upon their conscience in their daily lives. I will proceed according to the following structure.

The Spirit of God may be withheld from men in its inward workings upon their conscience in two ways.

1. In relation to sin.
 2. In relation to duty.
 3. Regarding sin, the Spirit may be withheld in two ways.
 4. Before the commission of sin, so that it does not check or dissuade you from it.
 5. After the commission of sin, so that it does not rebuke or convict you for it.
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1. I will now demonstrate how it is a miserable state to have the Spirit withheld from a person both before and after the commission of sin.
 2. I will explain the reasons why the Spirit of God is withheld in these ways.

3. I will discuss how far a child of God may be left without the presence of the Spirit.

Firstly, let me illustrate that it is a grievous judgment to have the Spirit withheld from a person before the commission of sin by providing the following evidence:

1. Without the dissuasion of the Spirit, one is prone and inclined to yield to any temptation of sin. Just like a city whose walls are broken down, individuals under the influence of sin's temptations, without the opposing dissuasions of the Spirit, become vulnerable to every attack of the enemy. The Spirit's dissuasions act as fortresses, preserving and guarding the stronghold of a person's heart. When the Devil tempts one to sin, the Spirit graciously dissuades and warns, "Do not break God's law; do not harm your own conscience." Through these dissuasions, the heart is restrained. However, when they are absent, how daring a person becomes in doing evil! It is said of Paul and Timothy that they intended to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit did not allow them. Similarly, it can be said of many individuals in relation to sin that they have attempted to commit certain sins due to the corruption of their hearts, but the Spirit has not permitted them. Just as a godly person cannot do all the good they desire because of the flesh, at times they will not do all the evil they desire because of the Spirit. When the wind blows strongly, a vessel can sail against the current that would otherwise carry it downstream. Likewise, the gales of the Spirit assist a person in overcoming the currents of temptation and corruption. However, when the Spirit is withdrawn, how daring a person becomes in committing sin!

If you are left without the Spirit, you will not only be prone to yielding to sinful temptations, but you will also commit sin swiftly and eagerly. We read of a young man who was seduced by the flattering words of a harlot, and he immediately followed her. When temptation is presented and the Spirit does not dissuade, how

quickly one can be ensnared! Just like gunpowder ignites when exposed to fire, temptation has a powerful effect on a corrupt heart if the dissuasions of the Spirit do not protect and guard it.

But that's not all. Not only will a person be prone to falling and fall quickly, but there is also a further danger. You will eagerly commit the sin, becoming consumed by your desires, burning in the sin, and poisoned by the evil. The Holy Spirit hints at this when speaking about the Gentiles who were without the Spirit of God. It is said that they were "past feeling," meaning they had no inner promptings from God's Spirit and were devoid of the workings of the life-giving Spirit. But what follows? It is stated that "they have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness." This implies that they not only engage in sin, but they believe they can never sin enough. Just as a greedy person constantly seeks more wealth, these individuals believe they can never satisfy their lusts. Let's observe a fivefold progression in this sin.

1. They were "past feeling." It is important to note that it doesn't say they were carried away to sin thoughtlessly, but rather, they willingly gave themselves to sin. When the Spirit is within a person and dissuades them from sin, they are never compelled to engage in it. However, once the Spirit's promptings are withdrawn, they willingly give themselves over to the devil.
2. When the Spirit is withdrawn, they not only give themselves but give themselves over to lasciviousness. This means they fully devote themselves to the ways of sin, not just partially.
3. It is mentioned that they give themselves, and this is even worse than what Ahab did when he sold himself to work wickedness. For a person to sell themselves to the Devil is a great evil, but when they willingly give themselves and give themselves over, it is an even greater wickedness.

4. It is worth noting that they not only give themselves over to sin in thought, but the text states that they give themselves over to work uncleanness. They don't just settle for contemplating wickedness; they actively engage in iniquity, making it a trade.
5. It is said that they give themselves over to all uncleanness, not just some sins, but all sins, and they do so with greediness. This is relevant to my point. Where will a person run when driven by the evil spirit? If the Spirit of God does not counteract the devil's influence with opposing motions, how eagerly will a person damn their own soul! Such an individual will not stop until they reach Hell unless the Spirit of God intervenes and says, "This is the way, walk in it." But when the Spirit withdraws, everyone turns to their own course like a horse charging into battle (Jeremiah 8:6). Just as a horse runs violently into battle when not restrained by a bit and bridle (Psalm 32:9), so does a person without the checks of conscience or the dissuasions of the Spirit.

Thirdly, when a person is left without the Spirit of God when tempted to sin, they will not only fall into it readily, suddenly, and eagerly, but they will also take pleasure in it, and this is the worst of all. We read about those who did not receive the truth with a love for it; they found pleasure in unrighteousness. They not only committed sin but did so with delight.

Thus, I have clarified the first aspect, which is that it is a grievous judgment to have the Spirit withheld before the commission of sin.

[Question 2] How it is evident that it is such a great and grievous judgment to have the Spirit of God withheld from a person after the commission of sin, can be demonstrated as follows:

1. Without the Spirit's conviction, you will never be convinced of the evil you have done. It is the Spirit that convicts the world of sin; without the Spirit's conviction, there is no conviction at all.

2. If the Spirit does not rebuke and convince you after the commission of sin, you will never be able to repent of it. Repentance follows the Spirit's conviction. As the Prophet says, "No man repents of his wickedness, saying, 'What have I done?'" A person must be convinced that what they have done is evil before they can repent of that evil. We have a proverb that says, "What the eye doesn't see, the heart doesn't grieve for." Similarly, if the eye of the soul does not see sin, the heart will never be troubled by it.
3. Your nature can never be sanctified and cleansed from the filth of sin unless the Spirit works in you after you have fallen into sin. Sanctification is the work of the Spirit of God. The Apostle Paul, speaking to the Corinthians about wicked and unregenerate people, says, "Such were some of you, but you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God." Believers are said to be a dwelling place of God through the Spirit. From this, you can observe the different works of the Trinity in the heart of a believer. God the Father chooses this house, God the Son purchases it, and God the Holy Spirit cleanses and furnishes this house. Otherwise, it would be a dirty and dark dungeon. You can never have your spirit as a dwelling place for God unless the Spirit of God cleanses you with the purifying grace.
4. Without the Spirit, you can never overcome the power of sin. As the Apostle says, "If you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live." It is through the Spirit that we put sin to death. Thus, you can see what a misery it is to lack the Spirit's dissuasion and conviction both before and after the commission of sin.

[Question] But why does God withhold His Spirit, preventing it from dissuading people from sin when they are tempted, and from convicting them of sin after they have committed it?

[Answer] In general, you should know that God does not do this as an act of sovereignty, but as an act of justice. You have wronged the Spirit, and therefore God withholds the Spirit. There are five reasons that can be identified as to why God withholds His Spirit in its striving with people.

1. Because in the past, you have refused to listen to the frequent motions and persuasions of God's Spirit. The Spirit of God has warned you that if you continue in such wicked ways, the outcome will be death. How often has it suggested to you that if you persist in certain courses, you will be eternally lost? Yet, you have continued in sin and have not heeded the Spirit's voice. God complains about His people through the Psalmist, saying, "My people would not listen to my voice, and Israel would have none of me. So I gave them up to their stubborn hearts, to follow their own counsels." It is as if He is saying, since they would not listen to me, my Spirit will no longer dissuade them. I will leave them to themselves and let them follow their own path.
2. Because it is possible that you have attributed sinful desires arising from the flesh to the Spirit's promptings. This is an injury to the Spirit that He will not tolerate. It is like saying that one's wrath, kindled from hell, is the zeal of the Spirit descending from heaven, or claiming that one's erroneous opinions are the teachings of the Spirit when He is the Spirit of truth. It is like ascribing satanical delusions to divine inspirations. This is an indignity no less than if a subject were to leave his illegitimate child at the gate of his prince. Some believe that this is what is referred to as "vexing the Spirit" mentioned by the Prophet Isaiah. This may be another reason why the Lord may withhold His Spirit.
3. Because people are more inclined to listen to the suggestions of the evil spirit than to the promptings of the good spirit. It is like when your friend refuses to come to your house when you are hosting his enemy. When the Devil easily prevails over you,

either tempting you to sin without any real temptation, or with a small temptation, it greatly provokes God's Spirit. This is also the reason why there is such a severe judgment attached to the third commandment, that God will not hold those guiltless who take His name in vain. This is because there is less temptation to the sin of swearing than to any other sin in the world. Other sins are more in line with human desires and inclinations, but swearing is a sin that people are least tempted to commit. The swearer serves the Devil for nothing and gains no profit or pleasure from their sin. Therefore, God imposes such a severe punishment. When you rush into sin at the slightest temptation and refuse to listen to the earnest prompting of God's Spirit, it provokes the Lord to withhold His Spirit's striving from you.

4. Because in the past, you have plotted and deliberated on how to commit sin, therefore the Spirit will withdraw from you in the future. There are many who commit sin with deliberate planning and consultation. When a person deliberately and contrivedly commits a sin, they greatly provoke the Spirit of God. It is said of a wicked person that they shut their eyes to devise mischief; closing the eyes is a posture of studying, plotting, and deliberating. Just as with a friend, if you accidentally give them a blow, although they may be initially angry, they will quickly be pacified when they realize it was unintentional. But if they see that you plan and scheme their death, they will never want to be in your company again. The same is true with the Spirit of God. When the Spirit sees you fall into sin inconsiderately and without forethought, He may not withdraw from you for this. However, when the Spirit sees that you lie in wait for Him and deliberately contrive how to commit sin, this provokes Him, perhaps not forever, but for a significant period. Such deliberate acts of the soul are more directly against God.

In this regard, it is worth noting what is written about David, that he did what was right in the eyes of the Lord all the days of his life, except in the matter of Uriah the Hittite. Now, why does the text not

rather say that he was perfect or did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, except in the matter of Bathsheba, for that was the most grievous sin? The reason given is that the Spirit of God should say he was a perfect man, except in the matter of Uriah, rather than in the matter of Bathsheba, because his sin with Bathsheba was done rashly and without consideration, he was suddenly tempted. But the matter of Uriah was done more deliberately, with plotting and contrivance. First, he brought Uriah home from the war to cover up his foul deed, then he made him drunk, and finally, he sent him with a letter to Joab that contained the plan for Uriah's own death. It was a sin so deliberately executed that the Spirit of God marked him for it. Therefore, beware of deliberate acts of sin. I am not here to pass judgment on anyone; each of you must answer to your own Master. However, I will say that deliberate sin gives a special provocation to the Spirit of God. It is the saying of a modern theologian, and a true one, that a deliberate will to sin without the act is more sinful than the act of sin without a deliberate will. In the case of Peter, the person who purposefully intends to deny Christ, even if they never do it, commits a worse offense than Peter, who actually denied Christ but did not intend to. Therefore, pay attention to your purposes and deliberations. If you sin deliberately, you are one step closer to the sin of those against whom the Prophet prays, "Lord, do not be merciful to those who sin maliciously."

5. The Spirit of God will withdraw from a person when they use the Holy Spirit for base desires, as hypocrites do who talk about the Spirit only to indulge in sin and enjoy their lusts more securely. This was the case with Simon Magus, who desired the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit in order to appear important and enrich himself. As the Apostle says, this was a cloak for his covetousness. Many people grieve and provoke the Spirit to depart when they do not truly serve God, but rather serve their own interests using God as a means to that end.

SERMON IV.

At St. Lawrence Jewry, London, November 10, 1650.

And the Lord said, "My Spirit shall not always strive with man,"
Genesis 6:3

I will now address another important question or moral dilemma, which is as follows:

[Question] To what extent can the Spirit of God be withheld or withdrawn from a righteous person, both before and after the commission of sins?

First, I will demonstrate how far the Spirit of God may be withheld before, and secondly, after the commission of sin.

The Spirit of God can be said to be withdrawn from a righteous person in five ways before the commission of sin.

1. It may not enlighten you to make you aware that the temptation you face is a sin. We see this in the case of the patriarchs who practiced polygamy. In that dark age, the Spirit of God was withheld from them, and they did not come to the realization that polygamy was a sin until their dying days.
2. Even if you are enlightened to know that the temptation is a sin, you may still be left by the Spirit in such a way that the strength of your lust and the force of the temptation drive you to commit that sin. This is evident in the case of David. He was fully aware that adultery was a sin, yet being left by the Spirit, the power of his lust and the intensity of the temptation led him to commit it.
3. A righteous person may be so far left by the Spirit that when tempted to sin, they may seek counsel from their own human wisdom rather than seeking guidance from the Spirit of God.

They may prioritize their own safety over inner peace, especially when their life, liberty, or possessions are at stake. We see an example of this in David's actions concerning Uriah.

4. It is possible for godly individuals to be left in such a way that they plan and deliberate how to commit a sin before actually committing it. The distinction between godly and wicked individuals is often based on the fact that the former do not sin deliberately, unlike the latter. However, there are instances in Scripture that demonstrate that even godly individuals may plan and deliberate how to commit a sin. According to theologians, this is a dangerous state that brings one close to damnation. For example, in the case of David, while the sin of adultery was not as deliberate as the murder of Uriah, David did plan the means, time, manner, and instrument for Uriah's killing. This deliberate act of sin reveals how far a godly person can be left. Therefore, it is important to recognize the need to praise and magnify God's free grace for keeping one from falling into complete damnation. Though one's garments may bear the smell of hell-fire, it is possible to avoid being consumed by its flames. Deliberate acts of sin are closely related to the unpardonable sin against the Holy Spirit, which is characterized by malicious intent. Thus, caution must be exercised in regard to such sins.
5. The Spirit of God may withdraw in such a way that even a godly person may fall into sins that are contrary to the virtues they are most known for. It is one thing for a chaste person to avoid sins that are not so contrary to their natural disposition, but it is a greater challenge for a chaste person to be left by God and fall into adultery, or for a meek person to succumb to anger. This is a significant evil. Numerous examples can be found in Scripture of godly individuals who were left by the Spirit of God in this manner. For instance, Abraham, known as the father of the faithful, is praised for his great faith by the Apostle. Yet, God allowed him to fall into unbelief and distrust by denying his own wife, which was contrary to the faith for which he was renowned.

You can also observe this in the case of Noah. Scripture praises him as a very sober man in a time when the world was characterized by excessive drunkenness and debauchery. Despite his reputation for sobriety, Noah was overtaken by drunkenness.

Similarly, Lot is commended by the Holy Spirit for disapproving of the immoral behavior of the people of Sodom. However, it is surprising that Lot himself fell into the sin of uncleanness and engaged in the abominable act of incest with his own daughters.

Moses, known as the meekest man on earth, is mentioned in the Scripture. One would least expect him to succumb to anger. Nevertheless, Moses' meekness was transformed into passionate outbursts, leading him to speak recklessly, even asking God to kill him because of his frustrations.

David, renowned for his patience as depicted in the book of Psalms, endured God's afflictions with tranquility. How patient was he when Shimei cursed and reviled him? However, when confronted with Nabal's rudeness, David's spirit was consumed with anger, prompting him to seek revenge and plan to kill Nabal and his family.

As for Job, the Scripture describes him as remarkably patient and steadfast. Yet, even he fell into impatience, a sin that contradicted his extraordinary patience. He cursed the day of his birth and fervently prayed for death, desiring God to destroy him.

These examples demonstrate how individuals, if abandoned by the Spirit of God, can not only fall into sins that align with their natural inclinations but also into sins that are contrary to their nature. It reveals the weakness of humanity when deprived of God's Spirit. This serves as a reminder that individuals can be left by the Spirit to such an extent even before committing sins.

[Quest. 2] How far may the Spirit of God leave a man after the commission of sin?

[Answ. 1] The Spirit may not convict a man that the action he has committed is a sin. This was evident with the Patriarchs in the early days of the world when they engaged in the practice of marrying multiple wives. Although it contradicted the original institution of marriage between one man and one woman, they were not convicted of this sin by the Spirit of God. Consequently, they continued to live in this sinful practice without remorse.

[Answ. 2] The Spirit may withdraw from a man to such an extent that after committing a sin, he attempts to defend and justify his wrongdoing. For instance, Jonah disobeyed God's command to go to Nineveh, and when God showed mercy to Nineveh, Jonah became angry. When God confronted him and questioned his anger, Jonah stubbornly justified his emotions, saying that he had every right to be angry, even unto death. In this example, a righteous man displayed a petulant attitude and boldly defended his own passionate response. Similarly, Israel, referred to as Ephraim, engaged in deceptive practices and oppression, yet they justified themselves, claiming to be rich and free of iniquity, despite God accusing them of deceitful behavior.

[Answ. 3] A godly man may live for a long time, even many years, under the weight of sin without experiencing remorse of conscience. This is a sorrowful state. David provides an example of this when he committed adultery with Bathsheba. It was only after the birth of their child and the visit of the Prophet Nathan that we see any indication of David's troubled conscience. For nine months, he remained unaffected by remorse, comparable to the gestation period of a woman. Additionally, Joseph's brothers, who sold him into slavery and showed great cruelty towards him, did not experience remorse for their actions until about twenty-one years later when they were imprisoned in Egypt. It was during their time in prison that they admitted their guilt, acknowledging that their brother's blood was on their hands, and attributing their present suffering to their past sin.

[Answ. 4] The Spirit of God may withdraw from a godly man to the extent that, after committing a sin, he may commit further sins to conceal the initial one, rather than repenting of it. This is a dangerous progression, bringing one closer to hell. David serves as an example. After falling into adultery, he did not engage his conscience in sincere repentance. Instead, he employed his cunning to cover up the sin. He summoned Uriah, Bathsheba's husband, to lie with her, attempting to disguise his own wrongdoing. When that plan failed, he devised a scheme for Uriah's death, using him as the instrument of his own demise. Similarly, Peter, a good man, committed multiple sins to justify or excuse his denial of Christ. He first denied him, then denied him with an oath, and finally denied him with a curse. The exact target of his curse, whether Christ, himself, or both, remains uncertain. Nonetheless, he committed numerous sins in an attempt to justify one. This illustrates the extent to which a godly man can go astray.

[Answ. 5] After committing sin, a godly man may lack the power to overcome and mortify that sin, leading to repeated falls into it. There are various instances in Scripture to support this. Abraham lied twice, denying his own wife. Joseph fell into the sin of swearing on two occasions. Solomon sinned against the Lord after having received divine appearances twice. The children of Israel murmured against God on ten consecutive occasions. Jehoshaphat succumbed to sinful compliance with wicked men twice, as inferred from the accounts. I mention these examples not to encourage reckless sinning but to provide solace to afflicted consciences. The Spirit may withdraw to such an extent, both before and after the commission of sin.

Before I address the withholdings of the Spirit in relation to what is good, let me provide the practical implications of the previous points. If the Spirit of God withdraws from you to this extent, then I conclude:

[Inference 1] You should not attribute it to God's sovereignty, but rather as an act of justice. God is provoked to do so. Why does the Spirit of God say to you, as the Lord said to Ephraim, "He is given to idols, let him alone"? Why does God's Spirit leave you? You must have offended the Spirit in some way—either by extinguishing its promptings, grieving it, vexing it, or resisting its operations. Therefore, you will no longer hear the dissuasions of the Spirit in your heart.

[Inference 2] Do not condemn a person when you witness them fall into sin; do not be harsh towards them. If God's Spirit were to be withdrawn from you, you would sin far more than that person. Scripture commands you to restore those who have fallen with a spirit of meekness, considering yourself, lest you also be tempted. If you see someone else sin, do not judge them; instead, reflect on yourself. If the Devil were to tempt you with a worse sin and the Spirit were to withdraw from you, you would commit even greater sins than that person.

[Inference 3] You have every reason to thank God for granting the striving of His Spirit to both yourself and others. 1. Thank God that the Spirit is given to you. The Spirit, through the Word, is like a voice behind you, saying, "This is the way, walk in it." By this means, you are protected from many temptations and delivered from numerous evils. If a tempting Devil and your corrupt heart were to encounter each other, and God's Spirit were to withdraw, you would willingly rush into evil. Just like a horse rushing into battle without restraint, you would pursue sin if the Spirit did not hold you back.

Furthermore, bless God for the influence of the Spirit upon other people, as He exercises a restraining power that keeps their spirits in check. Without this, living in the world would be impossible. Human societies would be destroyed, and people would become savage and cruel towards one another. Everyone would be inclined to kill and murder those who angered them, deceive anyone they interacted with, and lie to every person they spoke to. All kinds of sin would

abound. While there is already great wickedness in this present age, it would be even worse if the Spirit did not impose curbs and restraints upon people's consciences.

[Inference 4] Labour and pray that the Spirit of God may strive with you more intensely after you have fallen into sin, especially if it has been withholding its striving from you before the commission of sin. Whether you have sinned out of ignorance, aptitude, eagerness, or deliberate intention, pray for the Spirit to strive with you more powerfully afterwards, and seek this in three ways:

1. Ask for a clearer conviction of your sin. The Spirit should reveal not just sin in general, but your specific sin, with all its heinous and aggravating circumstances. This will bring about a saving conviction, as if to compensate for the Spirit's withholding before.
2. Seek a deeper sense of humility. If the Spirit has been withholding its influence from you before the commission of sin, desire an even greater humbling effect after you have sinned. Under the Law, a person who merely touched an unclean thing was considered unclean until evening. But if someone carried an unclean thing, they were to cast off all their clothes. Similarly, if you have merely touched sin, you are to be humbled. However, if you have fallen into a sin that the Spirit has not convicted you of, strive for a greater measure of conviction and humility afterwards.
3. Understand that the Spirit can also work within you a greater love and affection for Jesus Christ. It is notable that Peter, except for Judas, was the Apostle whom the Spirit allowed to fall into sin the most. When Jesus asked Peter if he loved Him, He didn't simply ask, "Do you love Me, Peter?" Instead, He asked, "Do you love Me more than these?" It was as if Jesus was saying, "Peter, you have sinned against Me more than all the other Apostles, so you should love Me more than they do."

Likewise, Mary Magdalene, who had been a great sinner and had seven demons cast out of her, is described in the following way: "Her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much." This means that the less love she had for Jesus Christ before she committed her sins, the more love she had for Him afterwards. Many sins were forgiven her, and as a result, she loved Him greatly. It is important to note that her love is not the cause of her forgiveness in this context, but rather an expression and evidence of it.

SERMON V.

At St. Lawrence Jewry, London, November 17, 1650.

"And the Lord said, 'My Spirit shall not always strive with man...'" Genesis 6:3

Now I will discuss with you the ways in which the Spirit is withheld in relation to good, meaning that it will not stir up holy impulses in the heart towards duty. But before I delve into this topic, I will present a fourfold distinction regarding the Spirit's motions towards good.

1. There are instances of the Spirit actively stirring up holy affections in the heart, igniting and fueling the flames of affection and grace within individuals. This was promised by Christ, who said that the Holy Ghost would bring all things to remembrance.
2. The Spirit also provides assistance to us. In Scripture, it is said to help us in our weaknesses. We not only read about the intercession of the Spirit in terms of acceptance, but also in terms of assistance. Just as a tree, despite having inherent

potential for growth, requires the supportive influence of heaven to bear fruit, the Spirit of God helps us in our works (Psalms 12:13; Ephesians 1:19).

3. Additionally, the Spirit plays a role in strengthening and increasing grace within the souls of individuals. It goes beyond mere assistance, providing strength and the growth of grace. This is evident in the concept of the supplies of the Spirit, wherein individuals experience further degrees and measures of the Spirit.
4. Moreover, the Spirit comforts and testifies. It supports the testimony of one's conscience, serving as evidence of the sincerity of the heart. As seen in the case of Paul, his conscience bore witness in the Holy Ghost, and the Spirit of God confirmed the truth and sincerity of his heart. Although I could discuss each of these aspects and highlight the grave consequence of having the Spirit withheld in these regards, I will focus solely on the Spirit and demonstrate the sorrowful consequence of its withholding in its exciting acts, preventing the stirring of holy motions in the heart towards good. I will proceed with the following approach:
 - I will explain how it is evident that having the Spirit withheld in terms of holy motions towards good is a judgment.
 - When the Spirit grants such motions, I will guide you in recognizing and distinguishing them from the motions to good that the Devil may incite in a person.

When the Spirit is withheld in its motions towards good, three miseries will befall a person.

1. There will be a void or emptiness of holy thoughts in your heart. The Spirit of God is like the spring in a clock: if it remains still, everything else remains still. Similarly, if the Spirit of God lies

dormant within you, your affections, which are the movements of your soul, cannot stir. It is God who works in us both to will and to do according to His good pleasure. If the Spirit of God is withheld, you will not even have the will to pursue what is truly good. Man's heart is like the house in the parable, which, when the Spirit is withheld, is described as empty, swept, and garnished. Empty means void of any holy thoughts and gracious motions, and garnished means not with the graces of God's Spirit, but with the Devil's influences. If you want to see what those influences are, read Matthew 15:19-20. When God withdraws His Spirit, there will be an emptiness of good motions in your heart.

2. Your heart will be filled and crowded with evil motions from the Devil. The heart cannot remain idle or empty for long. If it is not filled with the motions of the Spirit, it will be filled by the instigations of the Devil. If the heart is not Christ's garden, it will become the Devil's nursery. If it is not Christ's storehouse, it will be the Devil's workshop. If it is not the temple of the Holy Ghost, it will be the Devil's chapel. This increases the misery: when evil motions pester and fill the heart. The Scripture describes it as the Devil filling the heart. If the gusts of the Holy Spirit do not fill the sails of your heart to propel you towards heaven, then the instigation and provocations of Satan will help drive you towards hell. It is noteworthy, as the Scripture speaks of the indwelling of the Spirit, referring to its motions in the hearts of the godly, just as we say the sun is in the house when only its beams are there. Similarly, when evil motions fill our hearts, the Scripture expresses this as the presence of the Devil. For example, the Apostle said to Ananias, "Why hath Satan filled thine heart?" This does not refer to bodily possession, but rather the meaning is that the Devil put that covetous motion into his heart; the Devil was in that motion within his heart. Therefore, people should view evil motions as having the Devil in them. When Judas had the motion to betray Christ, it is said that "Satan entered into him." The Devil entered along with that

motion, for immediately Judas went out and conspired with the high priests, reaching an agreement to betray Christ. As the proverb goes, "They must needs go whom the Devil drives." What a misery it is, then, when the Spirit of God is withheld in its gracious motions, allowing the Devil to possess your heart with evil motions.

3. If the Spirit withdraws in its exciting acts, it will also be withheld in its assisting acts, which is a further misery. If it never moves you to act with grace, it will never assist you in doing so. It is true that sometimes there may be motions to good in the heart that are not accompanied by assistance. The resolutions many take to reform themselves are often the common workings of the Spirit, which are sometimes never actualised with further assistance from the Spirit. Just as there can be convictions without conversion. However, it is certain that where the Spirit does not move towards good, it will not provide assistance in its execution. Water cannot rise higher than its source; if your motions are natural, there will be no more assistance than what comes from your nature.

Now we can understand the misery of the Spirit withdrawing its exciting and assisting power through the following particulars:

1. With the Spirit's withdrawal, the soul is not as willingly inclined to do good, nor does it engage in holy duties with as much liking, delight, and pleasure. Instead, it performs them in a compulsory manner, approaching them like a bear to the stake or a child sent to school.
2. The frequency of engaging in good acts decreases. For example, David did so seven times a day, or Daniel three times a day. However, now it may be only once a month or not even thrice a week.

3. The fervency and intensity in carrying out these acts diminish. Men become lazy, lukewarm, indifferent, and lifeless in all their holy exercises.
4. The consistency of these holy motions weakens. They become fleeting, transient, and evanescent, rather than being steadfast and enduring in the heart.

But how can one distinguish between the Spirit's exciting to good and the Devil's motions in the heart to do good? This is a practical and useful question because it is possible, and quite common, for the Devil to prompt people to do good. In such cases, the Devil may appear as an angel of light. Therefore, to answer this question, I will provide several specific points.

[Answ. 1] If you have a motion to do good outside of your designated place and calling, that motion is from the devil, not from God. An example of this can be seen in the case of Saul when the Philistines were approaching. He said, "I have not made supplication to the Lord, I forced myself therefore, and offered a burnt-offering." The action of offering a sacrifice and making supplication was good, but it was not Saul's role or responsibility to do so. Therefore, even though the action was good, the motion to do it came from the devil. As a result, you can see how displeased the Lord was with Saul for his actions, and Samuel reproved him, saying, "You have done foolishly, and have not kept the Commandment of the Lord" (1 Samuel 13:13).

Similarly, we read about Uzziah, who did not neglect the worship of God and decided to burn incense himself. However, for this act, he was struck with leprosy. Offering sacrifices is a good thing, but it was not right for Uzziah to do it as he had no authority or calling to do so. This applies not only to matters of religion but also to political affairs. For example, if a private individual takes on the role of a magistrate, it is from the devil, not from God, as it goes beyond their place and calling. Absalom attempted to administer justice to the people, but he was an usurper of the royal office and had no

legitimate authority to administer public justice. Likewise, when private individuals, under the pretense of being gifted, take upon themselves the role of public ministry, it cannot be from the Spirit of God because the Spirit keeps people within their boundaries. As the Apostle says, "Let every man abide in the calling wherein he is called" (1 Corinthians 7:20). The Spirit prompts people to do good within their designated place and calling, but the devil does not. Just as fire in the chimney is good and placed there by your servants, fire in the roof or rafters of your house is the work of an enemy. Motions to do good within your place and calling come from the Spirit of God, but motions to do good outside of your calling are suggested by the devil.

2. The devil may prompt you to do good, but it may be his intention to hinder you from doing an even greater good. It is quite notable that when our Savior began to explain to his Disciples that he must go to Jerusalem, suffer at the hands of the elders, chief priests, and scribes, be killed, and rise again on the third day, Peter took him aside and rebuked him, saying, "Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you." Now, this came from the devil, who sought to obstruct the work of man's salvation. In response, Jesus said, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns." These words carry significant meaning from God's perspective.

Indeed, the Papists, who claim succession from Peter, may seek to excuse Peter's action and consider it a divine prompting. However, Protestants generally agree that Peter's action was naturally good, displaying his love for Christ, but the devil was also involved. Therefore, Christ called him Satan, saying, "Get behind me, Satan." He regarded Peter's motion as a stumbling block, hindering the progress of accomplishing the salvation of his people. It could not have been from the Spirit, for Jesus stated, "You do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns." At first glance, you might consider it a loving motion, but the devil had a hand in it.

He will prompt you to do good, but with the intention of hindering you from carrying out an even greater good. On the other hand, the Spirit of God will prompt you to do one good thing without neglecting the performance of another.

3. When the devil prompts men to do good, it is often with the intention of making them do it at the wrong time, purposely causing one duty to interfere with another. For instance, suppose you intend to pray, and perhaps the devil cannot distract you with sinful thoughts, but he will try to do so with untimely good thoughts. For example, while you are praying, he may bring to your mind thoughts about the sermons you have heard or the parts of the Bible you have read. Although these thoughts are good in themselves, they come from the devil. Therefore, those who attend our gatherings and immediately engage in private prayer during public worship, although the act itself is good, it is done at an inappropriate time and does not come from the Holy Spirit, who is the God of order. There are several instances of this. There was a man who approached Christ and asked him to settle a dispute over an inheritance with his brother. Although the request was good, it was made at an inappropriate time, while Christ was preaching. Therefore, although it was a good intention, it came from the devil in order to hinder a greater good. Similarly, there were people who said, "When will the new moon be over, that we may sell grain? And the Sabbath, that we may trade wheat?" Selling wheat was not an evil thing, but the timing of the motion was inappropriate because it was on the Sabbath day. Good motions in their proper season are a blessing, just as rain in a dry season brings comfort. However, rain during harvest is not as beneficial. Similarly, good thoughts that come into a person's mind at inappropriate times, such as thinking about a sermon during prayer or thinking about praying while listening to a sermon, come from the evil spirit, not the good one. It is like a printer who has good paper and clear letters but, if he misplaces the letters and substitutes one

for another, he will create nonsense. In the same way, good thoughts out of season are inappropriate.

4. When a person is moved to do good in a way that harms their physical health, it does not come from God's Holy Spirit, but from the evil spirit. In this matter, young converts often lack discernment. Initially, they have strong affections and believe they must read a certain number of chapters, pray for a specific number of hours, and listen to a certain number of sermons, fearing their consciences will condemn them if they don't. They mistakenly think that all of this comes from God, when in reality, they are driven by the impulses of their own spirit. If you feel strongly compelled to a duty, to the extent that it impairs your physical strength either in its continuance or frequency, it is not a command from God. God would rather show mercy than demand sacrifice in such a case. He is not strict or cruel in commanding duties. The Jews learned from God to offer sacrifices of their animals, but they learned from the devil to sacrifice their own children. God does not require you to fast so often or engage in duty for such extended periods that it weakens your health and strength. He has not ordained any duty for the soul that is detrimental to the body. God desires mercy, not sacrifice, as stated in Hosea 6:6. God deals with young converts as Jacob did with his children and flocks; He does not push them beyond their limits. On the other hand, it is the religion of the devil to compel people to engage in services that are harmful to their bodies. The worshippers of Baal would cut themselves until blood poured out as an act of cruelty to their own bodies. However, the Lord never commanded such things from them. I mention this not to encourage anyone to indulge their bodies or be negligent in God's service, but for the sake of young converts who believe they can never do enough in their duties, going beyond what God has ever required of them.

5. When the devil prompts a person to do good, it is often with the intention of hindering them from fulfilling their outward and

necessary duties. Young converts are particularly guilty of this. Their zeal to live a holy life leads them to live idly, neglecting their worldly responsibilities. However, God never intended for religion to be a disadvantage to our specific callings in the world. A good Christian knows how to pray, hear, and also labour in their chosen occupation. I acknowledge that secular affairs and employment can consume much of the time that should be dedicated to God. I do not advocate for this, but I want to emphasize that neither should your specific calling steal time from your general calling and Christian duties, nor should your general calling rob time from your specific calling as individuals living in the world. This corruption was present from the early establishment of the Church. The Apostle speaks of those who lived disorderly and did not work at all. Some falsely believed that they should not pursue a worldly calling in order to fully devote themselves to God's service. The Apostle addresses these individuals, including those who live a monastic life under the pretext of having more leisure to serve God. In reality, they hide their talents and put their light under a bushel. This comes from the devil, not from God, for God never ordained that His service should make you neglectful of your worldly callings. He has commanded us to work quietly and eat our own bread. I do not say this to encourage a worldly mindset or to indulge excessively in worldly pursuits. Many people are overly consumed by worldly business, becoming worse than Egyptian taskmasters to their own souls. However, let not people rob time from God and give it all to the world. I say this for the sake of young converts who engage in fasting and constant hearing, while neglecting their outward and necessary callings in the world.

6. If our sense of duty towards God causes us to neglect our duty towards others, then these motions to good come from the devil. There is a notable passage in the Gospel of Matthew that addresses this. The Scribes and Pharisees taught a doctrine that if anyone made generous contributions to pious causes, they would be exempt from fulfilling their obligations to their

parents. They said, "Whoever says to his father or mother, 'Whatever I have that would help you has been given to God,' he need not honor his father or mother." The Scripture condemns this as hypocrisy, when people, under the pretence of duty to God, neglect their duties towards others. Therefore, it originates from the devil. When the Spirit of God moves individuals to perform their duties, it moves them with equal emphasis on their obligations to both God and man, to the duties of both the first and second tables. This includes acts of charity and equity towards others, in addition to showing piety towards God. If a person is pious towards God but neglects their duties towards others, they are not led by the Spirit of God, as the Spirit guides individuals in fulfilling all their duties. A boat that is propelled by a single oar on one side will not go straight, and likewise, a person who is selective in their obedience will not find the right path to heaven.

7. When the devil prompts you to do good, he does so in a way that encourages you to rely on the good deeds you perform for your justification. The Apostle Paul addresses this when he says, "For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight." Whoever depends on their works for justification is not led by the Spirit of God. Therefore, as he continues, "This persuasion is not from him who calls you." It does not come from God, for the Spirit of God suppresses and discourages thoughts of earning merit. In the past, some who leaned towards the Catholic faith left behind remarkable acts of generosity, performing many notable acts of mercy. But what motivated them? The hope of earning merit through these works. While acts of mercy are inherently good, being prompted to do them with the hope of earning merit comes from the devil, not from God.
8. When the devil prompts you to do good at a time that is not appropriate for you, it is important to consider the circumstances. For example, if the life of a close relative is in

danger and you choose to go and hear the Word of God instead of attending to your sick friend, the Lord would rather have you show mercy than sacrifice. Everything has its proper time and place. Similarly, if you are a servant and you are engaged in your master's business, and then you feel an urge to pray or to listen to religious teachings, to the extent that you neglect your master's business, it is a sin and comes from the devil. The reason for this is that God views servants, their persons, and their time as not their own. Therefore, at such times, you please God more by diligently attending to your master's business than by being on your knees in prayer. I mention this not to encourage severity towards servants or to deny them opportunities for spiritual devotion, as many worldly masters do to their godly servants. Instead, my advice is that they should not take time away from their necessary duties, which could prejudice their masters, but rather allocate time for holy duties from their periods of rest and other idle hours.

9. When you are prompted to engage in a good deed that is beyond your current level of understanding and capability, this motion does not come from the Spirit of God. For instance, when women and young men, whose education does not require it, delve into complex theological questions and obscure religious controversies, God does not demand this of them. Instead, He desires that they study and focus on the fundamental principles of faith. Just as Jesus did not burden His young disciples with tasks beyond their capacity and maturity, young and weak Christians should not burden themselves with actions that are too difficult for them and that God has not commanded them to do. A wonderful guideline for this is found in Psalm 131:1, "O Lord, my heart is not proud, nor my eyes haughty; neither do I involve myself in great matters or in things too difficult for me."
10. The Devil will tempt people to do good things, but his intention is to wear them out and make them weary in their religious pursuits. It is a cunning tactic of the Devil. As a result, during

the initial conversion of a young believer, the Devil may prompt them to pray more in one day than they do in a whole month afterwards. Although there is genuine devotion to God in these early affections, there is also sin mixed with them. The Devil has two purposes in making young converts engage in good deeds. Firstly, to make them grow tired of Religion more quickly, and secondly, to make unbelievers have a more negative perception of Religion. I mention this not to discourage or suppress good intentions in anyone, as I am aware that for every person who does too much, there are ten thousand who do too little. However, we must be cautious not to be excessively severe, similar to the Church of Corinth, which almost overwhelmed the repentant excommunicated person with excessive grief due to their extreme austerity. Too much strictness and rigidity can discourage people from following the ways of Christ.

11. The Devil may prompt you to engage in actions that are associated with and preparatory to religious duties, rather than the duties of Religion themselves. This is a cunning strategy of the Devil, as if he can keep you occupied with these preliminary activities, you may never get to the main duties themselves. For instance, contemplation is a preparatory duty for prayer, meditation is a preparation for listening to sermons, and self-examination prepares us for partaking in the Lord's Supper. If the Devil can keep you engaged in these preparatory duties for so long that you neglect the main duties, he achieves his goal. Many Christians often overlook this issue. It is similar to a situation where someone is given an hour to play a beautiful piece of music for a gathering, but they spend the entire hour tuning their instrument. Likewise, many Christians focus excessively on preparation for duty, forgetting that preparation is meant to facilitate their engagement in the actual duties. Spending excessive time on preparation while neglecting the duty itself defeats the purpose of preparation. I acknowledge that some individuals do not engage in any preparation for duty, while others, due to the Devil's cunning, waste precious time

that should be dedicated to the main duties. However, the Spirit of God enables us to be focused and efficient in the performance of our duties.

12. Motions to good can come from the Devil if you are prompted to do good in order to disguise your wicked actions and carry them out with less suspicion and greater boldness. This was the case with Absalom, who pretended to administer justice to the people and spoke kindly to them, but it was all a pretence to conceal his plan to usurp his father's kingdom. Similarly, the Scribes and Pharisees devoured widows' houses and made lengthy prayers as a pretence. While it is good to pray at length, doing so for such wicked purposes is utterly detestable. Therefore, if a person's motions to good serve the purpose of enabling them to sin more freely and with less suspicion, they originate from the Devil, not from God. The Devil does not care about your appearance of goodness as long as you remain truly evil and sinful.

[use 1] Therefore, do not assume that you are in a state of grace just because you sometimes have good intentions. You can have good intentions and still be a bad person; not all fire is the fire of the Sanctuary. Therefore, remember that you can have a thousand good intentions and still end up in hell. Balaam had a good intention when he expressed the desire to die the death of the righteous, yet he was someone who loved the rewards of unrighteousness. While I do not want to discourage good intentions, I must emphasize that you can have such intentions that may come from the Devil rather than the Spirit of God. Therefore, examine your ways and your motivations for good, and determine whether they arise from the striving of the Spirit of God within you or from the instigations of the evil Spirit that opposes you.

SERMON. VI.

At St. Lawrence Jury, London, November 24, 1650.

And the Lord said, "My Spirit shall not always strive with man," Genesis 6:3

[Question 3] Now I will address a third question: Why or for what reason does God withdraw or withhold the striving of His Spirit from the souls of men?

I will present four reasons as the cause of this judgment.

[Answer 1] Because you quench the motions of God's Spirit, therefore He withdraws the Spirit in its motions from you. The Spirit of God is delicate and must not be harmed or abused. If we act sinfully, God's response is one of justice. Just as Israel would not listen, so God gave them up to their own desires. This is evident in the story of the Spouse in the Song of Solomon. Christ came knocking at the door, but she put Him off, and as a result, He withdrew Himself. She sought Him in bitterness but could not find Him. She opened the door to her beloved, but He had already departed. She called out to Him, but He did not answer. When we reject Christ and quench the motions of His Spirit, He departs from us as an act of justice.

There are three types of spiritual desertions:

- Cautionary desertions, aimed at preventing sin, such as when Paul was buffeted by Satan to prevent him from being exalted.
- Probational desertions, meant to test and exercise grace, as seen in the case of Job.
- Penal and corrective desertions, designed to chastise spiritual sloth, as in the example of the Spouse mentioned earlier.

2. Because people are more inclined to entertain evil temptations to sin than the Spirit's promptings to do good. This is another reason. When a friend sees that an old acquaintance would rather listen to the solicitations of an enemy than to their own advice, it provokes them to end the friendship. Similarly, the Spirit of God, who has been your long-time friend and best friend, when He sees you paying more attention to the suggestions of the evil spirit than to His own promptings, He is provoked to depart. I can relate the story of Rehoboam to illustrate this point. When the wise and respected elders of Israel saw that the thoughtless king had disregarded their advice and followed the reckless counsel of young and inexperienced men, they abandoned him, and ten out of twelve tribes turned away from him. In the same way, the Holy Spirit leaves those who disregard His promptings and wise counsel.
3. Because people have misused the motions and workings of the Spirit for base and sinful purposes, such as seeking popularity, vain glory, personal gain, or using it as a cover for secret lusts. When the Spirit of God is misused in such a way, being used as an excuse for indulging in one's own desires, it provokes the Spirit of God to abandon a person and allow them to use spiritual gifts for base purposes! What is this but for someone to light their lantern from the sacred lamp so that they can engage in theft? This was the sin of Simon Magus, who desired to buy the gift of the Spirit with money, intending to misuse it. This is a great provocation to the Spirit of God.
4. Because people have attributed and ascribed sinful affections that arise from the flesh to the Spirit. When individuals consider their own wrath, which stems from hell, to be the zeal of the Spirit coming from heaven, when they mistake Satan's deceptions for the Spirit's promptings, when they label licentious living as a Christian's spiritual freedom, and erroneous opinions as the Spirit's teachings, when they claim presumptuous peace as the Spirit's testimony, it is like an

adulterous beggar laying their child at the King's doorstep. This is such a serious provocation that the Spirit of God cannot help but withdraw from such individuals.

I will now proceed to present the symptoms or signs of the Spirit's withdrawal. When I mention a withdrawal of the Spirit, I do not mean a complete withdrawal, but rather a gradual one. There are ten symptoms that I will outline, and if you find any of them in yourself, you will be able to pass a fair judgment upon yourselves.

1. If the Spirit is withdrawn, you do not engage in doing good as willingly as you did before. In the past, your soul used to run swiftly and freely on the path of goodness, but now the wheels of the chariot of your soul have been taken off, and you move forward with heaviness. It is not the chariot of Amminadab. The description of God's people in the Gospel era is that they shall be a willing people. "Your people will volunteer freely on the day of Your power" (Psalm 110:3, NASB). However, a person from whom the Spirit of God is withdrawn does good not so much out of contentment but as a compelled action. They approach their duties like a bear tied to a stake or a child going to school, only doing what is commanded with much regret and reluctance, with little willingness. They are drawn rather than led to duty, compelled to do good out of a dreadful fear of hell and some hope of heaven, or to silence the clamor of a guilty conscience. When the Spirit is withdrawn, you do not approach your duties with the same willingness as before.
2. Nor do you prepare yourself as you used to. In the past, you were able to do as Abraham did, leaving his possessions and servants in the valley, casting off hindrances that could impede and distract you. When you prayed, you would engage in consideration; when you heard, you prepared yourself; and when you received the sacrament, you examined yourself. But now, with the Spirit of God withdrawn, you set aside those preparatory duties that are so helpful to us in those activities

where we commune with God. Your soul used to adorn itself as a bride when approaching the King to experience communion with the Almighty. But now, you have become careless in this preparation, which is a sign that the Spirit is withdrawn.

3. You do not have the same heart's delight in holy duties as you did before. Those duties that were once done with joy now feel like a burden. They used to be as sweet as honey to your taste, but now they are no more enjoyable than the white of an egg. There was a time when you could say with the Psalmist, "I was glad when they said to me, 'Let us go to the house of the LORD!'" (Psalm 122:1, ESV). Your esteem for the worship of God was such that you could declare, "I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness" (Psalm 84:10, ESV). But alas, where is this delight now? Duty feels like a burden, not a pleasure.
4. It is a sign that the Spirit is gradually withdrawing when you do not engage in duty as frequently as before. In the past, you used to pray seven times a day like David, or three times a day like Daniel, but now not even three times a week. How have the frequency of your duties decreased? To those in such a situation, I would say, consider the following:
 - You do not have fewer enemies now than before, so why should you be less diligent in duty? The vigilance of the enemy is heightened by our laziness and complacency.
 - You do not have fewer temptations than before, so why should you not be frequent in prayer to be delivered from them? Our Saviour said, "Watch and pray, so that you will not fall into temptation" (Matthew 26:41).
 - You do not commit fewer sins than before; in fact, it may be more. Therefore, why should you be less in prayer for forgiveness? One who frequently sins has a greater need to ask for forgiveness.

- You do not have less need for grace than before; in fact, it may be greater. So why are you less devoted in your duty to seek God's grace? If you are less frequent in your holy duties than before, it is an indication that the Spirit is gradually withdrawing from you.
5. If you do not have the same fervency in your holy duties as before, it is a significant sign that you have greatly declined in grace. This is noted as the decay of the Church in Ephesus: "Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken the love you had at first" (Revelation 2:4, NIV). It does not say that you have lost it, but that you have left your first love. Grace may be left, but not lost. The initial affection you had for the ways of God has been abandoned, and you have declined in these affections. Jerome rebuked the lazy in prayer, asking, "Do you think that Jonah prayed in the sea, or Daniel among the lions, or the Thief on the Cross, as you do?" Many individuals have been so forsaken by the Spirit that they have fallen into the state Augustine complained of in his time: Many individuals, at the beginning of their conversion, pray with deep feeling, but over time they pray with coldness, negligence, and lethargy. They lose the affections they once had. They need to stir up the fire that lies hidden in the ashes.
 6. It is an indication of the Spirit's withdrawal when a person performs their duties with less composure than before. Distractions break in, and wandering thoughts arise. Holy motions decline and pass quickly, lacking the same firm and lasting hold on the heart as they once did. This is a sign of the Spirit gradually departing. For where the Spirit of God is present, it establishes and settles the heart in holy duties. David prayed, "Strengthen me with a willing spirit" (Psalm 51:12). However, when there is much inconsistency and instability in the heart, it signifies that the Spirit has partially departed from that soul.

7. If you find that the use of duty is not as fruitful as it was in the past. Previously, duties left a deep impression on your heart, like a seal on soft wax. But now, they make no more impression than a seal on marble. Once, the ordinances of God impacted your soul like rain on the valleys, but now they are like water poured out on a rock. Many people engage in ordinances without any benefit, resembling the cypress tree which is known for its pleasant scent and appearance, but is unfruitful. Many Christians are like this tree—they thrive in God's garden and are esteemed by others, yet they do not bear fruit. If you are not a fruitful tree in the garden of grace, it is an indication that the Spirit of grace is withheld from you.
8. It is a sign of the Spirit gradually departing when you continue in the use of duty, but with less spirituality than before. This can be observed in two aspects:
 - When less grace is exercised.
 - When more sins are committed during the performance of duty.

When there is less grace exercised in duty—when there is a decrease in affection, zeal, delight, love, joy, and heavenly-mindedness compared to previous years—it indicates a gradual departure of the Spirit.

If you commit more sins while performing your duties—such as spiritual pride, dependence on worldly matters, self-centeredness, wandering thoughts, irreverence towards God, hardness of heart, and weariness in holy exercises—this reveals an abundance of sin within you and signifies the Spirit's withdrawal. I appeal to your own consciences; judge for yourselves whether some or all of these symptoms may be found in you. Consider whether you engage in duty with less spirituality than before, with more sins and less grace exercised.

To illustrate this, consider the following analogy: You never see a crow land on a living person, but when the person is dead and lies in a ditch, every bird of prey will quickly descend upon them. Likewise, worms do not crawl on a living person, but once the person is dead and their soul has departed, worms and vermin swiftly consume the corpse. I use this analogy to make the following point: Just as a living body deters crows and worms, so does the Spirit of God within the soul keep vermin-like lusts at bay. However, if the Spirit of God, which is the life of your soul, is withdrawn, then a swarm of vermin-like lusts will seize upon your heart during every duty you perform for God. Your heart will become a cage of unclean birds and a dwelling place for devils if the Spirit of God is once withdrawn from you.

9. You can determine if the Spirit has been withdrawn by observing whether you approach your duties with less care and diligence than before. You engage in the performance of duties with more negligence, rushing headlong into it without proper consideration. When the Spirit of God is withdrawn from a soul, it becomes careless in holy duties in two ways. Firstly, you become unconcerned about the manner in which you perform them and fail to prepare your spirit for their execution. Secondly, you neglect the purpose of duty, which is to improve your soul and make you more fit for the enjoyment of God.
10. If the Spirit has been withdrawn, you can discern it by observing whether you do not continue to engage in duty as practically and influentially as before. This means that good deeds no longer have a significant impact on the improvement of your conduct. God never ordained duties for their own sake, but for other purposes, namely, to shape your life and behaviour. As the Apostle says, "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit." Duties in which the Spirit assists us should have an impact on our lives. Therefore, if you are consistent in performing holy duties, yet they do not influence your heart, you may be a devout hearer but not a godly liver, a great professing

Christian whose actions do not align with their profession. This indicates that your duties do not have a saving influence on your life. You may pray well, but you do not live righteously. You may appear devout on your knees, but your conduct in your daily life falls short. This suggests that the Spirit of God has been withdrawn from you. Now, examine your hearts in light of these points and determine whether the Spirit of God has departed from you or not.

I will now move on to the Application of this message.

[Use 1] This will provide comfort, lest anything I have said becomes discouraging to any troubled conscience. I will present four words of comfort for those in need.

1. Remember that although the quickenings of the Spirit may be withdrawn from a godly person, the presence of the Spirit can never be withdrawn. Therefore, believer, do not despair or lose hope. The Spirit is like the Sun behind a cloud—it is still in the sky. Similarly, the Spirit is in your heart, and though its influence may be hidden, it is constantly present with you. A believer may have the reality and existence of grace within them, even if they do not feel its comfort.
2. Consider, O child of God, who believes that these symptoms indicate the departure of the Spirit from you. Remember that God has never consistently maintained the same motions and workings of the Spirit in any godly person. It is like natural phenomena: the sea experiences ebb and flow, and the seasons of the year include both winter and summer, as well as autumn and spring. Just as this applies to the times and seasons in the natural world, it is also true in spiritual matters. The Spirit of God is not uniformly present and active in all individuals; there are fluctuations. It is like the air, sometimes clear and sometimes cloudy. The Sun in the sky is always present, yet it does not always provide the same warmth, heat, and influence

on the earth. The same principle applies to the Spirit of God in the hearts of believers—it does not always have the same impact on the heart. There may be times when you experience a spiritual winter, and your graces may lack vitality and freshness, but the Spirit is still within you and will cause you to flourish in due time. A tree may have life in its roots, even when it lacks leaves, blossoms, and fruit during the winter. Similarly, a child of God may have their life hidden in Christ, the source of all spiritual life, even during seasons when growth, exercise, and comfort of grace are limited.

3. Remember that Jesus Christ knows that throughout your lifetime, you will not be able to perform duties without weakness or imperfection. That is why he has his perfect righteousness to cover your imperfect duties. This should greatly encourage the hearts of poor Christians. There is a good interpretation of this in Canticles 3:6. It is said there, "Who is this coming out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense?" The one coming out of the wilderness is not referring to Christ, but to the spouse of Christ. Now, observe two things here: she comes out of the wilderness. This signifies that the Church may be an afflicted Church, even though it is a Religious Church. It alludes to the great trials by which God tested his people when he led them through the wilderness of Canaan. And then it is said that she comes out of the wilderness like a pillar of smoke. What does this mean? A theologian gives this explanation: God's people may have smoky duties, tainted with many imperfections; they may be like pillars of smoke. Your duties may be marked with soot. But what is your comfort? Although it is said that the spouse came out like a pillar of smoke, she was perfumed with myrrh and frankincense. That means she had the righteousness of Jesus Christ to perfume her duties. He perfumes my duties with the fragrance of his own righteousness. And when the prayers of the Saints, which are compared to incense in Psalm 142:2, are offered by Christ, they ascend to heaven as a most sweet and acceptable sacrifice, far

more pleasing and welcomed than the costly fragrances of the most precious Arabian gums. Therefore, let this strengthen your heart. You may be marked by your weaknesses, but there is a fragrance that can sweeten all your duties. Hence, it is said that the Angel came and stood at the altar, holding a golden censer, and much incense was given to him to offer it with the prayers of all the Saints on the golden altar before the throne. This does not support the Popish belief of using the mediation of Angels. The Angel here does not refer to a created Angel of the Lord, but to the Angel of the Covenant, who is the Lord himself. And what was his role? He had much incense, and with this incense, he offered the prayers of the Saints. All the people of God share in the righteousness of Jesus Christ to cover their imperfect duties. It is also said that the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the Saints, ascended before God out of the Angel's hand. This means that the righteousness of Jesus Christ is scented with the prayers of the Saints and presented to the Lord, whereby they are accepted.

4. Lastly, take comfort in this: even though you cannot perform duties without weakness, you do perform them without known hypocrisy. Though you may stumble in the manner of your performance, you do not intend to be false in your intentions or principles. The sincerity of your heart in this matter can bring you comfort. Even if the Spirit may withdraw for a while from such a person, it will not be long before it returns again. Though to humble you, the Spirit may temporarily withdraw in anger, it will eventually come back. "In a little moment I hid my face from you, but with everlasting mercy I will gather you."

SERMON VII.

At St. Lawrence Jewry, London, November 24, 1650.

"And the Lord said, My Spirit shall not always strive with man..." - Genesis 6:3

I will now move on to further explore and apply this point by presenting specific inferences, directions, or statements regarding the withdrawal of God's Spirit.

[Position 1] Acknowledge the significant need you have for the presence and continuous influence of the Holy Spirit, based on four reasons.

1. Consider the weakness and incapacity of our human nature not only for performing good actions, but also for having holy desires and inclinations. It is the Lord who works in us both to will and to do, as the Apostle says. The very longing of the soul for goodness surpasses natural abilities and originates from God. Therefore, the same Apostle declares, "We are not sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God." Just as the inferior celestial bodies move as they are acted upon by the superior ones, it is just as unlikely for you to produce any good inclination or ability to do good on your own. All your assistance comes from the Spirit of God. Thus, as Saint Paul states, "If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the flesh." Recognise your inherent weakness, which should make you aware of your need for the Spirit.
2. Consider not only the weakness but also the reluctance within us towards what is good. The Scripture speaks of not only grieving and quenching the Spirit but also resisting it, as mentioned in Acts 7:51. Phrases like "Draw me, and I will run after thee" and "None can come unto me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him" indicate not only our weakness but also our unwillingness to come and the resistance in our hearts to submit

to a law of holiness. Until God, through His Spirit, makes us a willing people in the day of His power.

3. Be aware of the strong resistance within your nature to holy inclinations, which emphasizes the great need for the Spirit. Although grace is inherently active, due to the inherent disposition of our nature, it must be activated by the Spirit. Fire, for example, has an active nature and a propensity to burn. However, if you apply fire to green or wet wood, the moisture in the wood hinders the flames from spreading. The same is true for grace in our nature—it is like fire in green wood, requiring much effort to ignite. This is why the Apostle tells Timothy, "Stir up the gift of God, which is in thee." There is substantial resistance in our hearts against the Spirit of God.

4. You have a great need for the motions of the Spirit when you consider the abundance of evil inclinations that will arise in your heart if the Spirit's influence is withdrawn. Your heart will become a receptacle for the devil and sinful desires if the Spirit is absent. Just as smoke comes out of a chimney, corruption will come out of your heart. Just as sparks come out of a blown fire, evil inclinations will enter your heart when corruption is fueled by temptation. You are unwilling and hesitant towards what is good, and it is the Spirit that must stir you up. In this regard, we have a passage from the Prophet Isaiah: "He wakeneth me morning by morning." You need to be awakened and stirred up by the Spirit of God each day due to your daily inclination towards inactivity. From this, you can see the great need you have for the Spirit of God.

[Position 2] It is not enough to be convinced of the need for the motions of the Spirit; you should also be aware of the great state of misery you are plunged into if the Spirit's motions are restrained. This can be understood from three aspects.

1. Scripture records it as a great misery when even the ordinary workings and gifts of God's Spirit are withdrawn. We read about the lamentable complaint of Saul when the Spirit departed from him, which only involved the withdrawal of common gifts. The same can be said of Samson, who did not realize that the Spirit had departed from him, specifically referring to the Spirit of strength. If it is considered a lamentation when the Spirit's common gifts are withdrawn, should it not be seen as a sad misery when the Spirit's saving, comforting, and sanctifying work is withheld?
2. Be convinced of this because when the Spirit is withdrawn, you constantly experience loss.

I can illustrate it with this comparison: Imagine a wealthy merchant who has a ship at sea, loaded with valuable cargo. The ship is near the harbour but is unable to reach its destination due to being becalmed or facing adverse winds. During this time, the merchant incurs daily losses. Apply this analogy in a spiritual sense: the ship represents your soul, the cargo represents grace, and the harbour represents heaven. The favourable winds symbolise the motions of the Spirit, while the crosswinds represent temptations. If the motions of the Spirit do not assist you, you will be unable to reach your heavenly destination. From this, recognise the misery you experience without the motions of God's Spirit.

3. Realise your misery, for if good motions do not occupy your heart, countless evil motions will. If the house of your heart is devoid of good motions, the devil will enter with his evil motions and dwell there. The soul is restless and active, and when the good Spirit does not move within, the evil spirit will take advantage. The devil will seize any opportunity and will not allow a house to remain empty for long.

[Position 3] We have reason to be humbled by the inclination of our nature to entertain evil motions from the wicked spirit, and by the

reluctance in our hearts to embrace holy motions from the good Spirit. Our nature is like gunpowder to fire—when a spark of temptation falls upon us, we quickly ignite. But when it comes to good motions, our hearts are like green wood to fire—how resistant and reluctant we are to embrace them! Evil thoughts in the soul are natural, while good thoughts are supernatural. By nature, our hearts are a slaughterhouse for holy motions; we have stifled and strangled many good motions within our hearts. However, that same nature which suppresses good motions is receptive to wicked motions. An evil person brings forth evil from the evil treasure of their heart, as our Saviour said. Observe the natural inclination in your heart to entertain that which is evil.

[Position 4] When the motions of the Spirit are withdrawn, make an effort to search and identify the cause, and then lament over it. What harm or unkindness have you done to the Spirit that it has departed? To grieve the Spirit, as mentioned in Ephesians 4:30, is a greater unkindness than to resist the Spirit. One is more troubled by the unkindness of a friend than by all the hatred and opposition of an enemy. Surely something is wrong. Have you not neglected to keep your conscience clean? It is the filthiness in the dove-house that causes the dove to leave. Is there not an indulgence in some permitted and provoking sin that the Spirit of God sees in you? Have you not extinguished the motions of the Spirit? Have you not grieved, vexed, resisted, or tempted the Spirit? Search for the cause, and when you have discovered it, lament over it and cry, "Woe is me! The Spirit would have dwelled in my heart, and I did not give Him hospitality." Thus, the one whom I sought with tears and enjoyed with comfort, I have lost through the folly of my sinful actions. If you have not yet identified the cause, I advise you to consult your own conscience, which is God's representative within you. It will provide a true account if you listen to it. Ask yourself these three questions: Have I fallen from my initial love as the Ephesians did (Revelation 2:4-5)? Have I suppressed the checks of conscience and the motions of the Spirit? Have I exploited the motions of the Spirit for selfish and worldly pursuits, as Simon Magus did for personal gain and

worldly interests? Have you inclined yourself toward contrary motions? Have you been more inclined to heed the solicitations of the evil spirit rather than the promptings of the good Spirit? Ask your conscience; it may provide this answer. Has the Spirit departed due to your pride, idleness, and self-conceit? Through these types of inquiries to your conscience, you may come to know the cause for the Spirit's withdrawal from you.

[Position 5] Consider that the withdrawal of the Spirit's motions is not always due to sin, but can be for other higher and greater purposes that God has in mind.

1. It is true that God often withdraws the motions of His Spirit because of sin. As the Prophet Isaiah said, "Your iniquities have separated you from your God." Similarly, the Prophet Micah proclaimed, "They shall cry to the Lord, but He will not answer them; He will hide His face from them because of their evil deeds." Sin is typically the reason for the withdrawal of God's Spirit.
2. It is absolutely true that if there were no sin within us, God's Spirit would never be withdrawn from us. We would be incapable of experiencing the desertion of the Spirit if it were not for sin in general. While sin in general is the necessary cause, it is not always the immediate cause for the Spirit's withdrawal.
3. Although sin within us serves as a cause for why God's Spirit departs, God does not always make sin the cause for Himself. There are other higher purposes at play. Theologians who discuss the topic of soul abandonment and the withdrawal of God's Spirit distinguish three types of desertion based on three different causes, as we have previously mentioned.
 - There may be a desertion that serves as a cautionary measure, not due to sin, but to prevent sin. This was the case with Paul

when he was given a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment him, so that he would not become too proud. Similarly, when Peter fell and denied Christ, his desertion served as a cautionary measure to prevent him from relying on his own strength as he had foolishly done before.

- There may be a desertion that is probationary, intended to test and exercise certain graces in a person. For instance, Job was not afflicted because of sin, but God used it as a means to test his faith and patience.
- There is a desertion that is punitive, and that is indeed for sin, when God leaves a person to themselves. This was the case with the Spouse in the biblical metaphor, as she did not listen or open herself to Christ, so He withdrew Himself. If you find yourself deserted by the Spirit of God, remember that desertions are not always punitive (although I admit they are often so, and it is fitting for a humble and penitent soul to consider themselves smitten and forsaken by God due to their sin). Sometimes desertions serve as cautionary measures, and other times they are probationary in nature.

[Posit. 6] Instead of dwelling on your misery in the absence of the Spirit, be diligent in seeking His return. Many Christians fall into the trap of being content with fruitless and sorrowful complaints about their loss, without making active efforts to regain what they have lost. Joshua, after the defeat at Ai, did not simply lie on his face but stood up, investigated the cause, and worked to mend the situation. Some believers use whining and complaining as an excuse for their laziness and spiritual sloth. If you have lost the Spirit, do not dwell solely on your loss, but focus on what you must do to regain the Spirit. To help you in this, follow these directions:

1. Purify your conscience from the allowance of any known sin. Cleanse your heart and make it a suitable dwelling place for Christ, and His Spirit will come to you. Let your heart be like the

upper room where Christ ate the Passover: prepared, furnished, and free from sin. Purge your heart with the sanctifying grace and rid it of any sinful indulgence. This will be a means for you to recover the Spirit again.

2. Approach God in prayer, for it is the universal remedy for all spiritual ailments. If anyone is afflicted, let them pray, as the Apostle James said. No matter what your affliction may be, prayer will be a means to deliver you. Prayer is ordained by God as a means to receive the Spirit of God, as mentioned in Luke 11:13. It will be effective because it is God's ordained practice.
3. Don't just pray, but lament your condition in prayer. Pour out your complaints before the Lord and say, "Lord, how has my heart become a dwelling place for unclean birds? A receptacle for sin and the devil? This is the sorry state my heart is in. Once my graces were fresh and flourishing, but now they are withered like the grass on the rooftop. I used to have the embrace of an everlasting arm, but now I feel forsaken by the Spirit. I was once like a blessed field, like the Cedars of Lebanon, with roots and pleasant branches. But now I am like a fruitless tree in the forest. I was once a fruitful vine in Christ's vineyard, but now I am like the mountains of Gilboa, untouched by rain or dew." Lament yourself in the presence of the Lord, and perhaps when He sees you with tears in your eyes and your petitions in your hand, He may return to you. Though He has forsaken you, He will not forget you. Though He has brought you low, He will not cast you off forever (He will not cast away His people) if you do not forsake Him. Therefore, strive through prayers and tears to recover from your fall.

[Posit. 7] Consider it a more grievous judgment to have the sanctifying and transformative motions of the Spirit withdrawn than to have the comforts of the Spirit withheld. This is a common error among many Christians, especially those troubled in conscience. Their complaints revolve around the lack of assurance and comfort,

unsure if Christ is truly theirs or not. It is to be feared that in many such complaints, self-love rather than love for Christ is the underlying motive. However, it is a sadder judgment to lack the enlivening and stirring motions of the Spirit than to lack the witness and comforts of the Spirit. It is more grievous to have the gracious motions of the Spirit withheld than to have the comforting presence of the Spirit withdrawn.

[Posit. 8] Another point to consider is that the common gifts of the Spirit may be given while the saving gifts of the Spirit are withheld. This was the case with many in the Church of Corinth. The Apostle tells them that they lacked no spiritual gifts, yet he also reveals that they were carnal and behaved like ordinary people.

[Posit. 9] Reflect on the fact that the Spirit, in its motions and workings, may truly be withdrawn from a person even when they believe they are fully experiencing it. It can be likened to the story of Samson who, unaware that the Philistines were upon him, awoke from sleep and said, "I will go out as before and shake myself." He did not realize that the Lord had departed from him and his strength was gone. Similarly, you may be abandoned by the Spirit without knowing it. This can occur because the Spirit's departure is often gradual (just as we cannot perceive our own physical growth because it happens gradually), and also because the heart is deceitful, negligent, and lacks diligence in examining and assessing the state of the soul. Therefore, keep in mind that the Spirit's motions may be withdrawn from you even if you believe that you still possess them.

I will conclude this point with a few words of comfort, in case there are some who may be troubled and confused by what I have discussed regarding the withdrawal of God's Spirit.

[Use 1] For you, O Christian, who lament that the Spirit is withdrawn from you, remember this: even if the Spirit is withdrawn, it is a gradual withdrawal, not a complete one. It is only in certain aspects, not in all. The Spirit is never completely absent from godly

individuals; His presence remains, even though the comfort and assurance of it may be diminished.

[Use 2] Take comfort in knowing that the departures of the Spirit are temporary, not eternal. The Spirit is only gone for a season, as stated in Isaiah 54:8, "In a little wrath I hid my face from you for a moment." It is but a temporary period of displeasure. Just as Christ told His disciples, "I will go away, but I will come again," the same can be said of the Spirit. Though He may be withdrawn for a time, He will return again.

[Use 3] You may claim that the Spirit is withdrawn, but it may be a perceived withdrawal rather than a real one. By this I mean that you may think it to be so when, in reality, it is not. Among all people, the godly are most prone to having doubts about their own hearts and conditions. You may have, like Benjamin, a golden cup in the mouth of your sack, a sign of Joseph's love, and yet be unaware of it. Out of your innermost being may flow a fountain of living water, and yet you may not recognize it, just as Hagar, when she was dying of thirst, had a well of water nearby but did not know it. Therefore, it may be a perceived withdrawal rather than a real one. It is similar to the experience of Mary Magdalene, who, while speaking with Christ, did not recognize Him and asked where they had taken Him (John 20:15).

[Use 4] Consider that Jesus Christ may depart from you, not out of hatred, but as a test to see whether you will follow Him. Just as a mother sometimes hides from her child in a corner, not to abandon the child, but to gauge its love and whether it will seek after her, Jesus Christ may also occasionally leave you and withdraw His Spirit to test whether you will earnestly pursue Him and value the guidance of His Spirit. Thus, I have provided a brief account of the Spirit of Christ withdrawing from both ordinances and our souls. I have explained both the cause and the remedy for this distressing condition. May the Lord grant you understanding in all things.

SERMON VIII

At St. Lawrence Jury, London. December 1, 1650.

So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. - Galatians 5:16

Having recently discussed the plight of those from whom the movements of God's Spirit have been withdrawn, I will now address the blessings of those who follow the lead and guidance of the Spirit. This will be based on the following words: "Walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh." These words provide an apostolic instruction or warning, standing on their own, and therefore I will examine them without reference to what precedes or follows. The approach I will take is as follows.

First, I will explain the words. Secondly, I will divide them. Then, I will make some observations. And finally, I will apply it all.

1. In the explanatory part, there are four things that need to be clarified.

- What does "the Spirit" refer to in this context?
- What does it mean to "walk in the Spirit"?
- What is meant by "not fulfilling the lusts of the flesh"?
- How can it be said that people will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh?

[Question 1] What is meant by "the Spirit"?

[Answer 1] In general, it denotes the entire divine essence, which is divided into three persons. God is a Spirit, as stated in John 4:24,

meaning a spiritual essence. (2 Corinthians 3:17)

[Answer 2] More specifically, it refers to the third person of the blessed Trinity, as mentioned in 1 John 5:6.

[Answer 3] "Spirit" also refers to the gifts of the Spirit, as seen in Luke 1:15.

[Question 2] What is meant by "walking in the Spirit" here?

[Answer 1] To answer this, we need to refer to other passages that are related to it. First, in Galatians 3:2, it mentions the receiving of the Spirit. Secondly, in Galatians 5:25, it speaks of living in the Spirit. Thirdly, in Galatians 5:18, it talks about being led by the Spirit. And fourthly, in the words of my text, it mentions walking in the Spirit.

Now, by receiving and living in the Spirit, it portrays the initial implantation or work of God's Spirit in us during our regeneration. And by the phrases "being led by the Spirit" and "walking in the Spirit," they essentially convey the same meaning. They illustrate the progressive work of the Spirit in the soul during the process of sanctification. Therefore, to walk in the Spirit means to follow the motions and instructions of the Spirit. It implies that one should not follow the impulses of their own spirits. There are some, as Melancthon mentions, who consider their own dreams as authoritative as God's Word, and by doing so, they not only fail to overcome the lusts of the flesh but also indulge in them. The true meaning of "walking in the Spirit" is to walk after the Spirit, which is equivalent to the statement in Romans 8:1: "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit." In other words, if we follow the motions and instructions of God's Spirit, then we can be said to walk in it.

[Question 3] But what benefit will result from this? "You shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh."

[Answer] Before I answer this, I must provide a caution. The Apostle does not say that you will not have the lusts of the flesh, for you know that even those who most closely follow the motions and directions of the Spirit in their conduct still experience the workings of corrupt nature. As long as you have this natural body, you will have these lusts of the flesh within you. However, the Apostle says, "You shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh."

Now, when we speak of the "lusts of the flesh," we should not understand it in a limited sense, referring only to the sins of immorality or impurity, which are rightly called the lusts of the flesh elsewhere. Rather, it should be understood in a comprehensive sense, encompassing all those corrupt and sinful inclinations that exist in human nature.

So, when the Apostle says, "You shall not fulfill these lusts," he means that you will not carry out these lusts with the same strong and complete consent of the will or with the same deliberate intention as unregenerate people who lack the Spirit of God.

[Question 4] How can this be true, that if we walk in the Spirit, we shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh, when our experience tells us that even if a person walks in a highly disciplined and spiritual manner, they still give in to and act upon the lusts of the flesh, and the hidden corruptions of their nature manifest in their life?

[Answer] I have two things to explain in response to this.

1. Although it is true that a person who walks in the Spirit may still have the lusts of the flesh, it is equally true that a godly person who walks in the Spirit will not fulfill those lusts. The reason for this is that there is a distinction between acting upon the lusts of the flesh and fulfilling them. When a godly person sins, they may act upon the lusts of the flesh, but they do not fully fulfill them. This is because when they sin, they do not do so with the same complete consent or deliberate and intentional act of the will as

wicked people do. Sin carries wicked people with greater force and violence, and they act upon it with a more deliberate intention of the will. This is how some interpreters resolve this apparent contradiction.

2. Others answer it in this way: "Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh." According to them, this means that as long as you embrace the motions of the Spirit, the motions of sin will not prevail over you. If you listen to the good motions of the Spirit, you will not be overcome by the sinful motions of your own corrupt nature or of the devil. "You shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh." That is how it is in the original text, and it is translated in the singular form, which critics indicate contains many sins within the one sin of nature. All the sins in the world stem from the womb of original sin.

In the entire verse, there are three parts:

- A duty prescribed: "Walk in the Spirit."
- A benefit attached: "You shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh."
- The certainty of obtaining this benefit: "This I say, etc."

From these words, I will make two observations.

[Doctrine 1] It is the special responsibility of believers to follow the motions and guidance of God's Spirit.

[Doctrine 2] Those who walk according to the motions and guidance of God's Spirit will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh.

In the beginning of the first Doctrine, there are several questions that I will address.

[Question 1] Why must a believer walk according to the guidance of the Spirit of God? And what are the reasons for this?

[Reason 1] One reason is that it is a significant aspect of the Spirit's role, after bestowing converting grace, to stimulate and move the heart towards more grace, and to guide a person in the path they should walk. This is expressed by the Prophet Isaiah: "Your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, 'This is the way, walk in it,' when you turn to the right or when you turn to the left." Just as the star guided the shepherds or the fiery pillar guided the Israelites in their journey through the Wilderness, the Spirit serves as a guide for believers in the everlasting way. Therefore, if you do not walk according to its motions and guidance, you are, to the best of your ability, undermining the Spirit's role.

[Reason 2] Another reason why you should walk according to the guidance of God's Spirit is that the devil will be suggesting evil motions to you. He roams around the earth, not to do good but to do evil. He walks about, seeking whom he may devour. Moreover, your own spirit is deceitful, prompting and provoking you to sin. Just as a furnace casts out sparks and a chimney releases smoke, so does your spirit produce sinful motions. Considering the tempting devil outside of us, the evil heart of unbelief within us, and the presence of seductive teachers in the world, many false prophets have emerged, as mentioned by Saint John: "Many false prophets have gone out into the world." These individuals claim to have the Spirit and profess to be teachers of truth, but they are actually promoters of error. Given these influences, how can you not value and follow the motions and guidance of God's Spirit?

[Reason 3] Another reason why you should walk according to the guidance of the Spirit is because false teachers are capable of presenting their delusions and enthusiasms in such a way that they appear to be motions of the Spirit. This is why the Apostle cautioned the Thessalonians, saying, "Do not be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed, either by a spirit or a spoken word, or a letter seeming to be from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come." If you ask what is meant by "do not be shaken in mind by any false spirit," learned interpreters explain that it refers to revelations, instincts,

and inspirations that are falsely claimed to come from the Spirit of Christ. The impostor Mohammed, in his wicked blasphemy, claimed that his epileptic fits were divine revelations from the Spirit of God, and he deceived his followers by asserting that the dove he taught to come and feed at his ear was the Holy Spirit, who revealed to him the laws written in the Quran. Even in these times, as the devil has aided people in devising clever disguises for their wicked errors and appears as an angel of light, we have a greater need to walk according to the guidance of the Spirit.

[Reason 4] Another reason why you should walk according to the motions of the Spirit is that by doing so, you will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh. This is the reason stated in the text, but I will defer its further discussion until the second Doctrine.

[Question 2] How can we distinguish the motions of the Spirit from the natural motions of our own consciences?

[Answer] To address this point, I will provide five marks or differences that can help us discern one from the other.

1. The Spirit, when it moves a person towards good, not only urges them to it but also assists them in doing it. Therefore, the Spirit is said to help our weaknesses, interceding for us with unutterable groans. The Spirit of God is a powerful force that enables us to perform good deeds; it not only prompts but also provides assistance in what it motivates us to do. On the other hand, while natural motions from conscience may prompt a person to do good, they do not grant any power for its performance. It leaves you like Ovid's Medea, who saw what was good but refused to do it. Natural motions in the soul are like Pharaoh to the Israelites, urging them to make bricks but not providing the necessary materials. Natural conscience prompts duty but does not convey the power to fulfill it. Hence, it is stated that the law is weak through the flesh, lacking the power

for justification, as there is no inherent ability in humans to fulfill it.

2. The Spirit moves a person to do good primarily out of the attractiveness and beauty found in holiness, rather than out of fear of hell's torments. Thus, it is written that God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power, love, and a sound mind. Our actions are not driven solely by the fear of hell, but by love for God and holiness. As the Apostle Paul said, "For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, 'Abba! Father!'" The Spirit of God causes a person to act out of love for their Father, similar to how a child acts towards their father, rather than out of fear. This is the effect of the Spirit of God. However, the motions of natural conscience towards good are not motivated by any excellence perceived in the good deed itself, but solely by the fear of punishment. The individual sees damnation if they do otherwise.
3. The Spirit of God moves a person to do good not only in matters that are objectively good but also to have a conscience about the purpose behind their actions, ensuring they have a sincere intention. Hence, the Apostle says, "For God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control." The Spirit not only prompts a person to perform a good duty but also instills in them a genuine motive for doing so. On the other hand, natural conscience is satisfied as long as the duty is fulfilled, regardless of how corruptly it may be done. It is akin to the harlot mentioned by Solomon, who sacrifices and fulfills her vows, even though her ultimate purpose is abominable and base: to engage in unrestrained harlotry. She first plays the hypocrite and then becomes a harlot.
4. The Spirit of God, when it moves people to do good, guides them in the manner of doing good. The duty must be performed with

affection, love, faith, fervency, and a composed mind. However, when natural conscience prompts someone to duty, it doesn't go beyond the completion of the task; it doesn't consider how it is done. It may prompt to prayer and listening, but it never prompts to pay attention to how these duties are performed.

5. The Spirit of God moves a person so powerfully that it compels them to do good despite difficulties and dangers, which will not hinder them in carrying out their actions. The movements of the Spirit are like new wine in a barrel, ready to burst if not released; holy movements will result in holy actions. Wicked individuals are restless until they engage in wickedness and cannot be satisfied until they have acted sinfully. On the other hand, those who have natural inclinations towards good do not go any further; they remain content with their inclinations and never bring forth good achievements. Balaam had a good inclination when he said, "Oh, that I might die the death of the righteous and that my end might be like theirs." What a heavenly expression it was! However, it was a lazy one; he wished to die the death of the righteous but was unwilling to live the life of the righteous; he would not practice what he prayed for. Natural inclinations in people remain unfulfilled; they only desire but never break out into the performance of duty. Difficulties discourage natural individuals from consistently practising their good resolutions, just as the sluggard refuses to plow because of the cold (Prov. 20:4).

[Query 3] How can we distinguish the motions of the Spirit from satanical delusions? The devil's suggestions can resemble the motions of the Spirit, and there have been individuals throughout history who have mistaken fantastical illusions for the motions of the Spirit. To differentiate between the two, consider the following:

1. The motions of God's Spirit always align with the written Word; the prescribed words and the motions of the Spirit are in harmony with each other. This connection is expressed by

Solomon: "I will pour out my Spirit upon you, I will make known my words unto you." The prophet Isaiah also states, "My Spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth," etc. The motions of God's Spirit are always consistent with the Word of God. If they do not align with the law and the testimony, it is because there is no light in them. Therefore, anything contrary to the Word is a delusion from the evil spirit.

2. The motions of God's Spirit in people are not meant to predict future events; rather, they are holy motions that urge towards duty. Hence, the claims of the Papists who boast of a prophetic Spirit and the predictions of astrologers and fortune-tellers who claim to foresee future contingent events are diabolical delusions and not from the Spirit of God. Since the establishment of the Scripture as the canon, the Spirit refers us to the Word as the rule of our obedience.
3. The motions of the Spirit, wherever they occur, stimulate grace and suppress sin. They stir up grace, and therefore we read of the assisting, stimulating, and supplying work of the Spirit. Motions that stir up sin and nurture corruption are diabolical. As the Apostle Paul says, "For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." Movements from the Spirit of God are holy motions that stimulate grace and subdue sin. Therefore, if someone claims to walk in the Spirit and yet prophesies about wine and strong drink, encouraging drunkenness or any sin through their teachings, that person is lying. They do not come from the Holy Spirit but from the devil.

SERMON IX.

At Lawrence Jury, London, December 8, 1650.

So I tell you, walk in the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. - GAL. 5:16

A third Question. Now I will address a third matter to be investigated, which is: How can we discern between the common movements of the Spirit in the wicked and the saving movements of the Spirit in the regenerated?

[Answer] The reason why I will discuss this question is because the Scripture states that wicked individuals may partake in the Holy Spirit. To answer the question, it is necessary to understand that there are two distinctions between the participation of the Spirit by the wicked and the godly.

- Concerning the measure.
- Concerning the manner.

In terms of measure, although a Reprobate may experience the movements of the Spirit, they do not possess the same measure of the Spirit as a regenerate individual. Forbes, in his practical treatise addressing this doubt, provides an illustration. He states that wicked men partake of the Spirit like cooks partake of the food. They taste and enjoy as much as satisfies their palates, but they do not consume enough to have a full meal that nourishes and strengthens them. On the other hand, the regenerate are like invited guests who not only taste the prepared food but also partake in a full meal. Wicked men only have a taste, which is why the Apostle says of them that they have tasted of the heavenly gift. They are akin to people passing by an apothecary's shop, who may catch a whiff of the pleasant scents of the potions, but only the sick patient benefits from the remedies. Similarly, God may grant the wicked a taste of His Spirit, but they do not receive enough to benefit their souls. It is only the godly who experience saving participation in grace. Just as many of the Israelites tasted the fruit of the land of Canaan but never entered

heaven, some may taste of the heavenly gift without ultimately reaching heaven.

They differ not only in the measure of their reception of the Spirit but also in the manner.

1. The movements of the Spirit in the reprobate are fleeting and passing, not lasting movements; they vanish like a shadow. Thus, the Lord speaks through the Prophet Hosea, referring to Ephraim, "Your goodness is like a morning cloud, like the dew that goes early away." Just as the rising sun disperses the clouds and evaporates the dew, the movements of the Spirit in the reprobate quickly fade and disappear. However, the movements of the Spirit in the godly are like a long-time resident; they abide with them. That is why our Saviour says, "If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you." The words of Christ are transitory and temporary in the wicked, but they abide in the godly; they remain with a godly person throughout their lifetime. They are the ones who always have a clear conscience, as stated in Acts 24:16. David says, "My soul longs for your precepts at all times," and "I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever" (Psalm 23:6). The movements of God's Spirit in the godly are not sporadic but enduring and lasting movements.
2. They are rare and infrequent, not ordinary and common; just as they stay for only a while, they also come seldom, only on extraordinary occasions. This is true for the reprobate when it comes to good movements. It is like a person in a lottery, drawing a hundred blanks for every prize. Wicked individuals have a hundred Satanic movements towards evil for every movement of God's Spirit towards good. The latter are as rare and infrequent as seeing a swallow in winter. While a wicked person is engrossed in evil thoughts, it is their natural state, and they are as familiar with it as breathing. However, good thoughts are like strangers in their hearts.

3. The movements of the Spirit in wicked individuals are forced, not voluntary; they are not like water flowing from a fountain but rather like water coming from a still, compelled by the fire underneath. The movements of the Spirit in the wicked are constrained for two reasons. First, it may be due to their natural conscience, which tells them that they should not be complete devils without any good movements. Balaam desired to curse the people of Israel, but his natural conscience prevailed, and he asked, "Must I not take care to speak what the Lord puts in my mouth?" Secondly, this may arise from the sense of external judgments, which may prompt the reception of good thoughts. When they are struck with fear and faced with destruction, they will call upon the Lord. It takes a whirlwind of fear to drive them to call upon the name of the Lord, as mentioned in the Prophet Hosea, "In their affliction they will seek me early." When the Israelites were afraid of the thunder and lightning, they said to Moses, "You speak to us, and we will listen; but do not let God speak to us, lest we die" (Deuteronomy 5:26,27).
4. The movements of the Spirit in the reprobate are accidental and incidental, not deliberate or intentional; they happen without preparation or contemplation, as if they stumble upon them unknowingly. The wicked person actively seeks evil thoughts, as the wise man says, "He shuts his eyes to devise perverse things." Closing the eyes is a posture that reveals one's intentions. Thus, wicked individuals scheme to carry out malicious plans and are deliberate in their sin. The Apostle Paul affirms that God will expose the counsels of their hearts. Deliberate thoughts about sin are referred to as the heart's schemes or consultations, and these will be revealed by God. The wicked are said to plot against the righteous, but they do not make an effort to have good thoughts; when such thoughts occur, they arise accidentally and fade away without consideration.
5. Good movements in wicked individuals are partial, not universal, as they do not consistently lead them to good or to all

forms of good. They may have movements that prompt them to perform outwardly good actions, for which their names may be spoken of with praise, but not to engage in all good deeds. Their movements towards good do not lead them to mortify strong lusts or to keep sin under control. In contrast, the Spirit's movements towards good in the godly are universal, encompassing all good things. The Apostle Paul declares, "We trust that we have a good conscience, desiring to live honorably in all things." Likewise, in another place, he states, "In this I exercise myself, to have a conscience void of offense toward God and men at all times." There is a universality in the movements of God's Spirit within the hearts of the godly. Their entire hearts are inclined towards all that is good, and this is a constant disposition.

6. The movements of the Spirit in the wicked are fruitless, having no influence on their lives. It is said that the heart of a fool is like a cartwheel, and their thoughts are like a wandering axle, spinning round and round all day, yet remaining in the same place. Similarly, wicked individuals may occasionally have good thoughts and good movements, but these do not impact their lives. Their movements towards good are futile. However, in the godly, movements towards good are accompanied by actions and holy purposes combined with prayer, as expressed in Psalm 119:2.
7. The movements of God's Spirit in reprobates are directed towards good deeds done in public, not in private. They seek to do good in order to gain a good reputation. The wind of vanity may blow the sails of their hearts and fill them with good intentions. [Simile.] Wicked individuals can be compared to a nightingale; it is said that if the bird sees a person listening to its song, it will sing even more sweetly. Similarly, wicked individuals behave better towards people than towards God, and they appear more righteous in the Church than in private. There is a story about someone who could fast for several days in a

monastery but not even half a day in the wilderness. When asked about the reason, he answered, "When I fast in the monastery, I feed on vain glory and the praise of men, but not so in the wilderness." This applies to formal religious adherents; their movements are focused on outward and visible acts of goodness but not on inward and secret duties, such as examining their hearts, being vigilant over them, and maintaining a close communion with God in private. If you fall short in these areas, you fall short of the genuine and saving movements of the Spirit.

I will now make two uses of this point. First, for humility. Second, for instruction, to derive some practical lessons from this point. If it is the duty of God's people to walk according to the guidance and movements of the Spirit of God, then

[Use 1] Be humbled for our lack of awareness of the Spirit's movements within us. Just as it is with the wind, to which the Spirit is compared, the wind blows where it pleases; but who pays attention to the wind? How often do people walk on the streets without noticing which way the wind is blowing? Similarly, the Spirit comes with many gentle breezes, yet we do not take notice of it. Just as Job said of the Lord, "He passed by, and I did not see him," we can say the same about the Spirit of God, "It was near me, and I did not perceive it." Our Saviour also speaks of the world, that they cannot receive the Spirit of truth because they neither see him nor know him. This does not mean that they can physically see the Spirit, for the Spirit is not a physical substance, but rather they neither see him nor know him, meaning they do not perceive his movements and do not have any experiential knowledge of the Spirit's workings. Natural individuals are unfamiliar with their own spirits, let alone the movements of God's Spirit. We cannot see the sun without its own light, nor can we observe the Spirit without the Spirit. There are many in the world like the master of the feast when Christ turned water into wine, it is said that he did not know where it came from. I can allude to this scripture in this way: there are many people whose

water the Spirit would turn into wine, that is, their sinful movements into holy and gracious movements, yet they do not know it and refuse to see it.

[Use 2] If you are not guilty of being unaware of the Spirit's movements, still be humbled for the weakness of the flesh, that you cannot always embrace the Spirit's movements when you recognize them. In John 14, where Christ speaks about the sending of the Spirit, it is said that the world cannot receive him. He does not say the world does not receive him, but rather the world cannot receive him, indicating a weakness in the flesh, that people cannot welcome holy movements. Rolloc, commenting on this passage, compares the heart of natural individuals to wet wood, which is not easily set on fire. The natural person does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them because they are spiritually discerned. And the mindset focused on the flesh is hostile towards God, for it does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. It is not just a mere suspension of action, but a disability in the soul. This is our weakness, that even though we recognize the Spirit's movements in the flesh, we are unable to embrace them.

[Use 3] Be humbled because, even though you know them, you cannot put these movements into holy practice. There are many people who entertain the Spirit's movements, but alas, they do not act upon these gracious motions. The Spirit moves them to pray better, to listen better, to live more holily, and yet they remain unchanged. Sometimes they may resolve to live better, but how quickly these resolutions are forgotten. They can complain with Job in this situation, "My purposes are broken off, even the thoughts of my heart." Undoubtedly, these were good thoughts, as if he were saying, "I had intended to live in a certain way if God had kept me in prosperity, but now those intentions are broken off, and I am disappointed in my own thoughts." Many of us may make this complaint, that our purposes are disappointed. The Spirit has stirred up many good motions in your heart, yet you have not been able to

put those holy motions into action. But it is fitting for every child of God to have purpose and practice, and to say with David, "I will confess my sin," and to actually confess it.

[Use 4] Be humbled because of the receptiveness in our natures to embrace all sinful motions. How unlike are we to our Saviour! The Tempter came to him, but found nothing in him; he found no ground for his temptation to latch onto. But when the Tempter comes to you, he finds something in you. He finds in you a receptive nature to comply with the temptation he suggests to you. Christ's nature was like a crystal glass filled with pure water; the devil shook the glass, but it remained clear. But when the devil comes to us, he finds us like a puddle of water, and he only needs to pour into this puddle, and how does the mud appear? A dung hill may have herbs and flowers growing on it, but if you dig into it, how quickly will the stench take away the sweetness of the flowers? Though our natures may not seem as bad as they truly are, if the devil digs into them, then it will become evident who we are. The heart of man can be compared to a tinderbox, with the corruption of nature as the tinder in this box. Now, let the devil strike flint and steel together, that is, present a temptation to our corruption, and how quickly we are set on fire. Christ's nature was like iron, it would not ignite with sparks, but the devil tempts us and our natures are like tinder to the temptation. What reason do we have, therefore, to be humbled and greatly abased when we remember the receptiveness of our natures to embrace the devil's suggestions.

[Use 5.] Be humbled because of the inherent opposition in our natures against the motions of the Spirit. Our natures, in their state of innocence, were like the rivers of Egypt before they turned into blood—they provided a suitable environment for fish to live in. However, once they turned into blood, all the fish died. Similarly, in innocence, our nature was the proper environment for the motions of the Spirit of God to reside in. But when our nature degenerated and turned into blood, the motions of the Spirit departed. The words following my text illustrate the antagonism of our natures: "The flesh

lusts against the Spirit." By "Spirit," it does not mean the regenerated part, but rather the motions of God's Spirit. Corrupt nature wages war against the motions and workings of God's Spirit. There are three expressions in Scripture that depict the enmity of human nature against the Spirit of God:

- Vexing the Spirit.
- Resisting the Spirit.
- Doing despite to the spirit of grace.

All of these expressions signify the utmost enmity, indicating that the nature of man harbours a deep hostility towards the motions of the Spirit.

[Position 1] I will now provide some instruction by presenting a few inferences that can be drawn from this doctrine, and they will fall into two categories. Firstly, I will present some general statements. Secondly, I will provide specific guidance regarding the motions of the Spirit.

[Position 1] The motions of the Spirit are voluntary and unrestricted; they are given to whom and in what measure the Spirit pleases. The wind blows where it wishes; in other words, the motions of the Spirit are bestowed upon those chosen by God. The Spirit of God is referred to as a free Spirit. It is holy if you consider its effects, but it is free in terms of its working. Therefore, the Apostle James says, "Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth." The Spirit of God is a free agent.

[Position 2] No one consistently experiences the motions of the Spirit in the same manner. Just as the sun in the sky, although always present, does not exert the same influence at all times, the Spirit does not abide in the same measure within regenerate individuals. Similar to the varying intensity of the wind, which can be calm or turbulent, the godly do not always experience the Spirit in the same measure.

[Position 3] People tend to follow the motions of the evil spirit more than the motions of the good Spirit. This is a common observation drawn by theologians from Verse 19 and 22 following my text, where it is stated that the works of the flesh are evident, and a list of such works is provided. However, when speaking of the works of the Spirit, they are not referred to as such but rather called the fruits of the Spirit. This indicates that people are more inclined to walk according to the guidance of the flesh rather than the Spirit. The majority of individuals tend to follow the path dictated by the flesh rather than the promptings and suggestions of the Holy Spirit of God.

[Position 4] There is greater fruit and benefit to be found in following the motions of God's Spirit than in following the sinful motions of the evil spirit. I gather this from the distinction made by the Apostle when he lists the works of the flesh and the Spirit. He says, "The works of the flesh are evident, but the fruits of the Spirit are..." This indicates that there is no fruit or benefit in sin. As the Apostle elsewhere says, "What fruit did you have then in those things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death." Sin yields no fruit except sorrow and shame. Sin is a work of the flesh, a task assigned by the devil. It is a fruitless work. On the other hand, there is fruit in the Spirit, which signifies that embracing the motions of the Spirit leads to fruitfulness and benefit. "He who sows to his flesh will reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will reap everlasting life." Following the flesh brings no benefit, but following the Spirit brings great reward. Luther offers a profound interpretation of Paul's words, "Let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light." Sin is called a work of darkness, and if we consider the antithesis, grace should be called the work of light. However, it is referred to as the armor of light. Why is the contrast depicted in this uneven manner? Luther explains that sin is called a work of darkness, not armor, to emphasize its powerlessness against the wrath of God. On the other hand, grace is called the armor of light, signifying that just as armor serves for both ornament and defense, grace beautifies the soul and shields it from the impending

wrath. In conclusion, I refer to the words of the Apostle Paul: "To be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace." There is peace in this world and eternal life in the world to come. Walking in accordance with the guidance of the Spirit brings much benefit in the present and everlasting life and happiness in the future.

SERMON X.

At St. Lawrence Jury, London, December 8, 1650.

"So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh." - Galatians 5:16

Now, I will proceed to provide specific guidance regarding the movements of the Spirit of God.

[Directive 1] 1. When the Spirit of God prompts holy thoughts in your minds, do not let these thoughts die without bringing them into action. Holy thoughts should be accompanied by holy resolutions and followed by holy deeds. Many Christians make the mistake of letting good thoughts fade away within them, leading to a premature end. We should imitate the example of Daniel, who purposed in his heart not to defile himself with the king's food and wine. He did not stop at mere thoughts and resolutions; he made his request and put effort into his resolution. However, we often find ourselves echoing Job's complaint: "Our purposes are broken off, even the thoughts of our hearts." Holy thoughts should be followed by holy resolutions and fulfilled through righteous actions.

[Directive 2] When the Lord grants you the movements of His Spirit, do not mistake it as having the Essence or Person of the Spirit. This is the error of the Familists and nothing short of blasphemy, as they fail to distinguish between the motions of the Spirit and the Person of the Spirit. Their belief is that a believer possesses not only the graces of the Spirit but also the Person of the Spirit, which equates humanity with divinity. To clarify this, let me provide a comparison. We often say that the Sun is in a specific house or window, but we do not mean that the physical body of the Sun is there; rather, it is the light, heat, or influence of the Sun that is present. Similarly, when the Scriptures state that the Holy Spirit dwells in us, it does not

mean that the Person of the Holy Spirit is within us, but rather that the motions and graces of the Spirit are present. Thus, in the expressions "You are the temple of the Holy Spirit" and "The Holy Spirit dwells in you," there is a metaphorical understanding, as explained by Pareus.

[Directive 3] Be cautious not to mistake the motions of the Spirit for Satanic illusions. I have previously provided the distinguishing characteristics so that you may recognize the motions of the Spirit from the devil's deceptions. I will only mention this infallible rule: All motions that are not in accordance with the written Word are from the devil, not from God. I have cited two Scripture passages where the Spirit and the Word are connected, emphasizing that all your motions should align with the written Word.

[Directive 4] 4. Be cautious about believing anyone who claims to be inspired by the Spirit. In these times, there are many self-proclaimed teachers (who are actually masters of error but want to appear as disciples of truth) that assert their inspiration when no one else does. However, as the Apostle John says, "Do not believe every spirit," that is, every corrupt teacher. Instead, test the spirits to determine if they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world. They are referred to as "spirits" because they confidently pretend to possess the Spirit. To help you identify such individuals, I will address this question:

How can you recognize those who claim to have the Spirit but do not genuinely possess it?

[Answer 1] Those who only pretend to have the Spirit are always proud of the gifts they claim to possess. Their inflated belief in having the Spirit elevates their pride. Here is a reliable rule: Those who are truly inspired by the Spirit are always humble. This was evident in the case of Paul when he said, "I give my judgment, and I think I have the Spirit of God." Paul knew he had the Spirit, yet he spoke with humility, not boastfully and arrogantly like many others.

On another occasion, he mentioned, "I knew a man in Christ fourteen years ago... caught up to the third heaven and heard things that are not lawful for a man to utter." Now, who was this man? It was none other than himself. His modesty led him to speak in the third person. Therefore, those who boast about the Spirit and display vanity are evidence that they do not possess the Spirit of Christ, which is a spirit of meekness and humility.

[Answer 2] Those who exalt the Spirit while disparaging ordinances and the ministry do not possess the Spirit of God. Even during the time of the New Testament, when visions and inspiration were in use, the Spirit did not teach people immediately but directed them to an outward ministry. An excellent example of this is seen in the Ethiopian eunuch, as I mentioned earlier. While reading the prophecy of Isaiah in his chariot, the Spirit did not interpret its meaning directly to him but instructed Philip to go and explain it to him. Similarly, when Christ revealed himself to Paul, he did not personally teach him but commanded him to go to Damascus, where he would be instructed on what to do. We also see a similar example with Cornelius; the Spirit did not teach him immediately but instructed him to send for Peter, who would tell him what he needed to do. Through these examples, we can observe how the Lord has honoured the ministry of the Word. Therefore, those who exalt the Spirit to the extent of devaluing the ministry, expecting immediate personal teaching from the Spirit, undoubtedly do not possess the Spirit of God.

[Answer 3] Those who claim to have the Spirit yet boast more about the effects of the Spirit in future revelations than in present motions towards holy duties are deceived by a satanical delusion. In these times, there are many who presume to predict future contingent events, but this can only be a devilish deception because the gifts of the Spirit in foretelling the future have ceased and are no longer present in the Church. I do not deny that the devil, through a special manifestation from God, may occasionally reveal a future event, but I am certain that your astrologers cannot do so with the help of the

stars. We see an example of this when the devil appeared to Saul in the form of Samuel and said, "Tomorrow you and your sons will be with me, and the Lord will also deliver the army of Israel into the hands of the Philistines." How did the devil come to know this? It was through a special revelation from God, permitted by the Lord to deceive wicked Saul. Alternatively, the devil may have knowledge of future events through his great understanding of scriptural prophecies. He may possess knowledge of those prophecies that are obscure to us. Therefore, we find in history that the devil has predicted the outcomes of wars. For instance, the devil in the Delphic oracle told Alexander that both the Chaldean and Greek empires would be under his rule. So, if individuals confidently claim to predict future contingent events, I can confidently say that it comes from the devil, not from God.

[Direct. 5] Another direction regarding the motions of the Spirit is as follows: Put yourself in every advantageous position to receive the Spirit's motions. There are three advantages that I would recommend to you.

1. Engage in holy conversations with good company. Interacting with those who have the Spirit and discussing spiritual matters is a likely advantage for you to experience the motions of the Spirit. Just as Christ did while he was on earth, he continues to do so through his Holy Spirit. You may recall the account of the two disciples on their way to Emmaus, conversing and reasoning together, when Jesus drew near and accompanied them. Similarly, Christ will draw near to those who engage in discussions about holy things by moving their spirits.
2. Give due attention to God's ordinances. They are like the pool that the angel stirs at specific times. It is worth noting a passage in the book of the Prophet Isaiah, where the Lord says, "Your teachers shall not be moved into a corner anymore, but your eyes shall see your teachers, and your ears shall hear a voice behind you, saying, 'This is the way, walk in it.'" Pay attention to

the connection here: when you see your teachers, you will also hear a voice, which is the voice of the Spirit. The ordinances are the means through which the Spirit conveys its motions to us. In this regard, I can relate it to the words of the Prophet Zechariah, where it is said that the two olive branches pour out golden oil through the two golden pipes, and it flows into the candlestick. The candlestick represents the Church, the oil symbolises the motions of God's Spirit, and these motions flow through the ordinances. The ordinances are like the golden pipes that convey the Spirit's motions into your hearts. The motions of the Spirit and the holy ordinances are like blood and spirit flowing through veins and arteries. Just as these convey blood and spirit to every part of the body, the ordinances convey the graces and comforts of the Spirit to every believing member of Christ. Attend to the preaching of the Word and also engage in prayer. These will be means by which you can receive the Spirit. Christ himself encourages prayer, saying, "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him?" Therefore, go to God in prayer, for it will be a means of bringing the Spirit into your heart.

3. Spend a significant amount of time in solitary and holy meditation. Christ could testify that even when he was alone, he was not truly alone because the Father was with him. Similarly, when you engage in meditation, although you may physically be alone, the Spirit will be with you in its holy motions. Just as Isaac, when he went out to meditate, encountered Rebekah, the answer to his prayers for mercy, so I say to you, immerse yourself in meditation, and the Spirit for which you have prayed shall be bestowed upon you. Just as Elijah, in the mountain, perceived that the Lord was in the still voice, your soul will eventually realize that though the Holy Spirit may not manifest in the strong winds of tumultuous emotions, it will be found in the tranquil voice of holy meditation.

[Direct. 6] Place greater emphasis on the holy motions of the Spirit rather than the exhilarating comforts of the Spirit. The reason for this is that you need the Spirit's motions more than its comforts. You may reach heaven without experiencing comfort, but you cannot reach heaven without grace. Although it is the ecstatic work of the Spirit that brings comfort to my life, it is the sanctifying work of the Spirit that makes my soul capable of salvation. The sealing work of the Spirit, which leads me to cry, "Abba Father," provides comfort, but the sanctifying work of the Spirit, through which I put to death the deeds of the flesh (Romans 8:13-15), forms the foundation of that comfort.

[Direct. 7] Lastly, be cautious not to mistake moral persuasions for the motions of the Spirit. This is an important guideline. People often attribute a good inclination to the Spirit, when in reality, it may simply be a result of moral persuasion. Even mere human nature can drive a reprobate to act in a commendable manner. We read of instances where Herod experienced flashes of joy and gladly listened to John the Baptist, Felix felt pangs of fear and horror, and Judas was consumed by sorrow and grief. However, all of these reactions stemmed from the influence of moral persuasion and were not salvific workings of the Spirit.

To prevent confusion regarding moral persuasion, I will provide four distinctions between it and the workings of the Spirit.

1. Moral persuasion may prompt a person to do good, but it never truly changes their affections. This is evident in the statement, "That did not receive the truth in the love of it," which implies that individuals may accept the truth in its motion, yet not truly love it. Therefore, expressions such as "speaking the truth in love" or "doing the truth in love" emphasize the importance of love in all actions. Moral persuasion can inspire someone to perform a good deed, but it fails to cultivate genuine affection and love for the things they do.

2. Moral persuasion urges individuals to do good, but it does not grant them the power to fulfill what it persuades them to do. Moral persuasion may give someone the insight to recognize what needs to be done, but the Spirit provides not only insight but also assistance in carrying out those good deeds.
3. Moral persuasion motivates people to do good primarily out of the hope for reward or the fear of punishment, rather than out of love for grace or holiness. It focuses more on what God gives rather than what He requires, and places greater importance on the reward of grace rather than grace itself.
4. Moral persuasions are selective in nature, moving individuals to certain types of good actions while neglecting others. They may encourage easy tasks but not difficult duties, outward actions but not inner goodness. On the other hand, the motions of the Spirit are comprehensive and encompassing, prompting individuals towards all forms of good deeds.

[Use 1] Regarding comfort, let us consider in general the reason for comfort we have, in that the Lord has promised to give us more of His Spirit than He bestowed under the law. "It shall come to pass in the last days," says God, "that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh." The Spirit now reveals things more clearly and abundantly. In the past, they saw things obscurely, but now we see face to face, that is, more plainly. There will be a fuller revelation of the Spirit when the light of the moon is like the light of the sun, and the light of the sun is sevenfold, like the light of seven days. Hence, the promise that knowledge shall fill the earth as water fills the sea. In previous ages, the mystery of Christ was not made known to humankind as it is now revealed to us by the Spirit. Therefore, let us bless God, for this general comfort that more of the Spirit was reserved under the New Testament than was given in the Old.

Now, I will present six specific comforts for those who walk according to the guidance and motions of God's Spirit.

1. The Spirit of God will be a reliable guide for you, revealing and leading you in all truth. As our Saviour said, "He will guide you into all truth," meaning all the truth necessary for salvation. A similar passage is found in the same Gospel, stating that the Spirit will teach you all things, referring to everything essential for a chosen individual to know in order to be saved. The Spirit of God unveils the mysteries of salvation to His people. It is written, "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him." However, God has revealed them to us by His Spirit. The Spirit makes known to us the truths of the Gospel and unveils its mysteries. The spiritual person judges all things, yet is not judged by anyone else. They possess the Spirit of God, enabling them to discern whether doctrines are true or false. As the Apostle says, they are not subject to the judgments of others because they are so certain of the truth of their doctrine.
2. The Spirit will not only guide you but also serve as a seal to assure you of your adoption. Those who are led by the Spirit of God (that is, who follow its motions and guidance) are the children of God. And because you are children, God has sent the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, "Abba, Father." This provides you with further assurance and a seal of your sonship, allowing you to pour out your hearts to your Father with greater confidence.
3. The Spirit will serve as evidence of your union with Jesus Christ. As the Apostle says, "By this, we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit which He has given us. And by this, we know that we dwell in Him and He in us because He has given us His Spirit." Therefore, receive the Spirit into your heart, follow its motions and guidance, and you will be assured of your union with Christ.
4. Walk in the Spirit, and it will serve as a sure pledge that you are saved and exempted from damnation. There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus and walk according to the

Spirit, not the flesh. It will provide evidence that you are beyond damnation.

5. It signifies that you are free from the curse and power of the law. If you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. This does not mean that you are exempt from the moral law as a guide for life, but rather that you are liberated from its curse.
6. Lastly, if you have the Spirit of God and walk according to its guidance, you will find comfort in knowing that you will not fulfill the desires of the flesh. This leads me to the second doctrine, namely, that walking according to the Spirit is a special aid for believers in avoiding the fulfillment of the lusts of the flesh. Although they may still commit sins prompted by the devil and their own hearts, they will not completely surrender to the desires of the flesh. However, I will delve into this topic further in the upcoming sermons.

SERMON. XI.

At St. Lawrence Jury, London, December 15, 1650.

And you shall not fulfill the desires of the flesh.- I have so far discussed the duty of walking in the Spirit, and now I will address the benefit associated with this duty - "And you shall not fulfill the desires of the flesh." - GAL. 5:16

In addressing this, I will first provide an explanation, and then present the Doctrine.

There are two aspects that need clarification. Firstly, what is meant by the desires of the flesh? Secondly, what does it mean to fulfill

these desires?

[Question 1] What is meant by the phrase "the lusts of the flesh"?

[Answer 1] If we understand the lusts of the flesh as merely the natural desires of the body, then this text cannot be true, as we can and do fulfill the natural appetites of the body. When we are hungry, we eat; when we are thirsty, we drink; when we are tired, we rest. Therefore, if we take the lusts of the flesh to mean the natural desires of the body, we can lawfully fulfill them. Hence, this cannot be the intended meaning here.

[Answer 2] It is not limited to the sin of sexual immorality but should be understood more comprehensively as referring to the sinfulness of our corrupt nature, including the lusts and desires that we must not fulfill.

[Answer 3] These motions and desires of our corrupt nature can be understood in two ways. Firstly, as a power or inclination. And secondly, as an action or manifestation.

1. As a power, it refers to the inherent inclination or predisposition in human nature towards evil and away from good.
2. As an act, it signifies the sinful actions that arise from corrupt nature, specifically referring to the motions towards sin. Therefore, the meaning of this passage is that if you walk according to the guidance and motions of the Spirit, you will not engage in those sinful actions that stem from corrupt nature.

[Quest. 2] But then a further question arises, what is meant by not fulfilling these lusts of the flesh?

[Answ.] To which I answer, 1. Negatively, we should not understand this as if we were not to have any lusts of the flesh within us. Rather, it means that if you follow the motions of the Spirit, you will not give in to the sinful inclinations and strong will that wicked and

unregenerate people do, and thus you will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh.

Before I proceed to discuss the Doctrine, I would like to mention these points.

1. This benefit mentioned here can be understood either as a command, instructing you on what you should do, or as a promise, assuring you of what you will do. The translators of the Bible seemed unsure and provided both renderings in the margin. However, the exact translation is not crucial.
2. This promise (as it seems to be understood) should not be taken absolutely, but conditionally. What I mean is that God does not promise this unconditionally, but on the condition that if you walk in the Spirit, you will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh.
3. It is not stated that you will not have the lusts of the flesh, for who among us does not experience them? Rather, the emphasis is on not fulfilling them.
4. In our translation, it is mentioned as the lusts of the flesh in the plural, but in the Greek, it is singular as the lust of the flesh. The reason for this difference is that though the sin of our nature is one mass of sin, it contains within it many individual sins. This translation can serve the purpose of emphasizing that though the sin of our nature is singular, it carries within it all the sins of the world in potential.
5. Regarding the benefit that is attached, there should be no doubt left in your minds that this benefit will be yours if you fulfill the condition. If you walk in the Spirit, God will keep you from fulfilling the lusts of the flesh. I derive this understanding from the Apostle's assertion in these words: "This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh." This is my message to you in the name of the Lord, that if you walk in the Spirit, you shall not fulfill, etc.

Now, having stated these points, the Doctrine is as follows:

[Doct.] Walking according to the guidance or motions of the Spirit is a special means to prevent people from yielding to the desires of the flesh with the same strong and complete determination of the will as wicked and ungodly individuals do when they sin against God.

This is a very fruitful point. The promise is not to be taken absolutely that you will never fulfill the lusts of the flesh, but rather in comparison that you will not sin in the same way as wicked people do. You may still sin, but you will not hold on to iniquity in your heart, as the phrase goes in Psalm 66:18. You will not continue to sin as wicked people do, who make a lifestyle out of sinning.

In addressing this point, I will only discuss one thing: to show you how the wicked sin and fulfill the lusts of the flesh, so that all godly individuals who walk according to the guidance of the Spirit will not sin in the same manner.

1. Those who walk according to the guidance of the Spirit do not sin willfully or voluntarily as wicked people do. "If we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin." Godly individuals do not sin with such a strong determination of the will as wicked people do. They do sin, and their wills are involved, but there is much resistance within their will against the sin. It is not a complete consent of the will or a complete inclination of the heart. That is why the Apostle Paul says, "The evil that I would not, that I do." Paul acknowledges that he did evil, but he also states that he did not will the evil he did. A godly person sometimes succumbs to sin, as if to an usurping tyrant, but never as to their true Lord. Wicked people willingly desire the evil they do, but godly people desire the good they do not. Wicked people sin with their entire will because no part of their will is regenerated. That is why the Psalmist says, speaking of a wicked person, "Thou givest thyself to speak evil." There is a significant difference in the expression

used to describe Ahab and Paul. It is said of Ahab that he sold himself to work wickedness, but of Paul it is said that he was sold under sin. They were both sold, but there is this distinction: Ahab sold himself, whereas Paul was sold, and he did not sell himself. Ahab's action was voluntary; he willingly sold himself. But Paul was sold under sin; it was involuntary and against his will.

2. Those who walk according to the guidance of the Spirit do not fulfill the lusts of the flesh as shamelessly as wicked people do. Wicked people commit their wicked acts openly, without any sense of shame. Therefore, the Lord speaks through his prophet, "Were they ashamed when they had committed abominations? Nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush." The prophet further says, "Thou hast a whore's forehead; thou refusedst to be ashamed." Wicked people have abandoned shame. That is why the prophet Zephaniah declares, "The unjust knoweth no shame; they will not be ashamed when they have done wickedly." Just like a prostitute who finds a young man, catches him, kisses him, and shamelessly says, "I have peace-offerings with me; today I have paid my vows." Thus, wicked people sin impudently and feel no shame after committing abominations. However, the godly do not sin in the same manner. The Apostle asks, "What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed?" And Ezra says, "Oh God, our iniquities are increased, I blush and am ashamed to look up." The godly do not sin as shamelessly as wicked people do.
3. Godly individuals do not boast as wicked people do. Ungodly people boast in their ungodly deeds. The Psalmist addresses Doeg, saying, "Why boastest thou thyself in mischief, O mighty man?" It appears that Doeg not only killed innocent priests but also boasted about his villainy and wickedness. Similarly, the Apostle Paul wept over some who were enemies of the cross of Christ, whose glory was in their shame, that is, in their sin. A regenerate person may commit sin and try to hide or downplay

it, but we never read about a regenerate person boasting about their sin. A godly individual may come close to the outskirts of hell through their sin, but they never take pride in shame or boast about their sin.

4. Godly individuals do not sin with the same rejoicing as wicked people do. The Prophet Jeremiah speaks of those who rejoiced when they did evil. As the wise man tells us, "It is a sport to a fool to do mischief." Solomon's fool refers to a wicked person, and they are the ones who find joy in doing evil and take delight in the frowardness of the wicked. Ungodliness is a wicked person's amusement; they make a joke out of sin. However, a person of understanding has wisdom, meaning they possess more wisdom than to find amusement in sin. They know that those who take pleasure in unrighteousness will be damned, and therefore they dare not sin with rejoicing like others. Instead, they have the wisdom to mourn for it, just as David said, "I will declare mine iniquity; I will be sorry for my sin."
5. Godly individuals do not plan and scheme their sins as unregenerate individuals do. It is true that godly individuals may yield to the lusts of the flesh and commit sin, but they are not as cunning in plotting it. The Scripture says, "He that committeth sin is of the Devil." It is not merely said, "He that sins," but "he that commits sin," meaning one who makes sin. The word used here is derived from skilled artisans who are adept at their craft. Godly individuals are inept when it comes to sin, but wicked people are skilled in its execution. Hence, it is said that they are wise in doing evil and skillful in destruction. David tells us that the proud have forged a lie against him. Telling a lie is bad, but forging a lie is worse. This expression is borrowed from blacksmiths who bring a piece of iron to the forge to shape it into a precise form. Wicked people are as skilled in the ways of sin as if they were apprentices to it. Therefore, we read that their tongues are said to frame deceit. It is said that on the last day, Christ will cast away those who are

workers of iniquity. All people commit acts of iniquity, but not all actively engage in sin, meaning they do not make a trade out of sin nor possess expertise in the cursed craft of sin.

6. Godly individuals do not sin with the same deliberation as wicked people do. It is true that a godly person may be led to sin through the force of temptation and the deceitfulness of their own spirit, but they do not intentionally plan and consider how to commit it. Woe to those who devise iniquity and work evil while lying in their beds, and when morning comes, they put their plans into action. Wicked individuals are said to close their eyes and devise perverse things, which signifies the intensity of their thoughts, as opening their eyes would introduce distractions. Thus, wicked people plot, contrive, and deliberate on how to commit sin. They are students of sin. However, remember that on the day of judgment, God will not only hold you accountable for your actions but also for your deliberations and the thoughts in your mind on how to commit such sins, even if they were never acted upon. God will make manifest the counsels of the heart, judging you for the very thoughts and intentions to sin. The Psalmist states that a wicked person devises mischief while lying in bed and sets themselves on a path that is not good. They deliberate mischief; that is their intention, and they set themselves on a path that is not good, which further illustrates their deliberate actions. A godly person may be swayed from the right path by the Devil and their own heart, but the wicked set themselves on a path of sin. A godly person may stumble into sin, as the Apostle explains, indicating that they were deviating from it. However, a wicked person does not turn away from sin but purposefully positions themselves in a way that is not good. I must admit, as theologians have discussed in this matter, that in a sense, a godly person may deliberate on the act of sin. However, there is a significant difference between deliberating about the act of sin and deliberating on how to find an opportunity to commit sin. A godly person may be deliberate about the act itself,

contemplating it in their thoughts. But a godly person does not deliberate on how to seek out an occasion to be wicked. David, for instance, had deliberation when he committed adultery, but he did not deliberate on finding an opportunity; he did not go to his rooftop, thinking that he would see a woman to lust after. However, when he was there, the Devil presented him with an opportunity, and in that moment, he did not deliberate on how to commit that grave sin. The same can be said about his deliberation in the death of Uriah. Although he acted deliberately, the intense temptation pressing upon him led him to do so. On the other hand, wicked people deliberate on how to find opportunities to sin. They become their own devils, plotting how they can do evil and tempting the devils to tempt them.

7. Godly individuals do not indulge in the lusts of the flesh with the same level of eagerness and intensity as wicked people, who are wholeheartedly devoted to their desires. The adulterous thoughts of the wicked are likened to the neighing of a well-fed horse, representing a strong and fierce desire, and to the fury of a horse rushing into battle. Wicked people are as eager in pursuing their lusts as a horse charging into battle. In Exodus 32, it is mentioned that the people were determined to do evil, indicating their eagerness to act wickedly. How eagerly did Amnon desire to satisfy his lust, to the point of becoming sick? And how consumed was Ahab with desire for Naboth's vineyard? They were completely fixated on their lusts. On the other hand, although good individuals may sin, they do not do so with the same eagerness. The Apostle highlights this as a distinction between the godly and the wicked: the wicked engage in all kinds of iniquity and do so eagerly. It is said of the wicked that their hearts follow after detestable things.

8. Godly individuals do not engage in sin with the same level of determination as wicked people. Wicked individuals are so resolute in their lusts that they cannot be dissuaded. When God commands the people to abandon their idolatry, they defiantly

respond, "No, we will continue to love strangers and follow after them." It is as if they are saying, "We have done evil, and we will continue to do evil." Similarly, on another occasion, after they had burned incense to the Queen of heaven, despite the Lord's command to forsake their idolatry and the threat of punishment, they declare, "We will not listen to the word you have spoken in the name of the Lord." They were determined to persist in their wickedness. A wicked person is so fixated on their sin that it disrupts their sleep. They cannot rest unless they have caused harm, and their sleep is disturbed unless they cause others to stumble. On the other hand, godly individuals do not have the same resolute commitment to sin. It is true that a godly person may have the intention to commit a sin, even though they may recognize it as such, but a little good counsel can dissuade them. David's experience is quite noteworthy. He was determined to kill Nabal and his entire family, and he had even bound himself with an oath, fully intending to carry out his bloody resolution. However, when Abigail meets him and provides wise counsel, how quickly he is swayed from his determination! He exclaims, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, who sent you to meet me and blessed be your advice. You have kept me from shedding blood today." Godly individuals are not so firmly resolved to engage in wickedness. A little good advice can steer them away, and they will praise God for such timely guidance, as well as express gratitude towards those who provided it.

9. Godly individuals do not sin with the same level of contentment as wicked people. Wicked individuals sin contentedly because it is their natural inclination. Just as philosophers say that the earth is not heavy in its proper place, wicked individuals are like swine in the mire, finding pleasure in being there. However, for a sheep to be in the mire, it would be distressing. Sheep delight in green pastures. Wicked individuals not only walk and stand in sin but also sit down in it, indicating their contentment with it. But it is not the same for the godly. There is a difference between sin in a good person and sin in a wicked person, just as there is a

difference between poison in a human and poison in a toad. Poison contentedly resides in a toad because it is natural to it, whereas poison in a human body would cause offense. Similarly, sin in the wicked satisfies them because it is natural to them, but sin in the godly is like poison in a human's body—it tortures and torments them.

10. A godly person does not sin as habitually as wicked individuals do. A wicked person makes a habit of sinning; it becomes their way of life. This is why David prays, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me." There may be instances of wickedness in a godly person, but it is not their way of life. The wicked are accustomed to their sinful ways, and as the Prophet speaks, "Can an Ethiopian change his skin or a leopard its spots? Neither can you do good who are accustomed to doing evil." Sin in a wicked person is like water in a river—it was there yesterday, and it will be there today. It is constant. When they engage in sin, they are following their established course. However, sin in a godly person is like floodwater—it may be present today, but tomorrow it is gone. Sin is not their usual practice.
11. Those who walk according to the guidance of the Spirit do not give in to sin as indulgently as wicked individuals. The Prophet condemns the wicked for working wickedness in their hearts; their sin originates from their hearts. They are described as those whose hearts pursue detestable things, sinning affectionately. On the other hand, the heart of a righteous person is not consumed by sin. The wicked hide sin under their tongues like a sweet morsel, but the godly, even if they have sin in their mouths, find it bitter and unpleasant. A wicked person indulges in sin, knowing it will lead to their ruin, just as David dealt gently with Absalom. However, the godly respond differently. Even if they are overtaken by sin, they take revenge against it. As Paul says, "I find then a law, that evil is present

with me, the one who wants to do good. For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin." The inward man of the godly has been transformed, and they serve the law of God with their minds, while the flesh is subject to the law of sin. The godly do not delight in a course of sin.

12. Lastly, they do not sin with malice like the wicked. The Psalmist has a prophetic prayer against those who commit malicious wickedness, asking the Lord not to show them mercy. Those who walk after the Spirit, the righteous, never sin to spite the Spirit of grace. They may sin inconsiderately, but they never sin maliciously. Now, when you consider all these aspects, you will see that the text is true: if you walk in the Spirit, you will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh. In other words, you will not sin in the same manner or to the same extent as wicked people do.

[Use 1] You, who have the Spirit of God, should praise God for having such a preservative that keeps you from sinning in the same way as wicked people do. Why is it that the wicked sin the way they do? It is because they do not have the Spirit of God. Do you not have the same sinful inclinations as the worst among them? Other people's abhorrent actions are reflections of what lies in your heart. You have every reason to thank God because otherwise, you would commit even more sins than you do. And the sins you do commit would be done in a worse manner, more willingly, and more eagerly. Therefore, in this regard, bless God for His holy Spirit.

[Use 2] You can learn about the happiness of a godly person and the misery of a wicked person. The happiness of a godly person lies in having the Spirit that prevents them from sinning as others do. Scripture even speaks of a godly person as if they have no sin at all. "Everyone who has been born of God does not sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God," says the Apostle. This is not to be understood absolutely, as if godly

people have no sin, but in comparison, they do not sin as wicked people do. The Apostle says, "I write these things to you so that you may not sin." It is said of Job that "in all this, Job did not sin." These expressions are not meant to be taken absolutely, but comparatively. It means that godly people do not sin in the same manner as wicked people do. Job says, "You shall visit your dwelling, but you shall not sin." What an honour it is for the godly that because they do not sin like the wicked, the Scriptures mention them as if they do not sin at all.

Now, consider the misery of the wicked. What a state they are in, lacking the Spirit of God to restrain their sinful nature. How enslaved to sin they are, how bound to their own desires. When the devil tempts them from the outside and their own lusts tempt them from within, they have no Spirit of God to hold them back. Wicked people sin in ways that godly people cannot. Therefore, the Lord says, "They have corrupted themselves, and their blemish is not the blemish of my children." It is true that there may be some aspects I mentioned in your actions. There may be some will involved in sin, some pleasure, some deliberation. However, do not be discouraged if your heart does not fully yield, if there is not as strong a inclination to sin as there is in wicked people.

SERMON XII.

At Lawrence Jury, London. December 15, 1650.

"For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary the one to the other, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would." - Galatians 5:17

Having discussed in previous sermons the preceding verse about walking in the Spirit, I now turn to address this verse, which describes the conflict between the flesh and the Spirit.

For now, I will only explain the first part of the verse and address the rest in due order.

The initial attack in this spiritual battle comes from the flesh. The flesh lusts against the Spirit. To understand this, we must clarify two things.

[Question 1] 1. What is meant by "flesh"?

[Question 2] What is meant by "Spirit"? And then, what does it mean for the flesh to lust against the Spirit?

[Answer] By "flesh" we understand the corruption of human nature caused by original sin. This corruption can be understood as either a state or an action. If we consider the flesh as a state, it signifies the inherent, foundational, and original inclination in human nature towards evil. However, if we take it as an action, it signifies our corrupt desires opposing grace. In this context, I understand it as such: The flesh lusts against the Spirit, meaning that when the Spirit of God stirs the heart with holy motions, there is a contrary response in the flesh, suppressing those motions and leading the heart towards evil.

The corruption of nature may be called "flesh" for several reasons.

1. The soul becomes defiled with corruption immediately upon its union with the body. While there is debate among theologians about when exactly the soul becomes corrupted, considering that it is created and thus initially pure, the majority of authors conclude that upon the union of the soul with the body, human nature is said to have natural corruption. For this reason, some believe that corrupt nature is referred to as "flesh" because

humans are naturally corrupted as soon as the soul and body come together.

2. Corrupt nature is called "flesh" because this corruption remains as long as we inhabit bodies of flesh and blood. As long as we have flesh, we will have sin. The body of death is only destroyed through the death of the body. Therefore, corruption can be referred to as "flesh."
3. The motions of corrupt nature are as dear to a person as their own flesh. No one has ever hated their own flesh, and this is why the Scripture uses phrases like "right hand" and "right eye" to describe the corruption of nature. It is intimately connected to a person.

[Question 2] What is meant by the spirit?

[Answer] Some people understand the "spirit" to refer to the soul of a regenerated individual, but this interpretation seems incongruous as the context of the passage suggests something different, although it may also be included. Therefore, by "spirit," we mean the holy motions and workings of God's Spirit. It is evident that this is the intended meaning because the term "spirit" is used in the preceding verse and also in the verse following my text. Thus, I understand "spirit" to represent the movements and workings of God's Spirit within the soul. This is the sense in which the word "spirit" is used in most places in this Epistle.

[Question 3] What is meant by "lust" here?

[Answer] When it is said that the flesh "lusteth against the Spirit," it is important to note that it is not described as "working against" or "acting against" the Spirit. Although sin has an active nature, it is not always in the act. However, even when it is not actively engaged, it is always lusting. There is an inherent opposition in human nature to the work of God's Spirit upon the heart. In this passage, you can observe three elements:

- A dual conflict: The flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh.
- A dual cause: These are contrary to one another—the flesh is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit is contrary to the flesh.
- A dual consequence: As a result, you cannot do the things you would. The flesh lusts against the Spirit, hindering you from doing the good you desire, and the Spirit opposes the flesh, preventing you from doing the evil you would.

Before I present the doctrine, I would like to mention a few important points:

1. This conflict between the flesh and the Spirit was not present in the state of innocence. At that time, there was harmony between the movements of God's Spirit and all the faculties of both the soul and body. Man was created upright by God.
2. This conflict will not exist in the state of glory. In that state, you will be completely Spirit and devoid of corrupt flesh. The flesh will be completely abolished.
3. This opposition is not found in infancy. While it is true that infants have a corrupt nature and sinful tendencies, they do not exhibit what we call actual opposition since they cannot exercise either grace or sin.
4. This conflict is not found in an unregenerate state. When a person is entirely unregenerate, they do not have any saving movements within them. There can only be opposition where there are two opposing forces.
5. The duration of this conflict is the entire duration of this earthly life. It cannot be ended until life itself ends. Until you shed your mortal body, you will not be free from the movements of sin.
6. Even the most holy individuals experience this conflict between the flesh and the Spirit. Those who have the most grace are most

aware of the struggle between the flesh and the Spirit.

7. Even regenerated individuals more often align themselves with the movements of the flesh than with the movements of the Spirit. They are more inclined towards sin than obedience, more likely to embrace sinful tendencies than to entertain divine promptings. Some deduce this from the variation in the Apostle's speech when he says, "The works of the flesh are manifest," but he does not say the same about the fruits of the Spirit, suggesting that people are prone to align themselves with the flesh rather than the Spirit.
8. These movements of corrupt nature are not limited to the lower aspects of human beings, such as the concupiscible faculty inciting gluttony and lust, and the irascible faculty causing envy and wrath. They also affect the higher faculties, despite what the Papists might claim. The more noble and rational aspects of human faculties have become corrupt. Reason and imagination have become futile, understanding is tainted, the will is rebellious, and affections are misplaced. The higher faculties have been defiled.

Having outlined these points, I will now present the doctrine, which is as follows:

[Doctr.] The motions or inclinations in our natures to sin always conflict or wage war against the motions of God's Spirit urging us towards good.

I will not dwell on proving this point, as it is clearly written in the Word and evident in everyone's experience. Therefore, I will address several queries regarding this matter before providing the application.

[Query 1] In what does this conflict between the flesh and the Spirit consist?

[Answ. 1] It involves stirring up sinful desires in the heart when the Spirit dissuades from sin. The Apostle Paul speaks of this on behalf of the regenerate, saying, "When we were in the flesh, the motions of sin, which were by the law, worked in our members to bring forth fruit unto death." It is not only in unregenerate individuals that motions arise from corrupt nature, contrary to the Spirit of God, but also in a regenerate person. Every person is tempted when they are drawn away by their own lusts and enticed, that is, by original sin. Thus, Paul speaks of himself after his conversion, stating, "I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members." The Apostle refers to sin as a law because it had power over him and led him into captivity. The law of his members waged war against the law of his mind by provoking him to sin.

[Answ. 2] The conflict also involves extinguishing and suppressing the good motions of the Spirit that urge us towards righteousness. The Spirit's role is not only to testify to us about our graces and confirm our relationship with Christ but also to stir and provoke holy movements in the heart. However, the flesh does its best to quench these good motions. This is why Paul laments that he does not do the good he desires and does the evil he does not want to do. This arises from the corruption of nature, which he complains about throughout the entire chapter. It is in this chiefly that the opposition between the flesh and the Spirit exists.

[Answ. 3] The flesh opposes the Spirit by interrupting you when you are engaged in good duties. If the flesh cannot prevail in preventing you from doing them, it will strive to make you perform them incorrectly or with a wrong motive. This is where its great sinfulness lies. As Paul says, "For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out." It is as if he is saying, "I always have an evil nature within me that interrupts and weakens me, preventing me from doing the good I want to do." This is the essence of the conflict between the flesh and the Spirit.

[Query 2] How does the flesh oppose the Spirit and incite to sin? While the Spirit discourages sin, the flesh entices to sin. Now, in what way does the flesh entice to sin, thus conflicting with the Spirit?

[Answ. 1] In general, the manner in which the flesh opposes the Spirit is very crafty and subtle. This is evident in what Paul says, "But sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, produced in me every kind of coveting." Here, by sin, he does not mean actual sin, but original sin. The sin of our nature is highly deceptive, as can be seen in the following:

1. The names given to the sin of our nature in Scripture indicate its deceitfulness. It is referred to as deceitful lusts. There is great deceitfulness in sin, as the Apostle exhorts, "But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called 'Today,' so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness."
2. The sin of our nature deceives, as experienced by God's people. As Paul says, "But sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, deceived me and through the commandment put me to death."
3. This sin of our nature is what makes the heart deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. The heart is deceitful, and it manifests great subtlety in this aspect.

[Answ. 2] Specifically, there are seven ways in which corrupt nature entices individuals to sin.

1. By disguising sin with the appearance and veneer of grace. Just as a promiscuous woman may sometimes dress modestly to avoid suspicion, your heart may disguise sin in order to deceive you more easily. It is common for the beautiful countenance of grace to be marred by the corruption of our hearts, such that the tenderness of conscience is labeled needless scrupulosity, zeal is called recklessness, walking in holiness is seen as unnecessary and excessively strict, patience in enduring suffering is branded

as cowardice and weakness of spirit. Conversely, your corrupt heart may camouflage heinous sins with the mask of grace. Many have masked the ugly sin of greed with the virtue of frugality and thriftiness, pride is disguised as neatness, drunkenness is justified as good companionship, prodigality is labeled as generous magnanimity, and similar disguises are applied to the deformed face of sin.

This applies not only to actions but also to opinions. How are ancient heresies, documented by Eusebius and other authors, now referred to as "new lights"? How are Satan's deceptions labeled as the motions of the Holy Spirit? How is immoral behaviour termed "Christian liberty"? This masking of sin with the appearance of grace stems from our corrupt nature and is one way in which the flesh entices individuals to sin.

2. By convincing you that there are certain sins of which you need not fear committing. The devil has a great advantage in this matter. Sometimes our own hearts assure us that there are sins so repugnant to our natural disposition and that we possess enough grace that we will never commit them. This was the case with wicked Hazael. When the prophet told him of the evil he would do to Israel—burning their cities, slaying their young men, dashing children against the stones, and ripping open pregnant women—Hazael could not believe it. He said, "Is your servant a dog that he should do such a great thing?" Peter's heart deceived him in a similar way. He claimed that even if all others deserted Jesus, he would not. But how his heart deceived him! Even a godly person can be misled by their own heart. People refuse to believe that their hearts are as corrupt as they truly are. When the heart believes that there are certain sins it will never commit, it becomes complacent and more easily drawn toward them. David experienced this when he had a conscience about minor matters, as evidenced by his remorse for cutting off a corner of Saul's garment. However, he never thought he would fall into the gross and scandalous sins of

adultery and murder. His heart grew complacent and deceived him.

3. The flesh entices individuals to sin by promising pleasure and delight in the act of sin, while concealing the harm and mischief that comes with it. How many are deceived by this! Every person is tempted when they are lured and enticed by their own desires. We are said to be enticed by our lusts. The word used here is quite significant, likening it to fishermen who show the fish the bait but hide the hook. Just as fishermen and the devil and your corrupt nature operate, they show you the pleasure but not the danger of sin—the bait but not the hook. As the apostle Peter says, they deceive unstable souls. It is your own heart that deceives you. Just as the devil, before Adam, employed this tactic with his sinful nature, now your own heart uses it against you. "If you eat," says the devil, "you will be like gods, knowing good and evil, and your eyes will be opened." The devil concealed the hook, not revealing that they would be driven out of paradise, but hid the danger and deceived them. Now your own corrupt heart employs the same method against you. The path of the wicked seduces them, says Solomon. The wicked person performs deceitful deeds, but it is only the righteous who will receive a sure reward. The deeds of the wicked offer a seeming reward, but it is only the godly whose reward is certain.
4. By persuading you to entertain small and lesser sins, promising that if you yield to these, you will never be troubled to commit greater sins. This is a great deception of the heart, and many have been ensnared by it. Small sins serve as an entry point to greater sins. Just as a small thief entering a house can open the doors for greater and stronger thieves to come in, little sins can lead us to greater sins. I have read a story about a young man who was tempted by the devil and his own heart to commit three sins: killing his father, lying with his mother, and getting drunk. He refused to commit the first two sins as they were repugnant to his nature, but he thought, "I will yield to the last one because

it is the least." However, that was enough, for while he was drunk, he ended up killing his father and violating his own mother. Therefore, beware of this deceit of sin. Your own heart may not prompt you to commit all sins at once, but it will strive to gradually draw you from lesser sins to greater sins until you become completely abominable in them. Behold, as the Apostle James says, "what a great matter a little fire kindleth!" Little sins, when yielded to, can become the occasion for many great sins to arise. Therefore, be cautious and do not be deceived by the corrupt inclinations of your nature.

5. The flesh will tempt you to sin on the basis that it is just a small sin. It may say, "Is it not a little one?" similar to what Lot said about Zoar. But consider that this is merely the cunning strategy of sin to undo you. While some sins may be smaller in terms of the action itself, all sins are equal in relation to their object. There is no such thing as sinning against a small God, and therefore there can be no little sin. Sin should not be measured by its action, but by its object. A blow given to an ordinary person may be considered insignificant, but a blow given to a great person is highly offensive. Therefore, if your heart tells you that it is just a little sin, respond by saying, "The God I sin against is not a little God, and the merit required for the forgiveness of this sin cannot be small either. Furthermore, the hell prepared for the punishment of a little sin is no small torment." Therefore, be cautious of your heart in this regard.
6. Your heart may tempt you to sin under the pretence of the good that may result from it. How many have been ensnared by this trap? Lot's daughters were entangled in it when they decided to lie with their own father, believing that by preserving their father's seed, they would ensure the continuation of the people of God. They saw no other way for their father to have descendants and thought that the church would cease to exist. This was their motive, and so they were willing to venture into sin for the sake of preserving a seed. However, this goes directly

against the Scriptures, which forbid us from doing evil in order for good to come from it. "Will you speak wickedly on God's behalf? Will you talk deceitfully for Him?" By the same reasoning, Judas' betrayal could be excused because of the great good that would come from Christ's death. But let me tell you something: if you sin in order for good to come from it, you are actually putting yourself at risk of losing the good you seek. There is a striking example concerning Saul: when he was pursuing the Philistines, he issued a harsh and cruel command. He ordered the people under an oath not to eat anything until evening, so that he could take revenge on his enemies. Saul's intention may have seemed good, but by using an unlawful means, the people became weak and faint from hunger, whereas they could have achieved a far more glorious victory otherwise. Therefore, when people resort to sinful means to obtain good, it is just for God to frustrate their desired outcome.

7. Lastly, your corrupt heart will tell you that even if you do not boldly commit a sin, you can safely engage in the occasion of sin and still be preserved. This is how Peter's heart deceived him. He ventured into the high priest's courtyard, exposing himself to the occasion of sin, thinking that he would not be caught in it. Similarly, the Israelites married foreign wives, and this became an occasion that eventually led them to worship foreign gods. Therefore, stay away from the occasion of sin. Solomon has a wise saying: "Can a man walk on hot coals without his feet being scorched?" His meaning is that a person cannot keep company with a prostitute and remain chaste. Running towards the occasions of sin leads to the act of sinning. Just as you would not dare to walk on ice or slippery surfaces due to the risk of falling, if you desire to be free from sin, do not be bold enough to venture into its occasions.

[Use 1] Those of you who carry flesh and blood within you, along with sinful natures, and who experience the conflicts between the flesh and the Spirit, reflect upon what the flesh is fighting against. It

is nothing less than your immortal souls, as the Apostle Peter tells you: "I urge you as foreigners and exiles to abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your soul." The flesh seeks to condemn the soul. In this conflict, it is as if Caesar said during a battle he had in Africa against the children and followers of Pompey, that in other battles he fought for glory, but there and then he had to fight for his life. Remember, your precious soul is at stake in this combat. Therefore, I implore you to align yourself with God's Spirit against the flesh, and not with the flesh against the Spirit.

[Use 2] When you are overtaken by sin, do not blame anyone but your own heart. Do not blame God or the devil.

1. Do not blame God, for He created man upright. He gave man a pure and untainted soul, but they have chosen many sinful paths. Therefore, blame yourself. Let no one say when they are tempted that they are tempted by God, for everyone is tempted when they are drawn away by their own desires and enticed.
2. Do not blame the Devil; it is natural for people to shift the blame away from their own sinful natures when they fall into sin and place it all on the Devil. However, if you observe the Scripture, you will never find that a godly person ever blamed the Devil after they fell into sin. It is true that Adam and Eve did so, but they had no sinful nature to tempt them. After their fall, it was their sinful nature that tempted them, not the Devil. It is said that Satan stood up and provoked David to number the people, but David himself does not say that. Instead, he says, "I have sinned greatly, and I have acted very foolishly." David holds his own heart accountable, and the reason is that the heart of a person has a greater influence in provoking them to sin than the Devil does. What could the Devil do if we did not have a sinful inclination within us? When the Devil came to tempt Christ, he found nothing to latch onto, and therefore he could not succeed. Christ said, "The ruler of this world is coming. He has no hold over me." But it is different for us; temptations find

corresponding corruptions within us. When the Devil comes to you, your heart is like flax among fire or gunpowder with a spark in it, ready to explode. So, do not blame the Devil, but your own heart. Neither the Devil nor the world could harm you if it were not for your own heart, which, like a treacherous traitor, resides within your chest and betrays the soul to the snares and temptations of the Devil.

Sermon. XIII.

At St. Lawrence Jury, London, December 22, 1650.

"For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary to one another, so that you cannot do the things that you would." - Gal. 5:17.

Now, I will proceed to present to you the characteristics of this enmity and conflict, and there are nine or ten qualities of this adversary, which is our corrupt nature.

The flesh is a formidable enemy against the Spirit; it is not a weak opponent, but a strong one. That is why the Apostle says, "Do not let sin reign in your mortal bodies." In the unregenerate, the flesh acts as a mighty monarch, ruling without restraint, having power and authority over them. And in the regenerate, sin becomes an usurping tyrant, gaining control over a significant part of the believer's soul. Paul laments that he was sold under sin; even though he did not willingly sell himself to commit wickedness after his regeneration, he was taken captive by the flesh, as if he were facing a powerful and prevailing adversary. Just as conquerors sell their prisoners, Paul found himself in a similar situation.

Theologians often liken corrupt nature to the great Goliath, and grace to the little David. Goliath may have possessed more strength, but it was David who emerged victorious. Although corruption may be potent, ultimately, grace will prevail.

The potency of the flesh is evident in several ways.

1. Scripture attributes powerful names to corrupt nature. It is called a stronghold, akin to a fortified fortress that is difficult to conquer. It is referred to as a law, the law of sin, exerting control over the soul similar to how laws govern the subjects of a kingdom. It is said to reign, possessing the authority that a prince holds over his people.
2. The potency is demonstrated by the immense power required to suppress this enemy. Only the power of an Almighty God can overcome these corrupt inclinations. That is why the Apostle says, "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God, to the pulling down of strongholds." It is a weapon infused with the divine power that can demolish these strongholds.
3. Corrupt nature is strong because it is influenced by a powerful spirit, the Devil. He entices you to sin, and that amplifies the potency of the corruption in your heart. The sea may move on its own as a fluid body, but when a tempestuous storm arises, it rages and roars. The same is true for your corrupt nature. Even if there were no Devil, you would still be inclined to sin, but when the Devil stirs up the sea of your corrupt nature, it intensifies and swells. He is the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit who currently works in the disobedient.
4. It demonstrates the potency of the flesh because it often triumphs over the Spirit. The Apostle tells you that not only in wicked people but even in the regenerate, the flesh frequently gains the upper hand. He says, "The law is spiritual, but I am

carnal, sold under sin." He speaks of himself as a regenerate person. He does not say that he sold himself; that was characteristic of wicked Ahab. Rather, it implies that corrupt nature carried him away as a captive to sin, just as a conqueror takes away his prisoner.

5. The flesh is a formidable enemy because there is a greater measure of the flesh in regenerate individuals than there is of the Spirit. You have more sin within you than grace, more of a corrupted nature than a renewed nature. Even in the most devout followers of God, there is more ignorance than knowledge, more pride than humility, and generally more sin than obedience. This can be inferred from the list of works of the flesh and fruits of the Spirit mentioned here. There are seventeen sins listed as the product of the flesh, while there are only seven virtues as the product of the Spirit. This signifies that there is more of the old nature in your heart than the new, more of the old leaven than the new lump, more dross than gold. God allows this in His children to keep them humble and in constant dependence on Him. The spirits of righteous individuals are never perfected until they reach heaven, and in the meantime, it is the remarkable power of Christ to sustain a spark of grace amidst a sea of corruption.

As the flesh is a formidable enemy, it is also a malicious enemy against the Spirit. The mindset of the flesh is hostile towards God, and its malice towards the Spirit can be seen in two ways.

1. It allows no goodness to reside within it. The Apostle says, "I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwells no good thing." Though there may be goodness in the individual, there is no goodness in the flesh, meaning in their sinful nature.
2. It is satisfied with nothing less than the destruction of the person in whom it resides. This is an exceedingly harmful enemy. It not only extinguishes the motions of the Spirit but is

also malicious towards the individual. The Apostle Paul says, "Sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it, slew me." Furthermore, he declares, "If you live according to the flesh, you shall die." The flesh is content with nothing less than the death and eternal damnation of the soul. This clearly demonstrates the great extent of its malice.

3. Corrupt nature is a universal enemy against the Spirit, and its universality can be observed in three aspects.
 1. The flesh resides within the entirety of a person, in every part of their body and in all the faculties of their soul. Just as the soul dwells within the body, so does corruption and sin dwell within the soul. Philosophers state that the soul exists in the body entirely, with the whole soul present in every part of the body. Similarly, the corruption of nature and sin exist within your soul, with the entirety of corrupt nature present in the entire soul and in every part of it. It encompasses not only the concupiscible and irascible aspects but also the more noble parts, such as the will, understanding, and reason. It is universal throughout every aspect of a person.
 2. It contains within it the potential for all sins. Nothing contains within it all forms of evil except corrupt nature. Just as we can say that the first man encompassed all of humanity, we can say that sin, in its first instance, encompassed every sin virtually. The Apostle says, "Sin, taking occasion by the Commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence." Corrupt nature inclines towards all actual evils in the world. An analogy can be drawn with an egg. An egg potentially and seminally contains all the parts of a bird; it simply requires the warmth of a hen to hatch and bring it forth. Similarly, our corrupt flesh contains within it all sin, the seed and essence of every sin. And just as the hen hatches the chicken, the devil hatches sin.

3. It opposes all the graces bestowed by God's Spirit. Other sins, regardless of their nature, oppose only their corresponding virtues. Specific sins carry specific opposition; for example, pride opposes humility, lust opposes charity, drunkenness opposes sobriety, injustice opposes righteousness, wrath opposes meekness, and hatred opposes love. Each sin opposes a specific virtue. However, your flesh exhibits a universal opposition to all forms of grace.

The flesh is an insatiable enemy, and this insatiability is evident in two aspects.

- In terms of sin, if we give in to its temptations today, corrupt nature will not be satisfied. If you yield to sin today, you will have to do so tomorrow and all the days after. Corrupt nature is like the four things Solomon speaks of that are never satisfied. And as he also says, hell and destruction are never full, just like the eyes of a person that are never satisfied. In this context, corrupt nature within the eyes and sinful desires within the heart cause an adulterous eye to never be satisfied.
 - In terms of punishment as well as sin, even if sin brings diseases to your body or poverty to your estate, you still refuse to let go of it. It seeks nothing less than the damnation of your soul.
5. Corrupt nature is an tireless enemy against the Spirit. Even if the flesh possesses all the previously mentioned qualities, if it lacked this one, there would be hope that it would eventually tire out and be weary. However, corruption is by nature unwearied in its enmity against the Spirit. Things that act according to their nature do so tirelessly. Fire never tires of burning, water never tires of ebbing and flowing because it is natural to them. The sun never tires of following its course because its motion is natural. Sin is something natural to you, you were born in it and raised in it, and therefore it acts tirelessly. This war between the flesh and the Spirit is a ceaseless war.

6. Corrupt nature is an internal enemy; it dwells not only with us, but within us. That is why Paul says, "It is not I, but sin that dwelleth in me." An enemy outside a city cannot cause much harm if the walls are strong and well-guarded. But if there are traitors within along with external assailants, it endangers the city. Remember that you not only have the Devil outside, but corrupt nature within—a sin within that always seeks to betray you. Once a little thief has entered, there is more danger from him than from all the robbers outside. Corrupt nature is this little thief, always seeking to betray you to the Devil.
7. This corruption of nature is a continual enemy against the Spirit. Nothing acts continuously except corrupt nature. The eye does not always see, the sea does not always flow, the sun does not always shine. But corrupt nature is always at work. The Spirit cannot send forth a good motion without the flesh laboring to send it back and quench it. The Devil is not always tempting, the world is not always vexing, but the flesh is always resisting the Spirit.
8. The flesh is a cunning enemy against the Spirit. It works more through flattery than force. Every person is tempted when they are drawn away by their own desires and enticed. This is a metaphor taken from fishermen who show the bait but hide the hook. It works slyly and subtly.
9. It is a fierce enemy against the Spirit. The Apostle, in exhorting the Thessalonians to holiness and sanctification, tells them not to walk in the lust of concupiscence like the Gentiles who do not know God. Not in passionate lust, as the original text says. Corrupt nature is deeply rooted in a person, and that is why it is called a burning in lust. What is more fierce and intense than a burning fire? Corrupt nature ignites the soul, and it is also compared to a horse rushing into battle. It is described as drawing sin with cart-ropes, indicating the eager and fierce nature of a sinner. It is fierce, outrageous, and violent.

10. It is an equal enemy in all people. It is not more present in one person and less in another. It is equally present in everyone, as all are equally affected by it. This is because all people are equally connected to Adam. Otherwise, some individuals would be more affected by Adam's sin than others, which is impossible. We are all descendants of Adam and therefore equally tainted. However, it is true that actual corruption is more evident in some individuals than in others. Some are more profane, more immoral, or more passionate than others because they have stronger natural inclinations and prevailing corruptions towards certain sins. Yet, no one is more corrupted in their nature than another. Therefore, if you are regenerated, you have just as much reason to lament a corrupt and sinful nature as any devil in hell. These are the properties of the enemy that wages war against the soul.

[Use 1] Let the awareness of this inspire you to be grateful, that despite corrupt nature possessing all these qualities: its power, malice, universality, insatiability, indefatigability, inwardness, subtlety, and outrageousness as an enemy; it could not prevent converting grace. Praise God that converting grace has conquered this enemy, and despite all its strength, malice, and cunning, has brought it under control.

Praise God for sustaining grace. It is a marvel of the world that a child of God can have so much corruption within, and yet that corruption does not destroy grace. The wonder is evident in this: Adam, who had no sinful nature but was a mutable creature with the freedom of his own will, fell when tempted by the Devil. Even the angels in heaven, who had neither an evil nature within nor a tempting Devil without, still fell. But you, who have both a tempting Devil without and a corrupt nature within, will not fall. Oh, bless the Lord for this. It stems from your participation in an unchanging Covenant, because you are chosen by an unchanging decree and kept by an unchanging God. Therefore, once you are in the Covenant of Grace, you are always kept in it. Praise God for this unchanging grace

He extends to your humble soul, by which you are preserved for salvation, and by which the people of God are kept from falling.

[Use 2] Let this also prompt you to be vigilant against the impulses of sin in your corrupt natures. If the flesh possesses all these qualities, do you not have reason to keep watch and guard in your own hearts? There is a compelling reason why you should be watchful, because your corrupt nature has several advantages over grace.

1. It has been within you longer than grace has: Therefore, first and foremost, it is stated that the flesh lusts against the Spirit, which is a significant advantage. As we can observe in military affairs, when a decisive battle has been fought, the army that takes the field first will be sure to choose ground that favours them. Your corrupt nature, which wages war against the Spirit, was first in the field and has gained advantage. You were born a sinner, with an evil nature, but not with a divine nature; hence, in the text, the conflict begins with the flesh. Therefore, be watchful against the flesh, knowing it has this advantage over you.
2. The flesh not only has the advantage of time but also of quantity; there is more flesh within you than there is of the Spirit. There are more types of sin than there are of grace. In the best garden, there are more weeds than flowers; in the best soul, there are more corruptions than graces.

I can appeal to your experience to determine whether you have acted out more graces or sins. In the chapter where my text is found, there are seventeen sins mentioned in the list, but there are only seven graces. This signifies that the flesh is more dominant within us than the Spirit. There are swarms of lusts and vain thoughts, but alas, how few good thoughts and holy motions of the Spirit of God are present in the best of us?

3. In terms of constitution, the flesh has a significant advantage. Corruption is more aligned with your nature than grace. Grace is above nature, but sin is within nature and aligned with it. The path of grace is uphill; the path to heaven goes against both the wind and the tide. However, corruption does not face such obstacles, as it is favoured by both. Therefore, watch your hearts with this consideration in mind.

[Use 3] Break out in praise of God that despite corrupt nature having so many evil qualities, you do not engage in more evil actions. It is a mercy that from such a destructive root, no more poisonous fruit has emerged. If God were to leave aside the Devil and your own heart, and allow you to follow your own inclinations, there would be no sin committed by any person that you wouldn't also commit. You would be an embodiment of evil. Therefore, bless God that your actions do not align with your disposition, and that your life is not as wicked as your heart.

Bless God for other people. It is remarkable that wicked individuals, lacking a new nature to counteract their old nature, do not engage in more evil in the world. It is God who restrains and curbs their wicked tendencies. If God did not restrain the wickedness of these individuals, the world would have long ago descended into chaos due to the excesses of their wicked actions.

[Use 4] If it is true that corrupt nature possesses all these qualities, then be humbled by the awareness of your corrupt nature. Even if you are endowed with many excellent gifts and graces, humble yourself on the basis that despite having a divine nature, you also have a corrupt nature that constantly opposes it. Just as the peacock, with its beautiful feathers, has foul feet, and the swan, with its white plumage, has a black skin and black feet, remember that although you may appear innocent in your life, you possess a corrupt nature with sinful affections and wicked inclinations.

These considerations should motivate us to remember and remain vigilant against the corrupt nature within us.

1. It is a somber realization that should humble us and make us vigilant, that you have as much evil in your heart as the worst person alive on Earth.
2. It is ingrained in us, it existed in us before we were even born; before you entered the world, sin was already a part of your nature, because as soon as you had life, you had sin.
3. This corruption of nature will always be present with us as long as we live in this world. Our bodies are likened to earthen vessels, and the Scriptures compare it to the leprosy of an earthen vessel; if any unclean thing were placed in it, no amount of washing and scrubbing could make it clean, it would need to be broken. Likewise, with you, the vessel of your body must be broken before your corruption can be eradicated.
4. This corruption is what easily entangles you. The inclinations to sin in your nature are like sparks of fire in a heap of flammable material; they quickly ignite within your nature and prompt you to commit evil deeds. Therefore, be persuaded from this to maintain strict and diligent watchfulness over your own heart.

Sermon. XIV

At Lawrence Jury, London, December 24, 1650.

"For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary the one to the other, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would." I now proceed to a fourth question, which is why, or for what reason, does God allow corrupt nature to wage war with the Spirit in regenerate men?

Why does He not make us perfect as He did in creation? -
Galatians 5:17

This is a question worth discussing. God loves no sin, and yet He permits all the sins that exist, including this mass of sin, this sin that virtually encompasses every sin. In response to this, I shall present five reasons.

First, the remaining corruption of nature in regenerate men serves to humble them. It is similar to the Israelites in the wilderness who were stung by fiery serpents and scorpions to humble them. In the same way, while we are in this world's wilderness, we have a corrupt nature that clings to us, causing us to be stung by this fiery serpent of sin, which should humble us before the Lord. God has ordained it in nature that creatures of the greatest excellence should have some visible deformity. If we observe birds or beasts, we see that the peacock, with its beautiful feathers, has an unattractive voice. The swan, with its white feathers, has black skin. The eagle, with its keen sight and high flight, is also the most predatory among birds. Among beasts, the lion, the grandest of all creatures, is also the most fierce and cruel. The fox is the most cunning, yet has the foulest smell. Thus, even in nature, God has ordained this, and it is the same with His own people in terms of grace. Though they may possess excellent gifts and talents, He allows this corruption to remain in them to humble them.

We can observe this in the words of the Apostle James in Chapter 4. After speaking about corrupt nature in verse 8, he exhorts people to be humble in the following verse. This shows that the consideration of a corrupt heart should lead to humility. It was said by Master Fax that his graces hurt him more than his sins, which he explained by saying that he was often proud of his gifts and graces but humbled by his sins. The Apostle Paul, after experiencing extraordinary revelations, was given a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment him, so that he would not be exalted above measure. This text has various interpretations. Some interpret the thorn in the flesh

as lust and incontinence, but this cannot be the case since Paul affirms his gift of continence. Others say it was a bodily ailment, such as sciatica or gout, or some intense pain in his body. However, most interpreters differ from these views and interpret it as corrupt nature. The thorn in the flesh is seen as a sharp temptation and inclination to sin arising from the corruption of his nature and the remnants of lust. But then it may be questioned, how can corrupt nature be called the messenger of Satan? To this, theologians answer that it is called so not because it is a temptation from the devil, but because the devil is an instrument that incites our sinful nature to sin. This thorn in the flesh was left in Paul to humble him. This is the true and primary reason why God does not make regeneration as perfect as creation, as He desires to keep us humble. Thus, humility, the greatest of virtues, comes from the worst root, our sin, while pride, the worst of sins, comes from the best root, our graces. How wise and good is God that through this thorn in the flesh, He pricks and releases the pus of pride from our hearts!

Secondly, the reason why God allows corrupt nature to remain in the regenerate is to distinguish between earth and heaven, between being on a journey and being in our Father's house. In heaven, the spirits of righteous individuals are perfected, but on earth, this is not the case. If the spirit were perfected, we would be all spirit and no flesh. In the wilderness, there were scorpions and fiery serpents, but in Canaan, there were none. This world is like a wilderness, and as long as we live here, the fiery serpents of sin will sting us. However, when we reach heaven, we will be above sin. Currently, corruption dwells in the soul, just as the body dwells in a house. As long as the soul resides in the body, sin will reside in the soul. But when we reach heaven, corruption will be replaced with incorruption. We will be freed not only from the natural corruption of the body but also from the moral corruption of the soul caused by sin.

Thirdly, the primary reason for God allowing this is so that you may value a Mediator even more. If you had no sin, you would value God only as a Creator and not Christ as a Mediator. Sin causes you to

value a Saviour. This was true for Paul when he exclaimed, "O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?" His response was, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." In other words, if I were perfect, I would have thanked God as a Creator, just like Adam in Paradise. But now, having a sinful nature, it compels me to value Christ as a Mediator who delivers me from sin. I can illustrate this with an elephant. It is said that if an elephant falls to the ground, it cannot rise again. Therefore, naturalists claim that elephants do not lie down to sleep but sleep leaning against a tree. Now, the story goes that an elephant had fallen and a man helped it to rise. Grateful for the assistance, the elephant, like Andronicus' grateful lion, followed his benefactor wherever he went. Similarly, we had fallen, and only Christ's help could raise us up. So, we should be filled with humble thankfulness to God, who allowed us to fall so that we could learn to value the help we have and hope to receive through Jesus Christ.

Fourthly, God allows corruption in nature to test His people, to see which side they will choose in this conflict. Two camps are set up, army against army, and the Lord leaves the flesh within you to see which side you will take. Will you cling to the stronger side? Will you worship the rising sun? If so, then you will side with the flesh, as it often conquers in the present, although the final outcome and victory will be on the side of the Spirit. Will you wage war against the flesh and align with the Spirit in opposing the impulses of sin? Through this, the Lord will test you. The Canaanites and Jebusites were allowed to remain in the land specifically to test whether the Israelites would remain true to the worship of God. Similarly, God allows corruption to be within us to test the genuineness of our faith.

Fifthly, the Lord allows sinful impulses to exist in the hearts of His own people so that He can use those impulses to prevent them from acting upon sin. This is a mysterious consideration. God arranges it in such a way that the sins we are most frequently tempted with, we become most vigilant against. A person who is suddenly tempted may yield, but someone who is frequently plagued by sinful impulses,

God, in His wisdom, makes use of those impulses to prevent sinful actions. If David had been frequently haunted by impulses towards the grievous sins of adultery and murder, he may have had time to reconsider and prevent their commission. The same goes for Peter's denial of Christ. However, both of these servants of God were suddenly caught off guard. These are the reasons why God allows regeneration to remain imperfect.

The next question is, how can you prevent the motions of the flesh that incite to sin from prevailing over the Spirit?

If you do not want the flesh in its sinful impulses to have power over you, then resist them while they are only mere impulses, before they manifest in actions. Crush the venomous snake in the egg, extinguish sin, which is the fire of Hell, while it is still in its spark, the suggestion and impulse. As they say, it is easier to keep an enemy out than to defeat them once they have entered; similarly, it is easier to keep sin out than to eliminate it once it has entered. Sin in its impulses is like an enemy in the outskirts, not yet inside the city. If you do not want to yield to these impulses, resist them while they are still in that state, extinguish them while they are mere impulses. A disease, if caught in time before the symptoms worsen, can be easily cured. Treat your sins as Pharaoh commanded the killing of the Israelite children; he did not wait until the children grew up, but instructed the midwives to kill them as soon as they were born. This was a cruel act on his part, but you should do the same to your sins, and it will be a merciful act towards your soul. What Pharaoh did in a cruel manner, you should do wisely against your sins; eliminate them when they are in their early stages. There are three compelling reasons why you should follow this approach.

1. By resisting impulses while they are still impulses, you can ensure that the devil's suggestions do not join forces with the impulses of the flesh against you. Conduct this experiment: if you have an impulse in your nature to sin and you act upon it, the devil will then align himself with your corruption to make

you commit that sin again. The devil is unaware of the impulses to sin in your heart until you act upon them. For instance, if you are tempted by lust and you yield to it, the devil will know about the impulse in your heart and your inclination towards that sin, and he will be ready to tempt you to commit that sin again. Therefore, resist impulses while they are in that state, and by doing so, you will prevent the devil from joining his suggestions to the sinful impulses of your own heart.

2. If you do not resist impulses while they are still impulses, there will be a stronger and more intense inclination towards sin in your nature than before. Engaging in sin is not the way to cease and quell a sinful motion, but to increase it. It is like pouring oil into the fire to make it burn even more. Therefore, the way to quell sinful motions is to resist them while they are in that state. In philosophy, we say that actions strengthen habits. If a person has a habit of any virtue, acting upon that virtue makes the habit stronger. The same applies to sin. Acting upon sin increases the inclination towards it. Therefore, it is necessary for you to keep sinful motions in check, lest they lead you further into sinful actions. When sinful suggestions align with our sinful inclinations, the inclination gives rise to consent; consent leads to action; action leads to a continuous pattern of behavior; then comes delight; then a sense of security; and finally, a scornful contempt for all reproach and means of amendment.

If you do not keep sin in check while it is still in its initial stage, it will be more difficult for you to suppress corruption. If a house is on fire and you can contain the fire within, there is no danger of a widespread conflagration. But if the fire breaks out into the open air and the wind catches hold of it, then it will burn fiercely. The same principle applies to your sin. If you do not keep it in check while it is still in its early stage, it will be hard for you to suppress it later on. We take medicine as a preventive measure; preserving the health of the body and soul is easier than restoring it. A neglected sore

becomes gangrenous, infecting one part after another until there is no soundness in the flesh.

Avoid any external situations or circumstances that may lead you to commit the sin to which you are inclined. Regardless of the specific sin, if it is pride, do not wear clothing that may contribute to feelings of pride. If it is drunkenness, stay away from bad company. If it is immorality, avoid the vicinity of brothels. Be diligent in steering clear of occasions that may lead to sin. Joseph provides a great example in this regard. Despite his mistress speaking to him day after day, urging him to lie with her or be with her, he avoided her company as much as possible. This aligns with the counsel and command of the Lord to keep far from falsehood. Occasions of sin can be seen as triggers that awaken our sinful nature. They are the reason why a person, who may not have been thinking of sin, suddenly feels inclined to commit it. Therefore, do not take risks by putting yourself in situations that may lead to sin. Whenever you are tempted to sin, stay away from the external circumstances that facilitate it. A religious authority likens those who venture into occasions of sin to individuals who pray to God to avoid being burned but still thrust their fingers into the fire. If you pray against the impulses of sin, be careful also to avoid the occasions that may lead to sin. As God's children, we are obligated to abstain from any appearance of evil (1 Thessalonians 5:17) and to detest any garment tainted by sinful desires (Jude 25). Just as the Nazarite was not only to refrain from wine but also from touching the very husk of grapes (Numbers 6:3-4).

3. Make an effort to disarm the flesh. Just as the godly have armor, as mentioned in Ephesians 6, the flesh also has its own armor to fortify itself. It is armed with power, malice, an insatiable desire for your ruin, and various temptations to sin. Now, strive to disarm it of all its pretenses and strategies. In this case, you must treat sin as the Philistines treated the Israelites. Fearing that the Israelites would wage war against them, the Philistines implemented a tactic: they allowed no iron weapons among the

Israelites, and they prevented any blacksmith in Israel from making such weapons. Do as the Philistines did—disarm sin by removing any opportunity that corrupt nature may have to engage in transgression. Take away its occasions, just as the Rechabites did. They were commanded not to drink wine, and they resisted any temptation or solicitation to break that commandment. Disarm sin by eliminating its opportunities.

4. Do not engage in excessive debates with evil impulses; instead, resist them. It is foolishness for many to argue with the temptations of sin. No one has ever consulted with flesh and blood without eventually being overcome by it. Regard the flesh as your enemy, but never let it be your counselor. The flesh is a great deceiver, employing subtle insinuations and cunning evasions that can deceive a person into sin. Therefore, do not engage in debates with it. Engaging in debates with the flesh is similar to what our first parents did with the devil—after debating, they succumbed to eating the forbidden fruit. The flesh will try to convince you that certain sins are profitable or pleasurable and suitable for you. Beware of sin and focus more on resisting it rather than debating with the flesh.
5. Dedicate yourself extensively to the practices of self-denial and the duties that lead to it, as this will be a special means of preserving you. I will recommend three duties for this purpose: spiritual watchfulness, prayer, and fasting. Our Saviour prescribed two of these duties together: "Watch and pray," he said, "that ye enter not into temptation." The flesh will continuously assail you, and Satan through your flesh, so we must constantly be watchful and prayerful. The war between the flesh and the Spirit is ongoing. Be vigilant against the occasions of sin. Watch over the external senses of your body and the internal faculties of your mind. Engage in prayer abundantly to suppress and subdue sinful impulses. Do not pray like Augustine, who confessed that before his conversion, he prayed against the lust of incontinence and the sins of his youth, but

was afraid that God would hear his prayer. Do not pray like that. Combine fasting with the duty of prayer. Paul said, "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection," referring to corrupt nature. By fasting, prayer, and watchfulness, he kept the sinful workings of corrupt nature under control. It requires more than just a little effort; we must be as vigilant as wrestlers or fencers who are ready to defeat their opponents.

6. Lastly, be knowledgeable in the Word of righteousness, as this will greatly help you prevent the flesh from prevailing over the Spirit. Just as Christ did with the devil, use the written Word (Scripture) against the devil and your own heart. When faced with temptation, come armed with the written Word. Be so proficient in the Word of God that no temptation presents itself without you being able to draw arguments from the Word against it. We should be diligent in using the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, and sheath it in the depths of sinful flesh. If this approach is adopted, you will be less troubled by a tempting devil and a corrupt heart than you currently are.

Application

The application I will make from what you have heard shall bring comfort to troubled consciences. I can imagine many godly individuals saying, "Woe is me! I have a deeply felt experience in my own soul that my evil heart possesses all those evil qualities you mentioned, and my soul testifies that I employ the means you prescribed. I do avoid occasions of sin, I watch and pray against sin, yet God knows I cannot completely subdue my wicked heart." To anyone who sincerely and genuinely makes this complaint and acknowledges their sins, I offer four words of comfort.

1. You must never expect a complete eradication of the corruption of your nature while you live in this world, only a partial suppression. Corrupt nature will reside within you. Just as the dominion of those beasts mentioned by Daniel was taken away,

yet their lives were prolonged for a season and a time, so the dominion of sin is removed and sin shall not reign over you. However, the life of sin remains, and the body of death will persist within us as long as we inhabit these bodies. Corrupt nature will continue to exist in you, although it will not have dominion. It is like a tree mentioned by Daniel, where its branches are cut off, but the stump remains in the earth. You may prune away actual sins, but remember, the root will remain. It is akin to ivy growing on a wall, which cannot be uprooted until the wall is torn down. Similarly, sin in your nature (like ivy entwined within the wall) cannot be completely removed until your earthly body is laid to rest. We have a promise given to God's children that sin shall not have dominion over them, but nowhere does it say that sin will cease to exist within them as long as they are alive in this world.

2. There is a significant difference between yielding to the corrupt impulses of your sinful nature and fulfilling the desires of the flesh. I understand that all of us, to some extent, give in to the impulses of the flesh, but not all of us fulfill the desires of the flesh. You may embrace the urges that your sinful heart stirs within you, yet you may not carry out the actions prompted by sin. The Scripture highlights this distinction, "Make no provision for the flesh to fulfill its lusts." Godly individuals may experience the desires of the flesh, but they do not make provisions for them. You do not make arrangements for sin as one would for their family to ensure their well-being. You are not a provider for sin, so take comfort in knowing that although sin is present within you, you will not perish because of it.
3. To those who have employed all means and still find the flesh prevailing over the Spirit, consider that strong and potent urges to sin do not always indicate the strength of sin but rather its weakness. It is observed that dying things often strive and struggle with great intensity. Even a bird, a frail creature, if you remove its head, how vigorously will it flutter? This does not

mean the bird is gaining strength but rather that its strength is fading away. It may be the same for you; you may experience strong urges to sin, and you are aware of it. It is possible that sin is now playing its final cards. In Scripture, lusts are said to be crucified. Now, just as it was with the wicked and unrepentant thief who was bound and nailed hand and foot, yet still raged and ranted, so it is when lust is dying—it may still be raging. We see a similar pattern with taking medicine; initially, it can make a person feel sicker than the disease itself made them. However, this does not mean the person is truly worse off but rather that the medicine is working within their body. It may be the same for you—sin's struggles may be God's way of administering medicine to you. Although it may be strong, in the end, God will use it to purge the evil influences from your soul.

4. If the corrupt impulses in your soul are strong, then direct the strength of your heart towards praying to God for the subduing of these corruptions. Just as a virgin who was violated and did not cry out would be considered guilty and consenting under the law, the more the devil and your corruptions attempt to overcome you, the more earnestly you must pray and cry out to God for assistance. Complain about the frequent attacks that corrupt nature and the devil launch against you, and seek refuge in God for help and support. By doing so, your soul will never perish because of your iniquity.

Sermon XV

Preached at Lawrence Jury, London, December 29, 1650.

"For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish." - Galatians 5:17

Now, I will address the final question, which is: How can you discern whether the impulses to sin arise from the flesh or purely from the devil, making them purely diabolical?

Before I answer this question, let me first explain its significance. Secondly, I will present some foundational principles, and then provide you with the resolution to this question.

This question serves three main purposes.

1. It is necessary to know this because unregenerate individuals, when tempted to sin, often place all the blame on the devil and none on their own hearts. By attributing all their sins to Satan, they fail to give the devil his due. This was the case with Eve, who placed all the fault on the Serpent, saying, "The Serpent deceived me, and I ate." However, David had a different mindset. When he was tempted and incited to sin by Satan, particularly in numbering the people, he acknowledged, "I have sinned, and I have acted wickedly." It is natural for people, when tempted to sin and when they act upon it, to blame the devil. Therefore, it is important for us to know the difference, as we should not wrongly accuse the devil when he is merely a bystander and not directly involved in our sins.
2. Resolving this question is necessary because regenerate individuals, especially those troubled in conscience, often blame themselves for sins that should rightfully be attributed to the devil. For example, when the devil suggests blasphemous thoughts that go against human nature, they still take responsibility for them. So, just as the wicked falsely accuse the devil, the godly falsely blame themselves.

3. If impulses to sin solely originate from the devil, then these impulses, though they bring about misery, are not our sins if we do not yield and consent to them. The devil sets his traps at our doors and tries to break into our souls like a thief, but through faith, we resist him. Once entertained, it is not our sin. Being tempted is sinful, but the sin lies in giving in to temptation. On the other hand, wicked impulses arising from corrupt nature, even if we never give consent to them, are still materially sinful because they stem from the evil nature within us. These evil impulses that arise from evil hearts are like fruits growing from an evil root, and thus we should lament them. These are the reasons why it is useful to address this question. However, before I provide an answer, please keep these cautions in mind.

- Whether temptations originate from the devil or from corrupt nature, you can be certain that both are sinful and should therefore be rejected.
- Instead of being overly concerned with distinguishing between these motions, our priority should be to resist them. It is mere curiosity, not sincerity, to focus more on distinguishing rather than on actively resisting them.
- There is an apparent difference between temptations to sin that come from the devil and those that arise from corrupt nature. However, pinpointing the exact nature of this difference is challenging. A modern theologian provides a reason for this difficulty: the Scripture attributes temptations to the devil but also places responsibility on human hearts. For instance, in the 5th chapter of Acts, Ananias' lie is attributed to the devil in verse 3 and to the man in verse 5. However, to address the question, I will provide you with these distinguishing characteristics between motions to sin from the flesh and those from the devil.

1. Motions to sin from Satan are typically those that go against the light of human nature, unnatural sins that are strongly opposed by our innate sense of right and wrong. Therefore, theologians attribute temptations to blaspheme God and to harm oneself to Satan, as they are unnatural. These motions do not primarily arise from the flesh but from the devil, as they are contrary to nature and therefore not of natural origin. Temptations towards unnatural evils come from Satan, as their horrifying nature indicates their source. Thus, entertaining negative thoughts about God is purely diabolical, as it goes against the natural inclination to hold honourable and fitting opinions of God.

An example can be found in the story of Job, where it is mentioned that fire from God fell from heaven and burned up Job's sheep. Why did the devil not simply steal his sheep, as the Chaldeans and Sabaeans did with his other cattle? The reason given is this: the devil could not find a way to make Job blaspheme God, so he caused a fire to come from heaven and destroy his sheep, hoping that Job would view it as a direct act of God and thereby blaspheme Him. Therefore, when temptations arise that provoke God's people to blasphemy, Satan is the primary instrument behind them. This is not to say that there is no receptiveness within human nature to blasphemous temptations from the devil; indeed, the seeds of blasphemy are present in human nature, along with the seeds of all other sins. However, the initial suggestion for such temptations typically comes from the devil. We see this illustrated in the case of Judas, when he went to betray Christ and it is said that Satan entered into him. The motion came from the devil because it involved an unnatural sin. Betraying a Master, especially a good Master, is considered an unnatural sin and is therefore attributed to the devil. Although Judas was guilty for entertaining and acting upon this temptation, the Scripture attributes the primary responsibility to the devil as the initiator of this unnatural sin. Nonetheless, the seeds of unnatural sins exist in human nature, and the Apostle attributes the unnatural sins mentioned among the heathens to the lusts of their hearts.

2. Motions from the devil are typically towards gross acts of sin that do not originate in our inclinations and affections. The reason for this is that although the seeds of these sins exist within our nature, humans are naturally more inclined towards spiritual and inward sins. Nature prompts us towards inward sins, while the devil tempts us towards gross and outward sins. This is the great misery of humanity: the devil does not tempt us towards the sins that corrupt nature inclines us to. For example, Ananias' lie is attributed to the devil, as it is said, "Why has Satan filled your heart?" Similarly, sinful swearing is attributed to the devil, as it is a sin of a grosser nature. It is the devil's work to push people towards gross outward acts of evil. On the other hand, corrupt nature entices us towards sins that align with our corrupt inclinations, such as self-love, vain glory, seeking popularity, spiritual pride, reliance on the flesh, dishonest intentions, vain thoughts, and similar sins. These are the weapons of inward lusts that are bred within our corrupt nature, and it is towards these sins that our nature inclines us.
3. Temptations from Satan are usually accompanied by a sense of horror and fear when they are first suggested. When a temptation is so strongly presented that it makes a person tremble and feel a sense of horror, it is an indication that it comes from the devil. The reason for this is that nature provokes us towards sins that are most pleasing to our nature, and it does not create a disturbance in the mind.
4. Satan's temptations are usually suggested when a suitable object and opportunity to commit a sin are presented. For example, when a troubled person sees water, the devil tempts them to drown themselves. When they see a knife, the devil tempts them to cut their throat. When a person encounters an object of beauty, they are tempted towards incontinence. These kinds of temptations usually come from the devil. It is true that the devil can disturb one's imagination even without an actual object, but that is less common. However, we find examples in Scripture of

individuals being tempted when occasions to sin were present. For instance, Eve, upon seeing that the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eyes, had the object before her and then fell into the devil's temptation, resulting in her taking and eating from the tree. Similarly, David, when he fell into the sin of uncleanness, did not have impure thoughts initially when he went to the top of his house. However, upon seeing Bathsheba naked, the devil tempted him, and his nature succumbed to the temptation in that particular occasion. On the other hand, motions that come from corrupt nature usually arise even without any specific occasion. For example, when a person lying on their bed entertains worldly and covetous thoughts without any provocation, this stems from the corruption of their heart. Likewise, all those thoughts and contemplations of the mind regarding evil arise solely from your own heart. I must tell you that in occasions and temptations to sin, although the devil may be the initial instigator, if you yield to the occasion or temptation, you are more to blame for your own heart than the devil.

5. Motions to sin that come from Satan usually seize a person suddenly. Before the moment when such motions are suggested, they were never even thought of. Such motions come from the devil and, as Perkins says, they flash into a person's mind like lightning suddenly striking a house. We can read about this in Luke 22:37 concerning Peter. Jesus said to him, "Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat." What does this mean? Well, it refers to that temptation in which the devil tempted Peter to deny his Lord and Master. It is true that Peter's heart was to be blamed because he had the potential for that sin within him. However, the Scripture attributes it to the devil as the primary instigator because, before that instant, Peter had no forethought of such a thing. It was only when he came to warm himself in the High Priest's Hall that the devil tempted him to deny Jesus, and that is when Peter fell into the temptation. Therefore, those temptations that enter a person's mind, which

they never thought of before, originate from the devil. On the other hand, motions to sin that come from corrupt nature are more deliberate and enduring. They do not come with the same force and haste as temptations from the devil because they are more in line with human nature and cause less turmoil in people's minds.

[Use 1] Caution: Remember that even though there are these differences between motions to sin that come from the devil and those that come from corrupt nature, know that every sin that exists in the world could still be committed even if there were no devil to tempt us. The seed of all sin resides in the human heart. That is why our Saviour said, "For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, sexual immoralities, thefts, false testimonies, blasphemies." Our Saviour speaks of them in the plural form to emphasize that all kinds of sin exist in the human heart, in all their degrees. If God were to release the reins of human nature, how quickly would you plunge into all kinds of evil?

[Caut. 2] Understand that in most evil actions, there is usually a joint collaboration between Satan and the flesh. For example, if the flesh initiates a temptation, the devil supports and encourages it. And if the devil tempts, the flesh nurtures and gives in to the temptation. So, although there may be a distinction between the temptations, there is usually a cooperation between the flesh and the devil. If corrupt nature initiates, the devil will reinforce the attack. And if the devil initiates, corrupt nature will agree and comply. Corruption is the tide, and temptation is the wind that drives one faster downstream on a sinful path.

While it may be true, upon self-examination, [Caut. 3] that many motions to sin, such as those towards unnatural sins, may primarily arise from the devil, if you yield to these motions, you are primarily to blame. We can observe this in the case of David. It is mentioned that the devil tempted him to number the people. Yet, when David reflects on that act, he does not utter a single word about the devil.

Instead, he says, "I have sinned, I have done wickedly and foolishly." Similarly, with Peter, he denies Christ, and the Scripture informs us that the initial motion towards that denial came from the devil. Jesus said, "Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you." Now, Peter could have said, "It's true, I denied my Master, but it was the devil's fault." But we find no such words from Peter against the devil. Instead, he goes out and weeps bitterly. This shows that although motions to sin may originate primarily from the devil, if you yield to those motions, you are to blame yourself and not the devil.

[Use. 2] As a means of reproof, if it is true that the flesh opposes the Spirit, then this rebukes the Popish belief that concupiscence is not a sin. The Papists deny that an inclination or natural tendency in a person to sin is evil. They claim that it is abolished in Baptism. Similarly, the Pharisees were unaware that the motions of the flesh towards sin were evil. They held the belief that God's law only concerned outward actions, and that inward thoughts and desires were not sinful in any way. However, when Jesus explained the nature of the commandments, He taught a different doctrine. He said, "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart." Here, Christ shows that not only outward acts, but also inward desires and thoughts towards sin are forbidden by God's law.

Likewise, Paul, while he was still a Pharisee, evaluated his life based on the external letter of the Law. He considered himself blameless according to the Law. It was only after his conversion that Paul came to understand that the Law is spiritual. He says, "I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, 'You shall not covet.'" Therefore, be careful not only with your outward actions but also with the inward motions and desires of your hearts, as the Law extends to these.

This rebukes those who, after yielding to sinful motions, are prone to place blame anywhere other than on their own hearts. We have a tendency to shift the guilt of sin anywhere else rather than accept responsibility ourselves. There are three things that people typically attribute blame to: God, the devil, or other individuals.

1. Some people place the blame on God, just like Adam did. He said, "The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate." Thus, he shifted the blame for his fall onto God Himself, saying that if God hadn't given him the woman, she wouldn't have tempted him, and he wouldn't have eaten.
2. Others attribute the blame to the devil, yet even if there were no devil to tempt us, we would still tempt ourselves. In reality, neither God nor the devil should be blamed. God is never to be blamed, although there are times when the devil is at fault. The Apostle James tells us that God does not tempt anyone. And sometimes the devil is not to be blamed because our own nature tempts us. The same Apostle declares that every person is tempted when they are drawn away by their own desires and enticed. Lust gives birth to sin. The devil may be the father who begets sin, but the flesh is the mother who conceives, nurtures, and brings forth sin. The reason is that the devil's suggestions would do no harm if it weren't for our sinful inclinations. The devil came to Christ, but he found nothing in Him. The devil shook the bottle, but it was a crystal glass of pure water, without any mud. However, in your case, even though you may have a good appearance, if the devil digs into your heart, the mud of your corruption quickly becomes evident.
3. Furthermore, some people will blame others for their sins, just like Aaron did when Moses reproached him for his idolatry. He said, "You know the people, that they are set on mischief." He tried to shift off and excuse his own wickedness by placing the blame on the people. However, this didn't serve him well, as God held him accountable for the sin. It is natural for us to excuse

and conceal our sin, and that's why it is said that people cover their transgressions, just like Adam did. If your heart were not at fault, examples of sin would provoke you to detest them rather than imitate them. There are also those who blame the badness of the times, whereas if you had a good heart, you would remain good even in bad times. If your heart were good, the worse the times were, the better you would be. Therefore, place the blame for your sin where it should be—on the wickedness of your own evil heart.

[Use 3] As an exhortation, if the flesh lusts against the Spirit, then join with the motions of the Spirit against the flesh. Even though you are a godly person and sin will not damn your soul, it can wound your conscience and diminish your comfort. And although your sins cannot harm you in terms of damnation since you are a child of God, they can harm others. As Tostatus observes in 1 Chronicles 21:1, where it is said that Satan stood up against Israel and provoked David to number the people, take note that it is not said that Satan stood up against David, but against Israel. The reason is that David was a public figure, and the devil knew that if he could provoke David to sin, Israel would suffer for it. Therefore, when the devil tempts you to sin, standing up against it, he is targeting not only you but also those around you. So, if you are a person in a public position, and the devil succeeds in leading you to yield to sin, others will be affected by its consequences.

[Use 4] Lastly, for those of you who are regenerated, remember that you still carry flesh and blood within you. You have the flesh lusting against the Spirit, and there is a conflict within your spirits towards the Holy Spirit of God. Therefore, go home and complain about the contradiction and wickedness of your hearts. Ask yourselves, just as Rebecca did when she felt two babies struggling in her womb, "Why am I like this?" You have an Esau and a Jacob within you, nature and grace, evil motions struggling against good motions. Go to the Lord and say, "Why am I like this?" And with Paul, exclaim, "Oh wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?"

Acknowledge your struggle and seek God's deliverance from the power of the flesh, relying on His grace to overcome its temptations.

Sermon XVI

At St. Lawrence Jewry, London, December 29, 1650.

"For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish." Now I will proceed to the second part of the conflict, which is the Spirit's lusting against the flesh. The flesh initiated the attack first because it existed within us before the Spirit, but now the Spirit undertakes the war. Just as the flesh lusts against the Spirit, the Spirit also opposes the flesh." - Galatians 5:17

Before I delve into the point, I will clarify a Scripture that seems to contradict this, which is found in Ephesians 6:12. It says that we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. This passage can be reconciled with the text in two ways. First, when the apostle says that we wrestle not against flesh and blood, it may be understood not in an absolute sense, but in a comparative sense. If we consider flesh and blood to represent corrupt nature, then the meaning is that we not only wrestle with the corrupt nature within us, but we also have the devil to contend with externally.

The more likely reconciliation of this passage is as follows: In the text, it is said that we war with the flesh, while in Ephesians, it is stated that we do not war with the flesh. Although the same word is

used in both passages, it is used in different senses. To understand this, consider these three meanings of the word.

1. Flesh and blood is sometimes used to refer to corrupt nature. This can be understood in the saying of Christ, "Flesh and blood has not revealed these things to you."
2. Flesh and blood is used to describe the natural body of a person. This is seen in 1 Corinthians 15:50, "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God." This means that our current natural, corruptible, and mortal bodies are not capable of experiencing the glory and happiness of Heaven.
3. Flesh and blood can also refer to wicked people in Scripture. This usage is found in Ephesians 6:12, "We wrestle not against flesh and blood," meaning that our struggle is not primarily against wicked people, but against the devil, who is the ruler of the darkness of this world. This reconciles the different uses of the term.

The flesh lusts against the Spirit, which means that the movements and workings of God's Spirit oppose the motions to sin that arise from corrupt nature. From this, we can derive the following doctrine: The motions and workings of God's Spirit in the regenerated individual engage in conflict with the motions of sin that arise from corrupt nature.

In addressing this point, I will do the following four things:

- Explain the nature of this conflict.
- Identify its components.
- Provide guidelines for distinguishing the conflict the Spirit has against the motions of sin from the conflict against sin that may be present in the conscience of a natural person.
- Offer rules for navigating this conflict.

[Question 1] What is this conflict?

[Answer] Negatively, there are four types of conflicts against sin that fall short of the Spirit's conflict.

1. There can be a conflict against sin by sin itself. One corrupt inclination may contend with another, and a lesser sin can often be overcome by a greater sin. This is frequently found in natural individuals. For example, pride and covetousness: a proud person needs something to feed their pride, and because of their pride, they strive to be in high society and wear extravagant and expensive clothing. Now, covetousness, being a contrasting vice, may act as a check to pride. Thus, one corruption may struggle against another, yet it falls short of the Spirit's conflict against sin.
2. There can be a conflict against sin in the natural affections, where self-preservation is sought. This is similar to the behavior of animals. Many times, fear prevents them from acting on their natural appetites. For instance, a wolf may desire to attack a sheep, but its fear of the shepherd restrains it. Similarly, in the case of anger and fear, a person who is angry may be driven to seek revenge against the one they are angry with. However, another emotion (fear) tells them that if they kill the person they are angry with, they will face legal consequences. This conflict does not arise from the Spirit.
3. There is a conflict that arises from a person's natural disposition. Some individuals have such heroic and noble dispositions that they naturally struggle against many vices. Martin Luther, for instance, said that he was never tempted by the sin of covetousness due to his generous and free-spirited nature. Plutarch once said, "I would rather have men say there is no such person as Plutarch in the world than say Plutarch is unfaithful or inconsistent." This demonstrates a noble disposition that despises all forms of baseness.

4. There is a conflict that arises from the light of reason, aided by a natural conscience, which restrains and restrains a person from sin. The pagans, guided by their natural conscience, could see and detest sin. They considered it disgraceful to indulge in base and bestial desires. Conscience acts as God's spy and overseer in humans, warning them against sin. This conflict is experienced by unregenerate individuals and falls short of the Spirit's conflict against the flesh, as will be explained later.

But to explain positively what this conflict is: I answer that the conflict of the Spirit against the flesh is a powerful and irreconcilable opposition stirred up by the movements of God's Spirit in the souls of the regenerate against all the sinful inclinations arising from corrupt nature. This provides a clear and comprehensive description of this conflict.

[Question 2] The next question is, what does the conflict of the Spirit against the flesh entail?

[Answer] This conflict of the Spirit against the flesh has a dual purpose: Firstly, to prevent sin, and secondly, to encourage goodness.

In relation to sin, the Spirit does the following five things.

1. It enlightens a person and reveals sin to them that they had not seen before. As Paul says, "I would not have known what sin was, except through the law. For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, 'You shall not covet.'" The Spirit of God, through the law, exposed sin to Paul, and the act of discovering an enemy is a form of opposition.
2. The Spirit not only reveals sin, but also opposes the impulses of sin that arise from corrupt nature. The Spirit lusts against the flesh, meaning it opposes the workings of corrupt nature. This is stated in the text.

3. The Spirit prompts and guides the conscience to rebuke and reprimand a person for entertaining evil impulses, for allowing sin to dwell in their heart. It convicts the world of sin.
4. The Spirit sanctifies a person's nature and cleanses them from the filth of sin. As stated in 1 Corinthians 6:11, "But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God." Therefore, the Spirit of Christ is called the Holy Spirit because of its sanctifying work in the hearts of God's people. The Spirit is not only holy itself but also the source and producer of holiness in the hearts of believers.
5. The Spirit of God suppresses the impulses of sin; it not only opposes them but also assists a person in putting to death the motions of sin. As the Apostle says, "For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live." And there is a promise for this in the verse preceding my text, "So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh." The Apostle does not say that you will not act on them, but that you will not fulfill them; sin will not have as much power and control over you as it does over wicked individuals. Thus, in regard to sin, you can see how the Spirit conflicts with the flesh.

In relation to the doing of good, the Spirit opposes the flesh in several ways.

1. It enlightens and reveals to a person what is good. As the Lord promises through the Prophet, "You will hear a voice behind you, saying, 'This is the way; walk in it.'" The Spirit reveals to a person their path, their work, and their duty.
2. Not only that, but the Spirit stirs up holy impulses and resolutions within a person to fulfill their duties. It not only shows them the way but urges them to walk in it.

3. The Spirit assists a person in doing good when the flesh obstructs. As it is written, "We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express." The Spirit helps us in our weaknesses.
4. The Spirit continually imparts grace to its people, enabling them to do what is good. It provides constant supplies of assistance. That is why it is referred to as the "supplies of the Spirit of Jesus Christ." Thus, you can see where the conflict between the flesh and the Spirit lies, both in relation to sin and in relation to good.

[Question 3] Since there can be a conflict in wicked individuals against sin (as I have shown you), arising from natural conscience, then what distinguishes that conflict from the opposition against sin that comes from the Spirit of God?

This question has been addressed by many recent authors, such as Perkins in his treatise on the flesh and the Spirit, as well as Downam and many others. I would encourage you to read their works. However, I will not leave the point entirely untouched. To help you understand the difference, I will present it in the following particulars.

There is a difference, 1. In the manner of this conflict. 2. In its extent. 3. In terms of the principles from which this conflict arises. 4. In the duration of the conflict. And 5. In the outcome and end of this conflict.

First, regarding the manner of this conflict, there is a threefold difference in the manner.

1. The opposition in the unregenerate is involuntary; if their conscience did not trouble them, they would never trouble sin. They enter this battle not as volunteers but rather as those compelled into service by the prodding of their natural conscience. They come to the field not as bold champions, but as those dragged there. Conscience is God's spy and man's

overseer, and therefore, whether a person wills it or not, it will confront them. Thus, the opposition arising from natural conscience is involuntary. The commission of sin is voluntary, but the opposition is involuntary. In a wicked person, conscience is like a candle's light to a thief, constantly shining in their face even while they are in the act of stealing. But in the godly, it is quite the opposite. The commission of sin is involuntary (Romans 7:19), but the opposition within them is voluntary. They rejoice when the Spirit fulfils its role, when grace in their renewed nature suppresses the corruption of their hearts. Wicked individuals are said to be willingly ignorant, but the Apostle tells us that the godly are willing in all things to live honestly. Indeed, a wicked person is reluctant to contend with their corruption; their heart always longs for merriment, as the wise man tells us. They are unwilling for their conscience to trouble them and would gladly suffocate it. They are unwilling to struggle against the flesh. However, a godly person is most willing. That is why you read that they groan to be relieved of their burden (for sin is the greatest burden). They bear the weight of sin as a burden and long to cast it off.

2. The conflict in the wicked is merely superficial; it is like children playfully wrestling and striving with each other, not intending to harm one another. It is comparable to fencers who make showy moves and inflict minor injuries, but have no intention to kill. It is not like that of a warrior who enters the battlefield with the purpose of killing the enemy. However, it is different for the regenerate. In their conflict with sin, they sincerely strive to kill it, as the Apostle Paul declares. He says, "So fight I, not as one that beateth the air, but I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection." The word "keep under" carries a strong emphasis; it is a metaphor drawn from wrestlers who fiercely contend for victory, aiming to inflict significant harm upon their opponent. Therefore, Paul affirms that he does not aimlessly strike at nothing, but earnestly subdues his body. As the same Apostle says, "Those who belong to Christ have crucified the flesh," and

we also have the promise that if, through the Spirit, we mortify the deeds of the body, we shall live.

3. The conflict arising from natural conscience is a disorderly opposition, akin to people fighting in a chaotic uproar. On the other hand, the regenerate fight against sin as soldiers in an army. The disorderliness of the unregenerate's conflict becomes evident because it is scattered among different faculties. A wicked person may have the will and desire to commit a particular sin, but there is no opposing regenerate part within their will. However, their understanding may hold reservations, often reminding them that such actions will not only bring disgrace in the present but damnation in the future. Thus, the conflict within the wicked occurs in various faculties and lacks order. In contrast, the combat of the regenerate is orderly and takes place within the same faculty. It is not the will against the understanding, or the understanding against the will, but rather the will against the will, the understanding against the understanding, and the affections against the affections. The renewed part opposes the unrenewed part within each faculty. For example, the converted aspect of memory strives to retain holy truths while displacing the retention of evil. In the realm of affections, the war occurs within the same faculty, with the love for God and heavenly things fighting against self-love, love for the world, and love for sin. These are the distinctions between the conflict against sin found in the regenerate and unregenerate, concerning the manner of combat.

In terms of the extent of this conflict, the difference becomes apparent in these three aspects.

1. The conflict of a natural conscience against sin is limited to opposing outward sins, sins of life, and does not extend to the sin of one's nature, inward sins. The reason for this is that natural conscience does not recognize natural corruption as a sin. If nature lacks the ability to perceive sin, it will also lack the

ability to oppose it. Paul, while still unregenerate, was unaware that lust was a sin. Therefore, original sin does not fall within the purview of a natural conscience. We read in Scripture that wicked individuals have been checked by their natural consciences for sins of life, such as Cain for his murder, Ahab for his idolatry, Saul for his cruelty, and Judas for his treachery. However, nature cannot oppose itself; it can oppose the branches but not the root. In contrast, a conscience enlightened by the Spirit of God wages war against the inward motions and workings of sin. After his conversion, Paul speaks of a law of sin in his members and a body of death. Hence, we hear him cry out, "O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death!" Natural conscience may rebuke a person for sins of life, but only a renewed conscience will rebuke them for sins of nature.

2. Natural conscience, as it does not extend to the nature of sin, also does not confront the nature of sin. What I mean is this: natural conscience never opposes the nature of sin itself, but only the consequences of sin; it rebukes a person not because sin is against a holy God and contrary to a holy and pure Law, but because sin brings punishment. Natural conscience resists sin not because it defiles the soul, but because it destroys the soul; not because it erases the image of God, but because it prevents people from seeing the face of God; not because God hates sin, but because God punishes sin. On the other hand, the regenerate do not only fight against the sin of their nature through the Spirit, but also against the nature of their sin. They confront their sin not only as something that destroys their souls, but as something that defiles their souls; not only as something that torments their conscience, but as something that pollutes their conscience; not only as something that damns their soul, but as something that contaminates their heart. A natural person may fear sin like a child fears a burning stick, not because they fear touching it and dirtying their hands, but because it might burn their fingers. This is a significant difference, for a child of God

would refrain from sin because of God, not only because of hell. The godly do not want to offend against the purity, holiness, authority, and goodness of God, and that's why they abstain from sin. As Augustine says, the natural person "fears to burn, not to sin."

3. Natural conscience may conflict with sin, yet it falls far short of the conflict of the Spirit, as it only pertains to open and gross sins, not to hidden and minor evils. Cursing, for example, is such a detestable evil that a person's own heart will convict them of it, as the wise man says: "Often your own heart knows that you yourself have cursed others." However, natural conscience will not rebuke a person as frequently for secret and internal sins, such as spiritual pride, wandering thoughts during sacred duties, and emptiness of mind. In contrast, a renewed conscience, when the Spirit of God convicts of sin, reaches into the realm of hidden sins and even to the very thoughts, as well as actions. This was the case with the Apostle Paul. He said, "Sin, taking opportunity by the commandment, produced in me all manner of evil desire." Even when original sin was at the stage of mere thoughts before being acted upon, the Apostle was aware of it. Likewise, Hezekiah, a righteous man, humbled himself for the pride of his heart, for his lofty thoughts that no one else could accuse him of. These are the differences between the conflict that arises from natural conscience against sin and the conflict that the Spirit engages in against corruption.

[Use. 1] If it is true that the Spirit lusts against the flesh in regenerate individuals, just as the flesh lusts against the Spirit, then first, let us understand the reason why godly individuals do not live as sinfully as the wicked. It is not because the righteous have better natures than the wicked; in fact, the best person on earth, even the most glorious saint in heaven, possesses a nature as corrupt as the worst person on earth. The true reason lies in this: a righteous person has the Spirit to wage war against the flesh, to combat corruption. Therefore, they do not engage in sin as the wicked do. "If you walk in the Spirit, you

shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh." In accordance with this, the Apostle John states, "Whoever is born of God does not commit sin, for his seed remains in him, and he cannot sin because he is born of God." The phrase "he cannot sin" should not be taken absolutely, but comparatively. It means that they will not sin in the same manner, to the same extent, and with the same circumstances as the wicked, because they are born of God and have a seed of grace within them. This is the reason why godly individuals do not live as the wicked do. The righteous have a different kind of spirit within them than the natural person; they have the Spirit of Christ, while the others only possess the spirit of the world.

[Use. 2] Learn to praise God, knowing that you have such a corrupt nature, yet you also have the Spirit within you, which is capable of suppressing the workings of your corrupt nature. All of you who have been born again by the imperishable seed of the Word, who have the Spirit to restrain your corruption, think about the evil you would do and the good you would neglect if the Spirit were absent from you. What will become of a person who lacks the Spirit? Will they not be a dwelling place for a multitude of lusts and a cage for every impure desire? If your heart is not a storehouse for the Spirit, it will become a workshop for the devil. If it is not Christ's garden where He plants the seed of grace, it will become the devil's breeding ground, where nothing but sin thrives and grows. Therefore, bless God knowing that despite having such an evil heart, you have the motions of the Spirit to wage war against the motions of the flesh.

Pray to God that His Spirit may fulfill its purpose in you. You don't need to pray for your heart to tempt you to sin, but rather, you should plead with the Spirit to perform its role in your heart. Every day, make this request like David did: "Lord, do not withhold Your Spirit from me. Since I experience sinful inclinations every day, let me also have the promptings of Your Spirit every day. As Satan tries to persuade me to sin daily, let Your Spirit persuade me towards goodness each day."

Sermon XVII.

At St. Lawrence Jewry, London, December 29, 1650.

"For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary to one another, so that you cannot do the things that you would." - Gal. 5:17.

Now I will address the third difference regarding this conflict, between an unregenerate and a regenerate person, which pertains to time. There are several aspects to be discussed:

- The moment when this conflict commences.
 - The duration of this conflict.
 - The frequency of this conflict.
1. The conflict between natural conscience and sin can begin as soon as a person possesses the light of reason, while they are in an unregenerate state. The Apostle tells us that the Gentiles, who do not have the Law, naturally do what the Law requires. This means that natural conscience carries the weight of a law and has power over them, preventing them from indulging in many evils contrary to the light of nature. Therefore, the conflict of natural conscience against sin can occur while a person is still in a state of moral corruption and wickedness. However, the conflict of the Spirit does not begin until God brings a person into a state of grace.
 2. Regarding the duration of this conflict, it is temporary. It is a fleeting rebuke from conscience, comparable to a flash of lightning that quickly appears and disappears. The opposition in natural conscience can easily be erased, obliterated, and

extinguished by festive gatherings or sensual pleasures. On the other hand, the conflict of the Spirit is enduring. It continues until the regenerate part of a person, to some extent, gains victory over the lust it opposes. It remains with a person throughout their lifetime, from the moment of their conversion until the day of their death.

3. The conflict of natural conscience occurs sporadically. It only intermittently reproaches a person, coming and going in fits and starts. As the Apostle Paul indicates when speaking about the Gentiles, their consciences accuse them at times. In the unregenerate, the opposition is not constant. However, the conflict of the Spirit is persistent and continuous in the godly. It not only lasts long but also occurs frequently. It is rare for a godly person to be tempted to commit a serious sin without the Spirit injecting a contrary suggestion. This is the third difference that distinguishes the conflict of the Spirit from the conflict of natural conscience.
4. There is a difference in terms of the underlying principle or cause from which this conflict arises.

The opposition that arises in a natural conscience is driven by a principle of slavish fear. On the other hand, the opposition that occurs in the godly is rooted in a principle of love for God and hatred towards sin. This distinction is evident in the following examples: Cain cries out, "My punishment is greater than I can bear." He is not complaining that his sin is too great to bear, but rather about the punishment.

A wicked person who opposes sin based on a natural conscience can be compared to a thief who refrains from stealing not out of any hatred for theft or love for justice, but simply because they are afraid of being caught and hanged for their crime. Likewise, wicked individuals refrain from sinning or acting on their sinful desires solely out of a slavish fear of hell and condemnation, not out of love

for God. To further illustrate this, consider the difference between a coal miner and a clean person: a coal miner will not touch burning coals but has no issue with touching black coals, whereas a clean person will not touch either burning or black coals. Wicked individuals avoid sin because it is like a burning coal, whereas the godly recoil from sin because it is like a black coal. They love God and hate sin. That is why the Apostle Paul says, "What I want to do, I do not do, but what I hate, I do." He does not say that he wants to avoid evil or wants to abstain from it; instead, he states that he hates the evil and yet does it.

From this, theologians deduce that a godly person fights against corruption out of a genuine hatred for it, not because they fear punishment but because they detest the sin itself. Wicked individuals may recoil from sin, but it is not because they hate the evil of sin; rather, it is because they fear the consequences. For example, Balaam refused to curse the people, but it is said of him that he loved the wages of unrighteousness. Although he feared punishment, he did not hate the sin. In contrast, godly individuals recoil from sin based on a principle of genuine hatred for it. There are four spiritual principles from which the conflict of a godly person arises.

- Because sin is against a holy God. This principle is exemplified by Joseph when he asked, "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?"
- Because it is a violation of a holy Law. Paul expresses this principle by saying, "What I hate, that I do. If I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the Law is good." In other words, he opposes sin based on his conscience's agreement with the goodness of the Law.
- Another principle by which the godly oppose sin is a hatred for the very nature of sin itself. David professes this about himself, stating that through God's precepts he gained understanding and therefore hated every false way.
- They oppose sin out of love for Jesus Christ. Recognising that Christ died for sin, they strive to die to sin. As the Apostle

explains, "The love of Christ compels us because we are convinced that one died for all, therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves, but for him who died for them and was raised again."

- The fifth difference lies in the outcome and result of the conflicts between the flesh and the Spirit, as well as between natural conscience and sin. There are four distinct outcomes and results:

1. The outcome of the conflict between natural conscience and sin is that it leaves a person unsettled while the sin remains uncontrolled. This was evident in the case of Judas. His conscience told him he had sinned by betraying his Master, and he was so troubled that he ended up hanging himself. However, despite his remorse, his sin remained uncontrolled. In contrast, the conflict of the Spirit not only brings peace to the mind but also mortifies the sin. The Apostle, after speaking of the Spirit's conflict with the flesh, states that the fruit of the Spirit is joy and peace. This shows that the outcome of the Spirit's conflict is not only peace of mind but also the subduing of sin. "If you through the Spirit do put to death the deeds of the body, you will live."

2. Another outcome of the conflict in natural conscience is that the unruly passions of a person are too strong for it to oppose and subdue. Wicked individuals may struggle against sin, but if you observe closely, you will find that the strong inclinations of their hearts towards sin overpower them. Let me provide you with three examples: Saul, Pilate, and Pharaoh. Saul's conscience told him he was wrong in pursuing David, and he even acknowledged that David was more righteous than him and that he had acted wickedly in seeking his life. However, Saul's uncontrolled ambitions overcame his troubled conscience, driving him to continue pursuing David. Similarly, Pilate's conscience told him that Jesus, whom he was to judge, was innocent. He even washed his hands and publicly declared that he found no grounds for putting Him to death. But Pilate's ambitious desires

overpowered his conscience, as he feared losing favour with Caesar. When the people said, "If you let this man go, you are not Caesar's friend," he gave in to their demands, going against his conscience. Pharaoh also experienced a similar conflict. His conscience told him that he was acting wickedly by disobeying God's command to release the Israelites. He admitted his sin and asked Moses to pray for him. However, Pharaoh's ambitious desires overruled his conscience, and once the plague was over, he continued in his sinful ways. On the other hand, when the Spirit of God engages in conflict with the lusts of the flesh, even though the passions may be unruly, over time the Spirit will restrain and overcome them. While the Spirit may not completely remove them, it will bring them under control. As the Apostle Paul says, "I discipline my body and bring it into subjection." A godly individual deals with sin in this manner—although they may not eliminate it entirely, they strive to bring it under control.

3. Natural conscience, in its opposition to sin, is satisfied with merely restraining the outward action, without bringing about the mortification of the sinful inclination. This can be seen in the case of Pharaoh, where his conscience was stirred during the plagues, but his sin was not subdued, only temporarily restrained. The text states, "When Pharaoh saw that there was relief, he hardened his heart and did not heed them as the Lord had said." Similarly, when Haman, who harboured deep hatred towards Mordecai, saw that Mordecai was favoured by the king, he restrained himself from harming him, but his vengeful disposition remained unchanged. This illustrates that outward restraint does not necessarily lead to the mortification of sinful inclinations. For instance, a person may outwardly abstain from drunkenness, yet still have a strong inclination towards it.

However, in the conflict of the Spirit, it goes beyond mere restraint of action and works to weaken and suppress the sinful inclination. As the Scripture says, "If you through the Spirit put to death the deeds

of the body, you will live." Here, the emphasis is on the mortification of the sinful acts. We are also commanded to put to death our earthly members, such as fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness. Furthermore, we are instructed to crucify our affections and lusts, indicating the need to not only restrain sinful actions but also to actively kill and mortify the sinful inclination.

4. Lastly, when natural conscience opposes sin, it does not cultivate increased vigilance in a person against future temptations, but when the Spirit of God conflicts with a sin today, it makes the individual vigilant against all sin tomorrow and every day thereafter. Thus, we have addressed the third question regarding the difference between the conflict of the flesh and the Spirit, and the struggle that exists solely between the natural conscience of an unregenerate person and their lusts.

[Question 4] What guidelines can be provided, considering that the Spirit opposes the flesh within us, so that by following them, we can overcome the inclinations of the flesh towards sin?

[Answer] This is a practical and valuable question. In response, I will provide you with five directions.

1. Pay attention to what your conscience tells you when you are tempted to commit any sin. Conscience is God's spy, overseeing mankind, and an officer of the Spirit. By heeding its warnings, you take a ready path to embrace the promptings of the Spirit and close your ears to the urges of sin. It is the role of the Spirit not only to bear witness with our spirits but also to admonish and rebuke us for sin. Therefore, listen to what your own conscience speaks, whether it solicits you in this manner, saying, "Why would you dishonor such a good God, endanger your precious soul, and break a righteous law?" Just as sin wounds the conscience, an awakened, enlightened, and sanctified

conscience delivers a powerful reprimand to sin, preventing it from reigning in a child of God.

2. If you desire the Spirit to triumph over the flesh, ensure that you do not provide any opportunity for the flesh to sin, lest sinful actions arise from wicked inclinations. The Apostle gives this instruction to the Galatians, urging them not to use their freedom as an opportunity for the flesh. In other words, do not engage in anything that may give the flesh an opportunity to seize upon you. It is true that the flesh can sin without an opportunity, and a person can be an adulterer without ever seeing another person, a thief without ever stealing, or a murderer without shedding blood. However, occasions for sin further strengthen corrupt nature, as philosophers tell us that actions strengthen habits. Thus, the more you act in sin, the more it gathers strength. This is why the Nazirites, who were forbidden to drink wine, were also forbidden to eat anything that came from the vine, including raisins or grape skins, to prevent the admission of an occasion for sin. The wise man, in highlighting the harm of adultery, advises not to go near the door of her house. It is not inherently sinful to approach someone's door, but because being near the door of a harlot may incite impure thoughts and lustful desires, we are commanded not to go near it. It is noteworthy that God did not want to be called "Baali" but "Ishi." There was no harm in the word "Baali," as it commonly meant "my husband," just as "Ishi" did in Isaiah 54:5, "Your Maker is your husband." However, using "Baali" was forbidden so that the name associated with idols (as they usually called their idols "Baalim") would not serve as a temptation to idolatry.

To illustrate this point, theologians often refer to a passage in Deuteronomy 25:13, which states, "You shall not have in your bag differing weights, a heavy and a light." You might think that having these weights in your bag is not a sin. You may argue that even though you possess them in your house, you do not use them for

buying or selling. You may say they are only in your bag, not in your scale. However, God says, "You shall not have them in your bag," lest it become a temptation for you to bring them from your bag into your scale.

Similarly, the Israelites were commanded not to eat pork (Leviticus 11:7-8). Yet, in Isaiah 65:4, the Lord reproves the Israelites for two things: eating pork and having the broth of abominable things in their vessels. God only forbade the consumption of pork, but here He also condemns the broth. Why? Because eating the broth might tempt them to eat the flesh as well. Therefore, be cautious not to provide any occasion for the flesh, lest you become entangled by it.

An example of this is recounted by Augustine about a man named Allipius. He was persuaded by his friends to attend the gladiatorial games of the Romans, but he resolved to keep his eyes closed throughout, so that although he was physically present, he would be absent in his heart. However, when the crowd erupted in a loud cheer at the defeat of one of the combatants, he opened his eyes and became an approver of that bloody and barbarous spectacle. Therefore, beware of succumbing to occasions of sin.

3. If you want to prevent the flesh from overpowering the Spirit, do not dwell on thoughts and contemplations of sin. Engaging in fantasies and speculations about sin weakens the Spirit's influence and strengthens the desires of sin in your heart. The Prophet Ezekiel speaks of this in Chapter 23, verse 19, where he says, "She multiplied her whoredoms in calling to remembrance the days of her youth." Contemplating sin in your mind leads to moral impurity and hinders the Spirit's work. To guard your heart against the influence of sin, avoid dwelling on sinful thoughts.
4. If you want the Spirit to prevail, resist and confront your lusts promptly. Do not delay in engaging in the conflict. Often, people wait so long to begin the fight that they are already defeated

before they even start. Therefore, be ready to oppose sin from its very beginning. Act like Pharaoh, who did not allow the Hebrew children to grow up but instead killed them as soon as they were born. Apply the same approach to your sins.

5. Nurture and embrace the movements of the Spirit. Whenever you sense the Spirit dissuading you from sin, let those promptings reside within you, and they will keep the desires of the flesh at bay.
6. Do not entertain any negotiations with sin; if you engage in dialogue with sin, you have reason to suspect defeat. The flesh is a mortal enemy, and you must either kill it or be killed by it. There can be no peace treaty between the flesh and the Spirit. This battle is of such a nature that there is no peace treaty or cessation of hostilities throughout your entire life. It is worth noting the comparison between Galatians 1:16 and Acts 26:19. In Galatians, you read about Paul's conversion, and he says, "Immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood," meaning that he did not consult his corrupt nature regarding the dangers and hardships he would face. In Acts, when Paul recounts the same story to King Agrippa, he says, "Oh King, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision." This shows, as a learned person once said, that consulting and deliberating with flesh and blood is a form of disobedience to the heavenly vision. Even if you do not yield to the flesh, it is still a kind of disobedience to engage in consultation with it. Therefore, never enter into negotiations with your sin.
7. Resist every sin impartially and sincerely. If you despise the garment stained by the flesh, then you will also despise the flesh itself. Herod did many things, but he did not give up his relationship with Herodias.

Sermon XVIII.

At St. Lawrence Jewry, London, January 5, 1650.

"For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you cannot do the things that you would." - Galatians 5:17

I will now discuss the cause of this conflict, why the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh. The Apostle explains the reason: these are contrary to one another. The words do not require much explanation. The Apostle simply states that the flesh and the Spirit coexist within the same person and that they are contrary to one another. Regarding this, I will draw the following conclusion: Contraries can be found in the same subject. It is true that contraries cannot exist in the same subject in the highest and most extreme degree, but they can exist in a lesser and lower degree. That is the case here. The Apostle speaks of the flesh and the Spirit in the same regenerated person, and he describes them as contrary to one another, though not in the highest degree, but in a more moderate degree. They cannot be found in the highest degree because in heaven there is perfect grace without sin, and in hell, there is only sin without grace. However, on earth, we are partly sinful and partly gracious. Therefore, these two contraries, being present in a regenerated person to a lesser degree, can coexist quite well. The flesh and the Spirit are contrary to one another. It is impossible to conceive a more bitter opposition and direct contrariety in the world than that between the flesh and the Spirit. There is no greater contrariety than that between light and darkness, heaven and hell, fire and water, just as there is between the flesh and the Spirit. Contrariety goes beyond enmity; enemies can be reconciled, but contraries cannot. One contrary may indeed displace another, but one contrary cannot be reconciled with another. Water

can extinguish fire, but it cannot be reconciled with fire. Light can drive out darkness, but they cannot be reconciled. The contrariety of the flesh against the Spirit lies in this: whatever good the Spirit desires, the flesh opposes, and what good the Spirit prompts, the flesh discourages. This is the contrariety and the cause of the conflict in regenerated individuals.

[Doctrine] The doctrine is this: There is a mutual and irreconcilable contrariety between the flesh and the Spirit, between nature and grace, in the hearts of regenerate individuals.

I refer to it as a mutual contrariety because it is not a single opposition; the flesh is against the Spirit, and the Spirit is against the flesh. And I call it an irreconcilable contrariety because while enemies can be reconciled, contraries never can.

In addressing this point, I will only demonstrate its truth and then conclude with a practical application.

[First Demonstration] Firstly, this contrariety is evident from the contrasting names given to both the flesh and the Spirit in Scripture. Here in the text, corruption is referred to as the flesh, and grace is referred to as the Spirit. Corruption is called darkness, while grace is called light. In Romans 13:12, it is called a law of death, but grace is called the law of the Spirit of life. Corruption is described as filthiness of the flesh in 2 Corinthians 7:1, but grace is called purity of spirit in 1 Timothy 4:12. Through these contrasting names given to the flesh and the Spirit, their contrariety is made clear.

[Second Demonstration] Secondly, they have contrary principles and origins. Corruption is referred to as the work of the devil, as stated in John 3:8: "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil." On the other hand, grace is called the work of God, as mentioned in Philippians 1:6. Corruption is described as the lust of the devil in John 8:44, while grace is called the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22. Therefore, they stem from

opposing origins. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit.

[Third Demonstration] Thirdly, they have contrary actions and uses. The flesh is said to lust against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh. They are contrary in their works. Hence, in Scripture, sin is referred to as a work contrary to God. Sin leads a person to walk in opposition to God, while the Spirit draws a person to walk in God's ways. Sin is like Delilah, who never leaves a person alone but persistently urges them to yield to its temptations.

[Fourth Demonstration] They are contrary in their ends and outcomes. The flesh's end is to condemn the soul, while the Spirit's movements and workings aim to save the soul. We are commanded to abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul. The Apostle tells us that if we live according to the flesh, we will die, but if we mortify the deeds of the body through the Spirit, we will live. Sin leads to death, while grace leads to eternal life. Therefore, the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set us free from the law of sin and death. These demonstrations make it clear that the flesh and the Spirit are contrary to each other.

[First Use: Instruction] Let us consider the contrariety of the flesh against the Spirit and learn these three inclinations.

1. Learn to marvel at the free grace and mercy of God. Despite the contrariety of the flesh against the Spirit within you, it does not provoke anger and fury in God, but rather compassion and mercy. This reveals God's immense love for His people. God treats us as we would treat a person who has ingested poison; we would show pity to such an individual. Yet, poison in a toad is something we detest. When God sees sin in His people, tormenting them like poison in the body, even though they possess sinful natures that are contrary to grace, it does not stir up fury but rather favour and compassion in God. It is worth noting by comparing two Scriptures together, Genesis 6:5-6 and

Genesis 8:21. In Genesis 6, it is stated that the Lord saw that the imaginations of man's heart were evil, and only evil, and that continuously. Therefore, God said He would destroy man from the earth. Their corrupt nature and its actions provoked God to fury. But if you compare that passage with Genesis 8:21, you read that God will no longer curse the ground for man's sake, despite the fact that the imagination of his heart is evil from his youth. This seems counterintuitive, but God does not bring a curse; instead, He adds a promise, as if to say, "Even though I could destroy man as I did in the flood, I will not do it, even though the imagination of his heart is continuously evil." This should cause us to marvel at the grace of God, that despite the contrariety of our natures to holiness, it does not stir up fury but rather pity and mercy in God towards us.

2. Learn to marvel at the grace and mercy of God, that despite the opposition in our natures against the Spirit, the working of converting grace is irresistible. The Spirit conquers and breaks down the strongholds of our nature, bringing forth unexpected outcomes from these contrary elements. This is what the Lord does, commanding light to shine out of darkness. Oh, marvel at the omnipotence of God's grace, that despite the contrariety of your nature, it has not been able to resist the power of converting grace.
3. Marvel at the grace of God, that despite the contrariety of your nature, there exists either activity or perpetuity of grace in the regenerate. You continue to act in grace even though a principle of sin resides within you, and you have a perpetuity in the state of grace. This contrariety is never able to completely or finally overcome grace. Marvel at the fact that this spark of fire is not drowned by the flood of corruption, and that the contrariety in your heart against grace does not destroy it. Once you are in a state of grace, you remain in it. Let this heighten your admiration: Adam had perfect grace, but not perpetual grace,

whereas you have imperfect grace, yet you are firmly established in it, ensuring that you shall not fall.

[Use 2] In terms of humility, these teachings about the corruption of human nature primarily aim to humble the proud heart of man, which has degenerated and fallen from a glorious state. Be humble, O human! Even though you possess a principle of grace, there is something within you that opposes grace. You have a contrary principle to the gracious principle. The flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh, and they are contrary to one another. Now, I shall address not only unregenerate individuals but also the regenerate. Here are seven considerations to compel you to humble yourselves.

1. Consider that the flesh, and thus this contrariness to grace, existed in you before grace did. The struggle between Esau and Jacob in the womb of Rebekah is regarded by theologians as a symbol of corruption and grace in a regenerate person. They wrestled in the womb, and it is noted that Esau, the wayward son, was born first, while Jacob, the righteous son, was born last. This serves as a fitting representation of nature and grace contending within the heart of a regenerate individual. However, remember this: sin is the older of the two. Before you had the Spirit, you had the flesh. Nature is the elder sibling. In fact, as soon as the soul and body were united, sin was present in the soul. Not only did you have sin before you could exhibit grace, but you had it before you could exercise reason. I recall Augustine sharing an account in his Confessions about a small child who observed another child nursing from its mother's breast. He said, "Before the child spoke, I witnessed an envious nature in it. The child grew pale upon seeing the other child nursing, and this reminded me of my original sin." Truly, this is a significant advantage for the flesh. The flesh holds precedence within a person. It is as if two armies engage in a pitched battle, and the army that arrives first on the field possesses a considerable advantage over the one that arrives later. The flesh

has gained the upper hand with the advantage of being first in you. Therefore, be humbled.

2. Be humbled when you consider that the flesh and its opposition to grace in your nature are more prevalent than grace itself. It is not only more timely but also more abundant. Even though a Christian possesses the Spirit, every regenerate person has more of the flesh. You have only received the first fruits of the Spirit, but you possess the entire harvest of original corruption. In a regenerate individual, there are more swarms of lusts and unholy thoughts than there are gracious thoughts. Just as in every hedge, there are more briars and thorns than fruitful trees, so in every person's heart, there are more briars and thorns of corruption than the fruitful trees of grace. And as in every field, there are more thistles and weeds than lilies and roses, so in every heart, there is more of corrupt nature than true grace. Sin grows naturally, but grace only through divine cultivation. Corruption is natural, but grace is supernatural. The Apostle's words are noteworthy in this regard, as he exhorts us to yield our members to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity, but now to yield our members as servants to righteousness unto holiness. From this, theologians deduce that when the Apostle speaks of sin, he mentions three "to's": to uncleanness, to iniquity, and unto iniquity. However, when he speaks of grace and holiness, he mentions only two "to's," indicating that sin abounds in greater measure than grace. If you thoroughly search a believer in every aspect, you will find more sin than grace in each faculty.

First, examine your understanding, and you will find more ignorance than knowledge. Even Jerome himself admitted that he understood fewer truths than he was ignorant of. In the realm of memory, there is more forgetfulness than retention of good. You forget more good things than you remember. The best person alive does not remember as much from a sermon as they forget. Therefore, the Apostle counsels us to pay closer attention to the things we have heard, lest

they slip away like water from a broken and leaking vessel. The word used here implies a metaphor of leaking vessels. Similarly, in the realm of imagination, there are more vain, sinful, and impure thoughts than divine and holy contemplations. In the realm of emotions, there is more love for earthly things than for heavenly things. You fear humans more than God, and you grieve more over affliction than over sin, focusing on the punishment rather than the evil of sin. If you examine all individuals, you will find more corruption of nature than holiness and grace in them. The Apostle hints at this in the list he provides of the works of the flesh and the fruits of the Spirit, where he lists seventeen sins but only seven graces, indicating that there is more sin than grace in people. Corruption is like the great Goliath, while grace is like little David. Despite corruption being stronger and more prevalent than grace, we shall ultimately achieve victory. Though Goliath may be stronger than David, all the regenerate shall ultimately succeed and conquer.

3. To humble yourself, consider that this contrariety of nature to grace works tirelessly within you. If this contrariety manifested itself occasionally, on extraordinary occasions, it would not be as significant. However, this corruption consistently opposes grace. Grace and good impulses are supernatural and can be burdensome to us who are flesh and blood. Conversely, sinful impulses are natural to humans, and things that act naturally do so tirelessly. Just as the sea never tires of flowing and the sun never tires of running its course, corrupt nature never tires of opposing the Holy Spirit. Our entire journey to heaven is an uphill battle, going against the currents of corruption and temptations.
4. Also, humble yourself on this basis, that this contrariety of nature will persistently work against grace until your dying day. If it opposed only occasionally and then grew weary, or if it were limited to a certain age of a person's life, it would be something to consider. However, this corruption will constantly manifest itself in opposition to grace. As long as you live, you may be able

to rid yourself of actual sins, but you can never rid your heart of this ingrained corrupt nature. Cyprian made an insightful statement on this matter: "It is more difficult to eliminate one sin than many sins." His meaning is that it is harder to eradicate this one sin of nature than to remove many sins committed in one's life. The sins that haunted you last year may no longer trouble you, and the sins troubling you now may cease in the future. However, the sin of your nature troubled you last year, continues to trouble you this year, and will do so all your days. Just as ivy on a wall, even if you cut off its branches, it remains so firmly attached to the joints and structure of the wall that you cannot uproot the ivy without tearing down the wall. The same applies to us: until God pulls down this wall of our body, the root of our sin cannot be eradicated. This was symbolized under the Levitical Law, in the case of a house infected with a persistent leprosy. Despite scraping and pouring out its dust, the house could not be cleansed, so God commanded that the house be pulled down and removed. The corruption of our natures is like this leprosy, which can only be remedied by demolishing the house. Similarly, only through the death of the body can the body of sin be completely destroyed. This leprous house is a representation of your defiled body, and the scraping of its dust symbolizes your efforts to cleanse your heart of sin. Yet, despite all this, the house cannot be cleansed until it is torn down. Likewise, the house of your body cannot be fully purified, and sin cannot be completely eradicated, until it is torn down and laid in the dust. I recall a learned author who likened the impenitent thief on the Cross to the sin of our natures. When he was nailed to the Cross and bound hand and foot, he had only one member untied—his tongue—and with it, he reviled Jesus Christ. In the same way, says this author, our natures are like that of a person on their deathbed, unable to move hand or foot, yet possessing a nature kindled with fire from hell, through which they sin against God. Oh, let this greatly humble us in the sight of God.

5. Consider that this opposition in your nature against grace, though it goes against grace, is in line with your nature. Corrupt nature tempts individuals to sins that are most aligned with their flesh and blood. Just as the devil, when tempting Jesus in the wilderness while he was hungry, said, "Command that these stones be turned into bread," which was a very fitting temptation given Jesus' condition of having fasted for forty days and nights and being hungry. The devil tailored the temptation to suit him. If the devil tailors temptations to our condition, our own natures will do so even more, for a person's own heart knows what is more suitable to their inclinations than the devil does. It is true that the devil knows a person's inclination through their actions, but our corrupted natures will propose temptations that are most pleasing to our flesh and blood, as well as to the sins to which we are most inclined either due to habit or inclination. The Apostle James speaks of this, as I have mentioned before, when he says that everyone is tempted when they are enticed and drawn away by their own desires. This is a metaphor taken from fishermen who tailor their bait to the fish they want to catch and do not always use the same bait. Similarly, your corrupt nature acts as the fisherman, laying out a bait that is most suitable to your inclination. Therefore, be humbled on this account, knowing that sin is so well-suited to your corrupt nature.

6. Be humbled on this basis: your corrupt nature will lead you to commit sins that you never thought you would fall into. We have a notable example of this in Hazael. When the prophet Elisha told him about the evil he would do to the children of Israel—burning their strongholds, killing their young men with the sword, smashing their children against the stones, and ripping open pregnant women—he responded, "Is thy servant a dog, that he should do these things?" He couldn't believe it, yet he ended up doing even worse than what the prophet had foretold. This should cause you to be humbled. There is an evil seed within your nature that will provoke you to sin, even those sins you

never thought could be there. Why else would Christ warn His disciples to guard against excess, drunkenness, and worldly cares? Though they were esteemed apostles of Christ, they still had the potential for those evils within their natures. Mr. Capel observed that a godly person, at some point before their death, will be tempted by either the devil or their own heart to break every commandment of the law and doubt every article of the creed. Therefore, do not assume that your judgment is so firm that you will never fall into error. And you, who live a holy life, should not be overly confident or too secure, thinking that you will never fall like others have fallen. Remember, you have a heart as sinful as anyone else, and if God were to allow the devil, your own corrupt nature, and an opportunity to converge, you would fall into as grievous a sin as anyone in the world. There is such a contrariety within your nature against grace that it would lead you to commit the most unnatural and heinous sins imaginable. Augustine had a wise saying when he witnessed someone falling into sin: "Today it is you; tomorrow it may be me, if God does not help me."

7. Consider that this contrariety within you is universal. If it were only contrary to some grace and not all, it would be somewhat excusable. Or if it existed only in certain parts and not in all, it would be somewhat tolerable. But when this contrariety is universal, affecting every aspect, how intolerable is this? Even as a godly person, your entire body and soul are defiled. It is true that there is grace in every part of your soul, but there is also sin. There is ignorance in your understanding, forgetfulness in your memory, stubbornness in your will, disorder in your affections, hardness in your heart, and callousness in your conscience. Every faculty is infected, yet also regenerated in those who are godly. Corruption is to the soul what the soul is to the body. The whole soul is present in the entire body and in every part of it. It is the same with original corruption; it exists wholly within every person and in every part of a person.

One should note that corrupt nature is more present in the soul than the soul is in the body. Although the entire soul is within the whole body and every part of it, it is not present in each part in the same way as in the whole body. It is more prominently present in the whole rather than in the parts. However, corrupt nature is more present in a person than the soul is in the body. Although the soul is within the body, it exists only in specific members for particular functions. It is in the eye for seeing, not for working; in the hand for working, not for seeing; in the ear for hearing, not for walking; in the foot for walking, not for hearing. But sin is in the soul, not for specific acts, but in every person and in every part, provoking and enticing all kinds of evil. This universality of corruption in human nature gives us great cause for humility.

Sermon XIX.

At St. Lawrence Jewry, London, January 19, 1650.

"For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary to one another, so that you cannot do the things that you would." - Galatians 5:17

Having explained the enmity and opposition between the flesh and the Spirit, I will now address two questions of conscience related to this Doctrine. The first question is:

1. If the flesh exhibits such opposition to grace, what are the reasons why God allows such conflicting principles to remain in the hearts of regenerated individuals?
2. If there is an irreconcilable opposition, what is the purpose of a person striving against the flesh?

[Question 1] Why does God allow even in regenerated individuals such opposition against grace?

[Answer 1] I will answer this question with these four points:

1. God does it to demonstrate His mercy more clearly. God would have displayed His goodness if humanity had never fallen. But since they have fallen, God shows His mercy to them. The purpose of our redemption is for God's grace and mercy to reign. And you can clearly see a remarkable display of this when God works grace in you despite the opposition within your heart. This is great mercy. Even though you have a contrary principle in your nature against grace, converting grace will overcome. It may not remove it entirely, but it will subdue corruption. And though grace is opposed, it will never be expelled. Grace will ultimately conquer, even though it continually fights as long as we are in this life.
2. God is pleased to allow such opposition against grace, even in the hearts of regenerated individuals, so that they may value Jesus Christ more highly. If you did not have a contrary principle to grace, you would only admire God as a Creator. But now, having a principle of sin within you, you come to recognize the need for a Mediator. Adam in his innocence did not need a Savior. But now, having fallen through sin and having a principle of enmity in your nature, only the power of a Savior can remove this enmity through the work of sanctification. Only a Savior can free you from the guilt of this enmity, and that Savior is Jesus Christ. As the Apostle says, "I thank God through Jesus Christ who has delivered me from this body of death." It is through Him that you are delivered from the guilt and enmity.
3. The Lord allows the remains of original corruption to persist in the hearts of His people to arouse in them a greater and deeper sense of humility. Humility would not be a duty for us if the Lord had not left remnants of original corruption in the hearts of

His chosen ones. Indeed, you would delight in God for all eternity, but you would not have this basis for humility if sin had been completely eradicated. This was the case with Paul, an eminent Apostle. He was given a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment him, so that he would not be exalted beyond measure.

There are four interpretations given of these words. Some suggest that the "thorn in the flesh" refers to Hymenaeus and Alexander who troubled Paul, but this is unfounded. Others relate it to a severe bodily illness, but that can hardly be proven. Some connect it to the specific sin of lust or uncleanness, but that cannot be accepted because Paul had the gift of self-control and desired that all men were as he was in that regard. However, the most diligent and meticulous interpreters understand the "thorn in the flesh" to be the sin of human nature. It is called a messenger of Satan because the devil joins forces with human nature and stirs up the corruption in man's heart. Now, why was this "thorn in the flesh" left in Paul? Was it not to humble him and prevent him from being overly proud? Just as the Lord left the fiery scorpions in the wilderness to humble the Israelites, He leaves corruption in your nature to humble you. When you perceive the corrupt workings of your nature, you should see yourself as more vile and base.

4. The Lord allows this corrupt nature to remain in you for the exercise of your grace. Grace is never more tested than when it faces opposition. God uses this to evaluate the genuineness of your grace and the sincerity of your heart, whether you will align with the Spirit and stand against the desires of the flesh. Just as the Lord left the Canaanites in the land to test whether the Israelites would unite with them, there is a contrary principle to grace within us to determine whether we will join with the flesh or follow the promptings and guidance of the Lord's Spirit.

[Quest. 2] The next question is, What is the purpose of contending with the corruption in one's heart, knowing that we will carry this

corruption to our grave? We have heard that opposites can never be reconciled. So, what is the point of striving against corruption when the battle seems endless?

I will provide three reasons why it is necessary to engage in a struggle against corruption, even though we cannot completely eliminate the inherent contradiction within our hearts.

1. If you do not resist the corruption of your nature, it will manifest with greater intensity and violence in your lives. You currently possess an impure nature, but if you do not oppose it, you will lead a wicked life. If you leave your nature unchecked, it will be like an uncultivated field overrun with thorns and briars. As it is said, "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornication, thefts, false witness, blasphemies." If we do not suppress evil thoughts in our hearts, they will inevitably manifest as immoral and disorderly behavior. Therefore, although you cannot completely remove original corruption, if you do not resist it, you will not only have it in your hearts but also display it in your actions.
2. Although you cannot eliminate and eradicate this contradiction in human nature, you can suppress it. It is true that you cannot destroy it, but you can weaken it; you cannot remove it, but you can repress it. You can treat it as Joshua did with the Gibeonites, saving their lives but making them servants for manual labor, or as the Israelites did with the Canaanites, not driving them out but making them subject to tribute. Similarly, even though you cannot completely remove the corruption of your nature, you can keep it in check. The more you contend with your corrupt heart, the better you will be able to restrain it. There is an instructive law that the Lord gave the Jews regarding a house infected with the plague of leprosy. God commanded that if the leprosy was present in the house, they should scrape every stone, and if scraping did not cleanse it, the house should be torn down. Your nature is like this leprous house, defiled by the

plague of corruption. The Lord instructs you to treat your nature as the Jews were commanded to treat their houses: scrape every stone, labor to cleanse your hearts with the broom of sanctification. And if all efforts fail, when this house of yours is brought down by death, then it shall be cleansed. But as long as you live in this world, continue to contend against the workings of corrupt nature. Though you cannot expel it, you can subdue it. While our grace in this life may never be strong enough to completely expel and subdue our corruption, by striving and laboring in this contest, you will keep your corruption subdued, ensuring that it never extinguishes grace.

3. Consider that to not engage in conflict with your corrupt nature is an indication that you have no grace within you. There can be no opposition between one entity alone; opposition requires at least two. "These are contrary the one to the other"; just as corrupt nature is contrary to grace, grace is contrary to corrupt nature. Therefore, if you remain passive and do not contend with corruption, it is clear evidence that you have no grace.

[Use. 1] Let the contradiction within our hearts against grace always keep us vigilant and cautious over our own hearts. You do not know how far the contradiction and corruption of your hearts may lead you before you die. Do not assume, "Surely I will never fall into such a sin and such a sin." Do not be complacent, for you have a nature within you that can prompt you to commit the worst sin ever committed on earth. I mentioned the observation of Mr. Capels, that a Christian before dying may be tempted to break every Commandment of the Law and doubt every Article of the Creed. You have a contradiction against all grace and therefore an inclination towards all sin. Keep a watchful eye on yourself. Peter was not suspicious enough of himself when he told Christ that even if everyone else deserted him, he would not. He even said, "Even if I have to die with you, I will never deny you." Yet Peter did both; he deserted and denied Jesus, even cursing and swearing. If Peter had known his own heart, he would never have spoken those words. Good people do not know to what extent

the corruption of their nature may lead them. You may be a holy and gracious Christian, living blamelessly in your community. But consider this, if God were to unleash your nature, with what powerful force would you be drawn into sin? Hazael, as I mentioned earlier, did not believe that there was such wickedness in his heart as the Prophet foretold, and he said, "Am I a dog, that I would do such wickedness?" Likewise, Christ himself warned his disciples to beware of indulgence, drunkenness, and worldly cares. It may seem like a strange admonition for such good men. One would think it was an unnecessary caution for them. The disciples were not starving at that time, so to be guilty of indulgence would be unexpected. They did not even have a home to lay their heads, so being overtaken by drunkenness would be surprising. Yet Christ knew that the seeds of these sins were within their natures. And just as they did, we all have those seeds within us. Therefore, we ought to be suspicious of our own hearts. In the initial creation, all creatures were potentially present in chaos, awaiting only the movement of the Spirit to bring them forth. Similarly, in our natures, there is the seed of all evil, and it only requires occasion and temptation to draw it out.

Remember, [Direction 2] although there is this contradiction in your heart against grace, do not be discouraged. Even if you discern more of this corruption in your nature than ever before in your entire lifetime, do not lose heart. Many godly souls are in this situation, where they see more corruption and violence than ever before. They may have thought that sin was dead, but now they see it alive. They may have believed that its power was weakened, but now they see its edge sharpened. There are reasons why such individuals should not be discouraged.

1. It may not be because there is an increase of sin in your nature, but rather a clearer revelation of sin. It is not that the object is multiplied and enlarged, but rather your vision has been clarified. A godly person sees more corruption in their nature than ever before. This is not because there is truly more corruption, but because the Lord has granted them a clearer

insight into their own heart. I can illustrate it with this comparison: on a dark and gloomy day, you do not see dust or particles floating around your room. But when the bright rays of the sun shine in, you see an abundance of dust. The dust was there before, but you did not see it because the sun did not make it visible to you. This is how it is with people: before conversion, they have plenty of lusts in their hearts, but they do not see them because the Sun of righteousness has not shone upon them. There is a remarkable passage by Paul in Romans 7:13. He says, "But sin, that it might appear to be sin, worked death in me." Sin was already sin, but it did not appear to be sin until he was converted. Now he says, "I perceive the workings of my corrupt nature." When he was a Pharisee, he did not see or recognize himself as vile and sinful as he does now. When light breaks into the soul, hidden sins are revealed, and what once seemed like specks now appear as beams. What once seemed as insignificant as gnats now appear as large as camels.

2. It may be a result of a more gracious and tender conscience than in the past. Previously, your conscience was hard, calloused, and numb, resisting the sense of sin. But now, God has softened and melted it; He has made your conscience not seared, but sensitive like raw flesh. Godly individuals may complain about corruption and believe they have more than ever before, but it is because they are more tender and aware. When a person has injured their finger, they feel that they touch it more than ever, and this arises from the tenderness of the affected area. Similarly, since God has made your heart broken and soft, the corruption within it is felt more intensely than before. Sin to a wicked person is like a blow on the back, but sin to a godly person is like a blow to the eye.
3. Consider this: although you discern the corruptions of your nature and see more of them than ever before, be confidently assured that you will ultimately achieve victory. In this regard, I can refer to the story of Rebecca, who experienced a struggle

between the children within her womb. She asked, "Why am I like this?" And the Lord said to her, "Two nations are in your womb," referring to the future nations of Esau and Jacob. "Two peoples shall be separated from your body, and one shall be stronger than the other, and the older shall serve the younger." Here, note that it is said, "There were two different kinds of people in her womb, and they were separated." This reflects the contrast between Sin and Grace.

The one group, the descendants of Esau, is said to be stronger than the other, that is, the Israelites. For a time, the posterity of Esau was stronger and even defeated the Israelites once. But what is the comfort in this? Well, the elder shall serve the younger. And indeed, it happened that the Edomites served the Israelites. Similarly, I can say about Esau and Jacob that the corruption of nature is stronger than grace in many good people, and it is older than grace. But here is your comfort: the elder shall serve the younger; grace will ultimately prevail.

[Direction 3] I infer from this that although you should not be discouraged by the presence of this corruption, you should be greatly humbled by the awareness of this opposition in your nature against grace. If you only had a disability regarding grace, it would be a matter for humility. If you only had an opposition against grace, that would also warrant humility. However, having an absolute contrariety against grace gives you even greater cause for humility. A carnal mind is not just an enemy of God; it is enmity itself. What the Spirit persuades, the flesh dissuades, and what the Spirit wills, the flesh opposes. Therefore, you have significant grounds for humility.

4. Learn to trace all the actual sins that have occurred in your lives back to their origin, which is this inherent contrariety of nature. You do not sin because the devil tempts you or because you are in bad company, but because you possess a corrupt nature. A wise theologian once said that a Christian has many enemies to contend with, but there is only one that overcomes grace, and

that is the flesh. If it weren't for the corruption within, all temptations would have no power over you, just as they had no power over Christ. The Tempter approached him, but found nothing in him; his temptations were like sparks of fire thrown into the sea. However, the devil comes to you, and the world comes to you, and they find suitable material within you, a readiness in your nature to yield to and embrace temptation. Therefore, attribute actual sin to its original source. This is what Paul did when he said, "It is no longer I who sin," but who did he blame? Not the devil, not the world, but the sin that dwells within him, that is, an evil and corrupt nature. It is his corrupt nature that draws him towards evil and hinders him from doing good. If you were to trace your sins back to their origin in this way, how much sorrow and debasement would it bring you? It is said of David that the devil incited him to number the people, but he did not attribute it to the devil, but rather to himself. He said, "I have sinned, and I have acted foolishly." We are all transgressors from birth. Do not complain about the evil in your life, but attribute it to your corrupt nature. Similarly, David, in another instance, traced the great evils of murder and adultery back to the corruption of his nature. He said, "I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me." Likewise, Augustine, in his Confessions, when confessing how he stole from an orchard, said it was not due to hunger or lack of fruit, as he had better at home, but solely to gratify his corrupt nature.

5. If there is a contrariety in your nature against grace, then do not align yourself with this contrariety against the Spirit. Would you join forces with an enemy? Why is this contrariety within you? Is it not to damn and destroy your soul? Therefore, the Apostle says, "Abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul." The flesh strives to damn you, but the Spirit strives to save you. So, do not side with your enemy. Yet, how many men are there who join with the corrupt desires of their hearts when they prompt them to evil? And how unreasonable is this? The Apostle tells us that we are not debtors to the flesh, to live according to

its desires. It is as if he is saying, "You owe nothing to corrupt nature, so why do you yield to it?" It is considered honorable for every person to pay their debts. But you owe nothing to corrupt nature; rather, you are debtors to the Spirit. If you through the Spirit put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. Therefore, do not indulge the flesh, or as the same Apostle says, "Make no provision for the flesh." If an enemy enters your house, would you supply their camp? Would you send in arms to an enemy that seeks to destroy you? This is what people do when they align themselves with the flesh against the Spirit. The more a person makes provision for the flesh, the more they resist, oppose, quench, and grieve the Spirit. Thus, I have concluded the discussion on the dual conflict between the flesh and the Spirit and the dual cause of this conflict: they are contrary to one another.

Sermon XX.

At St. Lawrence Jewry, London, January 19, 1650.

"For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want." - Galatians 5:17

I have now come to address the double consequence of this double conflict, which also holds a double reference. The flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, so that you are unable to do the good you desire, and the Spirit desires what is contrary to the flesh, so that you are unable to do the evil you desire. The words are not overly difficult, and therefore, I will not elaborate much on their

explanation. Augustine understands these words to mean that you cannot do the things you desire, that is, you cannot do the good you desire. Musculus understands it to refer to both jointly; you cannot do the things you desire. In other words, the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, preventing you from doing the good you desire, and the Spirit desires what is contrary to the flesh, preventing you from doing the evil you desire. The doctrine derived from the first part of the consequence is this: the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, so that you are unable to do the good you desire.

[Doctr.] That the corruption of the flesh, even in regenerate men, often diverts them from, disturbs, and interrupts their holy actions.

To support this point, we not only have the testimony of the Apostle that it was the case with others, but also his own experience. He complains that he has the will to do good, but he struggles to find how to carry it out. When he wants to do good, evil is present with him.

I will divide this doctrine into two parts and demonstrate that this corruption of nature, concerning good, has two harmful consequences or effects.

First, it hinders a person from doing good. Secondly, it hinders a person in the act of doing good. These are the aspects I will focus on, and I will begin with the first: that corrupt nature hinders a person from doing good.

To illustrate this, there is a fitting analogy in the story mentioned in Genesis 38 about Tamar, who had twins in her womb, Pharez and Zarah. The story recounts that Zarah first put out his hand, and the midwife tied a scarlet thread around his finger. However, Pharez struggled with Zarah and ended up being born first. Divines apply this story to the situation, suggesting that a godly person may be like Zarah, ready to engage in acts of duty, but corrupt nature, like

Pharez, hinders the manifestation of those intentions. Corrupt nature obstructs regenerate individuals from doing good.

That which I will now do is to show you the cunning tactics of human nature that hinder a person from doing good. There are twelve stratagems that corrupt nature employs for this purpose.

1. The flesh impedes us from doing good by persuading a person that they are above the need for duty. This suggestion stems from proud and fanciful nature. The foolish Familist claims that duties are merely outward forms and are only for lesser Christians, not for those who have reached a higher level and are of a superior dispensation. Corruption often presents this plea to justify neglecting the performance of duties. This was observed during the time of the Apostles, as the Apostle Paul remarks, "Are there not contentions among you?" He not only criticises those who exalt different apostles but also condemns a fourth group who claimed to be of Christ. Why does the Apostle condemn them? The meaning is this: the Apostle denounces Enthusiasm. These individuals did not elevate Paul or other apostles; instead, they were solely focused on Christ, seeking revelations and inspirations. The Apostle censures those who exalt Christ to the point of devaluing ordinary ministry. To protect you from this infection of corrupt nature, I will provide three specific points.

In the most glorious times of the Church, the Word promises that duties and ordinances shall be beneficial among believers. S. John states in Revelation 11:15, "The seventh angel sounded, and there were great voices in heaven, saying, 'The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever.'" In the nineteenth verse, it follows, "The Temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his Temple the Ark of his Testament." This means that even in the purest times of God's Church, after the destruction of Antichrist,

there will still be Gospel ordinances, and a Temple containing the Ark of God's Testament.

2. The Scripture tells us that the strongest Christians should engage in the duties of religion. The Apostle Paul, in his letter to the Romans, tells them that he is convinced that they are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, and capable of admonishing one another. However, he boldly reminds them, as if to say, "Though you possess knowledge and goodness, I must still remind you of your duty." The strong need to be actively involved in duties and ordinances.
 - To have their judgments confirmed in knowledge and belief of the truth, 1 John 2:21: "I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you know it."
 - To have their memories strengthened in the remembrance of the truth, Jude 3: "I will put you in remembrance, though you once knew this."
 - To have their affections more stirred up to love the truth, 2 Peter 1:12.
3. Until you reach heaven, you must engage in the practice of duty. We read about the Israelites, how the Lord provided them with manna from heaven while they were in the wilderness. However, once they entered Canaan, the manna ceased. Similarly, as long as you are in the wilderness of this world, you must be nourished by the manna of ordinances. But when you arrive in heaven, and only then, will ordinances cease. It is truly ungrateful for those who have lived under ordinances for so long to proudly declare themselves above ordinances.
4. Another stratagem of corrupt nature is to use the excuse of urgent and extraordinary affairs and obligations in the world to hinder one from performing their duties. They may claim that their circumstances are demanding, and that they have little

time to devote to their calling. Therefore, they hope that God will exempt them from the same level of duty as others. Those who were invited to the great supper mentioned by Luke are examples of this. With one accord, they began to make excuses. One had bought a piece of land and needed to see it, another had bought oxen and needed to test them, and another had married a wife and could not come. Such excuses arise from corrupt nature, using worldly responsibilities as a reason to neglect one's duty to God. To address this misunderstanding, I will present three specific points.

5. The Scripture tells us that the strongest Christians should actively engage in the duties of religion. The Apostle Paul, in his letter to the Romans, expressed his conviction that they were full of goodness, filled with knowledge, and capable of admonishing one another. However, he still took the liberty to remind them, indicating that even though they possessed knowledge and goodness, he still needed to remind them of their duty. The strong need to exercise themselves in duties and ordinances.

God never intended our specific worldly occupations as men to overshadow our general calling as Christians, nor should our civil duties take precedence over our divine duties. If you wisely manage and plan your worldly affairs, you will have enough time to engage in divine duties. Through holy prudence and providence, you can redeem time for prayer, worship, and other spiritual practices.

Consider that the path to God's blessings in your worldly pursuits lies in dedicating yourself to religious duties. There is a saying about a man who had only two acres of land, while a wealthy lord's land was nearby. The poor man's land was fruitful, while the lord's land remained barren. When the Lord asked the poor man for the reason, he replied, "Oh, sir, I water my little plot with prayers and tears every morning. This is the way to be blessed in the world: give God His due, and He will give you what is rightfully yours." Seek first the

Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all other things will be provided for you.

You may claim that you must focus on your earthly calling and, in doing so, neglect your duty to God. However, consider that by doing this, you may provoke God to hinder your worldly endeavours. Without God's blessing, your efforts are in vain, even if you rise early, work late, and toil with sorrow, as the Psalmist describes. God often curses one's outward circumstances when they neglect the religious worship and duties owed to Him.

Lastly, God was displeased with Moses for neglecting his duty, even though he had a valid excuse, being on a journey, for not circumcising his child. The Lord met Moses at the inn and nearly killed him because of this negligence. God did not excuse the neglect of His ordinance, despite the necessity of the journey. Similarly, the Israelites incurred God's anger in the wilderness for neglecting the ordinance of circumcision, even though they could have argued that their nomadic lifestyle made it challenging to perform. This teaches us that our worldly occupations and necessary affairs cannot justify neglecting our duty to God.

Another stratagem of corrupt nature in this matter is when a person intends and promises to perform their duties, but only after their current circumstances and conditions have changed. They may say, "If I were in a different situation, I would devote more time and service to God than I do now. But in my present condition, I have no time or opportunity." This is a convincing tactic through which your corrupt hearts attempt to divert you from your duties. For instance, if you are a young servant, your heart may suggest that if you were a master, you would spend countless hours in God's service. If you are poor, you might think, "If I were rich, I would be more generous." If you are a private individual, you may imagine the good you would do if you were a magistrate. This was Absalom's vain notion. However, remember this: if your circumstances were to change but your heart remained the same, you would still be the same person, regardless of

the altered condition. For those who have been or may be deceived by their deceitful hearts in this manner, I offer the following points to consider:

- Understand that it is merely a deceit of the heart to think that if your circumstances were to change, you would become a different person. This notion is deceptive because if you are not good in your current condition, you cannot be good in any condition if your heart remains the same. The reason is that your wicked heart is what makes you bad in your present state, and if it persists, you will be bad in any other condition. If you are a bad servant, you will be a bad master, and if you are a bad child, you will be a bad father. If you are not good in your current situation, you will not be good in a married life unless your heart is changed. If your heart remains unchanged, your life will not change.
 - Consider that every other condition you admire and long for may perhaps have more snares, burdens, and inconveniences than the present condition you complain about. You are currently a young man, complaining that you don't have time to pray. What would you do if you had the responsibility of managing a household and a family? A public position entails more distractions and burdens than any private position. Therefore, do not deceive yourselves.
4. Another deceptive tactic of corrupt nature to keep a person from their duty is by disguising religious duties with an unseemly appearance. Just as the flesh, to entice a person to sin, will hide sin's true nature and make it resemble the beautiful face of grace, the heart, on the other hand, will smear the beautiful face of godliness with worldly prejudices to deter a person from their duty. It is similar to how Judas disparaged Mary's honorable act of liberality towards Christ when she broke the box of ointment, considering it wasteful and excessive (Matthew 26:8). Likewise, your corrupt heart will suggest to you that zeal for God is

nothing but rashness and indiscretion, that holiness is a lowly state of mind, that patience is a weak disposition that refrains from retaliating, that walking with God is akin to a monastic lifestyle, that conscientiously observing the Sabbath is mere adherence to outdated Jewish practices, and that having a tender conscience is unnecessary scrupulousness. By entertaining these carnal arguments, people allow their corrupt hearts to hinder them from doing much good. Therefore, if you wish to be freed from this deception, you must strive to perceive the inherent radiance and beauty of holiness and recognize the filthiness of sin.

5. Another way in which the human heart deceives a person is by feigning the performance of a lesser good as an excuse to neglect a greater good. Both the devil and one's own heart often divert a person in this manner. It has been observed by Mr. Greenham that in many households, every trivial matter becomes an obstacle to prayer. This is the nature of the human heart, to let even the slightest business distract one from their duty and the practice of religion. This was evident in the actions of the Pharisees who meticulously tithed mint, anise, and cumin, yet neglected righteousness and the more significant and weighty matters of the law.

Many individuals are satisfied with reading a chapter at home but neglect attending public worship and engaging in communal prayer. This is simply a cunning deception of one's own heart, similar to the ancient heretics known as Euchitae, who were so focused on prayer that they neglected all other forms of worship.

In response to this, I would only say that those who prioritize one duty over another should remember that duties are not contradictory, but rather subordinate and complementary to one another. I can compare the duties of religion to the lamps in the sanctuary as described in Scripture, where each lamp was strategically positioned to ignite another. Similarly, God has

ordained duties in such a way that one duty supports and prepares for another. Prayer prepares us for hearing the Word, hearing the Word prepares us for meditation, and meditation prepares us for prayer, and so on with other duties. Therefore, those who allow one duty to hinder another are creating conflict where the Lord has intended harmony.

Another tactic employed by the flesh is to persuade individuals to reduce their level of commitment to duty, even if it cannot convince them to completely neglect it. Your corrupt heart may not succeed in convincing you to abandon prayer and hearing the Word entirely, but it will strive to make you pray less frequently and listen to the Word less often than you used to. Just as it is a deception of the heart to lead us from small sins to greater ones, it is also the cunning strategy of the flesh to gradually diminish our engagement in duty until we cease to do it altogether. To protect you from this influence of human nature, I will present the following considerations.

It is the cunning strategy of your heart not to make you abandon duty completely and all at once, but to gradually diminish your commitment. Just as the church in Ephesus decayed gradually, first losing its initial love and then abandoning its initial works (Revelation 2:4), your heart and the devil know that gradual reductions are less noticeable. Neglect that is total and abrupt falls under the scrutiny of a natural conscience. You must pray and attend worship occasionally, or else your conscience will rebuke you. However, gradual declines are not as easily perceived. Therefore, the devil and your own heart will allow you to pray and hear, but not to the extent that you used to. Many of God's people have fallen into this trap.

Consider that the soul is equally endangered by gradual declines and reductions as it is by complete omissions. A small leak in a ship will eventually cause it to perish, just as a violent storm does, but in a more imperceptible and unnoticed manner. Lingering consumptions can kill a person as surely as raging fevers. It is true that a fever or

plague can claim a life within three days, but a consumption will inevitably lead to one's end and burial.

Corrupt nature will suggest to you that you should cease your duty because of the unchangeable decree of God. It will tell you that if you are predestined for damnation, no amount of prayer or hearing will save you. And if you are predestined for salvation, reducing the frequency of your prayers and attendance will not result in eternal damnation. This deception is ingrained in the hearts of all people. In response, I have these three points to present to you.

1. When it comes to duty, you are not to consult God's secret decrees, but His revealed Word. The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the revealed things are for us and our children forever, so that we may obey all the words of His law. We should not base our actions on God's decrees, whether to do or not to do our duty, but on His revealed will, which instructs us to engage in holy acts of religion and godliness. We should not search the secret records of heaven, but rather the Scriptures. It was wisely said by the devout Mr. Bradford, "A person should not enter the University of Predestination until they are well grounded in the Grammar-School of obedience and repentance."
2. Consider that the same decree that determines a person's destiny also determines the means to achieve that destiny. If you are decreed to be damned, the same God decrees that you will walk in ways that lead to damnation. And if you are decreed to be saved, God has also decreed that you will walk in ways that lead to eternal life. The Apostle tells us that we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. Not only our happiness, but also our holiness is decreed by God.
3. Those of you who yield to this plea of nature do not use the same reasoning in other matters. You do not reason in this way when

it comes to worldly matters. If a person were to say, "God has decreed how long I will live in this world from all eternity, so I will neither eat nor wear clothes," you would consider them mad rather than rational. Refusing to eat, which is God's ordained means to sustain life, is self-destructive. Similarly, omitting religious duties based on any pretense of God's decree is destructive to the soul. Just as it is in nature, so it is in matters of grace. As God has decreed the end, He has also decreed the means that lead to that end.

You may argue, prompted by a deceiving heart, that you are unable to do any good. Many people make this plea, saying, "If I had the ability, I would pray more; if I could remember better, I would listen more attentively. But because of my limitations, I am discouraged from fulfilling my duties. I know that it is my misery if I do not read, hear, and pray; and if I do perform these duties, it is my further misery that I sin in doing so." This is nature's plea. In response to this, consider the following:

1. Your inability does not nullify your obligation to the moral law. Even if you are unable to fulfill your duties, it does not free you from the duty itself. You are still bound to do what is right, even if you cannot do it perfectly. If you have lost the ability to obey, address that issue. God has not lost the authority to command, and natural incapacity cannot excuse willful neglect.
2. Even if it is true that you are unable to perform your duties, remember that your ability in this matter depends on God's promise, not your own strength. You may be unable, but God is not. You are under a promise, so engage in the performance of your duties, for God has promised the assistance of His Spirit.
3. Consider that there is less evil in imperfectly performing a duty, while still sinning in the manner of doing it, than in completely omitting it. A person who prays, even if not doing it perfectly, commits less sin than someone who does not pray at all.

Deficiencies in the performance of a duty may violate a part of a command, but total neglect violates the entire command. The duty itself is essential, while the defect is only incidental.

Sermon XXI.

At St. Lawrence Jewry, London, January 6, 1650.

"For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want." - Galatians 5:17

I will now proceed to present some other excuses that corrupt human nature uses to divert us from our duty. I have already presented eight, and the next one in line is this:

The flesh will tell a person that the duties of religion are too strict, and by devoting oneself to them, one will lead a rigid lifestyle and deprive oneself of many lawful pleasures. The Papists claim that Calvinism makes people melancholic. This is a significant prejudice held by many individuals who lack experience in the path of holiness. In response to this, I have three things to say:

1. The exercises of religion under the Gospel are not as austere as they were under the Law. The worship in the time of the Law was very strict. They had to sacrifice their choice animals and travel to Jerusalem from all regions of Judea once a year to worship. The Apostle also speaks of circumcision as a burdensome yoke that neither their fathers nor they were able to bear. But now, under the New Testament, God does not require animal sacrifices, but rather the surrendering of our sinful

desires. He does not demand laborious and painful tasks; he seeks the circumcision of the heart, not the flesh. Those who complain about the austerity of Gospel duties would complain even more if they were Jews. Gospel ordinances are easy; Christ invites all who are weary and burdened to come to Him for rest, to take His yoke upon them, and to learn from Him. His yoke is easy, and His burden is light. This invitation is to embrace the Christian religion, in contrast to the heavy yoke of Judaism. Christ says, "Take my yoke, for it is easy." In other words, walk in the ways of Christianity, and you will find ease and rest for your souls.

2. If you are avoiding the exercises of religion because you fear they will diminish your worldly joys and pleasures, consider this: the duties of religion will not eradicate or nullify your joys; they will only regulate them. Religion is not a tool to uproot your joys entirely; it is a pruning hook that trims and cuts off excessive branches.
3. Know that those who are most conscientious and diligent in performing the duties of religion have the most reason for joy. There is joy and peace in believing, as the Apostle tells us. There is no joy before or outside of faith. As the Apostle Peter says, "You rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory" through believing. This joy is not only referring to the joy that will be experienced in heaven, but the joy that believers have in this world. Love for Jesus Christ and faith in Him fill the soul with indescribable joy and glory. You can measure the dimensions of outward joy, but the joy of a believer is beyond words and radiates with glory.

Another plea of corrupt nature is that you have already done enough. You have spent so many years in a religious course, so many years as a believer, so why do you need to do more? This is a plea that often hinders further progress. And I have three things to address regarding it.

1. The people of God in the past never used this as a plea. In fact, they had a contrary attitude. Paul tells us that he forgets what is behind and reaches forward to what is ahead. He presses toward the goal, leaving behind his past duties and performances. He does not rest content with what he has done but continues to press forward. If he has done much good, he will do even more. Therefore, be abundant in your duty in the future as if you have never been engaged in duty in the past.
2. The Scripture actually presents your abundance in duty in the past as an argument for why you should abound even more in the future. If you have prayed and heard much before, then hear even more going forward. The Apostle uses this reasoning with the Corinthians, urging them to abound in charitable contributions to the poor saints in Jerusalem just as they have abounded in faith, utterance, knowledge, diligence, and love. He says, "As you have abounded, so abound in this grace also." Similarly, Paul appeals to Philemon, saying, "Show mercy to Onesimus because you have shown mercy. You have refreshed the saints' hearts, so refresh them again." Therefore, if you have been devoted to duty in the past, it is an argument for being even more diligent in the future.
3. Those of you who claim to have been diligent in duty in the past but neglect what you ought to do in the present, would you reason this way in worldly matters? Where is the person who says, "I have earned so much money last year that I will earn none this year"? This shows the unreasonableness of such a plea. People think they can never have enough material possessions, yet they are satisfied with any measure of spiritual pursuits.

Another plea of corrupt nature is this: the flesh will tell you that you have not been involved in great sins, and therefore you do not need to be so devoted to duty. It claims that you are not like those who commit notorious evils. This is a cunning deceit of the corruption

within people's hearts. I will address this plea in more detail, and I have five points to present in response:

1. This plea reveals elements of pride, laziness, and ignorance. It reflects pride by suggesting that an abundance of duty can atone for the sinfulness of sin. It shows laziness when the heart grasps onto poor excuses to divert you from, or make you negligent in performing religious duties. Furthermore, it demonstrates ignorance by assuming that one can engage extensively in duty while also indulging in sin. The truth is that the more you engage in sin, the less you engage in duty. If your duties do not diminish your sins, your sins will diminish your duties.
2. Consider that the angels and saints in heaven are completely free from sin, yet they are fervently engaged in duty. They are constantly fulfilling their duties without ever falling into sin. They are perpetually singing praises and hallelujahs to God, while sin remains absent. Our duty is to do the will of God as it is done in heaven—constantly and joyfully.
3. Recognise that even if you had fewer sins than you currently have, you still have guilt clinging to those small sins that all your duties cannot expiate or remove. Anyone who thinks they can balance their duty against their sin as a form of expiation is deceiving themselves, for guilt and sin cling to our duties.
4. If you contemplate this plea that suggests you should not be so devoted to duty, upon closer examination, it actually becomes an argument for why you should be more devoted to duty. For instance, if you are not heavily engaged in sin, you have even more reason to be fervent in duty. You should praise God for keeping you from the sins that others have fallen into, and you should fervently pray to God for preventing grace, so that you may not fall into sin in the future.

5. Consider that those individuals who have been least involved in sin, as the Scripture tells us, have been most devoted to duty. It is said of Zacharias that he walked blamelessly in all the commandments of God, and yet the Scripture commends him for frequently being in the Temple. Likewise, Cornelius is described as a devout man who feared God with all his household, who gave generously to the poor and prayed to God continually. Though he was devout and righteous, he maintained a consistent practice of prayer. He was devoted to duty without being heavily involved in sin. This is also mentioned about Anna in Luke 2:37 and the early Church, who continued in the doctrine of the Apostles, etc.

The flesh will tell you that those who were once devoted to duty have now abandoned it, and you may question, "Why can't I do the same?" You observe that those who were previously eager to hear sermons no longer listen, those who used to pray frequently now never pray, and those who were once committed to duty have now forsaken it. This is an argument that the sinful heart takes notice of. In response, I have three things to say:

1. It is indeed unfortunate that many who were once devoted to duty have now forsaken it. However, even though this may be true, you must be cautious not to fall into the same sin and condemnation. The Scripture strongly condemns such behavior. There are two relevant passages: one in Hosea 4:10 where the Lord laments that they have ceased to pay attention to Him; they once sought after God and were attentive to His ways, but now they have abandoned it. Another passage is found in the Psalms, where the psalmist states that they have ceased to be wise and do good; they used to do much good, but now they have stopped. The Scripture labels individuals like these as wicked apostates.
2. Consider that you would deem this plea vain in other matters. What you consider rational in spiritual matters, you judge

irrational in worldly affairs. If someone were to tell you that others have stopped trading and gone bankrupt, and therefore, why shouldn't you do the same? You would find it very irrational and say that although others have acted foolishly and ruined their estates, that is no reason for you to do the same.

3. Know that those who have been devoted to duty but have now cast it aside, if they belong to God, He will bring them back through the path of sorrow. God will make them see their folly, which will bring them shame. An example of this can be found in Hosea 2:7, where the Church had turned away from God. But she says, "I will return to my first husband, for it was better for me then than now." She realizes that it was better when she served God and walked in His ways, which she had now strayed from. This will be the sentiment of all those who have abandoned their duty, if they belong to God.

Some use the excuse that they refrain from performing their duty in order to avoid more evil, and this is a cunning insinuation of the flesh. Just as on one hand, people are deceived by their corrupt hearts to commit sin in the hope that good may come from it, on the other hand, their hearts would persuade them to neglect duty so that evil may not come upon them. Both of these deceits are the delusions of corrupt nature, and the Papists are guilty of this. They withhold the reading of the Bible from the common people under the pretence of preventing them from falling into error. Augustine also mentions some who would not hear the Word or seek knowledge because some individuals became proud of their intellect and knowledge. In response to this deceit, I shall say three things:

1. It is a good principle of the Schoolmen that you must not neglect what is good in itself and necessary to avoid a sin that may occur by accident, for otherwise, you would never fulfill your duty. If a person avoids listening to avoid distractions or refrains from praying due to wandering thoughts, following this reasoning, one should never perform their duty. However, listening and

praying are inherently good, while being distracted during listening or having wandering thoughts during prayer are accidental occurrences. Therefore, you must not neglect these duties on the pretext of wanting to avoid lesser evil, as these duties are inherently good.

2. Those who use this plea to avoid performing their duty because they sin while doing it could just as well say that they will not engage in their worldly occupations because they sin in them. Therefore, although this plea may seem plausible, and many doubting Christians get entangled in it, by using this plea, you will not only be deterred from religious duties but also from civil duties.
3. Consider that by avoiding evil on this pretext, you actually fall into a greater evil. The reason is that willful neglect and total omission are greater sins than spiritual deficiencies in the manner of religious performances. It is a lesser sin to be distracted in prayer than not to pray at all. Therefore, this plea is merely a lazy excuse of corrupt nature to make us neglect religious practices.

Another plea is the pretext of being unable to perform as we should. The flesh will tell you that if you were capable of performing your duty better, you would be encouraged to do it more often. But alas, you are unable to perform your duty. When you come to listen, you lack faith to believe the word and memory to retain it. When you come to pray, you lack a composed mind and appropriate expressions. Hence, the flesh argues that disability should exempt a person from duty. This plea often prevails with many troubled Christians. In response to this, consider:

1. Many Christians who claim disability may not truly be disabled, but rather their neglect may stem from their enmity towards duty. Seneca has a passage in one of his letters where he says, "Men pretend that they are unable to do good, but the true cause

is that they are unwilling. It is not a disability in their nature, but an enmity in their heart that is the cause." It is worth noting that when the Apostle mentions a disability for duty, he also mentions the enmity of the natural man's heart against duty. He says, "The carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be." Therefore, those who plead disability should examine their hearts to determine whether their neglect of duty stems from a dislike in their judgment rather than an inability in their affection.

2. Christians are inclined to use disability as an excuse to neglect their duty, when in fact it is more the fear of the dangers associated with duty that keeps them away, rather than actual inability. We have a notable example of this in the story of Moses, a righteous man, which is detailed in Exodus chapter four. God commands Moses to go to Egypt and take care of His people, but what does Moses say? He exclaims, "Oh, will you send me to lead these people? I am not able. I am not eloquent, neither in the past nor since you have spoken to your servant. I am slow of speech and tongue." This seemed like a plausible excuse, and so in verse thirteen he says, "Lord, please send someone else." But was Moses' disability the real reason why he didn't want to go? No, and therefore in verse nineteen, the true reason is revealed. The Lord says, "Go back to Egypt, for all the men who wanted to kill you are dead." There, the Lord hints at the actual cause. Moses had previously killed an Egyptian, and a search was conducted for him. When God commanded Moses to go back to Egypt, he was afraid. Moses didn't tell God about his fear; instead, he pretended disability. Then the Lord informed him that the men who sought his life were dead, and the text states that Moses took his wife and children and went to Egypt.

Another plea is the lack of success in duty. The flesh will suggest to you, "Why do you need to continue living a godly life? You have prayed many prayers and heard many sermons, yet you are not any better." To this, I answer:

1. You owe duty to God simply because you are His creation, even if He never grants you success in His service.
2. Duty itself is success; the very act of performing it is a reward. Even if God never brings you to heaven, you still have a partial recompense in that He allows you to fulfill your duty to Him here. As the Apostle tells you, "You have your fruit unto holiness, and in the end, you shall have everlasting life." Holiness and duty are their own reward.
3. Consider that there are two kinds of success that accompany duty. First, there is real success. Secondly, there is sensible success. Sometimes the success is felt, and a person's emotions are stirred, and their desires are subdued. But even if the success is not always felt, it is still real. A godly person truly benefits from all the duties they perform. Whatever good anyone does, they shall receive the same, whether they are a slave or free. No one opens the doors of God's house in vain. Even wicked Ahab, who only served God temporarily, was rewarded with a temporal reward from God. There is always a real success that accompanies the performance of our duty. And thus, I have presented the strategies and deceptions of the flesh by which it tries to divert people from duty, and I have given you answers to all of them so that you may not be deceived by its cunning subtlety.

[Application 1] This application is for those individuals whose consciences tell them that they have been deceived by some of these pleas of corrupt nature, leading them to neglect good duties. Before such individuals, I would present these five considerations:

1. A person can go to hell for neglecting good duties just as much as for committing sins. Natural conscience may tell a person that gross sinners will not inherit the Kingdom of heaven, but the Scriptures also state that people will go to hell for neglecting good deeds. It is noteworthy that in the sentence to be

pronounced on the last day by the Judge of the whole world, the form of it emphasizes not so much the commissions of sins, but the omissions of good deeds for which people will be condemned. "Depart from me, you cursed," says Christ, "for I was hungry, and you gave me no food; I was thirsty, and you gave me no drink; I was a stranger, and you did not take me in; I was naked, and you did not clothe me; I was sick and in prison, and you did not visit me." The sentence is primarily for omissions. Perhaps you do not die as a drunkard, an adulterer, a swearer, or a deceiver, but do you die as someone who neglects good duties? I tell you, the indictment will be against you. It is also observed that the man who had only one talent was commanded by Christ to be cast into utter darkness. What was the cause? He did not squander his master's talent, but because he did not use it and make it grow, the sentence was passed against him. Therefore, remember, you who neglect good duties, it is not for the misuse or squandering of your time, but for the failure to make use of it that you may go to hell. The tree is threatened to be cut down not because it bore bad fruit, but because it did not bear good fruit.

2. Consider that the Scriptures condemn those who persistently neglect the duties of religion. The Psalmist says they have ceased to be wise and to do good, and the Prophet Hosea says they have ceased to pay attention to the Lord. But above all, reflect on the severe curse pronounced by the Prophet Jeremiah: "Pour out your fury on the nations that do not know you, and on the families that do not call on your name." In this regard, the case of the Ammonites and Moabites is particularly noteworthy in Deuteronomy 23:3-4. Because they did not meet the Israelites and provide them with bread and water when they came out of Egypt, they were effectively excommunicated from the worship of God in the tabernacle for ten generations.
3. Consider that neglecting duty makes you unfit for duty when you should engage in it. Keys that are regularly used remain clean,

but if they are thrown aside, they quickly rust. The same goes for your heart: it will gather rust if you cast aside your duties. Fire can be extinguished not only by water, but also by the lack of fuel. Where there is no wood, the fire goes out. Therefore, remember that if you do not fuel your duty, the fervour of your devotion will quickly diminish. The longer we neglect a duty, the less capable we become of performing it. Just as a scholar becomes unfit for study if they neglect it, so too do we become less suitable for the exercise of duty if we persist in neglecting it.

4. God is more displeased with the sinful and complete neglect of good than with many acts of evil. It is worth noting the passage concerning Moses in Exodus 4:24. God was more angry with Moses there for a sin of omission than for any sin of commission he had committed throughout his life. It is said that the Lord encountered Moses at an inn and sought to kill him. What was the reason? Simply that Moses had neglected to circumcise his child when he was eight days old. This omission so provoked God that He sought to kill Moses. Yet Moses may have had more plausible excuses for his omission than we do for many of the duties we neglect. I mention this to emphasize the danger of the sin of omission.
5. Lastly, consider this: You would not accept such excuses in other matters. If your servants were negligent when you assigned them tasks and commanded them to perform services, would you tolerate their excuse when you hold them accountable? If they were to say, "We did not steal from your shops or take money from your cupboards; we did not harm you," would you accept these excuses? Certainly not! Let me remind you that you are all servants to the God of heaven; He is your Master. Even if you can say, "Lord, I am not a flagrant sinner, I have not dishonoured your name like others, and I do not blaspheme your name," God will still hold you accountable because you do not call upon His name. Therefore, be cautious of neglecting

good duties and beware of the subtle temptations of the flesh that lead to this sin and make excuses for it.

Sermon XXII.

At St. Lawrence Jewry, London, January 26, 1650.

"For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would." - Galatians 5:17

Having previously explained the ways in which the flesh seeks to divert people from their duties, I will now show you how it also endeavors to interrupt them in their duties. This is a highly practical matter, and there are many pertinent cases of conscience that arise in addressing this specific issue. But before delving into the queries I plan to address, I would like to present ten conclusions or positions about the flesh and how it disrupts good individuals in their virtuous acts.

1. The first conclusion is that the corruption of the flesh is more successful in disturbing good people in their holy duties than in diverting them from those duties. Indeed, with unregenerate individuals, corrupt nature prevails in diverting them from their duties. However, the case is different for the regenerate. Righteous individuals are not as prone to be diverted from their duties but rather face disturbances in their holy performances. Neglecting their duties falls under the scrutiny of a natural conscience, and therefore, virtuous individuals are not as frequently overcome in that manner. However, disruptions during the performance of their duties often go unnoticed by a natural conscience.
2. A godly person is more often interrupted in their duties by their own heart than by either the devil, the world, or anything else. We often blame our circumstances or the devil for being busy with us, when we should truly blame our own sinful hearts. Just

as it is the nature of good individuals to blame their corrupt natures and not the devil when they sin, so it is the opposite when they are interrupted in their duties. Instead of blaming the devil or the world, they primarily blame their own hearts. Like the Apostle Paul, who said, "For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out," they do not attribute the interruption to the devil or the world, but to the sin that dwells within them. Paul further explains that he serves the law of God with his mind but is enslaved to the law of sin in his flesh. It is the flesh that carries the power to cause us to sin in the service of God. Therefore, do not blame the devil or the world, but rather your own heart, O man.

3. Another point to consider is that the corruption of the flesh, which interrupts us in our duties, is evident and forceful both in private and public acts of worship. Your heart will be in conflict with you when you are alone, communing with God in the secrecy of your soul, as well as when you are in public settings. Your own experiences confirm the truth of this. How often do your thoughts wander and become distracted during your private times of reflection? Similarly, in public worship, how difficult is it to control your thoughts and compose your mind, to restrain your devotions?
4. It is worth noting that a person's heart and sinful nature are more likely to interrupt them in extraordinary acts of worship than in common and ordinary duties. On solemn occasions, such as a day of fasting, one's mind is more haunted by evil thoughts than on a typical day. Have you ever engaged in the solemn duties of self-examination and meditation? If you have, you may have found that your heart troubled you more in those moments than during reading, listening to sermons, and praying. The reason for this is that these solemn duties are most conducive to a Christian's growth in grace. Therefore, in those particular duties, nature will be most relentless in disturbing and interrupting you, and the devil will not fail to set your heart in

motion to disrupt you in those duties, as they undermine his kingdom and pose a threat to it.

5. The less people prepare their hearts for duty, the more they will be disturbed by their corrupt nature during the performance of duty. Greonham, in his observations, points out this fact: Why is it that Christians can never pray without distractions or listen without wandering thoughts? Oh, man! (he says) based on my experience, if you were to prepare more for duty, you would be less distracted during duty. Just as medicine does little good to the body if taken on a full stomach or without proper preparation, so it is with duties and ordinances. They will do you little good unless you first prepare yourself for them.
6. The flesh interrupts us more in the duties performed by others than in those we perform ourselves. When a preacher is delivering a sermon, they have fewer wandering thoughts compared to when they are in the role of a listener. The reason for this is that their mind is occupied with thinking about the message they have to deliver to their audience. The same applies to any of you. Suppose you were praying in a group, you would be less prone to distractions because the desire for popular approval and respect from the company you are praying with helps to keep your thoughts focused, so as not to appear confused in your duty. On the other hand, if you were joining in the duty alongside others, you would be more careless and distracted. Therefore, those of you who never preach or pray in public, pay attention to your own hearts, for the flesh is more likely to interrupt you in the duties where you join with others than in those you perform individually.
7. It is possible that the corruption of the flesh in duties may become more intense after a long time in the practice of religion than it appeared to be during your initial conversion. At the time of a person's first conversion, they may pray without distractions, with love, joy, and delight, with their whole soul

devoted to the service. However, as time passes and they continue in the ways of religion, they may become stagnant and formal, performing their duties out of habit and routine. This is what Augustine observed, that many individuals pray with great fervency and intensity at the time of their conversion, but later on, they pray with coldness and lifelessness, losing the vigor and warmth of affection they initially experienced.

8. There is not a single duty in your lifetime that you perform for God without some evil inclination of the flesh clinging to it. Although the duty itself is good, there is still some evil in it as it emanates from you. Prayer is good, and so is hearing, but as these duties pass through the vessel of your defiled soul, they become defiled. To the extent that God could rightfully attribute even the sins of their holy duties to regenerate individuals. As Paul says, "When I want to do good, evil is present with me." It is true that the natural impulses of the flesh may be restrained, but there is still a sinful stain that clings to your duties. It is noteworthy that in the ceremonial law, as described in Exodus 28:38, Aaron was to wear a plate of pure gold on his forehead when he entered the Holy of Holies, so that he could bear the iniquity of the holy things of the children of Israel. A divine explains that this signifies Jesus Christ, our forerunner, who has entered the Holy of Holies and, through his intercession and his seat at the right hand of the Father, bears not only the iniquity of our lives but also the iniquity of our holy things. If it were not so, and if there was no corruption clinging to all our holy duties, then we could present some duties to God without the mediation of Jesus Christ. However, because no duty can be performed without a trace of evil clinging to it, you cannot stand before God even in the best prayer you have ever made or the best service you have performed. We need a Christ, a Mediator, not only for our sins but also for our duties.

9. It is the most challenging thing in the world to keep the mind so focused on duty that the flesh does not interrupt its

performance. Just as Eliphaz reasoned with Job, every person can reason with their own heart: "Why does your heart carry you away, and why do your eyes wink, causing you to turn your spirit against God and let such words come out of your mouth?" In the same way, each person can reason with their own soul and ask, "Why does my heart carry me away when my spirit desires to stay close to God?" Augustine has an excellent observation on 2 Samuel 7:27, on David's words, "I have found in my heart to make a prayer unto thee," as if David is implying that he often lost his heart in prayer, as if he would come to pray many times but could not find his heart. It is the most difficult thing in the world to find your hearts when you come to pray, and once you have found your hearts, to keep them focused.

10. The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses the guilt and filth that clings to your holy duties. God knows that when you come to worship Him, you are human beings, not angels; you are imperfect spirits of good men, and therefore God does not expect your service to be perfect because your state is imperfect. So, take comfort in this: your deficiencies in duty will never condemn you as regenerated souls. You may often be hindered in duty, but that interruption will never damn you, for Jesus Christ wipes away the stain of all your duties. In the ceremonial law, you read about the altar for the burnt offering, which had a grate made of brass meshwork to allow the dust and ashes to fall out and be carried away. This is a symbol of Jesus Christ's intercession, for in your services and sacrifices to God, though you have much affection and zeal, there is also the presence of corrupt ashes. Just as the grate was made to carry away the ashes, Jesus Christ, the Mediator, will carry away all your defects in the service of God. This should encourage the people of God: though you may be weak in duty, do not neglect it; though you may be forgetful in hearing, do not stop listening; and though you may be distracted in praying, do not neglect prayer, for it is Jesus Christ's role to bear the iniquity of your holy things. These are the positions or conclusions that I wanted

to present before addressing the queries. The point I am going to address is this: the prevalence of corrupt nature, even in regenerate men, often interrupts them in holy performances.

[Doctrine] In discussing this point, there are several specific aspects that I will cover:

- I will prove that this is indeed the case.
 - I will show you how the flesh hinders in duty.
 - I will highlight the areas where the interruption of the flesh is most evident.
1. To prove this point, we not only have Paul's testimony but also his own experience. He says, "To will what is good is present with me, but how to perform it, I find not." The same word is used in the original as in Philippians 2:12, where we are commanded to "work out our salvation with fear and trembling." Just as Paul complained about himself and shared his experience, we can relate our own experiences to his and say that we also struggle to do what is good. Just as rust clings to iron, so does the flesh cling to our holy duties. Don't our own hearts tell us that there is much of the world in them? Are there not many vain and irrelevant thoughts that arise during our duties to God? This is not only true in general, but also in specific duties. In prayer, how does the flesh interrupt us with vain and irrelevant thoughts, and with wrong intentions? How does it deaden our affections, dampen our zeal, and constrain our hearts? In listening, how does the flesh introduce biases, misunderstandings, unbelief, and forgetfulness? In meditation, how does it cause our minds to wander, making it difficult to bring our thoughts to a satisfactory conclusion? In conversation, how does the flesh mix in judgment and vain glory? When we come to the Lord's Supper, how does the flesh hinder us from experiencing godly sorrow, inflamed love, and elevated joy in Christ? Therefore, we have reason to complain, as Augustine did when he saw a shepherd tie a stone to the leg of a bird, and the

bird, trying to fly upwards, was constantly pulled down by the stone. He said, "Just so it is with my soul. I desire to soar higher through holy meditation, but there is a stone tied to my leg—a corrupt nature—that continually pulls me down."

Now, let's address the next question: How does the flesh hinder us in holy performances?

I will focus my answer on these two aspects: the flesh hinders us by urging us to reduce and diminish our duties, and by injecting vain and irrelevant thoughts.

Answer 1: The flesh hinders us by urging us to reduce our duty. It tries to convince us that we don't need to be as zealous as before, that we can pray and hear less. This is a cunning strategy of our corrupt hearts, as it believes that performing duty with less intensity will eventually lead to not doing it at all. Now, for those who find themselves entangled by the flesh and experiencing a decline in duty, I have three things to say:

1. You don't have any less need to pray or perform duty than before. Therefore, why should you diminish your duties? You still face temptations from Satan, have corruptions in your soul, experience spiritual needs, and witness troubles in the Church. So, let not your nature prevail upon you to decline in duty.
2. Just as it is deceitful to go from small sins to great sins, so in the realm of grace, it is the deceit of our nature to go from doing little in duty to eventually doing nothing at all.
3. Gradual declines in duty can be as dangerous to your soul as total omissions. You can go to hell for either one. Although total neglect may provoke God more, it doesn't mean that gradual decline is less perilous. Just as a person sick with a fever is in more immediate danger than someone with a lingering consumption, both can be equally fatal. Those who completely abandon religion may die swiftly, like in a burning fever, but

those who decline in religion may slowly waste away, like in a lingering consumption. You may keep diminishing and diminishing until you become a mere skeleton in religion, lacking any vibrancy or vitality in your spirit and in the practice of holiness.

Answer 2: The flesh chiefly interrupts us in duty by injecting and casting in vain and impertinent thoughts when we are engaged in duty. These thoughts can be of two types: either lawful but untimely thoughts, or thoughts that are unlawful in their content.

1. The flesh will bring forth thoughts that are lawful in themselves but untimely in their occurrence. I can compare these thoughts to rain: rain in its proper season is a blessing, but rain during harvest is a curse. Similarly, good thoughts are blessed when they come at the right time, but when a good thought enters your mind to divert or distract you from the good work you are engaged in, that thought becomes sinful. For example, when you are listening to a sermon and start thinking about prayer, or when you are praying and start thinking about listening, these thoughts are untimely and therefore sinful. It's like in printing, even if the letters are well-formed, if they are misplaced, they would make no sense. Similarly, in Luke 12:13, the request made to Jesus, "Master, command my brother to divide the inheritance," was lawful but untimely because it was brought up while Christ was preaching.
2. Sometimes, the flesh will inject thoughts that are sinful in their content. The Prophet lamented about the Israelites: "They come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them; for with their mouth they show much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness." Even in their acts of duty, they entertained sinful thoughts on how to fulfill their covetous desires.

[Query 3] The third query is to demonstrate where the prevalence of the flesh in interrupting us in holy duties becomes evident.

I will answer this query through these two points:

- The flesh strives to interrupt individuals in the manner in which they perform duty.
- The flesh interferes with the ends or motives behind why individuals engage in duty. These are the two primary efforts of the flesh in this regard.

The flesh primarily interrupts a person in the manner in which they perform duty, and there are several ways in which the flesh hinders a person in their approach to duty.

1. The flesh causes a person to perform duty wearily, without enthusiasm. As Solomon says, "Much study is a weariness to the flesh," and if much study, then religious exercises as well. When the mind is occupied with them, the devil and one's own nature are ready to divert and interrupt them. Particularly, a person's nature is prone to become weary. That is why you receive exhortations to not grow weary of doing good. And what is the reason for this? It is because of the corruption of the human heart, which tends to make one tired in holy exercises. Things that act naturally do so tirelessly. Therefore, the sun is not weary of shining, the fire is not weary of burning, and the sea is not weary of ebbing and flowing, because these are natural motions. However, it is natural for a person to commit sin, and that is why the Scripture states that people do not grow weary of committing iniquity. But to do what is holy and to exhibit grace in any duty is not only above nature but also contrary to it. That is why in the Bible, hell is compared to a pit and heaven to a hill. It is easy for a child who can barely walk to fall into a pit, but it is difficult to climb up a hill. You can easily fall into the bottomless pit, but the path to heaven is an uphill journey that is hard to traverse. Therefore, in Isaiah 2, it is said that the mountain of

the Lord is established on top of the mountains and exalted above the hills. This is because duties are contrary to nature; they require going against the wind and tide.

I recall a theologian who illustrated how the corruption of a person's heart disturbs them in duty by comparing it to a bird in an egg. While the bird is in the shell, it cannot move. But as soon as it hatches and the shell breaks, it becomes lively and active. Similarly, a person in duty, while burdened by flesh and blood, is like a bird in the shell that cannot move. However, once the shell is broken and the corruption of nature is subdued, allowing grace to prevail, then they are like a bird out of the shell that can move and act vigorously and lively in holy duties.

The Prophet Zechariah speaks of those who had wings and the wind in their wings, symbolising their swiftness and speed, as Expositors interpret that passage. But as we journey towards heaven, we have neither wings nor wind. We naturally go against wind and tide, and we are glad to run continually, which can make us weary, especially when it is uphill. This is where the corruption of your hearts becomes evident, causing you to perform duty wearily. It acts as a hindrance, like a clog that weighs us down. Therefore, the Apostle commands us to lay aside every weight and sin that easily entangles us. Corrupt nature is a weight, and you know that if a person runs a race with a weight on them, they will quickly become tired.

Corrupt nature also causes you to perform duty wanderingly. Just as one wave follows another in the sea and clouds follow the rain in the air, in the heart, one impertinent thought follows another. The corruption of a person's heart makes their thoughts vain. While you are, O person, in God's house, the devil is in your heart, as in his workshop, forming and shaping many contemplative and vain thoughts in your mind, drawing you away from God. There is a significant passage that supports this notion, found by comparing two Scriptures, both spoken by Solomon. In Ecclesiastes 2:14, it is written that a wise person's eyes are in their head, but a fool walks in

darkness. Now, if you consider the natural location of the eyes, they are indeed situated in the head for both the wise person and the fool. So, what does Solomon mean when he says that the eyes of a wise person are in their head? His meaning is that a wise person's eyes are fixed and not wandering. But what about the fool's eyes? Solomon tells us in Proverbs 17:24 that the eyes of a fool are on the ends of the earth. This means that the fool has a wandering heart and is not focused on the worship of God. "Let your eyes look straight ahead; fix your gaze directly before you." This is Solomon's advice. It means that the thoughts of your heart should never turn aside, neither to the right hand nor to the left. However, the predicament of a godly person is that the flesh causes them to perform duty wandringly. As Augustine laments, "My heart is gone from me, and I cannot seize it. And if I do seize it, I cannot keep it." You know how slippery an eel is, the harder you try to grasp it, the more likely it is to slip out of your hands. The same is true for your heart. You may strive to hold onto your heart tightly, but your slippery heart breaks free from you no matter what you do. And where does this come from? It is because of the corrupt nature within you.

The flesh causes you to perform duty with a false sense of confidence. You perform duty in such a way that you rest in it, and if the devil cannot disturb you by injecting wandering thoughts, he will try to disturb you by casting in vain confident thoughts. This is an evil that you must be watchful against. Speaking to the Philippians, the Apostle says, "We are the ones who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." This means that we do not rely on our own performances. "Do not trust in deceptive words," says the Prophet, "saying, 'This is the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord.'" This was the devil's strategy. If he couldn't make them disregard the temple, he would try to lead them to the other extreme, relying solely on the temple and its worship. Therefore, the Lord calls those words deceptive. The same happened with the children of Israel. There is a story of a battle fought by the Philistines against Israel, in which 4,000 men of Israel were killed. After suffering this great loss, the remaining Israelites sought the

reason for God's hand against them, and they concluded that it was because the Ark of God was not among them. So they decided to fetch the Ark of the Covenant from Shiloh, believing that it would save them from their enemies. They did so, but in a second battle, they lost 30,000 men. Now, what was the reason for their worse outcome when they had the Ark with them compared to before? The reason was that they had placed their dependence on the Ark, the outward symbol of God's presence, and therefore God punished their carnal confidence. This is the devil's strategy: if he cannot distract you in duty, he will try to make you rely on it.

Sermon XXIII.

At St. Lawrence Jewry, London, February 2, 1650.

"For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary the one to the other, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would." - Gal. 5:17

In the last sermon, I showed you three ways in which the devil and your own hearts strive to distract and hinder you in duty. I will now proceed to add some more, and the fourth in order is this.

The flesh will strive to make you perform duties with a lack of trust. Faith is the shield by which we resist the devil, and the Scripture urges us to take up the shield of faith above all things, so that we may be able to quench the fiery darts of the devil. Corrupt nature strives above all things to weaken your faith. "O fools, and slow of heart to believe!" says our Savior. Christ places the blame on your hearts, for it is the work of the flesh to make you slow to believe and rely upon Jesus Christ. "He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." Without faith,

you cannot perform any acceptable duty to God, and therefore this is also a main goal of the devil, to rob you of your faith. Christ told Peter that Satan desired to sift him as wheat, but he said, "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." Satan singled out Peter's faith above all his other graces, and thus Christ's care was most evident in preserving Peter's faith from failing. While this is the work of the devil, it is also the work of our own hearts to rob us of our faith. However, Christ has prayed for us, and true faith shall never fail.

Another goal of the flesh is to make you perform duty reluctantly, rather than voluntarily. The flesh puts a person in a posture where they are more driven than led to duty. They are compelled to duty with much regret, like a child forced to go to school or a bear led to the stake. On the other hand, when they depart from a duty, it should be with delight, like a bird escaping from a snare.

The flesh will strive to make you perform duty uncomfortably, without joy in your heart. This is a cunning strategy of the flesh. Even though it cannot make you abandon duty altogether, it will ensure that you never find delight in performing them. Thus, I have explained the ways in which the flesh interrupts our duties in terms of their manner.

The interruptions of the flesh in duty are not only seen in the way you perform duty but also in the purpose for which you do it. I will now show you how the flesh introduces improper aims and ends when you engage in duty. If it cannot disrupt you in the manner, it will do so in the ultimate goal. I will briefly outline the seven sinister ends that the flesh introduces when you are involved in duty.

1. The flesh will introduce the sinful motive of seeking vain glory rather than God's glory when you perform good deeds. It is worth noting what is written in Galatians 5. The Apostle concludes that chapter with an exhortation: "Do not desire vain glory." After explaining the fruits of the Spirit and urging them to walk in the Spirit, he advises against seeking vain glory,

indicating that human nature is inclined to seek praise and recognition in doing good. The Apostle James also mentions this, questioning whether the Scripture says in vain, "The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy." Envy is a result of vain glory, a desire to outshine others and diminish their abilities so that our own talents appear greater. Some among the Philippians are described as preaching Christ out of envy, aiming to gain applause and surpass Paul. Their motivation was their own vain glory, not the glory of Christ.

2. Another sinister motive of the flesh is to make you perform duties primarily for outward and worldly benefits rather than for inward and eternal blessings. The Lord laments about His people, saying that they gathered for the sake of food and drink, not crying out for grace, but seeking material provisions. The same message is conveyed by the Lord through the Prophet concerning Ephraim, describing them as a well-trained heifer that loves to thresh the grain. Ephraim loved to perform duties, but only those that would bring profit and advantage. The flesh, in the performance of duties, disregards spiritual benefits and does not strive for mortification of sin, the arousal of holy affections, growth in grace, and a deeper experience of God's presence.
3. The flesh will prompt individuals to engage in duty not to purify their consciences but to appease them. It is similar to a thief giving food to a barking dog to silence it, so that those inside the house are not awakened. Likewise, people act towards their consciences, performing duties because their consciences act like barking dogs, constantly accusing and reminding them of their wrongdoing. They perform duties to quiet their troubled consciences, which would otherwise trouble them. Just as the mariners in Jonah's story prayed, but only because the threat of death awakened their natural consciences.

4. The flesh prompts people to engage in duty more out of fear of the consequences of neglecting duty than out of love for the command that requires duty. The flesh does not care for God's commands; its only concern is the terrifying threats of God's law. If the Scripture consisted solely of promises and precepts, wicked individuals would be idle and yet presume themselves to be righteous. However, because there are also threats mixed with them, wicked individuals engage in duty and religious practices. It is said that a righteous person fears the command, but a wicked person never fears the instruction itself. They may fear the punishment and the threats, but a godly person dares not neglect duty because of the command of God.
5. The flesh motivates the performance of duty more out of hope for the eternal reward that duty brings rather than out of any inward and spiritual excellence that the soul perceives in them. Although God allows us to love the reward, He does not approve of a mercenary love.
6. Corrupt nature compels individuals to engage in duty to avert external judgments rather than internal judgments, to avoid physical afflictions rather than spiritual consequences. Just like the pagan sailors who cried out to their gods when caught in a tempest and fearing for their lives, seeking to calm the storm and reach safety on land, every person turns to prayer. However, this is merely a servile and fleshly motive for duty, to engage in it primarily to escape bodily judgments rather than soul judgments. The same was true of the Egyptians when the Lord struck their firstborn. It is mentioned that Pharaoh and the Egyptians pleaded with the Israelites to leave, saying, "Rise up and be gone, you and your flocks and your herds, and go and serve the Lord your God." They urgently requested their departure because they believed they were all as good as dead. Pharaoh had previously refused to let them go, but when their departure would lead to their safety, he commanded them to leave. This is the nature of all people, to engage in duty primarily

to avoid physical afflictions rather than internal judgments. The prophet Jeremiah speaks about this, addressing the inhabitants of Lebanon who nestle among the cedars, questioning how gracious they will be when they experience pangs and pains akin to a woman in childbirth. Outward judgments, not inward ones, drive wicked individuals to perform their duties.

7. The flesh will prompt people to perform their duties so that they can sin more freely and with less suspicion. The Apostle found it necessary to defend himself against this accusation, stating that he did not preach the Gospel as a cover for sin. It is natural for people to cover up their wickedness with the appearance of godliness, just as a harlot would conceal her evil deeds with peace offerings. Our Savior condemned the Scribes and Pharisees who devoured widows' houses and made long prayers as a pretense. Their offense was not in the act itself or in the length of their prayers, for long prayer is not a sin. Rather, it was in the motive behind their prayers. They made long prayers in order to deceive widows and take possession of their estates and money, while appearing righteous and trustworthy. This is the specific focus of that passage. Thus, I have completed the doctrinal aspect of this point.

Now, I will move on to the practical application of this point, beginning with instruction. Secondly, I will provide comfort. First, there are seven practical conclusions that I will draw from this overall topic to inform us about how the flesh hinders regenerate individuals in the performance of their duties.

From this, we can see the great misery of unregenerate individuals. If the flesh hinders the godly, who have grace, in performing their duties, how much more does it hinder wicked individuals who have no grace at all? Those who remain in a natural state are in a spiritually dead condition, and dead people cannot act. Those in a natural state lack strength, as the Apostle describes. He compares them to someone who has fallen into mud and dirt and has no power

to help themselves. It is like a metaphorical dead body that is completely unable to help or move itself. Therefore, the Apostle describes them as a body that is dead and weak, meaning they are utterly helpless.

The Scripture portrays a natural man in four ways.

1. As someone who has lost their strength, unable to perform any good actions. The imagination of man's heart is evil, and only evil, continuously. Man's heart is inherently evil, devoid of goodness. It is persistently evil. This is the natural state of man. The carnal mind is not submissive to God's Law and cannot be. This illustrates the weakness of human nature.
2. You lack the strength to have any good inclinations, not only for good actions but also for good thoughts. The Apostle Paul affirms this when he says, "We are not sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God."
3. A natural man is unable to speak a single good word. They cannot do good, think good, or speak good. Christ reproved the Pharisees, saying, "O generation of vipers, how can you, being evil, speak good? For out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks."
4. A natural man cannot grasp the truth of what is good in a salvific manner. They do not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to them, and they cannot understand them because they are spiritually discerned. If a godly person is hindered in the performance of good duties, then all the more an unregenerate person.

Objection 1: But you may argue, don't wicked people hear, pray, give alms, and perform many other duties? Aren't these considered good actions? So how is a person disabled from doing good?

I respond that good works can be considered in two ways: formally and materially. Indeed, a wicked person may engage in actions that are materially good. Therefore, hearing, praying, and giving alms, in terms of their content, can be good. They may perform external acts of goodness. However, to do good formally, with all the necessary requisites and accompanying circumstances required for a truly good work, no wicked person in this world is capable of doing so.

There are many concurrent circumstances for a good action.

Firstly, the person who performs the action must be in Christ. The same action that a wicked person may go to hell for, a godly person performing the same action will go to heaven because of it. Therefore, the person must have a connection with Christ in order to do good. We must acknowledge that every good thing within us is through Jesus Christ, as the Apostle says. Hence, the person must be in Christ. Therefore, although wicked people may engage in morally good actions, they can never perform actions that are theologically good.

Objection 2: But if wicked people cannot do good works, and if they sin even when they do them, then what is the purpose of a wicked person engaging in any good duty? They sin if they don't pray, and they sin if they do pray. So why should they bother with these duties?

Solomon: In response, I acknowledge that this objection is very fitting for human nature. Job himself raises it as the voice of a wicked man: "If I am wicked," he says, "then why do I labor in vain?" It is as if he were asking, "If I sin when I pray and when I hear, then why do I exert myself in vain?" This objection was bubbling up within Job. However, let me answer the question:

1. Although a wicked person does sin in duty, they must still perform their duty. They are obligated to carry out their duties, but they are not obliged to sin in the process. That which is good in itself should not be abandoned just because an incidental evil

may occur. It is inherently good for a person to hear, pray, and engage in other duties, but it is only by chance that a person sins in doing so. If this reasoning were accepted, then by the same logic, the sun should not shine because it overheats some bodies and causes fever, or because it dries out and parches the ground.

2. You commit less sin by performing your duty, even if you sin in the act itself, than if you were to neglect it entirely.

Objection 3: But you may argue, if a wicked person is so disabled from doing their duty, then what is the purpose of God's commands? This objection is similar to the belief of the Pelagians who say, "Doesn't God mock people? He commands wicked individuals to pray and repent, but they are no more capable of performing these duties acceptably than they are of moving the world."

In response to this, I say that although the wicked are indeed unable, there are significant reasons why God should still command them.

1. To show them what they once were, back when they were in a state of innocence and fully able to do the will of God.
2. Even though God commands people to do what they cannot do, it serves to humble them, leading them to mourn their own impotence.
3. Although God commands people to do what they are unable to perform, He will, at some point, send forth His own power with His own command to all elect individuals, even if they are unregenerate, and make it effective in their souls. Just as there was power in God's command for dead Lazarus to come out of the grave, God, who commands a wicked person to repent, can infuse power into their heart to make them repent. Therefore, there is a great reason and purpose behind God's commands, even though natural individuals are incapable of obeying them.

Inference 2: I deduce from this that if the flesh is so disabled from doing good, it exposes the folly of Pelagian, Popish, and Arminian doctrines that elevate the power and ability of human nature and free will to attain supernatural good. How does this Scripture refute them? Even godly individuals are hindered by the flesh from doing the good they desire. These doctrines, which promote the power of nature beyond its limits under the guise of advancing God's grace, are enemies of God's graces. It is true that man has not lost the faculty but the moral integrity of his will. I can say of those who hold such views that their mistake arises from the same root as Samson's. When his hair was cut off by his wife, he awoke from sleep and said, "I will go out as before," but he did not realize that the Lord had departed from him. Similarly, I can say of these individuals that they try to stir themselves up as before, but their hair has been cut off. Through the fall in Adam, that strength has been severed, and if they would study the fall of man more closely, they would not exalt and admire the power of human nature so greatly.

Inference 3: I deduce from this that it is the duty of every Christian to give glory to God for all the saving abilities that anyone has to do good. If you are enabled to do any good, it is by God's grace. Follow the example of Joab with David, who, after taking the outskirts and suburbs of the city, summoned David so that he might receive the glory of the conquest. The one who did the work still gave the glory to David. Do the same for Jesus Christ. Perhaps you fulfill your duty well; do as Joab did with David and do not say, "I have done this and that," but rather, "Christ has done it in me," as the Apostle said, "I laboured more abundantly than them all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me." Likewise, in another place, the same Apostle said, "I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me." He did not arrogate anything to himself. It is by God's grace that we act, and this is acknowledged by the servant in the Parable who said, "Lord, your pound has gained ten pounds." He did not say, "My labour and my industry," but "your pound." Give God the glory for all the good you do, extol the free grace of God for initial, progressive, and consummative grace. The one who begins a good work in you will

bring it to completion on the day of Jesus Christ, and the author will also be the finisher of your faith. It is by the grace of God that we are able to do anything. God works in you both to will and to do according to His good pleasure. The entirety of our salvation is to be attributed to the grace of God. If you are called by grace and established in grace, admire grace and not nature. Without the leading and upholding of the Spirit of God, we will grow faint. This is excellently expressed by the Apostle Peter: "The God of all grace who has called us to his eternal glory by Jesus Christ, after you have suffered a while, will perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you. To Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen."

4. Does the flesh disable you from doing good? Oh, then strive to have a sight of and mourn under the awareness of the obstacles and interruptions that you face from the flesh. This is how Paul exclaimed, "Oh wretched man that I am!" (Rom. 7:14, 24). In Exodus 38:8, there is mention of a laver, a large vessel in which the sacrifices offered by the people were to be washed. The Scripture tells us that the base of the laver was made of mirrors, signifying, as some say, that when they came to offer their sacrifice, the people could see and observe their own reflections in those mirrors, noticing any blemishes on their faces. Similarly, when you come to perform your duties, behold, there are mirrors for you to see yourselves. Behold the interruptions caused by the flesh that hinder you, and be humbled. It is said of the Spouse, "Return, O Shulamite, that we may look upon you." And then the question is asked, "What will you see in the Shulamite?" The answer is, "As it were the company of two armies," signifying this opposition. Just as Rebekah said, "Lord, why am I like this?" when the children struggled within her womb, you too should complain to God and say, "Lord, why am I like this? Why does the flesh disturb and interrupt me in all my acts of worship towards God?"

Sermon XXIV.

At St. Lawrence Jewry, London, February 2, 1650.

"For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish." - Galatians 5:17

I will now present some practical inferences from this point: the hindrance and interruption caused by the flesh, even to godly individuals, preventing them from doing what they desire. The fifth inference is as follows:

The best of God's children have a great need for the mediation and intercession of Jesus Christ when they present any duty to God. If we were to approach God with these defilements and interruptions caused by the flesh in our duties, without Christ, God might say to us as Elisha said to the King of Israel, "If it weren't for Jehoshaphat's presence, I wouldn't look toward you or see you." Likewise, God the Father might say to each of us, "If it weren't for Jesus Christ, I wouldn't see or regard you in any duty you perform." Just as Joseph said to his brothers, "Unless you bring Benjamin with you, you shall not see my face again," so unless you bring the Lord Jesus Christ with you, you cannot expect to see the face of God with approval.

In Exodus 28:36, it is written that Aaron, the priest of the Lord, was to wear a pure gold plate on his forehead, engraved with the words "Holiness to the Lord." This signifies that when you come to serve God, you need the intercession of Jesus Christ, who, through his intercessions, bears the iniquity of our holy actions. Although you have the assistance of the Spirit in performing your duties, you still need the mediation of Christ for acceptance. Therefore, we read not only about the intercession of Christ but also about the intercession

of the Spirit. The Spirit intercedes within us, and Christ intercedes for us.

If the flesh interrupts during your duties, then you have a great need, when engaging in those duties, to watch over your hearts and fortify them against the incursions and disturbances of the flesh. Those who live by the seaside are compelled, for their safety, to build great mounds and banks to prevent the sea from overflowing them. On the other hand, those who dwell inland require only small ditches to serve their needs. Corrupt nature is like the sea, and you need to construct many mounds and banks in your heart; otherwise, corrupt nature will flood your mind with vain and irrelevant thoughts. Ainsworth provides a good note on Numbers 4:23, where it is mentioned that all those from thirty to fifty years old from the house of Gershon entered to perform service and work at the Tabernacle. The word used to denote "perform service" also means "to wage warfare," as Ainsworth translates it. The Scripture mentions this to highlight that when you are serving God, you are also engaged in a spiritual battle. In 1 Peter 4:7, there is a mention of "watching unto prayer," and in Colossians 4:2, of "watching in prayer." You are not only to be watchful before praying but also during prayer. You have grounds to watch against the interruptions of the flesh, as well as other interruptions. Firstly, there are interruptions from the world, and the Apostle desires that we may be free from cares and attend to the Lord without distraction. Worldly cares hinder holy duties, so we must watch against them. Secondly, we are also hindered by natural weaknesses, and we must be vigilant against them. This is how I understand Piscator on Matthew 26:41, where Christ speaks of the spirit being willing but the flesh being weak. "Flesh" there does not refer to corrupt nature but bodily frailty. Thirdly, interruptions and hindrances come from the devil, and in such cases, you should follow Abraham's example when birds landed on his sacrifice—he drove them away. According to Deodate, the birds landing on Abraham's offering is a clear sign of the devil disturbing the elect during holy acts. So, as Abraham did, you must drive away those birds, which are compared to the devil in Matthew 13:4—those foul and infernal

spirits that attempt to disrupt your worship. In the Book of Job, it is mentioned that on a certain day, the Sons of God presented themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came among them. The Sons of God cannot refer to angels, as it would mean that devils are in heaven where angels reside. Therefore, the Sons of God in this context refer to Job's children, and similarly, the descendants of Seth were called the Sons of God in Genesis 6. Now, to my point, it is said that Job's children appeared before the Lord on a certain day, believed to be the Sabbath day. On that day, Satan came among them, and you can be certain that the devil did not come with good intentions but to interrupt and disturb them in their religious practices. Therefore, considering that you have not only your own hearts, the world, and natural weaknesses to contend with but also the devil seeking to hinder and divert you, you have every reason to diligently watch over yourselves.

If the flesh interrupts you in God's service, then learn not to place any confidence in your most religious performances. Are you daring enough to rely on such a weak foundation for the salvation of your soul? If your duties are tainted and mixed with so much evil, how can you dare to find rest in them? Job speaks of this, saying, "Though I were righteous, yet would I not plead with thee," and again he says, "I am afraid of all my sorrows, I know that thou wilt hold me innocent." In another translation, it is stated as, "I am afraid of all my good works." Furthermore, he says, "Though I should wash myself with snow-water and make myself never so clean, yet shalt thou plunge me in a ditch, and my own clothes shall abhor me." Even if I were to perform my duty impeccably, you would still find much evil in me. Therefore, if your best services are mixed with sin, rely solely on Christ for salvation. To emphasize this point, I will present three compelling considerations.

1. You have more sinful acts coming from the flesh than gracious acts coming from the Spirit in your duties. Will you then rely on a duty that has more sin than grace manifested in it? More wandering thoughts than holy thoughts? You forget more of a

sermon than you remember of it, and the sin of your nature produces more wandering thoughts than the Spirit of God produces holy thoughts. Your graces are like gold filings, but your sins are like heaps of dust. How can you dare to rest on your duties, expecting life and salvation from them?

2. Consider that one circumstance in a duty is enough to render it evil, whereas many concurrent circumstances are not enough to make a duty good. Suppose you pray, and one circumstance in your prayer may make it sinful. Even if you pray well in terms of manner, if you lack the right end or have a flawed principle, it is not right. In moral philosophy, it is a principle that circumstances carry more weight than actions, and the same applies in theology. One circumstance can render a duty defective, but even many circumstances together cannot make a duty good.
3. Consider that you are guilty of many past sins, and present duties cannot compensate for past sins. Suppose a tenant who regularly pays their rent, but has been in arrears for ten or twenty years. Their current payment of rent cannot make up for the past arrears. The same applies to you. You are deeply indebted to God for past time, and even if there were merit in your duties (which there is not), present duty could not atone for past sins. Therefore, do not rely on duty.

Does the flesh interrupt us in duty? From this, we can see the evil nature of sin and the harmful quality of original corruption. This is a doctrine that can never be emphasized enough. So, from this doctrine, I urge you to take a moment to consider the evil nature of original sin. I can illustrate it with this example: If you have a vessel filled with liquid, a little bit of gall will embitter it more than a large amount of honey will sweeten it. Behold the destructive nature of sin. How it taints both your person and your performances. In Numbers 19:22, there is a law that states, "Whatever an unclean person touches shall be unclean." This was initially spoken about ceremonial

uncleanness, but it also holds true in spiritual matters. You are an unclean person, and everything you touch becomes unclean. You defile all your duties. There is a pertinent passage in Haggai 2:12-13, where the people had a question about the law to ask the priests. The question was, "If one who is ceremonially unclean touches holy meat with the edge of his garment, does it become holy?" The priests answered, "No." Then Haggai asked, "If one who is unclean by contact with a dead body touches any of these, does it become unclean?" The priests answered, "It shall be unclean." Here you can observe that holy things cannot make common things clean and holy, but if an unclean person touches holy things, they become unclean. The meaning of this is explained by the prophet in verse 14. Haggai said, "So it is with this people and this nation in my sight," declares the Lord. "Whatever they do and whatever they offer there is unclean." This means that every sacrifice and every duty is unclean. In the language of the Gospel, it means that if a person is in a state of nature, all their offerings and sacrifices, that is, all their duties, are unclean to them. For the unclean, everything is unclean.

[Use 2] The second use I will make of this point is for comfort. I will provide eight consolations for those who fear God and are aware of the interruptions caused by the flesh in the worship of God.

1. Find comfort in knowing that as you have the flesh hindering you, you also have the Spirit helping you in your duties. The Spirit will assist you in your weaknesses with sighs and groans that cannot be uttered. While the flesh may harden your heart and dampen your spirit, you have the Spirit of God to soften your heart and revive your spirit. The Spirit enables you to pray with sighs and groans. And even though the devil may tempt you, remember that "he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world," as St. John says.
2. Consider that in God's eyes, a desire to do the duties you are unable to perform is counted as actually doing them. It is worth noting what is recorded about Nehemiah in two Scripture

passages. In Nehemiah 1:11, he prays, "Lord, let Your ear be attentive to the prayer of Your servant, and to the prayer of Your servants who desire to fear Your name." And in Nehemiah 5:15, Nehemiah says, "I did not oppress the people, because of the fear of God." Therefore, Nehemiah's desire to fear the Lord is considered by God as the fear of God. A desire for any grace is regarded by God as possessing that grace. The Lord accepts the will in place of the deed. If there is a willing mind, it is accepted according to what one has, and not according to what one does not have. See, therefore, what a good God you serve, who accepts intentions as actions and purposes as executions, as evidenced by many testimonies in Scripture.

3. Feeling the lack of any grace or ability to fulfill any duty, and being grieved by that lack, is considered by God as if that lack were supplied. You say you cannot mourn, but do you desire to mourn for your sins? Well, a sense of lacking any grace is, in divine acceptance, considered as having that grace. Some interpret Romans 8:26 to mean that we do not know what to pray for as we should, but the Spirit itself intercedes for us with sighs and groans. That is, the Spirit helps us grieve over our inability to pray, repent, or perform our duties better. In this, we see the assistance of God's Spirit, and this God will accept.
4. Remember that God accepts sincerity of heart even when there is not perfection of grace. You live under a Covenant of grace, in which God accepts sincerity instead of perfection. God would rather see the truth of grace than the strength of abilities. You complain that you cannot pray; perhaps you lack the gift of eloquent prayer. But you do not lack a genuine desire, nor the beauty of a humble spirit and a pure heart. God prefers the truth of grace over the strength of abilities. You can see this in the case of Moses and Aaron in Exodus 4:4. God said to Moses, "I know that Aaron, your brother, can speak well." Moses, on the other hand, had a stuttering tongue. Yet, when Moses and Aaron were chosen for the great work of prayer while Joshua fought against

Amalek, God chose stammering Moses to make the prayer, not eloquent Aaron. Moses could pray better than Aaron, despite Aaron's greater abilities.

5. Consider that you may complain that it is the interruption of the flesh that hinders you in your duties, when in reality it is the disability of your physical body. Many godly individuals often attribute their unfitness for duty to their own hearts, when it is actually due to an indisposed and disabled body. You should understand that sometimes the body can disable a person from performing their duty, and that disability is not sinful; it is a condition of misery, but not a sin. This was the case with Paul. He said to the Galatians, "You know that because of physical infirmity I preached the gospel to you at the first. And my trial which was in my flesh you did not despise or reject, but you received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus." Jerome interprets these words as referring to bodily weakness that prevented Paul from preaching. Yet, the Galatians tolerated him and did not reject him because of this bodily infirmity. Similarly, Paul told the Thessalonians that he had intended to come to them again, but Satan hindered him. Some believe this hindrance was persecution, while others think it was a tempest at sea. However, most believe it was some form of bodily ailment through which the devil hindered him. Therefore, if you have a sick, painful, or diseased body that disables you from performing your duties, although it may be your misery, it is not your sin. Therefore, in such a case, do not blame your own heart. It is like a strong and healthy person riding on a poor, exhausted horse. In a similar way, the soul, though active and vigorous, is sometimes compelled to keep pace with a weak, sick, and tired body.
6. Remember that God accepts what belongs to Him in our duties and covers what is ours. The water in the sea is salty, but in the river it becomes fresh. Similarly, the duty that originates from you may be salty and unpleasant, but when it passes through the

river of Christ's blood, it loses its unsavoury taste. What great grace it is for God to cover our shortcomings and accept what is His own! In philosophy, there is a rule that the name or classification is based on the greater part. God classifies a person based on their better part. You may sin in prayer, but you also exhibit grace in prayer. Just as when wine is mixed with water and the mixture partially dilutes the wine, but because the wine still retains its taste and colour, the entire cup is called wine. So even if there is a mixture of sin and grace in your heart during your duty, the whole action will be considered a gracious act.

7. Although the flesh hinders you in performing your duties, there is a vast difference between a godly person and a wicked person in this very case, despite both being interrupted by the flesh.
 - The wicked are hindered by the flesh, but they do not have the Spirit to assist them against corruption like the godly do.
 - The wicked do not have renewed principles of grace in their hearts to resist the corruptions of the flesh, unlike the godly. Regenerate individuals cannot sin in the same way as the wicked because they have a seed of grace remaining within them.
 - The wicked do not discern and lament the interruptions of the flesh as clearly and deeply as the godly do.
 - The wicked will never be free from the evil workings of the flesh, neither in this world nor in the world to come. Sin will hinder their duties in this life, and in the afterlife, they will cast off all sense of duty. However, the godly, though troubled by the flesh, will one day be liberated from it. This concludes the first part of the dual consequence.

Sermon XXV.

"For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary to each other, so that you cannot do the things that you would." - Galatians 5:17

I will now proceed to the second application of these words, which is the conflict of the Spirit against the flesh, preventing men from doing the evil they desire to do. And the observation is as follows:

Doctrine: The Spirit of God often preserves regenerated individuals from doing the evil they desire to do.

In discussing this point, I will focus on three aspects in the doctrinal part:

- I will explain how the Spirit prevents a person from doing the evil they desire.
- I will clarify the nature of this work of the Spirit.
- I will help you understand the distinction between the restraining grace of the Spirit, which prevents a wicked person from sinning, and the renewing grace of the Spirit, which keeps regenerated individuals from evil.

How does the Spirit prevent a person from doing the evil they desire? I will provide five specific points to answer this question.

1. The Spirit prevents a person from doing the evil they desire by enlightening their judgment and making them see the true nature and consequences of sin. We see this in Job 36:9, where it says, "He shows them their work and their transgressions, that they have exceeded." The Spirit opens their ears to discipline and commands them to turn away from iniquity. The sin of human nature is marked by ignorance, indicating that a person without the Spirit is blind to the evils they commit. Therefore, the Spirit enlightens them. The Apostle Paul was sent to open

people's eyes and turn them from darkness to light, from the power of Satan to God. This implies that the eyes must be opened and the judgment enlightened before one can be rescued from sin.

2. The Spirit prevents a person from sinning by activating their conscience to check and rebuke them when tempted. Conscience is God's officer and man's overseer. Without a conscience, a wicked person would commit all imaginable evils; every opportunity would be seized to sin. Just as sin wounds the conscience after it is committed, conscience checks before the act. Conscience acts like an iron gate and a brazen wall, keeping a person from many evils they would otherwise engage in. Joseph consulted his conscience, saying, "How can I do this great wickedness?" and it prevented him from committing folly with his mistress.
3. Another way the Spirit prevents a person from sinning is by infusing a principle of grace and holiness that opposes the principle of sin in their nature. The Apostle John tells us that whoever is born of God does not commit sin because the seed of God remains in them. Those who are born of God have a renewed nature and a new principle contrary to the sin in their nature.
4. The Spirit prevents a person from evil by bringing to their remembrance specific passages from Scripture that speak against the sin they are tempted to. David speaks of hiding the Word of the Lord in his heart so that he may not sin against God. This is how the Spirit fortifies the heart against sin, as seen in many instances. Solomon advises his son to keep God's words and commandments to be guarded against the influence of the immoral woman. David also testifies, "By the word of your lips, I have kept myself from the paths of the destroyer." Augustine tells of a young man who was inclined towards wantonness, but God brought to his remembrance the passage that says, "Not in

rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness." This became a means by which he ceased his indulgence in dalliance and wantonness.

5. The Spirit prevents a person from doing the evil they desire by instilling in their heart a sense of awe and reverence for the presence of God when tempted to sin. "Fear the Lord and depart from evil," says the wise man, emphasizing the connection between the fear of God and abstaining from evil. Similarly, Solomon speaks to the same effect, stating that "By the fear of the Lord, men depart from evil." A deep fear of the Almighty God acts as a safeguard against sin.

[Question 2] The next question is, in what way does the Spirit keep a person from sin? In general, there are three aspects to consider.

- With regard to the types of sin.
 - With regard to the time and place where sin would be committed.
 - With regard to the manner in which sin is committed.
1. In terms of the types of sin, the Spirit ensures that a born-again person will never commit the sin against the Holy Spirit. It is not that the potential for that sin is absent in the godly, as it exists in them just as it does in others. This has been fully explained by John in 1 John 5:18. After mentioning the sin that leads to death and stating that one should not pray for it, he goes on to say in the eighteenth verse, "We know that whoever is born of God does not sin, but he who has been born of God keeps himself, and the wicked one does not touch him." This means that the wicked one will not prevail over a godly person to commit this sin leading to death. The grace in their heart will keep them, preventing the wicked one from exerting such influence.
 2. The Spirit of God will keep a person from committing sin at the specific time and place where they would be inclined to do so.

An example of this is seen in how the Spirit kept David from carrying out his plan to kill Nabal and his family in a fit of anger. When Abigail approached David and wisely persuaded him against it, his hot temper was quickly calmed. Here, the work of God's Spirit was evident in restraining David, despite his initial resolve to act in a certain way at a particular time and place.

3. Most importantly, the Spirit keeps a person from sinning in terms of the manner in which they do evil. A regenerate person will not sin in the same manner as they did before their conversion. I previously explained how the Spirit prevents a person from fulfilling sin, and now I will show you how the Spirit of God keeps a born-again person from sinning in the same way they did before. There are seven specific aspects I will mention regarding this point.

a. A born-again person will not sin in ignorance as they did before. Paul speaks of himself, acknowledging that the Lord showed him mercy because he sinned unknowingly. However, once a person is converted, their eyes are opened, and they will not sin in ignorance. This aligns with the Apostle's exhortation to be obedient children and not conform to their former lusts in their state of ignorance. Before conversion, a person walks in darkness, as the wise man says, unaware of what they stumble upon. The unconverted state is a time of darkness, where a person sins without awareness. But after conversion, God illuminates the soul, enabling them to see the harmful nature of sin.

b. You cannot commit sin as foolishly and unconsciously as before. Prior to conversion, sin did not trouble your conscience any more than gravel in the fingers of a glove. However, now it is like gravel scraping in your bowels; before, you were foolish and, as the Apostle says, your conscience was seared as with a hot iron. Seared flesh is insensible, while raw and chafed flesh is sensitive. Previously, your conscience was not sensitive to sin, but now, if you sin, it pricks your heart like a sword. Before conversion, the Law was disregarded, but

now a godly person sets it before their eyes. You were once numb, but sin now feels like a dagger at your heart.

c. You cannot sin as contentedly as before. In the past, you wallowed in sin like a pig in the mud, but now you are like a sheep in the mud longing to be back in the green meadows. I mentioned earlier that corruption in a godly person is like poison in the body, causing trouble and pain. However, for the wicked, sin is natural, like poison in a toad. Before your conversion, you were content with sin and corruption within you, just as a toad naturally carries poison. But after conversion, sin troubles you as if poison were in your bowels. Sin is the wicked person's sport and pastime, while it is the godly person's grief and burden.

d. You do not commit sin as fearlessly as in the past. Previously, you would rush into sin like a horse charging into battle, without the fear of God leaving an impression on your mind. The fear of God did not prevent you from sinning. However, when God converts a person, they sin with more fear in their hearts than ever before. It is worth noting that when the Scripture speaks of a converted person, it does not mention them simply refraining from sin, but fearing it. A good person is one who not only abstains from idle swearing but fears taking an oath. That is why godly individuals are said to fear the commandments. A wicked person may fear the threats and punishments, but it is only a good person who fears the commandments and refrains from sin because it goes against a holy law.

e. The Spirit will keep you from sinning as maliciously as you did before. Prior to conversion, the Scripture speaks of wicked people whom the Lord will convict of their ungodly deeds committed in an ungodly manner. It is not just ungodly men and deeds, but the act of committing ungodly deeds wickedly, meaning in a most wilful and malicious manner. However, after conversion, you cannot sin in such a way. We read about those who despise the Spirit of grace, but a godly person will never sin in that manner. They may quench and

grieve the Spirit, but they will never despise Him. A godly person will never sin out of malicious wickedness.

f. You cannot do evil, at least not voluntarily, as you did before. Before conversion, you willingly rushed into sin, but now you yield to sin with great reluctance. This is the change that converting grace brings about in you. Previously, you sinned with your entire will, but now there is a conflict within your will. That is why the Apostle says, "With my mind I serve the law of God, but with my flesh the law of sin." Before conversion, the entirety of a person was devoted to the service of sin. However, when a child of God is converted, although they may still sin, it is often done in a state of surprise, like Peter's hasty denial of Christ. In contrast, a wicked person sins deliberately, just as Judas betrayed Christ.

g. You do not sin as shamelessly as before conversion. Back then, people sinned without shame, as the Prophet Jeremiah says. But now, there is fear and blushing shame associated with it.

The next question is: Since being kept from evil is a blessing that applies to both wicked and godly individuals, what is the difference between the restraining grace of the Spirit in the wicked and the renewing grace of the Spirit in the godly? However, I will not address this question now but will save it for the next sermon. For now, I will conclude this sermon with some practical applications based on what you have heard.

1. Reflect on the great misery of those who lack the Spirit to perform this vital and beneficial function for them. How enslaved to sin they are! Without the Spirit, they are vulnerable to every attack and invasion that the devil launches against them. The Spirit's promptings and dissuasions act as a bulwark and barrier to protect the heart from sin. The Spirit is like a sluice gate that keeps water within its boundaries. But if you remove the gate, there will be a flood of water.

2. If you desire the Spirit to keep you from evil, you must also make an effort to keep yourself. The Spirit's guardianship does not exclude your own diligent care to guard yourself. David exemplified this by keeping himself from iniquity. He did not use God's care as an excuse for idleness. Remember this rule: If you do not take care to avoid the occasions of sin, the Spirit will not prevent you from carrying out sinful actions. As the Scripture says, "He who has been born of God keeps himself, and the wicked one does not touch him." Jude also instructs, "Keep yourselves in the love of God."

3. Regenerate men have every reason to bless God, both for themselves and in relation to wicked men. In terms of themselves, consider the evils that the flesh would have led you into if it were not for the opposing work of the Spirit within you. Reflect on your own conscience and recall how many times you resolved to engage in wickedness, even going so far as to plan the time, place, and manner in which to carry out your intended evil. Yet, God prevented you from accomplishing your evil desires, so that you could not do what you wanted. Therefore, you have great cause to thank God for His positive grace and, not only that, but also for His preventing grace that restrained you from sin. David's experience serves as an example. He fully intended to kill Nabal and his entire household, but the Spirit of God intervened through the counsel of a humble woman. So, consider these things and let them compel you to bless God for His preventing grace. To encourage you further, I will present some considerations from two perspectives:

- First, if you contemplate the pervasive corruption present in your nature.
- Second, if you reflect on the strength of that corruption.

1. If you contemplate the widespread nature of corruption, it affects all individuals, as all the descendants of Adam are infected with this common contagion. They have all sinned in him and thus are guilty of the punishment, making them susceptible to the contagion of Adam's sin.
2. If you consider the pervasiveness in every part, there is not a single part of a person that is free from sin. Even in regenerate men, while there is something sanctified in every part, there is also something unsanctified. There is grace in every part, but there is also sin in every part.
3. Regarding the object, a person's nature is averse to all that is good and inclined towards all that is evil. The corruption of nature is often described by theologians as resembling the chaotic state that existed before creation, containing virtually all the sins that have been committed in the world.
4. There is universality in terms of time as well. This corruption of nature is not limited to one era or another; it has existed in all ages of the world. It reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned in the same way as Adam did. Now, when you consider that all individuals and all parts of people are corrupted, and that this corruption incites you to all forms of sin, do you not have ample reason to marvel at why there is not even more wickedness committed in the world?
5. Consider not only the universality of corruption but also its strength. If it were a weak adversary, it would not be as concerning. However, there is immense strength and potency in it. That is why it is sometimes referred to as an enticing enemy and at other times as a forceful one. If it cannot entice through cunning, it will exert its power to draw you in.

We should exalt God's grace in relation to wicked individuals who are enemies of the Church. If it were not for the restraining grace of

God's Spirit, preventing wicked men from doing the evil they desire, the world would be unbearable. Every wicked person would murder anyone who angered them, and deceive anyone they interacted with. Human societies would be overturned, and the Church of God would be eradicated from the Earth if God did not restrain people through the common workings of His Spirit. God has the power to turn the wrath of man to His praise and to restrain the remaining wrath. This applies to God's enemies, and He restrains their anger through the ordinary operations of His Spirit, causing it to ultimately bring praise to Him and benefit His people. A well-known example is seen in the encounter between Laban and Jacob. Laban approached Jacob with malicious intent, but God intervened and commanded Laban not to harm Jacob or even speak against him. God exerted a great restraint on Laban's spirit, preventing him from carrying out the harm he intended. Similarly, in the case of Esau and Jacob, Esau harboured a deep hatred towards his brother and had planned to kill him after their father's mourning period. However, God changed Esau's disposition and restrained his violent intention, leading to a heartfelt reconciliation between the brothers. The Psalmist also expresses that the Lord can cut off the spirit of princes and is fearsome to the kings of the earth. In other translations, it is stated that the Lord can restrain the spirit of princes. This has been true throughout history and remains so today. Even those who despise religion and hold great power cannot act upon the full extent of their power. Because no wicked person can fully carry out their evil desires, we have abundant reasons to bless God. Despite Pharaoh's significant power, God delivered His people from his grasp. Moreover, the Lord prevented Balaam from cursing His people, ensuring that no harm would befall them. As David declares, God reproveth kings for the sake of His anointed ones, commanding them not to touch His anointed and not to harm His prophets.

Sermon XXVI.

At St. Lawrence Jewry, London, February 9, 1650.

"For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary to one another, so that you cannot do the things that you would." - Galatians 5:17

Now I will address the third question, which is: How can we distinguish between the restraining grace of the Spirit that keeps wicked men from sin and the renewing grace of the Spirit found in the godly?

To answer this question, I will present seven distinguishing characteristics.

1. The restraining grace of the Spirit in wicked men only suppresses and diminishes their sinful actions, but it does not change their disposition and will towards sin. Restraining grace for a wicked man is like a chain for a lion or a prison for a thief; it restrains their rage and theft but does not alter their nature. There are two instances in Scripture that confirm this. One is the case of Balaam, who told Balak that even if he were given a house full of silver and gold, he could not curse the people of Israel. However, this restraint from cursing did not arise from any unwillingness on Balaam's part, but solely from God's restraint. The Scripture tells us about four attempts he made to curse them. In Numbers 24:1, it is mentioned that when Balaam saw that it pleased the Lord to bless Israel, he did not go as at other times to seek for enchantments, but he turned his face towards the wilderness. This means that Balaam went three times to ask the devil to curse the people, but first he would ask God for permission. But now the text says that he did not ask God for permission but looked toward the wilderness, where the people of Israel were encamped, and attempted to curse them without God's permission. The Apostle Peter tells us that

although he did not curse the people, he loved the wages of unrighteousness. Similarly, we read about Haman, who, when he saw Mordecai being honored, was filled with indignation against him, but the text says that Haman restrained himself. This does not mean that Haman's anger towards Mordecai was subdued or changed, but that God restrained and kept his rage in check. The restraining grace for a wicked man can be illustrated by the example of the fiery furnace into which the three children were cast, and the den of lions into which Daniel was thrown. The fiery furnace remained as hot as ever, even seven times hotter, but at that time while the three children were inside, God suspended or restrained the natural property of the fire to burn. Similarly, with wicked men, their sinful desires burn as intensely as ever, but God, through His mighty power, keeps their desires under control. The lions in the den kept their ravenous nature while Daniel was inside, but God restrained them during the entire time Daniel was there. This is how God deals with wicked men; He may restrain their sin, but their inclination towards sin remains. On the contrary, renewing grace works differently; it not only suppresses sinful actions but brings about a change in a person's disposition. It does not merely restrain a lion but transforms a lion into a lamb. In the work of regeneration, there is a renewing of the mind, as the Apostle says. There is a change in the mind that was not present before. Therefore, the same Apostle says, "If you, through the Spirit, put to death the deeds of the body, you will live." This refers not only to restraining the action but mortifying the disposition. This is the effect of renewing grace.

2. Restraining grace makes a natural man refrain from sin more out of fear of the severity of the law that condemns than out of reverence for the purity of the law that forbids sin. This is what Augustine speaks of. He says that a person who fears hell does not fear to sin but fears to burn, whereas a person who fears to sin fears sin as they would fear hell. Restraining grace never makes a person fear sin in this way, but renewing grace does.

That is why the Psalmist says, "Because your word is very pure, your servant loves it." It is not just a threatening word against sin but a pure word that forbids sin. Renewing grace not only restrains the outward actions but also instills a deep reverence for the holiness and purity of God's law. It transforms the heart and mind, causing a genuine fear and aversion towards sin. A person under the influence of renewing grace loves God's Word because they recognize its purity and righteousness. It is not merely a fear of punishment but a sincere desire to honour and obey God's commands. This marks a significant difference between the restraining grace experienced by the wicked and the renewing grace bestowed upon the godly. The former is limited to suppressing sinful actions, while the latter brings about a fundamental change in one's inner being, leading to a genuine love for righteousness and a heartfelt commitment to living according to God's will.

3. Restraint grace only leads a person to abstain from obvious and gross sins, but it does not extend to restraining secret and internal evils. Outward restraint does not reach the depths of inward sins. Natural conscience may recognize sins that are more apparent, like seeing stars in a bright night, where the smaller stars can be seen. However, in a dark night, only the larger stars are visible. Similarly, natural conscience can only restrain sins of a gross nature. However, we are called to mortify our sinful and disordered affections. The Apostle Paul commands us to put to death the earthly members, such as fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. Here, both the acts and the disposition, as well as irregular actions and disordered affections, are forbidden. Hezekiah humbled himself for the pride of his heart, and David also did so for the pride of his heart in numbering the people.
4. Restrained corruption is reluctantly left behind. A person unwillingly abandons the sin they are being kept from. This is

suggested by the expression concerning Abimelech in Genesis 20:6, where the Lord said, "I also withheld you from sinning against me." The word indicates Abimelech's inclination to commit adultery with Abraham's wife. Restraining grace causes a person to leave their sins with the same unwillingness as someone leaving their spouse, children, country, or estate. They part with these with great regret, bidding farewell with tears in their eyes and sorrow in their heart. However, a person with renewing grace is willingly kept from sin. They are as eager to leave lust behind as a slave is to leave the galley, a prisoner the dungeon, or a beggar their rags. In contrast, a wicked person in their natural condition reluctantly abandons their sin, just as Abraham reluctantly sent Hagar and Ishmael away (Genesis 21:11) or as Phaltiel tearfully bid farewell to Michal (2 Samuel 3:16), similar to a mariner throwing goods overboard in a storm out of necessity.

5. Restraining grace, while preventing the act, actually intensifies the desire to commit that sin when the restraint is removed. Although the action is suspended, the desire is heightened. It is comparable to a river that, when dammed up, returns with greater force and violence to its former course. Likewise, when restrained corruption is unleashed, it returns to a person with even greater eagerness. Another analogy can be drawn from a blacksmith's forge: if a large amount of water is poured on the fire, it will extinguish it, but if only a small amount is sprinkled, it will cause the fire to burn even hotter. In the same way, restraining grace allows the lust to burst forth with greater violence, whereas renewing grace not only restrains the action but also removes the impetuous and eager desire to commit sin.
6. Restraining grace is only partial, both in terms of the subject and the object.

In terms of the subject, restraining grace only binds one part of a person while leaving the rest unrestrained. It may bind the tongue

but not the hand, or bind the hand but not the ear and eye. It restricts only one aspect of a person and not others. However, renewing grace is comprehensive and extends to the entire person. It is a transformative work, as the Apostle says, "May the God of peace sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be kept blameless." The work of regeneration does not merely involve a new tongue or a new ear; it brings about a complete renewal in the heart.

Restraining grace is also partial in terms of the object it reaches. It only applies to certain sins, not all of them. It may keep a person from one sin while allowing them scope for another. On the other hand, renewing grace is universal. It not only restrains one sin but strives to keep all sins in check. This is the specific and proper work of renewing grace, enabling a person to have regard for all of God's commandments.

7. Restraining and renewing grace differ in their purposes, in two ways:

- In terms of God's purpose.
- In terms of man's purpose.

1. In terms of God's purpose, God's intention in granting restraining grace is to uphold human societies for the benefit of others. On the other hand, God's purpose in bestowing renewing grace is for the sanctification of human nature and the salvation of individuals.

2. They differ in terms of man's purpose. The goal of individuals with restraining grace is to preserve their souls in safety. In contrast, a godly person's aim in restraining sin is to maintain the peace of their soul. This can be seen in the example of Jabez, as mentioned in 1 Chronicles 4:10. He called upon the God of Israel, saying, "Oh that thou wouldst bless me indeed, and enlarge my coast, and that thy hand might be with me, and that

thou wouldst keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me!" A godly person strives for the peace and purity of their soul, while a wicked person's goal is simply to avoid immediate trouble and condemnation for their sinful actions.

[Use.] In light of this point, I will first present some general principles regarding the Spirit's role in keeping people from sin, and then provide specific instructions.

Since the Spirit of God often prevents regenerated individuals from committing the evil they desire,

1. From this, you can understand that a person is unable to keep themselves. This is why Christ prays to the Father for His people, asking Him to keep them from evil while they are in the world. We are incapable of keeping ourselves, as acknowledged by the prophet Jeremiah when he says, "O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man who walks to direct his steps." We cannot prevent ourselves from committing evil.
2. The fact that the Spirit keeps us from evil does not negate our responsibility and effort to keep ourselves. The Lord graciously promises to keep the feet of His servants, yet Scripture tells us that it is their duty to make straight paths for their feet and to carefully consider their ways. Thus, we find in Scripture not only promises of what God will do and Christ's prayer for deliverance from evil, but also the practice and diligence of the godly in keeping themselves. It is their duty, as the Apostle says, "He who has been born of God keeps himself," and as the same Apostle adds, "Little children, keep yourselves." We must not rely on God's keeping of us to the point of idleness, but we must strive to keep ourselves, just as the Psalmist kept himself from his iniquity.
3. It is a significant indication of integrity and sincerity of heart when individuals make an effort to keep themselves from inward

and inherent sins, as well as from gross sins. David did this; he kept himself from his iniquity, referring to those sins to which he was naturally inclined. This demonstrated his great sincerity.

4. Consider that even though the Spirit of God keeps regenerate individuals from doing the evil they desire, the inclination and intention to commit any evil still renders us guilty in the sight of God, as if we had actually committed it. In the language of Scripture, what is intended or purposed to be done is considered as done. An illustrative passage can be found in Joshua 24:9, where it is stated that Balak, the King of Moab, waged war against Israel. However, if you read the history in Numbers chapters 22 to 24, you will not find any mention of such a war. The reconciliation of these two passages is straightforward: Balak did not actually wage war against Israel, but he intended to do so and even hired Balaam to curse the people, hoping for victory. I mention this to emphasize that you should not consider yourselves guiltless simply because you refrain from committing the act of sin. If you have the will and inclination towards such evils, you will be found guilty before God. This is why Christ tells us that anyone who is angry with their brother without cause is guilty of murder, and whoever looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery in their heart. This should humble us greatly, as we are guilty of many actual sins we have committed, as well as sins that have resided in our intentions and purposes, which the Law of God will judge.

5. Do not assess your righteousness and grace based solely on your ability to restrain yourself from specific sins. If you want to judge yourselves, do so by considering the overall pattern of your lives. It is possible for a good person to fall into a particular sin that a wicked person may avoid, and it is possible for a wicked person to perform a good deed that a godly person may struggle with. Therefore, you should not judge yourselves based on individual acts, but rather on the consistent course of your lives. Otherwise, you would condemn the righteous. Let me

provide an example by comparing two individuals: the righteous King David and the wicked King Abimelech. Both were tempted by the same sin. If you were to judge them solely on their restraints in that specific situation, you would perceive Abimelech as the righteous king and David as the wicked one. Abimelech, the heathen king, took Sarah, not knowing that she was Abraham's wife. However, the Scripture tells us that Abimelech did not defile her. On the other hand, David, who knew that Bathsheba was Uriah's wife, took her into his house and committed uncleanness with her. If you were to judge based on this particular incident, you would consider Abimelech as the gracious king and David as the heathen king. However, if you examine the overall course of their lives, you would see that David was far better than Abimelech. Therefore, do not pass judgment on anyone's character based on a single act. Just as in philosophy, one act does not determine one's nature, when assessing people, you should not focus on specific acts but rather on the general direction and flow of their lives. The righteous walk in the path of avoiding evil.

[Use 2] The second use is for the instruction of regenerate individuals who have experienced the renewing work of the Spirit. There are three instructions I want you to learn:

1. Thank God that you have been hindered from committing the sins you intended to commit. Many godly individuals have come dangerously close to committing sins when circumstances and inclinations aligned, but God has placed a restraint. Oh, bless God, for it is the greatest mercy after converting grace. Just as Jabez prayed, "Oh, that you would bless me indeed! And keep me from evil!" let it be your prayer as well. Sometimes people become angry when they are prevented from carrying out their intended sins. This is as absurd as a person being angry with someone for stopping them on the way to their execution. Oh, poor soul, you are heading towards the execution of your sin, and if anyone hinders you, it is for the salvation of your soul, or

at least for the preservation of your peace. Therefore, bless God. Consider how David blessed God when he intended to annihilate Nabal and his entire household, but Abigail came with kind words and stopped him. Oh, then he said, "Blessed be God, and blessed be you, and blessed be the advice you have given me." Similarly, if you had planned to commit a sin with all its accompanying circumstances, and God has stopped you in your tracks, how great a reason you have to magnify Him!

2. From this, understand why the people of God should suspect their own hearts, lest they be led to commit the very evils they thought they would never commit. Suppose the Spirit were suspended and did not restrain you, what evil would you not commit? There are instances in Scripture of godly men who have fallen into sins they never thought they would commit—sins that contradicted the very graces in which they excelled. Abraham, the father of faith, the most eminent man of his time, fell into unbelief. Who would have thought that? Yet, he did, when he doubted God's providence and told lies to Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, and Abimelech, the king of Gerar. Likewise, Moses, known as the meekest man on earth, spoke impulsively with his lips and succumbed to anger, which was contrary to his excellent grace. And even Job, described as the most patient man on earth, was driven to great impatience, cursing the day of his birth and the night when he was conceived. I mention these examples to make you see how much reason you have to thank God for being prevented from sin, and how much reason you have to be cautious if the Spirit of God withdraws from you. Moses, too, was known to be the meekest man on earth (Numbers 12:3), yet even this meek Moses was overcome by anger and spoke rashly with his mouth.
3. Pray to God for the Spirit to fulfill its role in your soul, so that it may keep you from committing the evil you would otherwise do. We read of David making this prayer, "Lord, keep your servant also from presumptuous sins." You need to pray for the Spirit to

restrain and control your corruptions when you are tempted to sin, because no matter how good you may be, you cannot rely on your own strength to avoid evil when tempted, no matter how repugnant it may be. Therefore, pray for preventive grace, that God may keep you by His Spirit, so that you may not carry out the works of the flesh. This is why Christ has taught us to pray, "Deliver us from evil," specifically from the evil that we cannot avoid by ourselves.

Secondly, regarding the unregenerate who are only hindered from sin by restraining grace, even they should consider the reason they have to thank God for this mercy. Although they may end up in hell, they still have cause to bless God for restraining grace on earth. For even though it will not make them good, it does make them less evil. While it may not make them spiritual, it does make them morally upright individuals. With restraining grace, a person can achieve the following good:

- They may refrain from committing as many and as grave sins.
- They may avoid incurring severe punishment.
- They will bring less scandal to religion.
- They will set a better example.

To those who have restraining grace, I offer this caution: Do not boast about it. The Pharisee had restraining grace, but he made ill use of it. He said, "I thank God that I am not an extortioner, an adulterer, or like this tax collector." Does God restrain these sins in you? Do not boast about these restraints. Who made the distinction between you and others? Is it not God? Therefore, do not be proud of it.

Be careful not to mistake restraining grace as evidence of renewing grace. In the following sermon, I will show you twelve ways by which you may be deceived.

SERMON XXVII

At St. Lawrence Jewry, London. Feb. 16, 1650.

"For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you cannot do the things that you would." - Galatians 5:17

With God's help, I will conclude this point in this sermon. There is only one question that arises from the last caution I mentioned in my previous sermon. It was that you should not consider the Spirit's restraints in keeping you from sin as the saving and gracious work of the Spirit. Therefore, I will address this question and show you other factors that can prevent wicked people from committing evil, aside from the renewing grace of the Spirit.

1. People can be kept from wickedness due to the influence of a religious upbringing they received when they were young. When under the guidance of parents, masters, or governors, this can prevent them from doing much evil. An example of this is seen in King Jehoshaphat. As long as the priest Jehoiada instructed him, he did what was right in the sight of the Lord. He walked in the ways of the Lord as long as his uncle lived. However, as soon as Jehoiada died, he turned to wickedness. Similarly, you read about Paul being blameless according to the law. How did he become this way? He attributes it to being brought up in the Jewish religion and the power of education, which instilled good moral values in him. The young man who approached Christ also claimed to have kept all the commandments from his youth. This demonstrates the influence of education and upbringing. Just as a wild colt can be tamed through training, a religious

upbringing can restrain people from evil, although it falls short of renewing grace.

2. Physical disability, whether due to old age or sickness, can be a means of restraining people from many sins. Ambrose referred to diseases as the workshops of virtue. Sickness may confine a person, but it is not a grave for sin. It is only through mortification that sin is slaughtered. When people are bedridden and suffer from bodily pain, they have neither the pleasure nor the opportunity to indulge in luxurious excess. We see an example of this in the case of Abimelech, where God restrained him by afflicting him with some sickness or ailment. This can be understood by comparing Genesis 20:6 with verse 17 of the same chapter. In verse 6, God informed Abimelech that He had kept him from sin. It is mentioned in a general sense that God restrained him. However, verse 17 hints at the specific way in which God accomplished this. Abimelech desired to defile Abraham's wife, but God struck him with a disease. It is stated that Abraham prayed to God, and God healed Abimelech. Rivet, commenting on these words, suggests that as soon as Abimelech took Sarah into his house, God afflicted him with a severe illness, rendering him unable to engage in folly with her. Rivet provides a reason for this, namely, that Isaac was the promised seed. If Abimelech had slept with Sarah, the child would have been thought to be Abimelech's and not Abraham's. Therefore, God inflicted a severe disease upon him, disabling him from carrying out his intended folly.
3. The humble and poor outward condition of a person can prevent many from committing sin. If they had wealth, they would indulge in wickedness with great eagerness. This was the case with Hazael. While he was a servant, he could not cause much harm because his lowly condition did not provide him with opportunities and advantages. However, when he became king in his master's place, he carried out heinous acts such as burning the city, ripping open pregnant women, and dashing children

against the stones. He never imagined he would become so wicked, but as a king, he committed these atrocious deeds and much more. We can be thankful that, as the common proverb goes, cursed cows have short horns. It means that wicked individuals are not always wealthy or in positions of power. God often arranges it so that those who have a propensity for evil do not have the opportunity to manifest it in their lives.

4. Another way in which people may be restrained from sin is through the fear of a natural conscience. God's Spirit not only bears witness with the spirit of godly individuals but also restrains the spirits of wicked people. Although a wicked person may not refrain from sin out of obedience to God's command, they may abstain from sin based on the conviction of their natural conscience. Natural conscience exercises authority and influence over a wicked person, preventing them from committing the evil they desire. The Gentiles, who do not have the written law, still do by nature the things contained in the law. They are a law unto themselves, guided by their conscience.
5. The fear of human laws and penal statutes is another means of deterring people from committing many sins. When a wicked person's conscience is not swayed by divine law, a human law can still restrain their actions. If it were not for the fear of the consequences imposed by human laws, how many murders would there be? It is often more the fear of punishment than the fear of eternal damnation that prevents such acts. It is a mercy to have good laws in a nation because they restrain people from engaging in evil practices when the law of God does not hold sway over their consciences. Examples can be found in Scripture where individuals have been restrained solely on this account. For instance, when the favourites of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon accused Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego of not worshipping their gods, a decree was made that they should be thrown into a fiery furnace that was heated seven times hotter than usual. However, they walked in the fire unharmed, which

convinced the king and his nobles. Consequently, the king issued an edict that anyone who spoke against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego would be cut into pieces and their houses turned into a dung heap. This human law had such a profound effect on the people that, despite their previous railing against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, they fell silent. I mention this example to demonstrate the power and influence that a human law can wield in restraining the sins of wicked individuals.

6. People can be kept from sin simply by being in the presence of and observing the example of good individuals among whom they live. It is said that among the Romans, there was a proverb: "Take heed, Cato beholds you." Cato, who was regarded as a virtuous man, had such an esteemed reputation that when someone was engaging in evil, this proverb would be invoked as a reminder of his watchful gaze. Similarly, in Scripture, it is mentioned that Herod feared John the Baptist because he knew him to be a just and holy man and observed his ways. In the book of Martyrs, in the beginning of the first volume, there is a story about the apostle John, who wrote the Book of Revelation. As he was riding on a highway, a group of thieves encountered him. Interestingly, the leader of these thieves happened to be a young man who had once been under John's ministry. Though John hardly recognized him, the young man knew John, and upon seeing the old man, he immediately fled. The guilt of his conscience and the presence of John were so overwhelming that he dared not continue his accustomed wickedness. This aligns with the words of the Apostle Paul, who said, "It is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing, and not only when I am present with you." This implies that while Paul was present, the people behaved admirably, but in his absence, they became idle. The presence and example of virtuous individuals often serve as a deterrent, preventing others from succumbing to sin.

7. Men can be deterred from sin by the nobility of spirit and the innate disposition of a person's temperament. For example, before his conversion, Luther, while still a monk in the Church of Rome, professed that he was never tainted by covetousness. He had such an honourable spirit that such a sordid sin did not cling to him. Similarly, Paul speaks of a natural gift he possessed, which was continence. It is also reported of Plutarch that he said, "I would rather you say there is no such man in the world than to say that Plutarch is either vain, unjust, or inconsistent." The man's natural temperament inclined him towards equity and justice. Paul, when speaking of the Gentiles, says that although they did not have the Law, they naturally did the things contained in the Law, meaning they acted according to a refined nature. Why are some people passionate while others are not? The reason is not due to renewing grace, but rather because some possess a more noble spirit than others. This inherent quality restrains many evils in their actions, even though they may lack renewing grace.
8. Wicked individuals can be prevented from doing evil out of fear of punishment, either temporal or eternal. Sometimes it is the fear of external judgments. For example, the Egyptians cried, "Let the Israelites go, or we are all dead men." They wanted the Israelites to depart not because God willed it or out of love for the Israelites, but out of self-preservation. They feared the consequences of not letting them go. Similarly, we read that the high priests and Pharisees refrained from killing Christ on a feast day because they feared a public uproar. It was not out of love for Christ, but out of concern for themselves. Many politicians would commit injurious acts if they did not fear the people.
9. The fear of hell and God's wrath can weigh heavily on the soul of a sinner and prevent them from committing wickedness. It is the fear of everlasting punishment. In this regard, there is a notable passage from the Prophet Isaiah: "The sinners in Zion are afraid;

fearfulness has seized the hypocrites." What is the reason for their fear? This is the answer: "Who among us can dwell with devouring fire? Who can dwell with everlasting burnings?" The fear of God's wrath makes them afraid of sin.

10. The hope of temporal and eternal rewards can be another reason why men may refrain from sin. This was the mindset of a young man who asked, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Christ replied, "You know the commandments: 'Do not kill, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal.'" The young man answered, "All these I have kept from my youth." He had more concern for the reward than for obeying the commandments themselves. Similarly, Balaam's hope for a happy ending restrained him from committing an unrighteous act. In all these aforementioned situations, wicked men may refrain from sin, even if they lack true grace.

[Use] The use I will make of this point is directed towards wicked men, especially those who have been kept from sin for any of the aforementioned reasons.

1. Through restraining grace, you have less sin than others or than you would have had if you were without it. While restraining grace does not make you good, it makes you less evil. Though you may not be holy and spiritual, you can be morally upright.
2. Your punishment will be less than it would have been if God had not given you restraining grace to curb sin. A heathen with restraining grace will be punished less than a Christian who lacks it. A sober heathen will be punished less than a drunken Christian.
3. Consider that by restraining sin, you will not disturb the peace of your conscience as severely. Open and flagrant sins expose the conscience, filling it with terror and astonishment. But the less you engage in sin, the less troubled your conscience will be.

4. By refraining from sin, you bring less disgrace to religion than you would have otherwise. Minor sins may scratch the face of religion, but open sins stab it in the heart. Religion is not discredited as much by hidden hypocrites as it is by blatant profanity.
5. If God were to abandon you, your sinful example could cause more harm than it does now. Though you may be a wicked person, if God restrains sin in you, your example is not as harmful as it could be.
6. Who knows if these initial experiences of restraining grace may be a precursor to renewing grace? Even if you are currently wicked but restrained from evil, who knows if God may turn restraining grace into transforming grace?

[Use 2] The next use will bring comfort to the righteous. Indeed, many devout hearts may raise fears and doubts based on what I have said. Some may fear that they fall short not only of godly people but even of the wicked, as the wicked can abstain from sins that they cannot. This objection may arise in the hearts of many good individuals. To address this, I will provide three or four words of response and comfort, and then conclude.

[Answer] 1. Consider that perceiving the unrestrained workings of sin in your nature does not indicate an increase in sin but rather an increase in light and sensitivity of conscience. Paul, before his conversion, believed he was alive and in a blessed state until he comprehended the spirituality of the Law. When the Commandment came with power to his conscience, sin revived, and he felt dead. This means that when the Law impacted his conscience, he recognized the presence of sin, yet he was in a converted and blessed state. Just as light entering a room reveals the deficiencies and disorder that were hidden in the dark, the light of understanding exposes our spiritual shortcomings.

2. Do not judge your state to be bad merely based on the absence of specific restraints against sin, but judge yourself by the evident display of habitual grace in your ordinary and consistent conduct. One person may be able to control their anger, while you struggle with it, yet that person may be wicked while you are good. A traveller may occasionally step into a rut, but their usual path is the well-trodden road. So if you fall into sin and lack restraining grace, it may be a deviation from your usual path. The upright are meant to depart from evil, but occasionally you may lose your way. You should not evaluate yourself solely based on individual acts of restraint.
3. Even if you are caught in a sin when others are not, who may be worse than you, consider that you face more temptations to sin than others. It is true that in certain cases a godly person's sins may be more serious than a wicked person's, but in other cases, a godly person's sin should not be overly magnified. The devil is more eager to tempt a godly person to sin than a wicked person. When the sons of God gather, the devil is also present among them. He holds a grudge against them. Therefore, if they are occasionally overcome, they should not judge themselves solely based on those specific acts, but on the overall course of their lives.
4. Remember, even if you give in to a sinful act, if sin is not a tyrant or master over you, you have no reason to fear. You yield to sin as to an intruder, not as to your rightful Lord. Though you may lack the restraint of the Spirit in certain specific acts to keep you from evil, if God keeps you from the dominating power of sin, do not be discouraged. You are in a fortunate state.
5. Take comfort in this: although you may occasionally struggle to restrain sinful acts, before long you will be a complete conqueror over all your sins. God will soon crush Satan under your feet. Right now, you fight the devil hand to hand, but soon you will trample him under your feet. Let this be your comfort if you

have the Spirit contending against the flesh. Your battle is brief, your victory is assured, your triumph is great, and your reward and eternal crown await you.

FINIS.

The Christian's Directory

Christian Reader,

The world's experience of the value of the works of this respected author makes a commendatory letter unnecessary. Our purpose now is simply to place this piece in your hands as promised and assure you that it is authentic, having been faithfully compared with and corrected by Mr Love's own notes. However, we must mention that it is undeniably beneficial for Christians as it provides guidance on how to conduct themselves in various situations they may encounter in this world. Whether they are afflicted or joyful, involved in buying or selling, or engaging with the world in any way, this work offers excellent advice and counsel. With the Lord's blessing, we pray that it may be accompanied and prove profitable to the souls of His people. We remain,

Your faithful friends,

Edm: Calamy, Simeon Ash, Jer: Whitaker, Will: Taylor, Allen Geere.

A CHRISTIAN'S DIRECTORY.

Sermon I

"And those who weep, as though they did not weep; and those who rejoice, as though they did not rejoice; and those who buy, as though they did not possess; and those who use the world, as though they did not make full use of it. For the present form of this world is passing away." - 1 Corinthians 7:30-31

I have chosen this passage of Scripture with the intention, by God's help, to deliver several sermons on it, as it provides us with a rich variety of material. However, I will not dwell too long on any specific doctrine, as I would like to bring it to a suitable conclusion within a reasonable time.

This passage can aptly be called a guide for Christians, directing and guiding them in their everyday lives as they navigate through the diverse changes, uncertainties, and alterations they may encounter in this world. Regardless of their circumstances, there is advice and counsel for them. If they face crosses, troubles, and afflictions, their duty is to weep as if they were not weeping. If they experience a surge of prosperity, with an abundance of external blessings, their duty is to rejoice as if they were not rejoicing. If they are tradesmen who accumulate wealth through buying, selling, and engaging in business, their duty is to use their riches as if they did not possess them.

And to ensure that these specific cases and instructions apply to every individual's particular situation, the Apostle gives a general rule to all who have dealings in the world, regardless of the nature of their involvement. The rule is that those who make use of this world must do so without abusing it, because the current form of this world is passing away.

Here you can see the task I have assigned to you, which will provide an abundance of material. For now, I will only briefly address the first instruction the Apostle gives to those who encounter crosses and afflictions in the world, namely, that those who weep should be as if they were not weeping. There is some disagreement among interpreters regarding the intended meaning of these words. Pareus believes that this passage has a specific reference to marriage. Although it applies to all kinds of people in the world, he believes it has a closer relation to those in a marital condition. A person in a married state should expect to encounter cares, crosses, and troubles, as the Apostle implies in the following verse. Therefore, the advice given is this: if you are in a married state and face troubles and afflictions, you should weep as if you were not weeping. You should mourn in a controlled and moderate manner. For instance, if you encounter troubles and afflictions such as having a difficult spouse, not having children, or having children who are troublesome or even losing them, you should moderate your sorrows and weep as if you were not weeping.

Beloved, the overall theme of this chapter supports this interpretation, and from here I can note the following:

[Doctrine 1] 1. A married life exposes a person to many crosses and troubles, including incompatibility between spouses, having difficult or no children, or experiencing the loss of a spouse or children. These and other afflictions can occur in a marital condition.

[Doctrine 2] 2. From this, I note that people should be cautious not to be overwhelmed with excessive sorrow and grief, no matter what troubles they face in this condition. However, I mention these points only in passing. Although I believe that this passage specifically relates to people in a marital estate, the Scriptures use general terms, stating that those who weep should be as if they were not weeping, and so on. Therefore, I would prefer to interpret it in a broader sense, suggesting that whatever crosses, troubles, losses, or afflictions befall anyone in this earthly life, they should mourn and

weep as if they were not weeping. This means they should regulate and moderate their sorrows so that they do not become excessive or immoderate. And the doctrine I derive from this is as follows.

[Doctrine] Christians should be careful not to exhibit immoderate or excessive sorrow when facing crosses, troubles, or the loss of worldly comforts.

No matter what afflictions you encounter or comforts you lose, you should ensure that your sorrows are not immoderate or excessive.

As I discuss this, I may touch the hearts of many of you. Some of you may be troubled by a lack of business, unable to afford food. Others may be troubled by losses, crosses, afflictions, or inward and outward troubles. In all these situations, you must weep as if you were not weeping. You must be cautious of immoderate and excessive sorrow.

Before addressing the queries I have regarding this doctrine, I will first present three conclusions related to it.

[Conclusion 1] This doctrine does not deny the natural sensitivity to any crosses or afflictions you encounter. Beloved, God does not want you to be indifferent or unfeeling under His hand. The doctrine of weeping as if you wept not allows for a natural sensitivity to any cross or affliction that befalls us. God does not desire stoic insensitivity of heart.

[Conclusion 2] The people of God are more capable of bearing afflictions and crosses at one time than at another. This was evident in the case of David. When Absalom died, he cried out with great impatience, saying, "Oh Absalom my Son, my Son, oh Absalom, would to God I had died for thee my Son, my Son." Yet, when his child died, he rose up, anointed his face, ate bread, and patiently accepted God's hand upon him. The people of God are more resilient in facing afflictions at certain times than at others.

[Conclusion 3] Inordinate and excessive sorrow for any affliction often provokes God to lay greater and heavier afflictions upon people. It is a way to invite the Lord to increase the severity of His blows, making the burdens heavier and the bondage greater. God deals with us as a father deals with his child: if the father sees that the child bears his corrections kindly, he will give him less; but if the child is stubborn, fretful, and resistant, it will not lead the father to lessen the punishment, but rather to increase it. Therefore, if we patiently endure the Lord's indignation in these afflictions He lays upon us, it is a path to have them alleviated. However, if we complain and grumble against God, and if our sorrows are immoderate, it will only lead to their intensification.

[Queries] Now, I will address the queries that I promised to discuss. There are three of them:

1. When do people's sorrows become immoderate and excessive for worldly afflictions?
2. Why should a Christian be cautious to prevent such excessive sorrow?
3. I will provide you with some considerations to temper excessiveness and immoderation in grieving over whatever befalls you in this world. Let's begin with the first question.

[Question 1] When can a Christian's sorrow, whether for encountering crosses, afflictions, or the loss of worldly comforts, be deemed immoderate?

[Answer] I will present it to you in these five specific aspects.

1. Your sorrow becomes immoderate and excessive when it greatly hinders you from performing religious duties, making you unfit and unprepared for holy activities, particularly hearing the word of God and engaging in private prayer.

Firstly, when it hinders you from hearing the word of God, as illustrated in Exodus 6:9, where Moses spoke to the Children of

Israel but they did not listen due to their anguish of spirit and cruel bondage. If any sorrow or hardship has affected you so deeply that it disturbs and hampers your ability to hear God's word, then it has been an immoderate sorrow. It is a significant sin and highly reproachable when individuals, after the death of their close family members, are so overwhelmed with sorrow that they fail to attend church for three or four consecutive Sundays, as is quite common among many. Leviticus 21:1-4 provides a command from the Lord that His people should not defile themselves for the dead. Among the pagans, it was customary to show lamentation and sorrow for the deceased by shaving their heads, cutting their beards, and engaging in self-harm. However, God forbids His people from engaging in these practices. When your sorrows for worldly matters interrupt your religious duties, such as hearing the word, consider it as an irregular sorrow.

Secondly, when your sorrow prevents you and keeps you from engaging in private prayer, then it is immoderate. As stated by Asaph in Psalm 77:3-4, "My spirit is overwhelmed within me; my heart is troubled and I cannot speak." When troubles silence individuals to the point where they cannot pray or express their needs to God, it signifies an immoderate sorrow. Women, in particular, who are naturally more tender and prone to grieving than men, should take note that even if their sorrows may be insignificant, if they have disrupted their ability to hear God's word and engage in private devotions, then they have been excessive and immoderate. In Malachi 2:13-14, we read about women who covered the altar of the Lord with tears, weeping, and crying out, but it refers not to godly sorrow but worldly sorrow. These women were deeply saddened by the harshness and unkindness of their husbands, leading them to shed tears at the altar. However, God did not regard such actions because excessive sorrow for afflictions leaves little or no room for sorrow over sin.

2. Your sorrows are considered immoderate when they overshadow and diminish your enjoyment of the present

mercies from God. This is exemplified in the case of Ahab's sorrow in 1 Kings 21:4. It is mentioned that Ahab was deeply grieved and displeased because he couldn't have Naboth's vineyard. The text describes how he went home, lay down on his bed, turned away his face, and refused to eat. Despite being a king with a splendid palace and owning numerous vineyards, Ahab couldn't find any pleasure or comfort in what he had because he couldn't obtain Naboth's vineyard. Similarly, Jacob mourned excessively for Joseph, whom he believed to be dead, to the extent that even when all his sons and daughters tried to comfort him, he refused to be comforted and said he would go mourning to his grave. The loss of one child overshadowed the comfort brought by his other eleven sons (Genesis 37:35). If the weight of your present sorrows and afflictions is so heavy that it diminishes your appreciation of the blessings and joys you currently have, then your sorrows are immoderate. Some individuals are so overwhelmed by minor afflictions that they forget about the multitude of great blessings they possess. For instance, there are people worth ten thousand pounds who, if they were to lose only one thousand pounds, would be so troubled that they couldn't find comfort in all the remaining wealth.

3. Your sorrows for worldly losses or crosses are considered excessive when they drive you to engage in sinful and wicked actions to recover and regain what you have lost. This is exemplified by Saul when he was in great distress and confusion, not knowing what to do. He sought help from the witch at Endor, which indicated the immoderation of his sorrow. Reflect on your own situation if you have experienced significant losses or endured great afflictions and crosses in the world. If these circumstances have driven you to resort to sinful means to recover your losses or alleviate your afflictions, then your sorrow has been excessive. For example, you may be in debt and unable to sustain yourself and your family through your trade. As a result, you resort to dishonest measures such as using false

weights, deceptive practices, or similar methods to recoup your losses. If this is the case, your sorrows are immoderate.

4. Your sorrows are considered immoderate when you grieve so much for your own troubles and afflictions that you lack compassion for the afflictions of others. When your personal losses affect you deeply, but the losses suffered by the Church and the State have no impact on you. When your own private afflictions trouble you to the point where you are indifferent to the fate of the Church or the Kingdom you live in. When you can shed tears for your own misery but not a single drop for the misery of the Church of God, then your sorrows are immoderate and irregular.
5. Your sorrows are irregular when you are so preoccupied with your own afflictions that you believe no one else's sufferings compare to yours. When you resemble those mentioned in Lamentations 1:12, who say, "Look and see if there is any sorrow like my sorrow which was brought upon me." When you say, "No one has ever lost an estate like I have, or a loving spouse, or children. No one has endured troubles and crosses like I have." Then your sorrows are immoderate. However, I will show you later that there are others who have lost more, suffered more, and undergone greater afflictions, giving them more reason to complain than you. But for now, this will suffice for the first question.

[Quest 2] Now I move on to the second question: Why should Christians be cautious of this condition of being immoderate and excessive in their sorrows for any affliction?

[Answ.] Firstly, because immoderate sorrow for worldly things arises from evil causes. Secondly, it produces negative effects.

Firstly, it arises from evil causes, which are:

1. An excessive love for worldly possessions, causing you to grieve too much in their absence or loss. It is a sign that you loved them excessively when you had them. In Genesis 37:35, when Jacob believed Joseph to be dead, he mourned excessively for him. Even when his sons and daughters tried to comfort him, he refused to be comforted and said, "I will go down to the grave mourning for my son." Jacob's immoderate love for Joseph led to his excessive sorrow. If your hearts are attached to worldly things, you cannot part with them without a great deal of vexation and sorrow. If your sorrow is excessive over the loss of something, it reveals your immoderate love for it when you possessed it. In John 11:35-36, when Jesus arrived at Lazarus' tomb and found him dead, he wept. The Jews observed his tears and said, "See how he loved him." His weeping demonstrated the depth of his love, although I do not suggest his love was excessive. However, we can understand from this that grief in the absence of blessings stems from the love we had for them when we possessed them.
2. This immoderate sorrow arises from discontentment and murmuring against God's providence in your life. It signifies a conflict between God's will and your own, as if you believe that you know better than God how to deal with your life. Otherwise, you would submit peacefully to His will.
3. Another cause of this immoderate sorrow is ignorance, both of the transient nature of worldly things and the true value of spiritual things. It reveals that we consider temporal things to be more valuable than they truly are, while deeming spiritual things to be of lesser worth.

But secondly, as it stems from evil causes, it also brings forth evil effects. There are five detrimental effects that immoderate sorrow produces:

1. It harms your physical health. In 2 Corinthians 7:10, it is stated that godly sorrow leads to repentance, never to be regretted, but worldly sorrow brings death. Solomon tells us that a sorrowful spirit dries up the bones in Proverbs 17:22. David also expresses in Psalm 31:10, "My life is spent with grief, and my years with sighing; my bones are consumed."
2. It tarnishes the reputation of religion when a Christian is excessive in their sorrow. The joy of the Lord should be their strength. A devout Christian always has reasons for unspeakable joy and glory. Therefore, it is a stain on Christianity to witness a pious person overwhelmed with worldly sorrow. It casts a negative light on religion when a godly individual hangs their head low due to the loss of external things, as if they have no greater concerns, joy, comfort, or happiness beyond this earthly life.
3. It greatly hinders the heart from engaging in holy and spiritual duties. It obstructs and interrupts one's ability to hear the word of God and pray. In Exodus 6:9, it is mentioned that the people did not listen to Moses due to their anguish of spirit and cruel bondage. Psalm 77:4 also states, "I am so troubled that I cannot speak."
4. Excessive sorrow taints the enjoyment of the sweet and comforting blessings one has. The overwhelming sorrow for one affliction buries a thousand mercies. As seen in Genesis 37:35, Jacob mourned intensely for his youngest son Joseph, whom he believed to be dead. Despite having eleven sons and many daughters who came to comfort him, he could find no solace in any of them. He resolved that his grey hairs would go down to the grave mourning for Joseph. This excessive sorrow for Joseph embittered many other blessings and comforts he possessed. Likewise, in Esther 5:13, though Haman enjoyed great intimacy and familiarity with the king, it meant nothing to him as long as he saw Mordecai sitting at the king's gate. In this regard, many

individuals display a temperament similar to that of a hedgehog. According to naturalists, a hedgehog has the tendency to gather numerous apples or similar fruits on its spines and then go to a hedge to eat them. However, it is such a mournful creature that if it happens to drop one of its apples along the way, it becomes so vexed and troubled that it throws away all the rest. Similarly, many people, when faced with a single cross or affliction, discard all the other blessings they enjoy and find no comfort in any of them.

5. Excessive sorrow for worldly hardships often provokes God to send even greater afflictions than those you have already experienced. As I mentioned earlier, a stubborn child who whines, cries, and complains under their father's discipline will fare worse and receive more blows as a result. Similarly, the more we grumble and excessively grieve over worldly afflictions, the more crosses and troubles we are likely to encounter. This concludes the second question, why Christians should be cautious of immoderate and excessive sorrow over worldly matters. Now, let us proceed to present some considerations to alleviate your sorrows. However, I will leave that for the afternoon. For now, I will briefly apply what has been said and bring this to a close.

[Application] Application: If it is true that Christians should not be excessive in their worldly sorrows but weep as if they did not weep, then this rebukes those who can mourn for every little setback that befalls them but cannot shed a tear for any sin they commit. Many individuals complain about insignificant troubles and afflictions, yet they never complain about their sins and corruptions. These sins do not trouble them or touch their hearts. They can mourn for things that, at most, harm the body, but they do not grieve for things that can harm and destroy their souls.

I implore you, beloved, to be cautious about freely shedding tears for worldly setbacks or afflictions. It is a waste to use precious tears to

cleanse a dirty room. I must tell you that tears are too valuable to be shed for every trivial matter. It would be much better if you used these precious tears to wash away your sins. Although it is only Christ's blood that can wash away the guilt of sin, your tears can greatly contribute to washing away the filth and power of sin. When you mourn over worldly troubles, weep as if you did not weep. But when you mourn over sin, mourn as much as you can. Be like the morning dew before the sun, which quickly evaporates and turns into water. You, who are the children of God, know that you have greater and more significant things to bestow your tears upon than any outward troubles. You have daily failures, numerous sins and corruptions that remain unconquered and unsubdued, and the loss of the light of God's presence to mourn over. Your sorrows are never directed correctly unless they flow in this channel, unless your tears run into the millpond to grind your lusts and corruptions, to diminish and weaken them. Then, and only then, are your sorrows right and proper.

Lastly, I urge and advise you not to make a mistake regarding your sorrows. Do not think that you are mourning and grieving for your sins when, in reality, it is only for external afflictions. Many individuals, when their neighbours inquire why they appear so sad, mournful, and tearful, are quick to claim that it is because of their sins, weaknesses, and overpowering corruptions, or something similar. However, the truth is that they are only mourning over some cross or external trouble they have encountered. Therefore, do not mistake that sorrow to be for your sins when it is primarily or exclusively due to some external affliction you have experienced.

SERMON 2

Now we turn to the third question, which I will address this entire afternoon. It is this: I will lay down twelve considerations to help alleviate and control excessive and immoderate sorrow for any worldly crosses or afflictions. These considerations will guide us in maintaining the frame and temperament of spirit that the Apostle commands us, namely, to weep as if we wept not. As I mentioned in the morning, God does not want us to be insensitive or unaware of His hand in any affliction. However, we should not be stoic, nor should we be excessive in our sorrows. With this in mind, I have pondered on these various considerations, as they are likely to be most effective in reducing excessiveness and immoderacy of sorrow.

1. Consider that throughout your lifetime, you have had more blessings to bring you joy than crosses to cause you discomfort. This reflection strongly influenced Job in sustaining his spirit during afflictions. He said, "Shall we receive good from the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" Let me share a story of a man who lived for 50 years without experiencing sickness, but in the last two years of his life, he fell ill and became very impatient. However, he reasoned with himself and said, "The Lord could have given me 48 years of sickness and only two years of health, but He did the opposite. Therefore, I will rather marvel at God's mercy for granting me such a long period of health than complain and grumble about the short duration of sickness." The Lord always leaves us with more blessings than He takes away from us. This should uplift our spirits, knowing that our blessings have been greater and more numerous than our afflictions. Even if the Lord visits me with sickness now, I have enjoyed more years of health than years of sickness. Even if I have lost friends, I should consider that I had the privilege of their companionship for a long time. Even if a particular comfort is taken away from me, I still have many more remaining. The Scripture acknowledges our tendency to grieve excessively and provides this rule to alleviate immoderate sorrow: "In the day of adversity, consider." What should we consider? We should reflect on how God has balanced our afflictions with His past

mercies. Though you may be in afflictions now, He has previously bestowed His mercies upon you, and it is possible that He will grant you prosperity again. He has counterbalanced your current afflictions with former mercies. If you compare the mercies you have enjoyed with the present afflictions you endure, you will find that the count of your mercies exceeds the number of your sufferings. When David cried out in immoderate sorrow for his son Absalom, saying, "Oh Absalom, my son, my son, would to God I had died for thee, my son, my son," if he had also said, "Oh Solomon, my son, my son," and earnestly considered what a good son he had who was still alive, it would have greatly pacified his spirit. Reflecting on the many mercies we have experienced will be an excellent means to bolster our hearts in the face of any present affliction we endure.

[Consideration 2] Secondly, if you want to keep yourselves in check when it comes to your sorrows, consider that God often takes away creature comforts and contentments from His people to make way for greater mercy and blessings to replace them. This can be clearly seen in the case of David. God took away a child that was born out of wedlock, and in its place, He gave him Solomon, a lawfully begotten and better child. This consideration actually upheld David's heart, as expressed in Psalm 71: "You have shown me great and sore troubles; but you shall bring me up again from the depths of the earth, and shall increase my greatness and comfort me on every side." If we seriously consider this, it will help us bear losses and troubles. What if this or that comfort is taken away? Perhaps God has a gracious purpose in it, to make way for the bestowing of an even greater mercy in its place. Would you be angry with someone who tears down your smoky cottage if they intend to build a stately palace for you in its place? Every mercy that God takes away from you, He will give something greater in return. As the prophet told Amaziah, who spent his resources on the Israelites, "The Lord is able to give you much more than this." This is precisely how God dealt with Job, as you can see by comparing the first and last chapters of the book. The Lord took away all Job's possessions and wealth but gave him twice

as much as before. He lost 7,000 sheep, but God later gave him 14,000. He lost 3,000 camels, but God gave him 6,000. He lost 500 yoke of oxen and 500 female donkeys, but God restored double. The case of Job can serve as an example and source of encouragement for Christians in all ages to patiently wait upon God, humbly submitting to His providence. As the Apostle James said in James 5:11, "You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the purpose of the Lord, that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful." This example should strengthen your hearts during times of affliction. The Lord takes away small mercies to make room for greater ones. It is worth noting how this consideration worked with Isaac. His mother Sarah had recently passed away, but to compensate for his loss, God gave him Rebekah as his wife. It is said in Genesis 24:67, "She became his wife, and he loved her, and Isaac was comforted after his mother's death."

[Consideration 3] 3. Consider that excessive sorrow for the loss of one comfort embitters all your other present comforts. Therefore, be cautious of introducing this bitterness among your joys. Excessive sorrow is like a worm in a nut that eats away all the sweetness of the kernel, leaving nothing but the shell. In the case of Haman, it was just so. He boasted to his friends and his wife about his riches, numerous children, and the honour bestowed upon him by the king, elevating him above the princes and servants. Surely, you would think this man was flourishing. However, Haman confessed, "Yet all this avails me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate and not showing me reverence or bowing down to me." Here, we see the curse of God upon him, for he could not enjoy any of his blessings with comfort because Mordecai did not show him respect. Similarly, as previously mentioned in the case of Jacob, excessive sorrow for one affliction diminishes the joy of all our blessings.

[Consideration 4] 4. To alleviate immoderate sorrow, consider that you have within yourself a greater cause for exceeding joy than anything outside of you can be a cause for excessive sorrow. As

Proverbs 14:14 says, "A good man will be satisfied from himself." A godly person has reason to rejoice within themselves, regardless of what happens in the world. We read in Luke 17:21, when the disciples desired a temporal earthly kingdom, Jesus told them that the kingdom of God was within them. If we have the grace of Christ and so forth, even if we have nothing else, that is a greater cause for exceeding joy than any other lack can be for excessive sorrow. What if we have nothing in this world? God is our portion, and we have an inheritance reserved for us with the saints in light. What if our purses are empty? We possess a true treasure that cannot be corrupted by moth or stolen by thieves. What if our cupboards are empty of bread? Every day, we partake of the bread of life—the precious body and blood of Christ. What if our good name is slandered? Our names are written in the Book of Life. In every way, we have more cause for joy within ourselves than we have for sorrow outside of us. As Esau said, "I have enough," Jacob also said the same, but the word signifies, "I have all." Yet, Jacob was poorer than Esau. "He has everything who has Him who possesses all things."

[Consideration 5] 5. Consider that the comfort for which you excessively mourn its absence may have turned out to be a greater burden and trouble if God had continued it. An example of this can be found in Genesis 30:5. It tells the story of Rachel, a woman consumed by impatience, passion, and sorrow due to her lack of children. She cried out to her husband, "Give me children, or else I die." Eventually, her desire was granted, and she who had cried for children or else death received them. However, in the process of childbirth, Rachel died (Genesis 35:16-18). God can turn the very comforts we desire into burdens. Similarly, had God granted David the life of his child, it would have been a living reminder of his shame, and all who knew the child would have said, "There goes David's illegitimate child."

I once heard a godly minister share a story about visiting a neighbour whose child was critically ill. The mother was overwhelmed with grief and refused to be comforted. The minister asked her, "Why do you

grieve so much? If your child were to live, it might become a scourge and cause you great vexation by engaging in wicked and sinful behaviour." The mother replied, "I wouldn't care if my child recovered, even if he were hanged afterward." Astonishingly, the child did recover but was later executed for some heinous act he had committed. In hindsight, it would have been a greater mercy and a thousand times better for the mother to have seen her child buried before he came to such an unfortunate end. I share this story to demonstrate that God can transform the very comforts we value and hold dear into crosses to bear. Therefore, this consideration should temper excessive sorrow over the loss of any worldly comfort.

[Consideration 6] 6. Consider that all the worldly crosses for which you grieve, no matter how great they may be, are temporary. This is the argument the Apostle uses in the text: "Brethren, the time is short, so those who weep should be as if they wept not." Although your afflictions may be heavy, they will not last long. Therefore, be patient in enduring them. Despite their magnitude, their brevity makes them bearable. The Apostle emphasises this in 2 Corinthians 4:17: "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." Similarly, God declares, "For a moment have I forsaken thee, but in everlasting loving kindness will I have mercy on thee." Our afflictions are measured in days and hours, while our mercies are measured in years, indicating the fleeting nature of the time we endure hardships in this world. They will soon pass, and like clouds, the sun will break through them. When Athanasius was banished, he remarked that it was but a small cloud and would soon pass. A martyr said to his companion, "Close your eyes, and the next time they open, it will be in another world."

[Consideration 7] 7. Consider that through excessive sorrow, you do not alleviate or diminish your afflictions but rather provoke God to continue and intensify them. I mentioned this in the morning. Just as a stubborn child who throws tantrums, cries, and acts out does not dissuade their father from disciplining them but rather invites more

punishment, the more excessive we are in our sorrows, the heavier afflictions God often lays upon us. What Christ said about worries applies here: "Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature?" Similarly, we can ask, "Which of you by excessive sorrow can even slightly diminish your affliction?" The way to remove our afflictions is to accept the consequences of our sins. A child who humbly submits, seeks forgiveness for their wrongdoing, and promises to improve often avoids many blows of discipline.

[Consideration 8] 8. Consider that any outward comfort in this world, for which you excessively mourn, is no better than what any wicked person may possess, and you could well be without it. Is it for the lack of wealth, honour, children, and so on? Look, wicked individuals may have all these, so why should you be so troubled for the loss of something that even a reprobate can enjoy? Truly, if it were the loss of Christ, heaven, and eternal happiness, we could never mourn enough for the loss of those. However, in the loss of these external blessings, we lose no more than what a damned wretch may have. The things we mourn for are not of the worth and value we attribute to them. I once read a story about two godly men named Anthony and Didymus. Didymus, despite being blind, possessed excellent qualities. Anthony asked him if he was troubled by it. Yes, said Didymus. But Anthony replied, "Will you grieve for the lack of what flies and dogs may have, rather than rejoice that you possess what angels have?"

[Consideration 9] 9. To alleviate your excessive sorrow, consider that whatever loss or affliction God inflicts upon you in this life, He genuinely intends it for your benefit and gain. So why should any misfortune trouble you, knowing that God intends good for you through it all? In the end, you will be compelled to say, "It is good for me that I was afflicted, and in His faithfulness, He has afflicted me." Consider Salmeron's observation on John 3: Suppose a person throws a precious pearl or diamond at you and accidentally hits your hand, but you are allowed to keep the diamond. Would you consider it an injury? This is how God deals with us; He turns our losses into

gain and all our crosses into comforts. Imagine a person who is heavily in debt and desperately needs money even for basic sustenance. If this person goes to a friend and reveals their condition, begging for assistance, and that friend takes out a large bag of money or gold from their chest and throws it at them, hurting them in the process, do you think they would take it as unkind? Certainly not. Similarly, every affliction that God allows us to experience will work for our good. We can say, as Joseph did to his brothers, "Though you intended this for my harm, God intended and turned it for my good." So, when someone wrongs or injures us, we can say to them, "Though you intended harm, God will bring benefit and advantage to me through it." The Lord never intends harm for us but only good through all the afflictions He allows. All afflictions, like Jonathan's rod, have honey on the top. Therefore, let us bear them patiently. You would be furious if an enemy drew blood from you, but if a doctor were to take away much more from you for the sake of your health and well-being, you would not take offense. Be persuaded, therefore, to be patient in the face of all worldly crosses and troubles, knowing that God intends your good and promotes your spiritual growth through them so that as your afflictions abound, your consolations in Christ may abound even more.

[Consideration 10] 10. Consider that people superior to you have been in equally bad or worse conditions than you, so let this lessen your sorrows. It is true, indeed, if we were in such a dire state that no one else had experienced, we might have some excuse for our excessive sorrow. However, none of us are afflicted alone. Those who are far better off than us have faced great crosses and afflictions. In 1 Peter 5:9, the Apostle exhorts them to resist the Devil with steadfastness, knowing that the same afflictions are experienced by their brethren in the world. There is no one now in such a wretched condition that others have not been, are not, or will not be in equally sorrowful circumstances. No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to mankind, for God is faithful and will not let you be tempted beyond your ability. Have you lost a significant estate? Well, Job lost more than you ever did. He lost seven thousand sheep, three

thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen, five hundred female donkeys. He lost everything, not even a shred of outward comfort remained. Therefore, since others have faced the same affliction, why shouldn't you be content? But perhaps you will say, "I have lost my children." Job lost more children than you ever did. He lost ten children in one day, taken away by untimely death. However, it may be that even though you have lost many children, they passed away peacefully, and that can bring comfort to your heart. Others have been in worse conditions than you, and yet they endured it patiently. Despite all the afflictions Job endured, he did not sin or utter a word against God.

And so, our Lord Jesus Christ, was a man of sorrows. He said, "Foxes have dens, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head." Jesus Christ, though the heir of all things, was as poor as you have ever been. Therefore, let these considerations steady your hearts in whatever afflictions may befall you in this world, for the Lord knows the imminent danger we still face.

[Consideration 11] 11. To prevent excessive sorrow for the loss of any earthly comfort, consider that your sorrow is misplaced until it is directed towards sin. Your sorrow runs in the wrong channel and is misaligned until it focuses on sin. If you grieve over worldly things, you divert your sorrow from its rightful place. It is a waste to use precious water to clean a filthy room. Sin should be the primary object of our sorrow, and our tears deviate from their proper course when we fail to grieve for sin, whether directly or indirectly. God has promised to collect and preserve the tears shed for sin, but not for any other cause. The tears we shed for worldly things are merely wasted, flowing in vain and not collected in God's bottles. Indeed, my brethren, there are no worldly afflictions that deserve our sorrow or tears. Would you not consider someone mad who throws pearls or diamonds at a pear tree, thus losing them? Similarly, it is a pity to waste tears on the things of this world, to squander such precious commodities on every trivial occasion.

[Consideration 12] 12. Consider that excessive sorrow for the world will hinder and disrupt your mourning for sin. Just as when a vein is opened in the arm and the blood flows out there, hindering and diverting it from its usual course, so when you are immersed in sorrow and discontent over worldly losses or crosses, it diverts and obstructs the natural flow of your tears, preventing you from mourning for sin.

And thus, I have concluded these twelve considerations, along with the three queries. I have explained when sorrow becomes excessive, and I have provided reasons why Christians should not mourn immoderately for worldly matters. Furthermore, I have presented twelve considerations to guide you in avoiding excessive mourning over the loss of any external comfort.

SERMON 3

[Question 4] I have one more query to address, which is, in the fourth place, to guide you on the rules or aids you should employ in order to keep your sorrows for worldly troubles in check, to weep as if you did not weep. I will also provide you with 11 or 12 directions for fulfilling this duty.

1. To control your sorrow, consider those things for which you excessively grieve as insignificant. You may say it is childish to cry over nothing, yet we often engage in such childish behavior, grieving, mourning, and weeping over mere trifles. If we seriously reflect on this when we mourn the loss of certain comforts, it would alleviate our sorrows, as we would realize they are nothing substantial. But you may argue, "My business fails, a significant portion of my wealth is lost, and you call this

nothing?" Yes, I do, for that is how the Scriptures refer to them. Solomon says in Proverbs 23:5, "Will you set your heart on that which is nothing? For riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away." If that is the case, why should we set our hearts so much on them as to grieve over their absence? When King Agrippa arrived to pass judgment on Paul, it is said in Acts 25:23 that he came with great pomp. However, in the original text, it is described as "a great fancy." These worldly pomp and comforts are mere fancies and insignificances compared to the weighty matters of salvation. Christ himself said, "There is only one thing necessary," and that is to have an interest in Him. It is not necessary for you to possess riches and worldly honour; the only essential thing is to have Christ. Therefore, why should we waste our time and exert ourselves for things that are not nourishment for our souls and offer no true profit? These are mere nothings. How childish was Haman's reaction when, despite enjoying numerous privileges and dignities such as the King's favour, dining at the King's table, and riding on the King's horse, he became so grieved and troubled because Mordecai would not pay him homage? It was such a trivial matter that disrupted all his comforts. Similarly, Ahab could not have Naboth's vineyard even though he possessed many of his own. Many individuals allow themselves to be overwhelmed with sorrow for poor, insignificant matters. Seneca describes a person who possesses a grand house, beautiful orchards and gardens with plentiful fruit, yet grieves because a few leaves fall off.

2. If you want to keep your sorrows in check, be careful not to place an excessive and immoderate love on any worldly comfort you enjoy. When you love something too much while having it, you will grieve too much for its loss. Therefore, do not let your hearts be attached to any comfort in this world. Let the comforts of the world be like gloves to your hands, not like the skin to your flesh. You cannot remove the skin from your flesh without great pain and torment, but you can easily take off your gloves without any trouble. If your hearts are too strongly attached to the love

of worldly things, the loss of those things you loved excessively will provoke you to excessive sorrow and grief. A person will never grieve for the loss of something they hate, but for that which they love. You can never control your sorrow if you do not control your love. It is similar to a picture. If you place it in a frame and hang it on the wall, you can easily take it down. But if you glue it to the wall, you cannot remove it without tearing it to pieces. Similarly, if your love for the world is like a picture glued to the wall, you will not part with worldly things without experiencing great sorrow, trouble, and vexation. It is said of Jacob that when he heard his son Joseph was dead, he wept and refused to be comforted. The reason was his excessive love for Joseph, more than for all the others. His overwhelming love for Joseph caused him to sorrow so much in his absence.

3. Consider all the comforts in this world as perishable and uncertain. God, in His wisdom, has not made any comfort here below permanent. Regard your comforts as mutable and fleeting. Have you lost a child? Say, "I knew beforehand that I had brought forth a mortal child." There is an appointed time for all of us to die, and the comforts we enjoy in this world are not like an anchor at the bottom of the sea that holds fast during a storm, but rather like a flag on top of a mast that turns with every wind. Therefore, since even in your greatest comfort you are subject to sudden change, why should you excessively mourn their loss and grieve so much for that which you may lose at any moment? One should detach oneself from things that can be lost and not give in to certain sorrows for the loss of such uncertain comforts.
4. If you want to keep your sorrow in check, consider that you have no reason to grieve over the loss of worldly things if God provides you with enough for the necessities of life, even if not in abundance for pleasure and indulgence. Having food and clothing, let us be content with that. If you have bread, even if not fancy treats, be content with it. If you have clothing, even if

not adorned with ornaments, still be content. If you have enough food and clothing, even if they are simple, only sufficient to sustain life, you have no reason to complain, but rather to be content. Jacob was a wealthier man than any of you listening to me today, yet he said in Genesis 28:20, "If God will give me bread to eat and clothing to wear, it shall be enough for me." If the Lord provides us with food and clothing, even if the food is plain and the clothing is modest, we should be content and say, "It shall be enough for me." Even if God does not give us abundance for our enjoyment and convenience, if He gives us enough to meet our needs, we should be content and have no cause for excessive sorrow in that regard.

5. Avoid doing anything that may remind you of your past or present afflictions, causing your sorrows to resurface. Beloved, it is a harmful practice that many people engage in when they have lost a loved one, such as a spouse, parent, or child. They keep looking at pictures, clothes, or any other belongings of the departed, which only renews their grief and opens up fresh wounds. Do not engage in activities that bring your sorrows to mind. An example of this can be found in Genesis 35:17-18. It is mentioned there that when Rachel was dying and giving birth to a child, she named him Benoni, meaning "son of my sorrow." However, Jacob did not allow the child to be called by that name; instead, he named him Benjamin, meaning "son of my right hand." The reason for this, as explained by theologians, is that if Jacob had let the child be called by the name Rachel gave, it would have constantly reminded him of the loss of his wife, who died during childbirth, and thus revived his grief and sorrow. Therefore, we should avoid recalling our afflictions in ways that renew our sorrows.
6. If you want to keep your sorrows in check, spend more time meditating on and contemplating divine things. The reason you mourn so much for earthly matters is because you do not meditate enough on heavenly things. If your thoughts were

focused on divine and spiritual matters, the joy derived from them would overshadow your sorrow for any worldly loss. Adam, in his state of innocence, was so absorbed in conversation with God that he did not even notice his own nakedness. I have read about the eagle, which has a disposition contrary to all other birds. When other birds are hurt or in need, they cry out and make noise—cranes chatter, doves mourn, ravens croak. But the eagle, in contrast, flies high towards the sun and delights in its warm rays. Beloved, I urge you to be eagle-like in your meditations, soaring heavenward, lifting your thoughts to spiritual and heavenly matters. This would greatly alleviate your sorrows over the loss of any worldly comfort.

7. Strive to mourn more for sin, and then you will mourn less for outward afflictions. When your conscience is deeply affected by a repentant sorrow for sin, your sorrow for the loss of worldly comforts will diminish. Oh, beloved, if you direct your sorrows towards sin, it will divert them from any other object, for when the soul is in a state of weeping over sin, it recognizes sin as such a great evil that no other evil in the world can be a greater cause for sorrow. Therefore, if you want to weep as if you did not weep for outward troubles, weep more for sin and the corruptions that exist in your own hearts. I can say of sorrow what is said of fear in Isaiah 8:12-13. The text says, "Do not call conspiracy all that this people calls conspiracy, and do not fear what they fear, nor be in dread. But the Lord of hosts, him you shall honor as holy. Let him be your fear, and let him be your dread." Those who fear the Lord will not fear men; those who possess a godly fear will not have a worldly fear. Similarly, if you have a godly sorrow for sin, it will prevent you from experiencing immoderate sorrow for worldly matters. Therefore, I would suggest that when you find your sorrows welling up over the loss of worldly comforts and things going awry in your earthly life, you consider that you have greater evils to mourn for and much more reason to direct your sorrows towards sin than any external cross or affliction.

8. If you want to reduce excessive worldly sorrow, balance your outward needs with your inward and spiritual blessings, and compare your external crosses with your internal comforts. See if the scale of your spiritual blessings does not significantly outweigh the other. If God grants you spiritual mercies that surpass your outward afflictions, you have more reason to rejoice than to mourn. David followed this course in 2 Samuel 23:5. He said, "Although my house is not so with God, yet he has made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and secure. For will he not cause to prosper all my help and my desire?" In other words, David acknowledged that even though he did not possess an abundance of worldly happiness, it did not matter to him because God had made an everlasting covenant with him, ordered in all things and secure. Though things may go wrong externally, all is well within. God has made a covenant with me, and that is all I desire and all my salvation. Therefore, if you, like David, balance your external crosses with your internal comforts, you will find more cause for joy than for outward sorrow. A righteous person, as Solomon says, is satisfied from within; they have within them something that brings comfort regardless of their external circumstances.

You who are burdened with worldly sorrow, reason with yourselves in this manner: What if my condition is difficult, and I lack the necessities of this life, not even having a home to rest my head in; or if I do have one, it is but a humble and smoky cottage? Yet why should I be troubled, knowing that I have a heavenly home, not built by human hands, but eternal in the heavens? Though I may have no earthly dwelling, Christ has gone ahead of me to prepare a place for me in heaven. What if I have a modest income and can barely make ends meet despite my hard work and efforts throughout the year? God is my portion, and I have an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Christ. What if I am in debt and constantly in danger of being arrested and imprisoned whenever I go out? Yet my great debt has been paid, for Christ has satisfied divine justice on my behalf. I will never go to the prison of hell for all eternity. What if I

have no money in my purse to buy bread? I have a treasure in heaven that will never be depleted. What if I have scarce clothing to cover my nakedness? I have the righteous robe of Christ to cover my sinful nakedness. And though I may have little food and drink to satisfy my hunger, I am nourished by the bread of life, the Lord Jesus Christ. What if I am reproached, slandered, and defamed in my good name? Yet my name is written in the book of life. And though I may not possess any land here to enjoy, I am an heir to a kingdom. A prince disguised in a foreign country may face mistreatment, but it does not trouble him greatly. Why? Because he is the heir to a crown and knows that when he is in his own kingdom, he will be respected. Beloved, let these inward and spiritual blessings alleviate all worldly sorrow. Consider that if you balance your spiritual blessings with your material needs and your inner comforts with your external losses, the former will infinitely outweigh the latter.

9. If you want to keep your sorrows under control, then make the most of the blessings you receive and minimize the difficulties you endure. It is characteristic of a sorrowful spirit to magnify afflictions and belittle blessings. But if you want to avoid excessive sorrow, you should magnify and appreciate God's mercies towards you, while diminishing and downplaying your afflictions in your thoughts. This will increase your gratitude and decrease your tendency to complain and be sorrowful. Consider that even the smallest mercy you receive is more than you deserve, while the greatest affliction you endure is much less than what you truly deserve. Also, remember that you came into this world with nothing, and you cannot take anything with you when you leave. If you escape the torment of hell in the hereafter, it is a greater mercy than if you were to enjoy all the treasures and pleasures of the world. Yet many people, when faced with a single day of adversity, dwell on their misery and amplify their sorrows, without considering the abundance of mercies that God has bestowed upon them. You have more reason to rejoice when God grants you the smallest mercy than to complain when He allows the greatest affliction to befall you.

10. Compare your afflictions with those of others who have endured greater sufferings with more patience and less sorrow than you have. Consider the patience of Job and the outcome that the Lord brought about for him. You have never experienced the level of loss that Job did—he lost 7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels, 500 yoke of oxen, 500 female donkeys, and even his seven sons and three daughters, all in one day. He endured immense physical misery and was reduced to sitting on a dung heap, and yet he remained patient through it all. So, reflect on the fact that better individuals than yourself have faced greater miseries, troubles, and afflictions, yet they displayed much more patience and less sorrow and grief than you. The Apostle Peter encouraged people to practice patience in times of suffering, reminding them that the same kind of afflictions were experienced by their brethren in the world. Paul also emphasized in 1 Corinthians 10:13 that no trial has overtaken them except what is common to mankind. Moreover, even Jesus Christ Himself endured numerous afflictions and hardships, yet He did not utter a word of complaint. Like a sheep before its shearers, He remained silent. Those who possess more grace experience less mercy than you, and those who have fewer sins endure more afflictions.

11. To ease your sorrow and keep it in check, consider that it is better for you at your worst than it is for wicked men at their best. If you deeply ponder on this, it will significantly alleviate excessive sorrow. "A little that a righteous man has is better than the riches of many wicked," as stated in Proverbs 15:6. In the house of the righteous, there is much treasure, but in the revenues of the wicked, there is trouble. Note that it does not say "in the revenues of the righteous" but "in the house of the righteous." A righteous person's house may be a poor cottage, a beggar's abode without a chair to sit on, a fire to warm oneself, or food to sustain them. Yet, Solomon says that in the house of the righteous, there is much treasure. Do wicked men also have treasure? No, in the revenues of the wicked, there is much

trouble. It is not mentioned in the house of the wicked but in their revenues that trouble abounds. God's curse rests upon everything a wicked person possesses. The humble cottage of a righteous person holds more treasure and happiness than the vast riches of the wicked. Even in their worst state, a godly person is better off than a wicked person in their best state. "Better is a little with righteousness than great revenues without right," as stated in Proverbs 16:8. A little with the fear of God is superior to abundant possessions that a wicked person possesses. Now, will you take this to heart? Even if you are under great afflictions and have lost an estate, a spouse, children, friends, or anything else, remember that you are a godly person. I assure you that in your worst condition, you are better off than a wicked person in their best state. Although there may be little or nothing in your house, there is great treasure. And though a wicked person may have much in their house, there is also a great deal of trouble and sorrow. I have only one more consideration to share, and then I am finished.

12. If you want to alleviate excessive sorrow over worldly setbacks, consider that you will live much happier by being content with what you have than by grieving excessively over what you lack. By doing so, you only inflict numerous sorrows upon yourself. A person may be wealthy and engaged in extensive trade, yet still be miserable, with a hellish conscience and a hellish family. Therefore, if you cannot align your mind with your circumstances, you must adjust your mindset to align with your situation. The comfort of life does not lie in riches but in being content with your condition. So, instead of mourning and grieving over what you lack, bless God for what you possess. Mourning excessively for what you lack will only make your life uncomfortable and filled with trouble and sorrow. Take the Apostle's advice from Hebrews 13:5: "Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have." And with this, I have concluded the twelve helps or considerations to keep your sorrows in check.

Now, let us turn to the reproof, addressing those who mourn over every trivial and insignificant loss they encounter in the world. They are like fountains, pouring out rivers of tears for any worldly setbacks or afflictions. Yet, when God calls for mourning, weeping, and repentance, their heads are like rocks that cannot shed a single tear. Although they can mourn over minor and light afflictions, they cannot shed a tear for their own sins or the sins of the nation. These individuals deserve reproach for their misplaced sorrow.

SERMON 4

I will now further elaborate on this point: if it is true that Christians must be cautious of excessive sorrow and weep as if they did not weep for worldly afflictions, then this doctrine will give rise to three cautions, which in turn will raise three moral dilemmas.

[Caution] 1. Be careful not to fall into the error of pretending that your excessive sorrow for worldly setbacks is merely a natural sensitivity to your afflictions, and nothing more. I give you this caution because people have a tendency, when reproofed for their immoderate sorrows, to make excuses and say, "Shouldn't I be allowed to mourn for my sins and be sensitive to God's hand upon me?" [Case 1] Now, because people are prone to misunderstand this matter, I will address this moral dilemma concerning it. I will explain the distinction between a person who has only a natural sensitivity to God's hand upon them and one who mourns and grieves excessively. I will differentiate between genuine grieving and a passionate outpouring of emotions. I will do so through the following six points.

1. When there is only a natural sensitivity, a genuine grieving for worldly setbacks, it tends to motivate and invigorate the soul

towards religious duties rather than hinder or interrupt them. This is why we often find weeping accompanied by prayer and supplication in Scripture. For instance, it is said that Jacob wept and made supplication, and in Jeremiah 3:21, a voice was heard on the high places, weeping and supplications of the children of Israel. Similarly, in Jeremiah 31:9, they shall come with weeping, and with supplication I will lead them. Judges 2:5-6 records that the children of Israel at Bochim lifted up their voice and wept, and sacrificed to the Lord. These passages demonstrate that sorrow, which is only a natural sensitivity to God's hand, actually stimulates and encourages the soul in its duties rather than rendering it unfit. On the contrary, excessive sorrow makes a person unfit for prayer, reading, hearing the word, or any other holy duty. As in Psalm 77:4, Asaph was so overwhelmed with sorrow that he could not speak. And in Exodus 6:9, your sorrow is excessive when it hinders you from performing holy duties.

2. When there is only a genuine grieving and a natural sensitivity to worldly setbacks, it sparks in the heart a sympathetic and compassionate feeling towards the troubles of others. Such a person will have compassionate sentiments towards others who are in distress, just as they have for themselves. Job 30:25, Job says, "Did not I weep for him that was in trouble? Was not my soul grieved for the poor?" However, when sorrow is excessive, you become so preoccupied with your own troubles that you have no pity for others who are in similar conditions.
3. When there is only a natural sensitivity to worldly setbacks, the soul maintains an awareness of the many mercies it enjoys, alongside the afflictions and sufferings it endures. A natural sensitivity to afflictions does not diminish the comfort and enjoyment of present mercies. There is an appreciation for the mercies experienced, as well as the afflictions endured. However, in excessive sorrow, the very sense of your troubles and crosses takes away and embitters all your past or present

mercies. In Numbers 16:12-13, there is a significant insight from God's perspective. The land referred to by these people is Egypt, where they were once in bondage and slavery. Yet, when they faced afflictions in the wilderness, they forgot about the deliverance from the bondage in Egypt and described it as a land flowing with milk and honey. Excessive sorrow for afflictions completely diminishes the sense of the mercies you actually enjoy.

4. When there is only a natural sensitivity to worldly setbacks, prayer to God or a promise from God can bring peace to the heart. This can be seen in the example of Hannah in 1 Samuel 1:18-19. She was distressed about not having a child, but what did she do? She prayed and said, "Let your maidservant find favor in your sight." So the woman went her way, ate, and her countenance was no longer sad. After pouring out her heart in prayer to God, she found comfort, went about her day, and was no longer sad. Your sorrow is genuine when turning to God in prayer can calm your heart.

Similarly, when a promise from God brings you comfort, like it did for David in Psalm 119:50. He said, "This is my comfort in my affliction, for your word has given me life." The promise of God's word brought him comfort. In verse 92, he declared, "If your law had not been my delight, I would have perished in my affliction." And in verse 107, he said, "I am severely afflicted; revive me, O Lord, according to your word." Your sorrow is moderate when either prayer to God or a promise from God can bring peace to your heart. On the other hand, your sorrows are excessive when even all the promises in the Bible cannot calm you, and no prayer to God can bring you comfort. This was the case with Job in Job 9:16. He said, "If I called and He answered me, yet I would not believe that He listened to my voice." So, beloved, take note: if you have experienced numerous worldly crosses and troubles, and no prayer or promise could bring you comfort, it is an indication that your sorrows were excessive.

5. When there is only a natural sensitivity to worldly setbacks, the soul still justifies God despite all afflictions and condemns oneself, acknowledging that one's own sin is the cause of these crosses. We have an example of this in Lamentations 1:18, "The Lord is righteous; for I have rebelled against His command." And in Daniel 9:14, "The Lord is righteous in all His works which He does, for we have sinned against Him." Similarly, David in Psalm 51:3 says, "For I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is always before me." Your sorrow is genuine when you can justify God and take shame upon yourself. However, when sorrow becomes vexing and excessive, a sinner may rebel against God, justifying oneself and considering God to be severe and cruel in His ways. This was the case with Job in Job 16:17, where he blamed God and justified himself, indicating excessive sorrow. Isaiah 8:21 describes a state of sorrow where afflictions lead people to curse their King and their God, thinking ill of God and justifying themselves. Solomon also speaks of the foolishness of man perverting his way and his heart fretting against the Lord in Proverbs 19:3.

6. When there is only a natural sensitivity under the hand of God, there is a willingness to listen to comforting counsel from the Word of God to uphold the heart in times of affliction. Job 33 speaks of Job opening his ears to counsel when God laid afflictions upon him. When you are humbled by afflictions and willing to hear the voice of correction and the counsel found in the Word of God to uphold and support your spirits, then your sorrow is in order and acceptable to God. However, when sorrow is excessive, a person becomes resistant to receiving any instruction or comfort from friends who seek to console them. Asaph in Psalm 77:2 says that his soul refused to be comforted when he was overwhelmed with sorrow. It is similar to Rachel, who would not be comforted when her children were gone, as mentioned in Matthew 2:18. The women of Bethlehem wept and mourned and would not be comforted, indicating their excessive sorrow. When no promise or comfort from the Bible or the Word

of God can ease and quiet the heart, it reveals that such a spirit is overwhelmed with excessive sorrow, vexation, and grief over worldly crosses.

And thus, I have finished discussing the first caution, which warns against attributing excessive sorrow for worldly afflictions solely to a natural sensitivity to the hand of God.

[Caution 2] 2. If it is true that we should not be immoderate in our sorrows for worldly crosses and should weep as if we did not weep, then be cautious not to mistake mourning for sin as solely mourning for outward troubles. Beloved, I offer this caution because people have a tendency, when they have lost a spouse, child, or their wealth, to be greatly distressed. If you ask them why they mourn and grieve so much, they will answer that it is for their sins. They may say, "Will you not allow me to mourn for my sins? It is my sin that is the cause of all my grief, sorrow, and tears. I hope you will understand and permit me to do so." Yes, mourn for your sins in God's name. [Case 2] However, because individuals are prone to deceiving themselves in this matter, I will address another case of conscience: how to discern whether a person excessively sorrows, weeping more for their afflictions than for their sins, more for their troubles and worldly crosses than for their transgressions and offenses against God. I will provide four clear indications of such a person.

1. A person grieves under worldly crosses more for their sin than for their afflictions if they had already grieved and mourned for their sins before they experienced any affliction. It indicates that their grief is directed towards sin rather than affliction when, in times of prosperity, sin deeply troubles their hearts, causing restlessness and unease within them. David exemplified this when he mourned for his sins, even before any affliction or cross came upon him. He wept and lamented, watering his couch with tears, for his transgression with Bathsheba. At that time, he had no external affliction, yet his soul was in turmoil, and his bones found no rest due to his sin. Even when David sat upon the

throne in worldly glory and prosperity, he humbled himself in spiritual shame, all before the sickness of the child. Therefore, if upon self-reflection, you find that you wept and mourned for your sins and corruptions before any affliction befell you, including the present one, you can conclude that your sorrow is primarily for sin rather than worldly afflictions. However, if a person claims to grieve for sin, yet their sins never troubled them throughout their lifetime, their corruptions never pained their hearts or troubled their consciences before, it reveals that their mourning and weeping is more for afflictions than for their sin.

2. A person mourns more for sin than for affliction when they exert greater effort to remove sins from their soul than to alleviate afflictions in their body. When your soul's greatest request and the care of your heart is to have your sins removed rather than your afflictions, it indicates a focus on mourning for sin rather than for affliction. In Hosea 14:2, the plea is, "Oh Lord, take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously." They did not say, "Oh Lord, take away affliction," even though they were facing many afflictions at the time. Instead, they asked for the removal of iniquity and sought God's gracious acceptance. On the contrary, someone who desires primarily to have their troubles removed rather than their sins indicates that they mourn for affliction rather than for sin. A similar example is seen in Pharaoh when God's judgments afflicted him with thunder, hail, frogs, lice, and livestock disease. Pharaoh asked Moses to entreat the Lord to stop the mighty thunderings and hail, seeking relief from the plagues. However, he never requested the removal of his sin or the hardness of his heart. If you cry out, "Oh Lord, take away this cross or affliction from me," but never pray for the removal of your sins and the subduing of your corruptions, it is an indication that you mourn more for affliction than for sin.

3. If, when faced with the choice between committing a sin and continuing in affliction, you would rather endure the affliction than commit the sin, it demonstrates that you grieve for sin more than for affliction. For example, when a person finds themselves in a low and deteriorating condition, experiencing a failure in their trade and depletion of their resources, if they are more troubled by the sin that led them to that condition rather than the affliction itself, they will refrain from committing a sin to recover and restore their losses. Even if they know that committing such a sin could provide a solution, they would choose not to do so. The same applies in any other situation. I once read a story about a nobleman whose son and heir was believed to be bewitched. Some advised him to consult a witch to have his son cured and released from the bewitchment. However, he firmly refused, stating that he would rather have the witch take his son than have him in the hands of the devil. But if you have no qualms about committing a sin to avoid or alleviate an affliction, if you are willing to break the boundaries of God's commands to escape a temporary discomfort caused by affliction, it indicates that you mourn more for your crosses and afflictions than for your sins. It reveals that you have never grieved as much for your own corruption as you have for your external troubles. As Job 36:21 states, those who turn to witches, wizards, and fortune-tellers in times of distress, following the example of Saul consulting the witch of Endor, demonstrate that they grieve more for affliction than for sin.
4. If you mourn for sin, the true joy that arises from the forgiveness of sin will overwhelm the grief caused by any worldly cross or affliction, and it will also enable you to endure them with patience. The person who grieves most for sin is the one who, when their sin is forgiven, grieves the least for outward troubles. The comfort of having one's sins forgiven brings greater joy than the continuation of any affliction can bring sorrow. We see an example of this in Isaiah 33:24, where it says, "The people dwelling there will no longer say, 'I am sick'; the forgiven sins of

those who live in that land will take away their sickness." These people may be like a ship in a great storm, with a broken mast and loose sails, having lost all their equipment. Yet, they will not say they are sick because the Lord has forgiven their sins. The awareness of their forgiveness should diminish the sense of pain in their present sufferings. When you experience this, it is evidence that your trouble was more for sin than for affliction. However, when a person is more troubled by their afflictions than their sins, they will grieve even if they are assured of their sins being forgiven and of their future inheritance of glory. Despite all the assurances of sin's forgiveness, their impatience remains. With this, I have concluded the second caution, which warns against mistaking mourning for sin for mere outward troubles and afflictions.

Before I move on to the third caution, allow me to bring it closer to your hearts with a few words of application. I will use what has been discussed in these two queries for reproof and then for exhortation.

1. As a reproof to those who are far from weeping as if they did not weep for afflictions, but instead weep excessively as if their whole bodies were made of a lump of ice that dissolves into tears when scorched by the sun of affliction. How many people are easily drawn to excessive sorrow for worldly crosses! We often say that when a person weeps, they are watering their plants. You know that if you water your garden plants too much, you drown and kill them. Similarly, when you weep excessively for afflictions, you drown your inner growth and disturb your spirits, making them unfit for any spiritual engagement.
2. This reproves those who, when they come to mourn and weep for their sins and corruptions, are so sparing with their tears that they weep as if they did not weep. A superficial sigh or a few forced tears is the greatest sorrow many people have for their sins. They are like a cloud that easily sheds tears for any outward affliction but like a rock that cannot shed a single tear for sin, for

dishonouring and displeasing God. Many people are like King Louis XIV of France, who always carried a crucifix in his hat and, when he committed gross and abominable sins, would take off his hat, bow to the crucifix, ask for forgiveness, and then think all was well instantly. Most people tend to be shallow and superficial in their grief for sin. But how do you invert the order and guidance of the Apostles here? You weep for sin as if you did not weep and are excessive and immoderate in your worldly sorrows.

As a word of counsel, be persuaded to consider your sins as greater reasons for sorrow and grief than all the afflictions that have ever befallen you. Oh, weep and weep again for your sins, for they are worse and greater evils than all your outward troubles. And to further encourage you in this duty, consider...

First, recognize that sin is the cause or entrance for all your afflictions. If it weren't for sin, you would not have experienced any suffering. Therefore, mourn more for the cause than for the afflictions themselves.

Secondly, afflictions are not as bad as sin because God is the author of all our afflictions, but sin is such an evil that God disclaims it. Even though God is the author of the evil of afflictions, he disclaims being the author of sin.

Thirdly, consider that all outward afflictions are compatible with grace, but many sins are completely incompatible and inconsistent with grace. No matter how great your afflictions may be, you can still be a godly person. You may be as poor as Job or as miserable as Lazarus, enduring any afflictions, and still maintain grace. However, not all sin is compatible with grace, such as the sin against the Holy Spirit, the sin of final impenitence, or the final hardness of heart. These sins are not consistent with grace. Therefore, you have more reason to mourn for sin than for afflictions.

Fourthly, remember that afflictions only affect the body, while sin affects the soul. Afflictions can make the outward person miserable, but sin will destroy and harm the soul, making it miserable. Therefore, be persuaded to weep more for your sins and corruptions than for your sufferings and corrections.

SERMON 5.

[Caution 3] We now come to the third caution, which is this: If we are to weep as if we wept not, then be cautious not to be excessive in your sorrows for sins and corruptions. But before I address this matter, allow me to present three conclusions.

1. [Con. 1] It is possible for a person to weep excessively for their sins. This is mentioned in 2 Corinthians 2:7. The Corinthians feared that the excommunicated individual would be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow for their sin. The Apostle advises them to forgive and comfort the person, so that they would not be consumed by excessive sorrow.
2. [Con. 2] Let it be concluded that there are few individuals in the world who grieve and sorrow excessively for their sins. For every person who errs by grieving too much, there are thousands and thousands who err by grieving too little. There are only a few who display immoderate sorrow for their sins.
3. [Con. 3] Consider that only despondent, doubtful, and despairing sinners grieve excessively for their sins. Obdurate sinners do not grieve at all, and assured Christians do not grieve excessively. It is only those who are disconsolate and despairing who experience excessive sorrow.

Now we come to the third case of conscience, which pertains to when and in what circumstances a person may weep and sorrow excessively for their sins.

I will address this case briefly and provide a resolution.

Firstly, sorrow for sin is excessive when it causes a Christian to focus so much on their corruptions that they overlook their graces. It is akin to a child crying so much and tears streaming down their face that they cannot see their letters or read their book. Similarly, a

Christian grieves excessively for their corruptions when they cannot see or appreciate the graces bestowed upon them by God.

Secondly, you grieve excessively for sin when it condemns and darkens your assurance of Heaven. When a Christian becomes so fixated on their sins and finds so much cause for grief and sorrow in them that they never look into their own heart to see the reasons for joy, such as having assurance of their union with Christ and their right to glory. Beloved, God does not want one grace to overshadow another. Sorrow for sin is a grace, but God does not want it to overshadow spiritual joy. When a Christian grieves for sin to the extent of forsaking all hope of Heaven, their sorrow is excessive. They grieve and cry so much that they cannot read their evidence of heavenly inheritance.

Thirdly, excessive sorrow for sin occurs when it discourages the soul from coming to Christ for forgiveness and pardon. When a person grieves for sin to the extent that they dare not look to Jesus Christ for mercy or grasp onto a promise for comfort, they mourn excessively. Just as the children of Israel in the wilderness, when they were bitten by fiery serpents, needed the boldness to look up to the bronze serpent in order to be healed and restored, so too when sorrow for sin prevents us from looking up to Christ for forgiveness, it becomes excessive. Sorrow and tears for sin are never right until they become like floods of water that drive us to Christ.

Fourthly, sorrow for sin is immoderate when it overwhelms you to the point that you cannot find comfort in the outward blessings that God has bestowed upon you, such as houses, lands, crops, wine, and so on.

When a Christian's sorrow for sin dampens their spirits to the point that they cannot experience the outward joy and lawful contentment in worldly comforts that God allows, then their sorrow is excessive. Although many may think that God intends sin to be so bitter for

them, it is not the case. You must be sorry for sin, yet still find comfort in the outward blessings bestowed upon you by God.

Fifthly, sorrow for sin is excessive when it renders a person incapable of receiving comfort from the Gospel. When a Christian perceives their sin as so great and their condition as so dire that the promises of the Gospel hold no value for them, they believe those promises do not apply to them and find no comfort or sweetness in them. When a person obstinately rejects the comforts of the Gospel due to their sin, their sorrow is excessive. Asaph expressed this in Psalm 77:2, saying, "In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord; my hand was stretched out in the night without ceasing; my soul refused to be comforted." When one's condition is sorrowful, yet they refuse to accept comfort, their sorrow is excessive.

Sixthly, sorrow for sin is immoderate when it disables or hinders a person from fulfilling their duties in their general or specific calling. It incapacitates them from engaging in the duties of their general calling as a Christian, preventing them from praying, reading, conversing, or hearing the Word of God. They isolate themselves and refuse anyone's comfort or conversation. Such sorrow that hinders a person from performing their holy duties is irregular. As stated in Psalm 77:4, "You hold my eyelids open; I am so troubled that I cannot speak." Similarly, sorrow that prevents a person from fulfilling their specific calling as an individual, impeding their ability to work, study, trade, or carry out their particular responsibilities, is excessive sorrow. God expects us to work in our callings, just as we are called to work out our salvation. Therefore, sorrow that hinders and disables us from doing so is excessive and immoderate. Thus, I have explained when sorrow for sin is excessive, providing only the main points, and have also addressed the resolution to the third case of conscience.

[Application] Now let us proceed to the application. If it is true that Christians should not only be cautious about excessive grief for afflictions but also for sin, then be careful not to distort this teaching.

Beware of being obstinate, stubborn, and hard-hearted in sin. Although I tell you that Christians should not be excessive in their sorrow for sin, it does not mean that wicked individuals should be obstinate and unrepentant, never mourning for their sins. No, it would be good for them if they could weep bitterly for their sins. Therefore, you who are obstinate and presumptuous sinners, be cautious not to misuse this teaching. And likewise, for those who consider sin their greatest burden, seeing every small sin as a mountain upon them, be careful not to be so overwhelmed with sorrow that you cannot find any comfort in Christ and in the promises of salvation through Him. Instead, look to the Lord Jesus Christ and recognise that there is more in Him to save you than there is in yourselves to condemn you. Although there may be an abundance of corruption within you, there is a fullness of satisfaction in Christ. He is able to save completely all who come to God through Him. Therefore, all who belong to Christ, neither weep excessively for your sins nor too little. Do not say that you will not grieve or shed tears for them at all. Just as Christ's blood was shed for our sins, we should shed tears for them. However, we must not grieve for them in a way that discourages us from going to Christ or obscures our assurance of Heaven.

[Exhortation] Now, I have only one exhortation remaining, and then I shall conclude. If Christians must strive to weep as if they wept not (as the aim of the text suggests), then let me, in the compassion of Christ, urge all of you who are God's people to labour to fulfil this apostolic guideline. Conduct yourselves as those who have better hopes and greater things to pursue than anything in this earthly realm. Just as before, I provided you with twelve considerations to mitigate and control excessive sorrow, I will now offer you seven or eight additional considerations to help you guard against excessive sorrow. If you seriously contemplate and take them to heart, they can greatly assist in preventing you from falling into immoderate sorrow, no matter what befalls you.

[Consideration 1] First, consider that excessive sorrow for worldly afflictions indicates either a complete absence of grace or an extreme weakness of grace. In some cases, it signifies a total lack of grace. It is like the rusty hinges of a door: when you open or close the door, they creak and make noise, but if you apply some oil, they do not. Similarly, many times Christians, lacking the oil of grace, cannot bear God's rod of affliction without crying out excessively and being impatient under His hand. On the other hand, if it does not indicate a total absence of grace, it is a sign of significant weakness of grace. Just as I have often observed in the streets of London, a new pair of cart wheels squeaks and makes noise as they move, while an old cart goes silently. Likewise, if when God brings afflictions upon you, you are like a new cart, crying out and mourning excessively, it suggests that you are a new and weak Christian. As Solomon said, "If you faint in the day of adversity, your strength is small." However, a Christian who has been long accustomed to troubles and afflictions can bear a heavy burden without making a noise.

[Consideration 2] Another consideration to prevent excessive sorrow is this: recognise that whatever crosses befall you in the world, they are merely manifestations and executions of God's will, which is the standard of order and justice. His dealings are inherently good and just. If God's will is done, even if it goes against your own, it does not matter. This is what kept David from excessive sorrow in 2 Samuel 12:21-22. David's servants were surprised that he fasted and wept while his child was alive, but when the child died, he got up, ate, and was no longer sad. David explained that while the child was still alive, he fasted and wept, hoping that God might be gracious and spare the child's life. But now that the child is dead, why should he mourn? Can he bring the child back? He acknowledged that he would go to the child someday, but the child would not return to him. Seeing that God's will had been accomplished, why should he grieve? He decided to remain silent and not complain because the Lord had brought it about (Psalm 39:9).

[Consideration 3] 3. Consider that before your conversion, you never grieved over the lack of grace and spiritual blessings. So why should you weep for worldly things after your conversion when you have obtained spiritual mercies? Reflect on the fact that before your conversion, you were content with outward worldly comforts and were not troubled by the absence of grace, hopes of Heaven, or reconciliation with God. You did not grieve for these things. Therefore, now that you have Christ, should you grieve because you lack ordinary and common blessings of worldly things? As a Christian, you should have a holy indignation towards yourself. If, before my conversion, I could not grieve for the lack of grace, now that I have grace, I will not grieve for the lack of outward comforts. There is infinitely more reason to grieve for the absence of spiritual mercies than temporal ones.

[Consideration 4] 4. To keep worldly sorrow at bay, consider that God never imposes any outward cross or affliction on His people except for sin, either as punishment, prevention, or purification.

First, it may be for the punishment of your sins. If it is for the punishment of your sin, then if you mourn for anything, mourn for your sins that caused it, rather than for the affliction itself, which is merely the result of your sin. Accept the punishment of your iniquity with submission, but detest the sin itself. There is no reason to complain about your afflictions, for why should a living person complain about the punishment for their sin? In this case, you should grieve for your sins rather than your punishments.

Secondly, if it is not for punishment, then it is for the prevention of sin, to keep you from sinning. This was the purpose behind God's punishment of Job, to redirect him from his path and to humble him. Therefore, if God takes away your wealth, friends, or any outward comfort, as long as it is to prevent sin and preserve you from Hell and damnation, you have no reason to grieve. Just as you would not be angry with a doctor for taking

away your blood to prevent a pleurisy, God never takes away any outward comfort from His people except out of mercy to prevent sin.

Or thirdly, if not for the punishment or prevention of sin, then it is for the purging out of sin, as stated in Isaiah 27:9: "By this, therefore, shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged, and this is all the fruit of it: to take away his sin." A person does not grieve that medicine makes them sick and causes discomfort in their stomach because it purges out harmful substances. Beloved, your crosses are like purging pills that cleanse you of your corruptions. All worldly afflictions serve the purpose of punishing, preventing, or purging out sin, and therefore we have reason to bear them patiently.

[Consideration 6] 6. Consider that God turns all worldly crosses and losses into spiritual advantages for His people. You shall never be a loser because of your afflictions. It is like a poor man who is in debt and desperately in need of money, coming to a rich man and sharing his condition, begging for help. The rich man immediately goes to his chest, retrieves a bag of money, and throws it to the poor man. The poor man would not see this as a wrong or injury done to him but would instead be grateful for it. Similarly, God transforms all our apparent crosses and afflictions into real and spiritual benefits for us. As Paul said in Philippians 1:19, "I know that this shall turn to my salvation." All things work together for the good of those who love God. Although we may not see how it will come to pass, we are like little children who see a heap of beautiful and sweet roses lying on a table, and their mother puts them in a mortar and pounds them into pieces. The child cries and thinks the mother is spoiling them, unaware that she does it to make a preserve of them, so they may be more useful and enduring. Similarly, we may think we have comforts like beds of roses, and when the Lord takes them away and breaks them into pieces, we are prone to believe they are ruined and we are undone by it. However, God intends it to work for our greater benefit and advantage.

[Consideration 7] 7. Engage in the meditation and contemplation of the joys and glory of Heaven. This will greatly help to ward off worldly sorrow, as the thought of the heavenly glory and happiness will uplift a Christian's soul with spiritual joy, making it less susceptible to being overwhelmed by worldly concerns. I have come across a schoolman who held the opinion that the reason Adam, in his state of innocence, was not conscious of his nakedness was because he was so absorbed in direct communion with God. Similarly, if you were more absorbed in conversing with God and contemplating His glory, even if you had nothing in this earthly life, you would consider yourself lacking nothing. The contemplation of Heaven, glory, and happiness would make you overlook all worldly trials and afflictions. It is said of Paul that he was caught up to the third Heaven and witnessed ineffable things, but he couldn't tell whether it was in the body or out of the body. In other words, he was so captivated by the glory and the joys of Heaven that he couldn't even discern whether he was still in his physical body, and it caused him to forget all his troubles and hardships in this world. I recall reading in Jerome about the advice he gave to a young man in his time who was excessively burdened with sorrow and grief over worldly afflictions. He said, "Take a stroll or two in Paradise every now and then, and you will never think of a wilderness or be troubled by the hardships of a desert." Oh, beloved, if only your souls possessed this art of divine speculation and contemplation, if you could have an experiential knowledge of the joys of Heaven, it would prevent you from mourning any longer over worldly trials. When Christ was transfigured on the mountain, Peter said to Him, "Master, it is good for us to be here. Let us make three tabernacles, one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." He was so uplifted by the sight of Heaven that he didn't even consider that he was on a barren mountain and the challenges and needs they would face there. I have previously shared what I read about the eagle, how it differs from other birds that fly in the sky. When other birds are injured or hungry, they cry and mourn, making a fuss. But the eagle, when it is injured, will soar high in the air and comfort itself with the warmth of the sun's rays. Oh, beloved, if you could soar high like an eagle in

divine meditations and contemplations of heavenly glory and happiness, it would greatly protect you against worldly sorrow.

[Consideration 8] 8. Remember that your sins demand more tears from you than you are able to shed, so do not waste them on worldly matters. Beloved, if you could weep profusely for your sins, it would still be insufficient to fully express your grief and sorrow for them. Indeed, even if every tear you shed were an ocean, it would not be enough to shed for sin. Tears are precious, and it is a shame to use them to cleanse filthy rooms; reserve them for your sins, for they are in greater need of them. Even if you had more tears, it would still be inadequate. Even if your head were a fountain and your eyes were rivers of tears, they would not be enough to shed for the numerous sins and iniquities you have committed against God.

And thus, I have concluded this first part of the text, concerning those who weep as if they did not weep.

SERMON 6.

And they that rejoice as though they rejoiced not. - 1 Corinthians
7:30-31

We now proceed to the second part of the Apostolic Directory, which is "they that rejoice as though they rejoiced not." If your condition in the world is sad, miserable, and afflicted, then your duty is to rejoice in a moderate and restrained manner, as if you did not rejoice. But if you experience a period of prosperity and happiness, and enjoy the comforts of this world abundantly, then you must rejoice in a measured and controlled manner, as if you did not rejoice excessively. The point of instruction that I shall derive from this is as follows:

Doctrine: It is the duty of Christians not only to ensure that they do not exceed in worldly sorrow for outward crosses, but also to ensure that they do not exceed in worldly joy for outward comforts. We can rejoice excessively in all earthly pleasures.

In the elaboration of this doctrine, I will address the following two or three queries:

- I will explain when your joy becomes excessive.
- I will provide you with some rules to restrain your joy within limits, so that you do not excessively delight in the comforts of this life.
- Then, I will offer some practical application and use.

I will not delve into any of these topics at this time; instead, following my usual approach, I will present six or seven conclusions as premises.

1. Take this conclusion: Although Christians must be cautious not to be excessive in their joy for worldly comforts, you must know that God allows you to rejoice in the outward comforts that He provides in this world. As Solomon says in Ecclesiastes 3:4, "There is a time to mourn, and a time to rejoice," and in Ecclesiastes 9:7,9, "Go, eat your bread with joy, and drink your wine with a merry heart, live joyfully with the wife whom you love." Also, in Ecclesiastes 7:14, "In the day of prosperity, rejoice," and in Deuteronomy 12:7, "You shall rejoice in all that you put your hand to." This conclusion is necessary for sad and melancholy Christians who, even when enjoying an abundance of worldly comforts, refuse to rejoice in them. Beloved, God allows you to rejoice.
2. Consider that religion does not eradicate or eliminate worldly rejoicing; it merely regulates it. Religion is not like a weeding-hook that uproots your joy entirely; it is like a pruning-hook that trims away the excess and keeps your joy in proper order. I state

this to dispel the misconceptions that many people have about religion, thinking that it makes one melancholy. They tend to believe that once they embrace religion, they must forsake and abandon all worldly comforts and bid farewell to the pleasures of life forever. Beloved, religion does not annihilate your joys; rather, it regulates them. In fact, being religious can enhance your joys. When God made a covenant with Abraham, He promised him a son and named him Isaac, which means laughter (Genesis 17:19). This signifies that even after entering into a covenant with God, you can still experience joy and pleasure. Therefore, do not entertain such negative thoughts about religion, as if it requires you to relinquish joy when you embrace it.

3. Take this conclusion: The worldly joy of a wicked person is often mixed with more internal distress and spiritual grief than the worldly joy of a godly person. As Proverbs 14:13 states, "In the midst of laughter, the heart is sorrowful," and in 2 Corinthians 5:12, the apostle speaks of some who boasted outwardly but not in their hearts. The joy of the wicked is superficial, not genuine. Even in their greatest merriment and mirth, they experience internal pangs and conscience troubles them. Just as a person may wear a nice shoe but only the wearer knows where it pinches, a wicked person's joy is like a godly person's sorrow. The former's joy is merely external, not true, while a godly person may appear sorrowful but in reality, they are always rejoicing (2 Corinthians 6:10). "The blessing of the Lord makes rich, and He adds no sorrow with it" (Proverbs 10:22).
4. A wicked person's worldly joy is easily disrupted by small matters, more so than the joy of a godly person. I am referring to the outward worldly joy that one experiences in this world. Look at how quickly Haman's joy was interrupted. Despite having many reasons to rejoice in the glory of his riches, the multitude of his children, and his high position in the king's court above all the princes and servants, he became extremely displeased and

could find no joy in anything because Mordecai did not bow down to him or show him reverence. The same happened to Ahab; even though he had an entire kingdom, he found no satisfaction in it because he desired Naboth's vineyard. A small thing can divert the joy of a wicked person, and that is why their joy is compared to the crackling of thorns under a pot (Ecclesiastes 7:6). They make noise and blaze for a brief moment but are quickly extinguished. Belshazzar, while he was reveling with his golden bowls and enjoying himself, had his joy shattered by a handwriting on the wall, causing him to hang his head in despair.

5. Although it is lawful and permitted by God for you to rejoice in worldly comforts, there are certain things in which you should not find joy. I will present them to you in five or six specific points.

You must not rejoice in your own sins; the sins you commit should never be a source of joy for you. However, wicked individuals often do rejoice in their evil deeds, as mentioned in Jeremiah 11:15: "When you do evil, then you rejoice." Solomon also speaks of some who rejoice in doing evil in Proverbs 2:14. In Psalm 52:1, it is said of Doeg, "Why boastest thou thyself in mischief, O mighty man?... Thou lovest evil more than good." God does not permit us to boast and find joy in sin. Such rejoicing, as someone said, is a joy that should be wept for; it leads merrily to Hell.

Furthermore, you should not rejoice in the sins of others. God never allows their sins to be a source of your joy. In 1 Corinthians 13:6, it is said of love that it "rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth." Love for others does not make us rejoice in their sins but in their virtuous actions. In Romans 1:32, not only those who commit wicked deeds but also those who take pleasure in those who do them are condemned. It is a matter of grief rather than joy, as expressed in Psalm 119:136: "Rivers of water run down mine eyes, because men keep not thy law." Lot, as mentioned in 2 Peter 2:8, vexed his

righteous soul with the ungodly conduct of wicked men. Based on these grounds, the learned Mr. Perkins condemns the use of stage plays, as they often portray villainy and wickedness to provoke spectators to joy and laughter. Therefore, they are unlawful and should not be attended.

You should not rejoice in the punishment of sin in animals either. On this basis, the same author condemns the use of bull or bear-baiting and cock-fighting. These activities involve rejoicing in the outcomes of sin. It was sin that first caused enmity between the bear and the dog, as well as among other creatures. Sin is responsible for all the discord and animosity among creatures, and therefore, it is not permissible for us to find joy in the effects of our own sin. Regarding bull-baiting, one could argue that it may make the bull more useful as food for humans, but merely baiting a bull for recreation is unlawful. Similarly, hawking and hunting are permissible because those creatures cannot be captured without it. However, I reprove those who delight in stage plays and find joy in the sins of others. I also urge those who partake in bear-baitings, cock-fightings, and similar activities to reconsider and refrain from engaging in them in the future.

And based on the same reasoning, the same author condemns noblemen who keep fools in their houses for the purpose of amusement and pleasure. This is not permitted by God because it involves finding joy in the punishment inflicted upon another creature.

You must not rejoice in ill-gotten gains. The Lord never allows you to find joy in goods obtained through robbery or dishonest means. As stated in Psalm 62:10, "Rejoice not in robberies, neither in goods ill-gotten." In Habakkuk 1:13-15, the Lord's pure eyes cannot behold evil. Why then do you look on those who deal treacherously and remain silent while the wicked devour the righteous? They catch people like fish and gather them in their nets, exploiting the poor. And what follows? They rejoice and are glad. The Lord condemns the

rich who acquire their wealth through oppressing the poor, usury, and similar practices. Therefore, it is more necessary for you to make restitution for what you have wrongfully taken from others than to rejoice in it or make grand displays by building hospitals to boost your pride and vain glory. You may rejoice in your lawful transactions in buying and selling, and in honestly gaining profit. These are permissible sources of joy. However, you are not to rejoice in ill-gotten goods. If you take advantage of someone in a transaction, laughing in secret when you have obtained a good deal, as described in Proverbs 20:14, saying, "It is naught, it is naught," that is an evil practice. In Deuteronomy 23:18, God declares His hatred for the wages of a prostitute or the price of a dog used as a sacrifice. Though the money itself may be good, because it was obtained through wickedness and impurity, the Lord detests it. The Lord abhors those who bring their wickedness before Him to find joy in it. In Micah 1:7, all the idols of Samaria were to be broken into pieces, and the money gained from them burned with fire because it was earned from the wages of a prostitute. When Ahab was displeased because he couldn't acquire Naboth's vineyard in 1 Kings 21:7, Jezebel, his wife, acted wickedly by telling him to rise up and be merry because she would get the vineyard for him. It is a godless practice to rejoice in ill-gotten gains obtained through cheating and defrauding the poor.

You must not rejoice in the afflictions and sufferings of God's people. This is what the Lord condemned the Edomites for in the prophecy of Obadiah 12: "You should not have rejoiced over the children of Judah in the day of their destruction, nor spoken proudly in the day of distress." The Lord also threatens Mount Seir and Edom for their hatred of Israel and their rejoicing over her in the day of her distress, as stated in Ezekiel 35:16: "As you rejoiced over the inheritance of the house of Israel because it was desolate, so I will do to you; you shall be desolate, O Mount Seir!" In Micah 7:8, the church pleads, "Do not rejoice over me, my enemy; when I fall, I will arise." Proverbs 17:5 warns, "He who is glad at calamity will not go

unpunished." Lamentations 1:21 also highlights the inappropriateness of rejoicing over the misfortunes of others.

You are not to find joy in the miseries and sufferings of even your enemies. Proverbs 24:17 advises, "Do not rejoice when your enemy falls, and do not let your heart be glad when he stumbles." Job was so conscientious in this matter that he disavowed such practices. In Job 31:29, he declares, "If I have rejoiced at the destruction of him who hated me, or lifted myself up when evil found him, neither have I allowed my mouth to sin by wishing a curse to his soul." Job rejects these actions, and you should not find joy in the afflictions and sufferings of your worst enemy in the world. However, if you perceive them as enemies of God and His Church, then you may rejoice in their destruction as they are God's enemies. David exemplified this sentiment, stating, "I hate those who hate You, and I hate them with perfect hatred." You must not hate anyone as your personal enemy or for causing harm to you, but you should hate them as enemies of God and find joy in their destruction. None of these six aspects should be a source of joy for a Christian.

Take this conclusion: There are sometimes and occasions when it is not appropriate to rejoice, even in lawful things. I will briefly mention them to you.

Firstly, on days of public and solemn fasting and humiliation, expressions of joy are unseasonable. The bride and bridegroom must come out of their chambers, for joy is not fitting during such times.

Secondly, when a land is devastated by destructive judgments, all rejoicing shall cease. Isaiah 24:8 states, "The mirth of the tambourines ceases, the noise of the jubilant ends, the joy of the lyre is stopped." Ezekiel 21:10 warns, "It is sharpened to make a grievous slaughter; it is polished to flash like lightning. Shall we then rejoice? You have despised the rod, my son, with everything of wood." In other words, if afflictions and the sword of judgment are prepared for us, should we rejoice? Would that not be to despise God's

correction and treat His shining sword as a mere wooden rod? Nehemiah 1:4-5 tells of Nehemiah, the king's cupbearer, who, upon hearing of the distress and destruction of Jerusalem, sat down, wept, mourned, fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven. He did not find it appropriate to rejoice.

Thirdly, when the hand of God weighs heavily on a particular individual or family, it should be a time of mourning. Ecclesiastes 7:2 says, "It is better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting, for this is the end of all mankind, and the living will lay it to heart."

Fourthly, after a significant falling away or apostasy from God, after committing a grave sin or transgression, it is not a time to rejoice. Hosea 9:8 delivers a clear message on this matter: "Rejoice not, O Israel, with exultation like the nations, for you have played the whore, forsaking your God." While other nations may rejoice, Israel should not, for they have strayed after other gods. They should go through life in mourning until the scandal is stopped, the sin is conquered, and their souls are reconciled. This is evident in the case of David after his grievous sin of adultery. He experienced great sorrow for a long time, declaring, "For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer" (Psalm 32:3-4). Despite having many blessings that could have brought him joy, David found no comfort in them. There were three particular circumstances that could have tempted David to indulge in worldly joy.

Firstly, he was a king and sat upon a throne in state, pomp, and dignity, yet even this could not uplift his spirits. Instead, he humbled himself and sorrowed in the dust.

Secondly, David was a skilled musician, proficient in playing the harp (1 Samuel 16,17,18), but even the sweet melodies of his music could not bring joy to his heart.

Thirdly, he had a naturally cheerful disposition, with a ruddy countenance and a merry temperament. However, none of these advantages could make him rejoice. His sin troubled him and weighed heavily on his conscience, despite being a king, a musician, and naturally inclined towards merriment. He could not experience true joy until his sin was forgiven. That concludes the sixth point.

A person whose natural temperament is joyful is susceptible to various evils such as lust, frivolity, excessive talking, and engaging in too much company.

Please note that there can be an excessive amount of spiritual joy, just as there can be with worldly joy. Although you may find this conclusion strange, it is indeed true. Christians should be cautious not to be excessive in their spiritual joy, just as they should avoid excessive sorrow for worldly matters. Excessive spiritual joy leads to thoughtlessness and impulsiveness in their actions. It may cause them to neglect their responsibilities, live without considering the importance of ordinances, and engage in similar behaviours. In such cases, spiritual joy becomes immoderate. I will provide two passages from Scripture to support this claim. The first is found in Acts 12:14-15. In this account, many people were gathered and praying at the house of Mary, the mother of John. When Peter knocked on the gate, a servant girl named Rhoda went to listen. Upon recognizing Peter's voice, she became so overjoyed that she did not open the gate. Instead, she ran back inside and told the others that Peter was at the gate. The girl's joy was excessive, leading her to act inconsiderately by failing to open the gate for Peter. This incident demonstrates that joy can be excessive. Another example can be found in Luke 24:39, after Christ's resurrection. When Jesus appeared in the midst of his disciples and showed them his pierced hands and feet to prove his resurrection, they could not believe it due to their overwhelming joy. Their spiritual joy was so intense that it hindered their ability to believe. This shows that excessive joy can disrupt other aspects of one's faith. I mention this specifically in relation to new converts, as their joy may be mixed with a considerable amount of sin.

With these eight conclusions, I have completed my discussion. Now I will move on to addressing the queries, which will provide more practical insights into the idea that Christians should avoid excessive sorrow for worldly troubles and excessive joy for worldly comforts.

SERMON 7

And they that rejoice as though they rejoiced not. -1 Corinthians
7:30, 31

Today, I will briefly address two points. First, I will explain when your worldly joy becomes excessive. Secondly, I will provide you with some guidelines to keep your joy in check.

[Question 1] Q1: When does worldly joy become excessive and immoderate? I will illustrate this with eight specific examples.

[Answer] 1. Worldly joy becomes excessive when it hinders godly sorrow for sin. It occurs when a person is so full of merriment and happiness that they declare, "Let sorrow hang, and cast away care. I will never be sorrowful again or have serious thoughts about sin." Such joy is excessive and sinful. When one grace displaces another, when worldly joy displaces sorrow for sin, it becomes immoderate. This was the case with Belshazzar in Daniel 5:2. He spent his days in mirth and revelry, drinking from the vessels of the Temple. In one day, he feasted a thousand of his lords and indulged in wine. However, you can see the outcome in verse 20: his heart was lifted up, and his mind hardened in pride. His joy was excessive because it hardened his heart and hindered him from mourning over sin. Similarly, Saul called for music instead of devoting himself to sorrow

for sin (1 Samuel 16). Now, my beloved, reflect on your own hearts. Although God allows you to rejoice moderately in His mercies, if you are so consumed by pleasure and joy that you avoid sorrow and serious introspection about your sins, then your joy is excessive.

[Answer] 2. Your rejoicing in worldly comforts becomes excessive when it diminishes your empathy and compassionate feelings towards the sorrows and afflictions of God's Church and people. This is indicated as a sign of excessive joy in Amos 6:4-6. The people indulged in luxurious living, feasting, music, and pleasures, but they were not grieved by the afflictions of Joseph. "Afflictions of Joseph" refers to the miseries faced by the tribe of Manasseh, which descended from Joseph. While this one tribe endured great afflictions, the other nine tribes showed no mourning for them. This lack of compassion was their sin, and their joy was excessive. Therefore, if your heart suggests that you live a merry life in the world, indulging in mirth and pleasure, while disregarding the sufferings of the Church and the cause of God, and being indifferent to the fate of God's people, then your joy is excessive.

[Answer] 3. When your worldly joy dulls your delight in God and spiritual duties, then your joy is excessive. If your delight and satisfaction in worldly things is as sweet as honey, but you cannot find as much joy in communion with God, in performing duties to Him, and receiving grace and spiritual blessings from Him, as you find in the taste of the white of an egg, then it is a sign that your joy is excessive. Job 21:11-15 speaks of the wicked who spend their days in mirth and pleasure but reject the knowledge of God's ways. Their excessive joy dampens their love and duty towards God. Recreation should sharpen our inclination towards duty, like a whetstone sharpening a blade or medicine stimulating the appetite for food. It should not dull our desire for spiritual things.

[Answ.] 4. Your joy is excessive when you grieve excessively in the loss and lack of a worldly comfort that you once enjoyed. It is not

wrong to grieve over the absence of a mercy, but if you had rejoiced excessively in its possession before, then your joy was excessive.

[Answ.] 5. Your joy is excessive in outward comforts when it leads you to mock and triumph over the miseries and afflictions of others who lack those comforts that you enjoy. In Judges 16:23,25, Sampson's enemies, the Philistines, rejoiced over him when they had captured him, blinded him, and made him their prisoner. They called for him to entertain them and mocked his misery. Beloved, your joy is excessive when you find pleasure in the afflictions of others.

[Answ.] 6. Your joy is excessive when it is mixed with luxury and sensual indulgence. This is why Scripture often mentions people being merry with wine, which can also imply drunkenness. When mirth leads to drunkenness and sensuality, it becomes excessive.

[Answ.] 7. Your joy is excessive when it breeds a sense of security and insensitivity to the approaching judgments of God. In Zephaniah 2:15, Ethiopia is called the "rejoicing city that dwelt securely." That is why in Psalm 2:11, fear is associated with rejoicing—"serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with trembling." Absalom advised his servants to attack Amnon when he was merry, knowing that his heart would be at ease in that state. Those who chant and drink in Amos 6:3,6 are described as putting far away the day of disaster, being secure in their pleasures. Similarly, in Isaiah 22:12,13, the people rejected the call for weeping and mourning, indulging instead in joyous feasting and saying, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we shall die." They did not heed the prophet's warning of impending judgments. Likewise, in Isaiah 56:12, those who said, "Come, let us get wine; let us fill ourselves with intoxicating drink; tomorrow shall be as today, and much more abundant," displayed a lack of fear or concern for their future. Their security indicated excessive and inordinate joy.

[Answ.] 8. Your joy is excessive when you turn to worldly pleasures and indulgences to quiet and suppress the troubles and fears of your conscience.

When a person feels convicted in their conscience and troubled by some serious wrongdoing they have committed, and then seeks solace in worldly recreations, pleasures, or by surrounding themselves with merry company to escape and push away their troubles, it reveals an immoderate joy. This was evident in Saul's case in 1 Samuel 16:15, when an evil spirit troubled him, signifying guilt and terror on his conscience. Instead of turning to prayer, he commanded his servants to find a skilled musician to play for him. He would have been better off going down on his knees in prayer rather than seeking music and sensual delights to alleviate his distress. The idolaters who sacrificed their children to Moloch also employed musical instruments, but for what purpose? Firstly, to drown out the cries of their children and, secondly, to provoke merriment and jollity so that their consciences would not trouble them for the heinous act of sacrificing their own offspring. Beloved, when a sermon strikes home, touching you deeply, and the word of God has a powerful impact, convicting you of your sin, if you then resort to recreations, pleasures, company-keeping, or attending stage plays to divert your thoughts from your sins and alleviate the terror and trouble of your conscience, it indicates that your joy is excessive and sinful. In fact, this approach tends to intensify rather than quiet the pangs of conscience. It is like a pelican trying to extinguish a fire by flapping its wings, only to fan the flames and burn itself further. Similarly, those who seek worldly pleasure and merriment to smother the pricks of conscience end up increasing their torment. Thus, I have briefly covered these eight points to demonstrate when a person's worldly joy for external comforts becomes excessive.

Now, I have one more point to address, followed by a brief application, and then I will conclude.

[Query 2] 2. What rules and directions can you give us to keep our worldly joy for external comforts in check?

[Answ.] I will provide you with three or four.

1. Reflect on the fact that you have better reasons for rejoicing than anything in this earthly realm. You have superior objects to fill your soul with joy, such as your reconciliation with God, communion with Christ, the comfort of the Holy Spirit, assurance of forgiveness of sin, justification through Christ's merits, and the sanctification of your nature by the Spirit of Christ. You have your election, calling, redemption, and glorification. These are the objects that should ignite your joy and capture your delight. Would anyone rejoice and delight in mere counters if they could have numerous pieces of gold instead? Would anyone find such great joy in pebbles if they could possess as many pearls in their place? Or in a flint stone when they could have a diamond? Oh, beloved, you have things of far greater worth than anything in this world to rejoice in. The difference between the heavenly things and the eternal mercies, and these outward comforts here below, is much greater than that between brass and gold, pebbles and pearls, or the sun and a candle. Therefore, consider this: I have God and Christ, heaven and eternal happiness, forgiveness, reconciliation, sanctification, justification, redemption, and glorification. I have all these to anchor and place my joy upon. So why should I rejoice so excessively in the things of this world? The disciples of Christ thought highly of themselves and were proud because they could cast out demons and perform miracles. But Jesus said to them, "Do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven" (Luke 10:20). The more one is captivated by the estimation and contemplation of the joys of heaven, the less they will value and admire the comforts of this earth. The higher you stand, the less significance you see in things below. Would anyone rejoice in the light of a candle when they behold the brilliance of the sun shining at its full strength? It is a rule among theologians that just as physicians, when a person experiences a nosebleed, will stop it and divert the blood flow by opening a vein, likewise, the way to prevent your worldly joy from becoming excessive is to seriously ponder and consider the profound reasons you have

for spiritual joy and rejoicing. This will divert your joy from worldly objects. Directing all your affections toward the right objects is the way to prevent them from becoming excessively fixated on the wrong ones. Fear God, and you will not fear people. Love Christ, and you will not overly love the creature. Grieve for sins and corruption, and you will not mourn too much over external hardships. Rejoice in spiritual matters, and you will not excessively delight in temporary ones.

2. If you want to avoid excessive joy in external comforts, consider that nothing in this world is deserving of your joy. The world is not worthy of a righteous person's affections. As Amos said in Amos 6:13, "Why do you rejoice in a thing of nothingness?" The world is fleeting, its fashion passes away. It is unworthy of a Christian's joy. When Agrippa came to the court of Judicature to judge Paul, it is said in the original text that he came with mere pomp, all the worldly honours, riches, and splendour are mere illusions, unworthy of a Christian's joy.
3. Reflect on the fact that the more you rejoice in any external mercy, the less you will rejoice in the God who bestows those mercies. Excessive joy in outward comforts is nothing less than robbery as it deprives God of what rightfully belongs to Him.
4. Consider that by rejoicing too much in your blessings, you spoil them and provoke God to take away what you delight in. I can aptly compare excessive joy in your blessings to holding a bouquet in your hand. Just as handling a bouquet gently and occasionally smelling it will keep it fresh and fragrant all day, if you crush it in your hand and constantly smell it, it will wither and die. Similarly, the more you excessively rejoice in worldly things, the more they will forsake and leave you. However, if you rejoice in them moderately and do not become overly attached, you will enjoy them more and keep them longer.

5. Consider that if you rejoice too much in the blessings you possess, you will grieve excessively when God takes them away from you. If you cultivate a mindset where the comforts of this world are like gloves to your hands, you will easily part with them without much trouble. But if you hold the world and its comforts so dearly, clinging to them like skin to flesh, you will only part with them with great grief, pain, and trouble. And thus, I have addressed the second query. I now have a final word of application before concluding.

[Application] And the use I will make of this is by providing caution in four or five specific areas.

[Caution 1] 1. If it is true that Christians must be careful not to exceed in their worldly joy, then give Christianity the honour it deserves by demonstrating that it has a greater influence and authority over your emotions than anything else in the world. Let Christianity be respected by allowing it to regulate your love, joy, sorrow, and all your affections.

[Caution 2] 2. Never hold prejudice against Religion as if it were an enemy or in any way destructive to your worldly joy. Religion does not eliminate but rather guides your joy. It is not a tool to uproot and eradicate your joy, but a means to moderate and direct it. Therefore, do not entertain negative thoughts about Religion.

[Caution 3] 3. Take heed, you who are Christians, not to present Religion unfavorably to the world by depriving yourselves of the lawful joy and comfort that God has given you and that His word allows in the blessings and mercies of this life. For a Christian to walk around with a downcast face, pursed lips, tears in their eyes, and sorrow in their hearts, lacking a cheerful countenance and comforting words, diminishes and brings discredit to Religion. Therefore, do not deprive yourselves of the lawful joy in the world that God permits. I recall Calvin saying that because he was such a

melancholy and sorrowful man, the Catholics would not embrace his Religion, as he appeared too gloomy and mournful.

[Caution 4] 4. Likewise, be cautious of excessive joviality. Just as you must be careful not to be excessively sad and disconsolate, you must also be cautious of having a frivolous and excessively joyful spirit. Find a balance between the two extremes, neither being too sombre nor too frivolous.

[Caution 5] 5. Be cautious of resorting to worldly joy and pleasures as a means to suppress and drive away mental distress. Those who use such base methods and unlawful means to quiet their consciences and alleviate their troubled minds should take heed. This approach is more likely to agitate and disturb rather than pacify their consciences. Those who, in their sorrows, indulge in mirth, entertainment, and merry gatherings, thinking that by doing so they can dispel their troubles, are mistaken. In fact, they only amplify and intensify their sorrows. It is comparable to the story of the Pelican, which, being naturally afraid of fire, shepherds would place coals near her nest. The poor bird would flutter its wings, attempting to extinguish and put out the coals, but instead, it would ignite and inflame them, leading to the destruction of both the nest and the bird itself. Similarly, for us to turn to worldly joys and pastimes in order to extinguish the sorrow and trouble in our minds is a surefire way to exacerbate rather than alleviate our grief.

SERMON 8

"And those who buy, as though they possessed not." - 1
Corinthians 7:30

We now turn to the third part of the Apostle's instruction, found in these words: "And those who buy, as though they possessed not." I will spend only two or three sermons on this third aspect, and then move on to the latter part of the Apostle's instruction: "And those who use this world as not abusing it." We will begin with the first. If your livelihood and subsistence depend on buying and selling, on engaging in financial transactions, then your duty is to approach buying as if you did not possess anything. Whether you buy or sell, as both are encompassed in this statement, whatever you gain through buying, selling, and trading in the world, you must have your hearts so detached from your possessions as if you had nothing at all. Those who buy must act as if they possessed not. You may possess your wealth, but you must not be possessed by it. "I do not surrender myself to things, but to their usefulness," as Seneca said.

And here, beloved, as I am preaching in a city of commerce, to an audience who earn their living through buying, selling, and engaging in trade, I will elaborate a little on this point. But before I address it directly, I will present some related teachings that can be derived from these words. Firstly, from considering the intention that the Apostle aims to convey with this expression, "those who buy as if they possessed not": Throughout this chapter, the Apostle has been speaking about marriage and the responsibilities of individuals in that state. Now he shifts his focus to trading, buying, and selling. From this, I observe.

Doctrine

1. Those who have been entrusted with a family by God are especially commanded to engage in buying and selling, to be diligent in their professions, for the support of their dependents. As stated in 1 Timothy 5:8, "But if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever."

2. The Apostle addresses a variety of matters here, whether individuals are experiencing affliction and sorrow or prosperity and joy, whether they engage in buying or selling, or whatever their circumstances may be. From this, I deduce the teaching that the Scriptures cover the different callings and conditions of people in the world. There is guidance and direction, either general or specific, in the Word of God for every occupation, condition, type, or gender of people. Thus, it is aptly said in Psalm 119:96, "I have seen a limit to all perfection, but your commandment is exceedingly broad."
3. Considering the term used by the Apostle, "those who buy," it is known that buying involves exchanging a valuable sum of money for a commodity, from which the seller profits and gains an advantage. From this, I note that the Apostle was opposed to the doctrine of communal ownership or the notion of having all things in common among men. The very mention of buying and selling implies and signifies ownership or possession of what a person has acquired lawfully. A person has a rightful ownership of their estate or whatever they have obtained. Therefore, the doctrine advocated by court parasites who elevate monarchy to such an extent that the king can forcefully seize all possessions from a subject is false and erroneous. Such action would constitute tyranny, not sovereignty. An example is Ahab, who, despite being a covetous king, chose not to forcefully take Naboth's vineyard but intended to buy it. This stands in opposition to the concept of communal ownership, as buying and selling presuppose ownership on the part of the seller.
4. "And they that buy as though they possessed not." From this, I further observe that it is permissible for a person to accumulate wealth and build an estate through their trade and occupation.
5. Furthermore, it should be noted that even if a person has acquired an estate, wealth, and riches through trading, buying,

and selling in the world, they must possess them with such detached affections as if they had obtained nothing at all.

I do not intend to dwell specifically on any of these points but will draw two general teachings from the overall content of the text.

The Apostle's mention of buying includes not only instructions regarding marriage and those in a marital state but also guidance on buying, selling, and conducting business in the world. From this, we can observe:

Doctrine

Christians should be careful not to violate the rules of Scripture in their buying and selling practices.

"And they that buy as though they possessed not." From this, we can observe:

Christians should approach what they have acquired through buying and selling with detached affections, as if they possessed nothing at all.

I will be brief in discussing the latter point but will elaborate more on the former. Christians should be cautious to abide by the Scripture's rules in their buying and selling practices.

Now, my beloved, I ask that you follow me for a little longer and lend me your attention as I address this point. This morning, I will present you with some Scripture rules to be observed when buying, and in the afternoon, I will provide you with Scripture rules that you should be mindful not to transgress when selling.

And now, my beloved, will you kindly follow me for a moment and pay attention as I discuss this point? This morning, I will present to you several specific Scripture rules to be observed when buying, and

in the afternoon, I will provide you with Scripture rules that you should be mindful not to transgress when selling.

During this hour, I will give you ten particular Scripture rules that you should be cautious not to transgress in your buying practices. First,

1. If you wish to avoid transgressing Scripture rules in buying, be careful not to disparage the commodities you intend to purchase in order to lower their price and acquire them for less than their worth. This is mentioned in Proverbs 20:14: "It is worthless, it is worthless," says the buyer, but when he goes away, he boasts. In Solomon's time, people were so wicked that when they went to the market to buy something, the buyer would say it was worthless even if the commodity was good and in demand, and the seller's asking price was reasonable. However, once the buyer left, he would boast about what a good deal he had obtained. Therefore, the first caution in buying a commodity is not to disparage it to obtain it at a lower price when it is actually good and marketable.
2. Do not make vows and protestations that you will not offer more for a commodity than your initial bid when, in the end, you end up giving more. It is a common practice among people to go to a shop, bid a certain amount for a commodity, and declare, "I will not give a penny more," while the seller refuses to accept a penny less. Yet, both the buyer ends up giving more and the seller takes less than what was initially bid or proffered. Although this is frequently done, it cannot be justified. It is a clear falsehood and a great sin, so be cautious and avoid it. Once you have made a promise, you are bound by it, and if you give even a penny more, you are sinning.
4. Observe this rule: do not give less for a commodity than you believe it is worth in your conscience. It is oppressive in buying when you try to lower the value of a commodity. You should give

for it as much as you honestly believe it is worth. This is exemplified by Abraham when he bought the Cave of Machpelah from Ephron. He said, "I will give you the worth of it in money." Similarly, David, when he bought the threshing floor from Ornan the Jebusite, said, "Give me the floor, and I will give you the full value of it" (1 Chronicles 21:22).

5. Do not delay the payment for commodities you buy on credit when you have the means to pay. This rule is found in Proverbs 3:27-28: "Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in the power of your hand to do it. Do not say to your neighbour, 'Go and come back, and tomorrow I will give it,' when you have it with you." This verse specifically refers to buying and selling. When a person has sold a commodity and is repeatedly asked for payment but fails to provide it, it goes against the principle of not withholding what is due. Although this verse is often associated with acts of mercy, it also applies to trading in the world or purchasing commodities. If you owe someone money for a commodity you have bought, you should pay what you owe and not make the creditor come day after day without receiving payment when you have the means to pay. This goes against the behavior of bankrupt individuals who borrow money or acquire goods without a conscience to repay their debts. If people had any sense of decency and goodwill, they could never be joyful and carefree in the world when they have not paid what they owe to others. Phocion would not feast until he had paid what he owed to C • llicles. Prophet Elisha was so conscientious in this matter that when he made the poor widow's oil multiply (2 Kings 4:7), he instructed her to sell it and first pay her debts before using the rest to support herself and her children. Scripture depicts it as a characteristic of a wicked person not to repay debts (Psalm 37:21). Borrowing money or buying a commodity is the same; it is a mark of wickedness not to repay what is owed.

6. Do not monopolise a commodity. What I mean is, do not buy up all of a commodity for yourself so that no one else can have any except you. This is a great oppression and detrimental to the commonwealth and trading as a whole. Scripture condemns this in Proverbs 11:26. It specifically refers to hoarding corn. The text says, "He that withholdeth corn, the people shall curse him: but blessing shall be upon the head of him that selleth it." At that time, there were corn hoarders who would buy large quantities of corn when it was cheap and hold onto it until the price rose. Solomon says that the people will curse those who engage in this practice, but they will bless those who sell the corn. It is not a sin in itself to monopolise a commodity if you sell it at a fair price and according to the usual rate. However, if a person monopolises a commodity solely to increase its price, it becomes an oppression that leads the people to curse the person. Many individuals who monopolise commodities can be compared to a large oak tree that spreads its branches so widely that no small tree can thrive under its shade. Similarly, many people monopolise commodities to such an extent that poorer individuals cannot make a living from them. This is a gross oppression and a great wickedness.

7. If you want to avoid transgressing Scripture rules, do not take advantage of the seller's mistake or oversight when buying a commodity. For example, if you go to a shop and purchase a certain amount of cloth, and the shopkeeper either gives you more cloth than you paid for or asks for less money than the agreed price, you must not take advantage of the situation. If you take more than you have paid for, it is theft, and if you give less than the agreed amount, it is also theft. This is demonstrated in Genesis 43:12. Jacob sent his sons to Egypt to buy corn during a famine. When they arrived, Joseph, who recognized his brothers, secretly returned the money they had paid for the corn and sent them home. When they discovered the money in their sacks, they informed their father, who instructed them to return to Egypt and return the money. Jacob said, "It

may have been an oversight." This demonstrates conscientiousness. If someone either gives you more than you are owed or you give them less than they are owed, you must not take advantage of the situation. The Lord sees such actions as nothing less than deceit and dishonesty.

8. When purchasing commodities, do not engage in trade on the Lord's Day. It is true that in cases of urgent necessities, such as for the sustenance of life in humans or animals, it is lawful to do so. However, buying things that are not necessary and can wait until Monday is a sin if done on the Lord's Day, which is a day set apart for Heaven (Nehemiah 10:31). Nehemiah and the people swore an oath not to buy goods or food from the people of the land on the Sabbath day. Some may object and say that this refers to the Jewish Sabbath and their strict observance, but I must clarify that even in the Gospel, there is no permission to profane the Christian Sabbath. It should be kept just as strictly as it was back then. Therefore, I cannot see how it would not be a sin to buy wine, pepper, mustard, or any other trivial item that one can do without. It is undoubtedly unlawful and sinful to buy something that can be easily avoided. If you buy such things on the Lord's Day, you are sinning. I implore you to choose to go without such trivial things rather than transgress Scripture rules by buying them on this day.
9. When purchasing a commodity, do not take advantage of the desperate needs of a poor person who requires money, forcing them to sell at such low prices that they cannot sustain themselves. This is a grave sin and oppression. Often, wealthy individuals exploit the poverty of the poor. The poor may need to sell their commodities to buy bread or acquire more materials for their work. However, the wealthy will only buy their commodities if they can obtain them at prices lower than what the poor can afford. This is a great oppression. Leviticus 25:14 states, "And if thou sell ought unto thy neighbour, or buyest ought of thy neighbour's hand, ye shall not oppress one

another." There is oppression in buying, just as there is in selling, when someone takes advantage of the poverty of a poor person and forces them to sell at unaffordable prices or refuses to buy from them altogether. Oh beloved, how few people in the world are conscientious in their purchasing practices, considering these matters.

10. If you want to avoid transgressing Scripture rules in buying, then be careful not to purchase things that are not suitable or permissible to be bought and sold. First, do not buy spiritual things, such as the gifts of the Holy Spirit or church livings, as these are not things that can be bought. This is known as Simony. In Acts 8:20, when Simon Magus wanted to buy the gift of the Holy Spirit, Peter said to him, "May your money perish with you, because you thought you could buy the gift of God with money." Second, do not buy stolen goods, as they are not to be bought but rather should be returned. I fear that this is a sin that many people in this city do not have a conscience about. As the saying goes, "The receiver is as bad as the thief," so let me tell you that the buyer is just as bad as the thief.

Do not buy monuments or relics of idolatry, such as crosses, beads, crucifixes, images, and similar items. These should not be purchased.

Do not buy men as slaves. This is condemned in Amos 8:6, where it says, "That we may buy the poor for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes." Similarly, in Deuteronomy 24:7, it states that if someone is found stealing and selling their fellow Israelite, that thief shall die. You must not steal a person and sell them.

And thus, as you can see, I have briefly covered these ten points. Oh beloved, let me tell you that my concern is that there are few of you who abide by these guidelines in your purchases. It is likely that in one way or another, you have transgressed in your buying practices.

I shall now briefly apply what has been said. First, as an exhortation, I urge all of you who engage in buying, selling, and trading in the world to be cautious and avoid these pitfalls. In the afternoon, I will show you the consequences of unjust practices, so steer clear of such methods. In your purchasing of commodities, among all your transactions, I implore you to heed Solomon's advice and buy the truth, not selling it. Also, follow Christ's counsel to buy from Him gold to become rich and white raiment to be clothed in. Consider the pearl in the field that the wise merchant sold everything to obtain. Likewise, sell all that you have to acquire this priceless pearl, the Lord Jesus. However, do not misunderstand me when I say to buy spiritual things. They cannot be purchased with money, but rather require your diligent efforts, striving, and earnest prayers to God. You must give up the rags of sin and corruption in exchange for the white raiment of Christ's righteousness. Do not let the market days of your souls pass without obtaining something beneficial for your souls. Purchase the truth and do not sell it. Acquire the pearl of grace and pursue spiritual matters. Do not consider worldly things to be of great value while deeming grace, Christ, heaven, happiness, and glory as worthless. Everything in this world can be overpriced, including gold, but you can never pay too much for Christ and grace. One hour of enjoying Christ will outweigh all the troubles, miseries, and losses we endure for Him here. Therefore, beloved, do not spend so much time and effort on transient things. Do not prioritize superficial and circumstantial aspects of happiness while neglecting the pursuit of true happiness, which lies in having an interest in Christ, His righteousness, merits, and satisfaction. Diogenes criticized the folly of people in his time for valuing precious things lightly and pricing worthless things highly. Woe to those who hinder the trade of religion, who hinder others from entering into knowledge and do not enter themselves (Luke 11:52).

If it is indeed the case that we should not violate Scripture rules in buying commodities, then let this be a matter of humility for any of you who have encountered the Word of God today. Beloved, go home and humble yourselves before God, and praise His name for the fact

that His word has exposed your transgressions. Beloved, go home and refrain from such wickedness any longer. If you have transgressed Scripture rules in any of these matters, go home and confess your sins to the Lord and reform your lives. Beware, lest the Lord pronounce a curse upon what you have gained and say of your trading as He did in Ezekiel 28:18: "You have defiled your sanctuaries by the multitude of your iniquities, by the iniquity of your trading; therefore I will bring forth a fire from your midst; it shall devour you, and I will bring you to ashes upon the earth in the sight of all who see you." Lest the Lord declare that when you have accumulated many bags in your chest and much merchandise in your shop, these are but the fruits of your sins and the price of your soul, and that along with them, you shall have death and damnation.

SERMON 9.

"And they that buy as though they possessed not." - 1
Corinthians 7:30.

Now I turn to the other aspect, which is that you must be careful not to violate Scripture rules in selling commodities. Just as the Scripture provides extensive guidance on buying, it also offers rules and directions regarding the selling of commodities. I will mention nine or ten of them to you.

1. If you want to avoid transgressing Scripture rules, do not unnecessarily use excessive words when selling a commodity. The Scripture emphasizes this point. For example, in Genesis 23:15, when Abraham was buying the Cave of Machpelah from Ephron, there was only one word exchanged between them. Ephron stated the price, and Abraham immediately paid it. In

Zechariah 11:12, God says, "If you think good, give me my price, and if not, forbear." Multiplying words is unnecessary. As Solomon says, "In a multitude of words, there is sin." This applies not only to ordinary conversation but also to business transactions. I do not mean to suggest that sellers should be dull and unresponsive in a shop, but they should avoid being excessive and frivolous in their speech.

2. Do not use excessive words to praise and exaggerate the qualities of your commodity when you know in your conscience that it has a flaw or fault. It is a wrong attitude for a seller to use a plethora of words to enhance the image of a defective commodity. Just as it is sinful for a buyer to say, "It is naught, it is naught," it is likewise sinful for a seller to say, "It is good, it is good," when it is not.
3. Do not sell your commodities using false weights or measures. Do not use deceitful balances or measures. In Amos 5, the Lord reproves those who manipulate measures, making the ephah small and the shekel large, and falsifying balances through deceit. Likewise, in Proverbs 20:10, "Divers weights and divers measures, both of them are alike abomination to the Lord," meaning the Lord hates and detests those who use and sell with dishonest weights and measures. Therefore, the Lord gave a specific law to all traders in Israel in Deuteronomy 25:15-16, commanding them not to use deceit in their weights and measures. The law states, "You shall not have in your bag diverse weights, a great and a small. You shall not have in your house diverse measures, a great and a small. But you shall have a perfect and just weight, a perfect and just measure shall you have, that your days may be lengthened in the land which the Lord your God is giving you." Anyone who engages in such deceitful practices is an abomination to the Lord. It is important to note that this does not refer to different types of weights or measures, such as pounds, ounces, ells, yards, etc., or multiple weights or measures of the same size if they are just. Rather, it

pertains to different weights of the same type but of unjust and unequal sizes. Therefore, beware of using unjust and false weights or measures. In Micah 6:10, God asks, "Are there yet the treasures of wickedness in the house of the wicked?" Money acquired through unjust weights and measures is referred to as the treasures of wickedness, as well as the abominable scant measure.

4. You should not only refrain from speaking falsely but also avoid speaking equivocally. It is observed that in the statement, "Let no man defraud his brother," many tradesmen, though they may not lie, will resort to equivocation. To sell a commodity, they may have a partner or a friend bid money for it, and then when they have another customer, they will inform them that someone just offered a certain amount for it, in order to entice the buyer to pay more. They may also claim that it cost them a certain amount when they may have had similar commodities of higher value at the same price. Moreover, they may have a longer payment period while the buyer is expected to pay in cash. These are examples of equivocations employed to deceive others.
5. When selling a commodity, do not take advantage of the buyer's ignorance or simplicity. If you perceive that the buyer lacks knowledge, treat them better rather than worse. In Zephaniah 1:9, God threatens to punish the young men who exploit their masters' houses with violence and deceit. Likewise, in 1 Thessalonians 4:6, the Apostle warns, "Let no man go beyond or defraud his brother in any matter, for the Lord is the avenger of all such." In 2 Peter 2:3, the Apostle speaks of corrupt teachers who, out of greed, use deceitful words to make merchandise of others. Similarly, false tradesmen in their shops deceive customers by taking advantage of their ignorance. It is a grave sin to exploit a buyer's lack of knowledge to increase the price of a commodity.

6. Beware of diminishing a commodity from its original goodness and excellence in order to profit more from it. This is condemned in Amos 8:6, where it speaks of selling the refuse of the wheat. Corn-mongers would pick out the best grains and sell the inferior ones, which God reproves and condemns. The prophet alludes to this in Isaiah 1:22, saying, "Thy silver is become dross, thy wine mixed with water." They would dilute wine with water and mix dross with silver. The Scripture condemns debasing a commodity from its original goodness while selling it at the full price and value of the best.
7. Do not be among the first to raise the market and increase the price of a commodity. I mentioned earlier that this is a significant wrongdoing. In Proverbs 11:26, it is stated, "He that withholds corn, the people shall curse him, but he that sells it, the people shall bless him." In a commonwealth, it is oppressive for individuals to raise the price of corn or any other commodity when there is no necessity for it.
8. Do not be so eager and focused on selling your commodities that you refuse to trade only on the six days of the week; instead, you must also sell on the Sabbath day. Do not be like those mentioned in Amos 8:5 who say, "When will the new moons be gone, that we may sell corn? And the Sabbath, that we may set forth wheat?" These greedy individuals were so consumed by their desire for profit that the six days of the week were not sufficient for them; they wanted to sell on the Sabbath as well. In Nehemiah 13:21, Nehemiah took great care to rectify this situation when merchants came to Jerusalem to sell their goods on the Sabbath day. He confronted them and contended with the nobles of Judah, saying, "What evil thing is this that you do, and profane the Sabbath day?" He warned the merchants and sellers of various wares that if they continued to do so, he would take action against them. From that time on, they did not come on the Sabbath day. This condemns the practice of common pubs

and small retail trades that think nothing of selling trivial items on this day, which is a great sin.

9. When your dishonesty and unjust dealings in your sales are exposed and revealed, do not justify yourselves in your deceit. Many people, if you tell them that they sell at a higher price than others, will not be convinced. Or if you inform them that the commodity you bought from them is not good, they will claim it is as good as can be expected for the price. They are like those mentioned in Hosea 12:7: "Ephraim is a merchant; the balances of deceit are in his hand; he loves to oppress. And he says, 'Surely I have become rich, I have found wealth for myself; in all my labours they shall find no iniquity in me.'" Even though they hold the balances of deceit, they insist that no one can accuse them of wrongdoing or dishonesty in their dealings.

10. Do not sell commodities that are not marketable or unfit to be sold. Firstly,

Spiritual things should not be sold. When Simon Magus tried to buy the gift of the Holy Ghost with money, the Apostle told him to go away and let his money perish with him.

Likewise, monuments of idolatry, such as crucifixes, images, beads, and conjuring books, should not be sold. In Acts 19, many who practiced sorcery brought their books and burned them, and the value of the books was estimated to be 50,000 pieces of silver. Even though these books were of great value, they were not sold but burned.

Do not sell people as slaves. In Deuteronomy 24:7, it is stated that if a person is found stealing and then sells their fellow Israelite, that thief shall die, and you shall remove evil from among you.

Furthermore, you must not sell yourself to work wickedness, as Ahab did, nor should you sell yourself to the Devil as witches do, becoming his servants. This applies to all those who live licentiously and

without restraint. Remember, beloved, you are not your own; you have been bought with a price, the precious blood of Jesus Christ. Therefore, you must glorify God in both your souls and bodies, which belong to Him.

You must not sell stolen goods, as they are not to be traded. Just as people should not buy stolen goods, they should also not sell them.

Lastly, you must not sell anything that can only be used for sinful purposes, such as materials for face painting and similar items. While it is true that one may sell things that could potentially be used sinfully, we should not sell items that are intended solely for sinful uses.

And thus, I have concluded with these ten specific points where you must not violate Scripture rules in selling.

Now, I will address some moral dilemmas concerning trading and commerce in the world.

Firstly, the buyer may ask, "How can I determine if I am buying a commodity too cheaply?" And the seller may inquire, "How can I know if I am selling a commodity too expensively?"

My response is that while the Scripture does not explicitly state the exact amount of profit you should make, whether it be a penny, two pence, or more in a shilling, your gains should align with what is typically earned in such commodities by others in your trade. Consider the prevailing market rates and the usual valuations in your locality, and set your prices accordingly.

Sell your commodities in a manner consistent with those who are most conscientious in their business practices. Follow their example as far as they go.

[Objection:] But is it not permissible to sell a commodity for more than its worth in certain circumstances?

[Answer:] In some extraordinary cases, it is lawful to do so. For instance, if a person has a stockpile of goods and finds themselves in a situation where their locality is under siege, causing those commodities to become scarce, they may justifiably increase the price. This was the case during the Siege of Samaria when an ass's head and doves' dung were sold at exorbitant prices, despite their previous insignificance. However, once the exceptional circumstances no longer apply, the commodity should return to its previous price.

If a person is urged and pressured to sell a commodity that they are reluctant to part with and cannot easily do without, as it would cause harm to themselves, but eventually yield to the importunity and agree to let their neighbour have it, in that situation they may charge more for it than its actual worth. However, in the usual and customary course of trade, it is sinful to demand more than what is commonly accepted in that locality.

[Case 2] 3. Is a person obligated to sell a commodity for a lower price when selling on credit compared to selling for cash?

[Answer] Mr. Perkins, in his first volume on the eighth commandment, gives his opinion on this matter and considers it a sin to charge a higher price when selling on credit than when selling for immediate payment. However, this opinion does not align with the principles of reason. Therefore, I will provide you with my judgment on this specific issue.

I believe it is not a violation of fairness in trading to charge more for a commodity when the buyer requests a credit arrangement instead of paying cash. My reasoning is as follows: Selling a commodity without receiving money upfront causes a loss and inconvenience to the seller. Therefore, it is lawful for them to charge more, as stated in Leviticus 25:14-15. It is mentioned there, "If you buy from your neighbour or sell to your neighbour, you shall not oppress one another. You shall adjust the price according to the number of years

left for harvesting." The same principle applies here: if you sell your commodity for a period of time before receiving payment, you may charge a higher price; whereas, if it were for immediate payment, you would need to charge a lower price. In the case of Ahab and Naboth's vineyard, Ahab offered to either pay the worth of it in money or provide a better vineyard in exchange. Notice that if Ahab had paid in cash, he would have given only the worth of the vineyard, but since he did not offer money, he was willing to provide something better. Therefore, I see nothing in Scripture that contradicts the principles of fairness in allowing a slightly higher price for a commodity when payment is deferred due to lack of immediate funds. However, it is crucial not to take advantage of a poor person's necessity in this situation and ensure that the additional charge does not exceed the loss incurred by the delayed payment.

[Case 3] Q. 3. If a person has sold a commodity and the buyer is unable to pay in cash, is it lawful for the seller to take a pawn or pledge as security for the debt?

Answer: God permits a person to take a pledge in such a case to secure their debt, as stated in Deuteronomy 24:10-12. "When you lend anything to your neighbour, you shall not go into his house to get his pledge. You shall wait outside, and the borrower shall bring the pledge to you. You may take the best of what he has as a pledge until he can repay the money." It is lawful to take a pledge, but the seller must not enter the buyer's house to take it themselves. Instead, the debtor must bring it out, offering something they can spare until they can repay the money. However, the Lord prohibits taking a person's clothing or their essential tools of trade. It is cruel to take these items from a poor person who has nothing else. The pledge taken should be something that the debtor can best spare without any harm to their life or livelihood. Therefore, it is lawful for a creditor to take pledges in cases where the debtor can afford to part with them without facing any significant harm.

[Case 4] If a person has sold a commodity, and the debtor shows no regard for paying the owed amount, is it lawful in such a case to arrest the debtor for the money and take legal action?

Answer: If a person is genuinely unable to pay their debts due to circumstances beyond their control, not because of their negligence or mismanagement, it would be unfair to be harsh with such an individual or imprison them for the money owed. However, if a person has squandered their wealth prodigally or is capable of paying their debts but refuses to do so, then it is lawful to arrest and imprison them and use legal means to collect the debt. But when there is nothing to be gained, there must be forbearance of the debt, as exemplified by the forgiving creditor in the parable mentioned by Christ in Luke 7:42. If a person has fallen into financial ruin due to circumstances beyond their control and is unable to pay any of their debts, it would be cruel to be harsh with them or imprison them when they are incapable of payment. However, if a person is idle and neglects their occupation, or if they have squandered their wealth through excessive spending or bad company, or if they have undisclosed assets and are capable of paying but refuse to do so, in such cases, it is lawful to arrest, imprison, or take any other legal action to recover the debt. If God commands people to repay their debts, then it is reasonable to assume that He allows individuals to pursue lawful means to collect what is owed to them when it can be obtained through fair methods. Therefore, it is lawful for a person to employ measures to recover their rightful debt as God commands in Romans 13:8, "Owe no one anything."

[Use.] And thus, I have concluded the doctrinal part of this topic. The practical application I will make to you, who are tradesmen in the world, is simply a word of caution to dispel a misconception that many of you hold. It is the notion that if you adhere to the principles outlined in Scripture and refrain from engaging in occasional dishonest practices in your trades, you will never amass wealth or achieve financial success. This idea is commonly expressed in the saying, "Honesty is the best policy, but it leads to a life of poverty."

However, this is a completely false and wicked statement. In reality, honesty and integrity in one's actions are the surest path to prosperity. As Proverbs 10 says, "The blessing of the Lord brings wealth, without painful toil." On the other hand, the great fortunes amassed by wicked individuals are often accompanied by significant troubles, vexation, a guilty conscience, and regrets. Many individuals, upon reflecting on the wealth they have acquired within a short period, can attribute it to their deceitful practices and sinful actions, realizing that their riches are the fruits of deception and the cost of their own souls. Therefore, my beloved, I implore you in the fear of God to beware of oppression and deceit in your trades. Do not subscribe to the notion that honesty will lead to a life of poverty, for it is the only path to true richness. Let the word of God be your guide in all your actions, so that with His blessing upon your endeavors, you may acquire wealth without the burden of sorrow.

SERMON 10.

"And they that buy as though they possessed not." - 1 Cor. 7:30

There is one more point that can be derived from this clause, "and they that buy as though they possessed not," and it is as follows:

Doctrine: Possessing and accumulating wealth through trade is not disapproved by God.

Having an estate and possessions in the world is allowed by God. In ancient times, the most righteous individuals were often the wealthiest, such as Abraham, Jacob, and David. However, I do not wish to dwell on such a general doctrine; instead, I will focus on the specific meaning of the words "and they that buy as though they possessed not." This means that when a person acquires wealth

through buying and selling, they should maintain an indifferent attitude towards it, as if they had gained nothing at all. From this, we can deduce the following doctrine:

Doctrine: Christians should be extremely cautious not to develop an excessive attachment to the estates and possessions they acquire through buying and selling. As it says in Psalm 62:10, "If riches increase, set not your hearts upon them." Many people not only possess wealth, but they are possessed by their wealth. It consumes all their time, energy, thoughts, and even their hearts. While you may possess wealth, wealth should not possess you. Even if your riches increase, you must not let your hearts be consumed by them. Job himself clears this matter in Job 31:25-28, saying, "If I rejoiced because my wealth was great and because my hand had gained much, then let God weigh me in a just balance."

In the exploration of this doctrine, I will address these two questions.

[Question 1] When do Christians develop an excessive or immoderate attachment to the estates and possessions they have acquired through their trades?

[Question 2] Why should Christians be so cautious not to develop an immoderate affection towards the riches and wealth they have obtained?

Firstly, when can Christians be said to have an immoderate affection towards their possessions?

[Answer] I will provide you with these 5 or 6 demonstrations:

1. You display an excessive affection for your worldly estate when your earnest pursuits and desires for material wealth divert you from making sincere efforts towards spiritual matters. This was evident in the case of those traders mentioned in Matthew 22:5. When a great king invited them to a wedding feast and sent his servants to inform the invited guests that everything was ready,

they made light of it and went about their own ways—one to his farm, another to his merchandise—and they refused to come. When individuals are so consumed by their desire for gain and their hearts are completely occupied by worldly matters, to the extent that they neglect their spiritual duties, it is akin to the situation of the rich young man in the Gospel. When Christ told him that to be perfect, he must sell all his possessions and give to the poor, he went away sorrowful because he had great wealth. This signifies that their hearts are excessively attached to worldly things. In Luke 10:42, when Martha was distracted by the many things of the world, even though her actions expressed her love for Christ, he told her that she was troubled by many things but only one thing was necessary, and Mary had chosen the better part that would not be taken away from her. If your preoccupation with your trade causes you to neglect reading the Word, praying with your family or in private, then your affection towards the world is immoderate.

2. When your engagements and business in the world consume your thoughts to the point that you cannot find the ordinary refreshment and contentment that God intends for you in the blessings you possess, then you are developing excessive affections for worldly things. Ecclesiastes 5:12 states, "The sleep of a labouring man is sweet, whether he eat little or much; but the abundance of the rich will not suffer him to sleep." When individuals are so preoccupied and absorbed in worldly matters, driven by concerns of acquiring, fears of losing, or hopes of increasing wealth, to the extent that they cannot enjoy their meals or have peaceful rest, it indicates that their hearts are overly attached to the world. Ecclesiastes 2:26 describes how God grants wisdom, knowledge, and joy to those who are good in His sight, while the sinner is burdened with the task of accumulating riches, leading to restlessness, vexation, and trouble of mind. The Psalmist vividly compares a covetous person to a hungry dog in Psalm 59:14-15, depicting their constant search for food, dissatisfaction if not satisfied, and

persistent noise-making. Let them run around like a hungry dog, making a commotion due to lack of food.

3. Excessive attachment to wealth is demonstrated when your possessions in the world give you a false sense of security and indulge your sensual desires. The rich man in the Gospel exemplifies this mindset when he says, "I have goods laid up for many years; take your ease, eat, drink, and be merry" (Luke 12:19). This reflects his security and sensual indulgence. God refers to the wealthy nation dwelling without care in Jeremiah 49:31, emphasizing their reliance on material possessions. In Proverbs 18:11, Solomon declares, "The rich man's wealth is his strong city; the destruction of the poor is their poverty." Wealth can create a false sense of security. David also experienced this false security through his prosperity, as stated in Psalm 30:6, "In my prosperity, I said, 'I shall never be moved.'" When your wealth fosters a sense of security and encourages sensual pursuits, your affections for worldly things become excessive.
4. Excessive affection for wealth arises when your riches serve and fuel your sinful desires, becoming a means to indulge your corruptions. Proverbs 10:16 distinguishes between the labor of the righteous, which leads to life, and the revenues of the wicked, which tend towards sin.

When you use your wealth and riches to fuel your pride, as in Ezekiel 28:5 where God said to the Prince of Tyre, "By your great wisdom in trade, you have increased your riches, and your heart is lifted up because of your riches," it is a sign that you have excessive affections for worldly things. If God blesses you with wealth and as you rise in the world, your heart also becomes filled with pride, it indicates that your affections for the world are immoderate. Hence, in 1 Timothy 6:17, the Apostle charges those who are rich in the world not to be haughty or to put their trust in uncertain riches, but to trust in the living God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy.

When your wealth leads to indifference and contempt towards the poor, it reveals immoderate affections. James 2:3 mentions the rich man in the Gospel who allowed poor Lazarus to lie at his gate without offering any help. The Apostle John states in 1 John 3:17, "But whoever has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him?"

When you, as described in Proverbs 10:15, put your confidence in your wealth, it shows excessive affections towards worldly things. When you are unwilling to part with anything for the advancement of God's glory, worship, or the benefit of others, your affections are immoderate, as mentioned in 1 John 3:17.

Your affections become excessive when you are insatiable and constantly eager for more riches, never considering that you have enough. When your desires expand endlessly, resembling the insatiable grave. Isaiah 56:11 describes those as "greedy dogs" who can never have enough. Such individuals are slaves to their wealth, and their riches possess them more than they possess their riches. Beloved, when you exhibit such eagerness in pursuing wealth and unquenchable desires for worldly things, it indicates that your affections are too strongly focused on them. This concludes the explanation of when people's affections towards their estates and possessions may be deemed excessive.

[Question] Now we move on to the second question: Why should Christians be cautious not to place an immoderate affection upon their wealth and possessions in the world?

[Answer 1] Firstly, I answer that Christians should be cautious not to place an immoderate affection upon their wealth and possessions in the world due to the uncertainty and instability of all earthly comforts. The glory of the world is merely transient and superficial, lacking true substance. The world is filled with vanities and is ultimately of little value. Moreover, these worldly possessions are subject to great uncertainty and inconstancy. Therefore, we should

not attach our affections too strongly to them, as either the world will abandon us or we will have to leave it behind. Your estate may wither and decline before your own demise, for riches, as Solomon declares, have wings and can easily fly away from you. This serves as a compelling argument to detach one's affections from the world. Beloved, if you could carry your wealth with you beyond death and retain it for eternity, then it would be justifiable to strive relentlessly for it. However, since you must leave everything behind when you die, entering the world naked and departing in the same manner, carrying nothing with you, it is wise not to set your hearts too strongly on worldly possessions. As the Psalmist states in Psalm 49:12, "Man being in honor abideth not: he is like the beasts that perish. This their way is their folly: yet their posterity approve their sayings. Selah." In Ecclesiastes 2:18, it is said, "Yea, I hated all my labour which I had taken under the sun: because I should leave it unto the man that shall be after me."

[Answer 2] Another reason is that you do not know who will inherit and enjoy what you have laboured for. You may exert tremendous efforts to accumulate and amass wealth, only to leave it to those who neither love nor appreciate you for it. Why should I toil and toil in the world, risking my soul to acquire riches, when I may leave my estate to individuals who may neither love nor thank me for it, nor make honest or charitable use of it? As Ecclesiastes 2:19 states, "And who knoweth whether he shall be a wise man or a fool? yet shall he have rule over all my labour wherein I have laboured, and wherein I have shewed myself wise under the sun. This is also vanity." Shall I wake up early and go to bed late, consume the bread of carefulness, and exert so much effort to acquire an estate, when I do not know whether a wise or foolish person will inherit it? You, who are covetous individuals, expending all your strength and time in acquiring riches and accumulating wealth with great anxiety and eagerness, do not know whether the one who will govern all your labor will be wise or foolish, good or bad, a friend or a stranger, or whether they will use it well or poorly.

[Answer 3] Do not excessively place your affections on the world because you have better things to focus on in another world. You have true, lasting, and enduring riches to rejoice in, such as reconciliation with God, communion with Christ, the comforting presence of the Holy Spirit, justification of your person, sanctification of your nature, acceptance of your services, and more. Why would you be so infatuated with pebbles when you can have pearls in their place? Why cling to brass counters when you can possess pieces of gold?

[Answer 4] Another reason is that if you excessively attach your affections to worldly things, when the time comes for you to part with them, and if it pleases God to take them away from you, the loss will be more painful and distressing. When the Lord puts you on the test (like Job) and strips you of all your comforts, riches, possessions, children, and friends in a single day, how bitter and agonising will it be for you? If your hearts are tightly bound and attached to the world, and if worldly things cling to you as closely as your skin, you will find it difficult and troublesome to let go of them. However, if you live with detached affections towards the world, considering the comforts of this life as mere gloves that can be easily taken off without any pain, then when God calls for any of your comforts or strips you of all of them, you will be willing to let go and say, like Job, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." Otherwise, it will be a great misery and a sorrowful affliction for you to be stripped of possessions that have taken complete possession of your heart.

And thus, I have concluded the doctrinal part of this section of the text: "And they that buy as if they possessed not."

[Use] Now, let's move on to the application. The use I will make of this will be directed towards three groups of people.

If it is true that Christians should be cautious not to place excessive affections on the riches and possessions they acquire in the world, then I have something to say:

1. To those who engage in buying, selling, and trading in the world, who work diligently but do not experience any increase in their endeavors. They buy but possess nothing, they labor and toil in the world but gain nothing.
2. To those who engage in buying, selling, and acquiring riches in the world, but do so through dishonest gain.
3. To those who engage in buying, selling, and amass great wealth, doing so lawfully and through honest and commendable means. I will dedicate two sermons to addressing these three groups of people, and I will now begin with the first.

To those of you who buy and sell, and are industrious in your respective vocations in the world, yet do not experience any increase in your endeavors; you buy but possess nothing, and despite your efforts, struggles, and hard work, you can hardly make ends meet or improve your financial situation throughout the year. For individuals like you, I have two things to say:

Firstly, I offer some counsel. Secondly, I provide some comfort.

1. As counsel, I advise you to first look around and seriously consider whether your poverty is not a result of your own actions, whether it is not your own fault that you are not growing rich and thriving in the world. Beloved, there are many ways in which people can pursue a vocation and yet not acquire wealth. For example:
 - Does your poverty stem from your own lack of discretion in managing your occupation? As stated in Psalm 112:5, "A wise man will guide his affairs with discretion." Similarly, in Ezekiel 28:4, it is mentioned that riches can be obtained through

wisdom and understanding. Managing a trade requires a great deal of wisdom and judgment, which you may lack. Therefore, due to your indiscretion in buying, selling, and investing your commodities, you are falling behind in the world.

- It is possible that even though you are engaged in your vocation, you are idle and lazy, not diligently pursuing your trade. As Solomon says in Proverbs 6:9, "A slothful man will come to poverty as one who travels, and want as an armed man."
 - Perhaps you are a companion of those who engage in frivolous activities, and what you earn through your trade, you squander in the alehouse. In Proverbs 28:19, it is stated, "He who follows frivolous pursuits will have plenty of poverty." It may be that you are depleting your resources through extravagance and excessive indulgence. Proverbs 23:21 warns, "The drunkard and the glutton will come to poverty, and slumber will clothe them with rags."
 - It could be that you are engaged in a profession and amassing a considerable amount of money, but you are miserly and unwilling to show pity and provide assistance to the needy. This approach will ultimately lead you to become a beggar. Solomon emphasises in Proverbs 11:24, "One gives freely, yet grows all the richer; another withholds what he should give, and only suffers want." When you give to the poor without seeking recognition, your store will increase. However, if you withhold your generosity, it will lead to poverty. If God sees that you are using your resources to His glory, He will bless you with more. But if not, He may take away what you have and give it to others who will make better use of it.
2. To those of you who engage in buying and selling but gain nothing, I offer this advice: do not grudge or envy the wealth and prosperity that others have and enjoy in the world. As David says in Psalm 37:7, "Be still before the Lord and wait patiently

for him; do not fret over those who prosper in their way." Even David himself slipped into this fault at times, as expressed in Psalm 73:2-3. Jeremiah also reasoned with God about this matter in Jeremiah 12:1. The riches and possessions of wicked individuals are their portion and all they are likely to have. Therefore, do not envy them, but rather pity them, for their riches will be their downfall. They are like oxen fattened for the slaughter. Will it grieve you that you walk on foot while another rides to the place of execution?

3. For those who cannot acquire worldly riches, strive to store up treasures in Heaven. If you cannot amass wealth here, labour to attain grace. If you cannot obtain gold, seek the gold that Christ speaks of in Revelation 3:18. He advises, "I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, so that you may be rich." If you cannot acquire material possessions, seek grace; if you cannot gain wealth, seek Christ; if you cannot obtain earthly possessions, seek Heavenly treasures.

And thus, I have provided counsel to those who buy and sell but gain nothing. Now, I have a few words of comfort for you.

1. Find contentment and satisfaction in your present circumstances and know that if God denies you possessions and increase in your worldly trading, it is for your own good. As stated in Psalm 84:11, "For the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord bestows favor and honor. No good thing does he withhold from those who walk uprightly." Perhaps the Lord sees that granting you wealth and extensive possessions in this world would be detrimental to you. Your riches could lead to your ruin, and your prosperity could become a snare. Therefore, in His mercy, He withholds these things from you. We should view the comforts that God keeps from us as acts of mercy, as He protects us from that which would bring about our downfall.

2. In God's wisdom, He deems it best to grant good men the smallest portion of worldly possessions while allowing wicked men to have the greatest share. As mentioned in Psalm 73:3, the wicked do not face the troubles that others do; their eyes bulge with fatness, and they have more than their hearts could desire. They spend their days in joy and revelry. On the other hand, God has chosen the poor of the world to be rich in faith and heirs of His Kingdom. The wisdom of God is revealed in His distribution of blessings. It is akin to a nobleman who does not permit his son to collect the annual rents, but entrusts a servant with such a lowly task. Often, the servant has enough money while the son has none. In Ecclesiastes 9:11, it is stated, "I have seen something else under the sun: The race is not to the swift or the battle to the strong, nor does food come to the wise or wealth to the brilliant or favor to the learned; but time and chance happen to them all." Wicked men may possess riches while wise and understanding men have none. In His wisdom, God deems it fitting that wise men may struggle to find bread while fools have abundance. Will you then complain when God deems it appropriate?

3. Take comfort in the fact that God has bestowed upon you greater riches than they possess. Although wicked men may have the temporary possession of outward comforts, you have the true right and ownership of these possessions. Who would be so foolish as to consider the steward happier than the heir? The steward only has temporary possession, while the heir has full ownership. Consider that if you belong to the chosen ones of grace, even if you are poor in this world, you possess the only true and lasting riches. You are enriched with wisdom, knowledge, grace, and happiness that are found in God's presence. Even though God may not entrust you with pebbles, if He grants you pearls, you have no reason to complain. Even if God does not entrust you with material riches, if He gives you grace, Christ, heaven, and glory, you have no reason to murmur

against Him. Acorns are sufficient for pigs, but bread is for the children.

4. Consider that the poorer you are in the world, the more suitable you are for God's service. A lean ox is more suitable for service than a fattened ox. If God keeps you low and poor, it is to make you more capable of serving Him. Why should you be troubled by this?
5. Consider that you are freed from more cares and burdens to the extent that the Lord gives you less in this world. Those who desire to be rich fall into various traps and temptations (1 Timothy 6:9). Now, which is better: to walk on a wide path where snares are laid for you, or to walk on a narrow path where you can go safely and without danger? Therefore, beloved, if God grants you only a small portion here on earth, then you can say, "I have fewer cares, troubles, snares, and burdens that rich people are susceptible and exposed to." In Genesis 13:2, it is said that Abraham was rich; the Hebrew word used there means "heavy." Similarly, the Prophet Habakkuk describes those surrounded by riches as being encompassed by thick clay. They are so burdened with worldly possessions that they cannot run the race set before them on the path to Heaven.
6. Consider that it is possible for you to have more peace, comfort, and contentment in the little you possess than wicked people often have in their great abundance. Many times, you may experience more genuine comfort in your scarcity and poverty than the wicked do in all their plenty. Psalm 37:16 states, "Better is the little that the righteous has than the abundance of many wicked." Beloved, those to whom God grants abundance may have everything they need, yet they may still be troubled by something or other. The condition of poverty, want, and disgrace may be easier in some respects. A satin suit may gall a rich person more than a simple coat troubles a poor person. God often mixes care and trouble with the riches and abundance that

wicked people possess. However, a poor person, though they have little, has the blessing of God with it. Proverbs 10:22 says, "The blessing of the Lord makes rich, and he adds no sorrow with it." Ecclesiastes 4:6 states, "Better is a handful with quietness than two hands full of toil and a striving after wind." A small estate with peace and contentment is better than twice as much with sorrow and worry. Suppose you are a poor person, yet it is possible that you find more comfort in what you have than the rich do in their abundance of worldly possessions. Now, consider for yourself: Isn't it better for you to wear a simple coat and have a healthy body than to be clothed in satin and purple but suffer from leprosy all over your body? Isn't it better for you to enjoy a little with God's blessing upon it than to have all the riches and abundance of the wicked and bear their care and trouble along with it?

SERMON 11

"And they that buy, as though they possessed not." - 1
Corinthians 7:30

Now, I will provide guidance on how to apply this doctrine that Christians should be cautious not to develop an excessive and disproportionate affection for the wealth they acquire through buying and selling in the world. This is directed towards the second group of people I promised to address: those who engage in trade and commerce, and have acquired estates and possessions through honest and just means. I have three points to share with you:

- I will offer some precautionary instructions.
- I will present some thought-provoking considerations.

- I will provide some helpful advice concerning your estates, acquired through just and honest means.

To begin, I will focus on the precautionary instructions.

1. For those who have acquired wealth and riches in the world, I urge you to frequently recall and remember your previous poverty before attaining riches. This is a command that God gave to the Israelites in Deuteronomy 8:2. He said to them, "You shall remember all the way which the Lord your God led you these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you and test you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not." I remember a story about Agathocles that Plutarch relates. When Agathocles, who was once a potter's son, became a prince, he insisted on having his meals served on earthenware plates to remind himself of his humble origins and prevent pride from taking hold of him. Similarly, beloved, you should frequently recall and reflect upon your former poverty and humble circumstances. Some of you may have arrived in this city with barely any clothes on your backs, but now you are adorned in silk and satin. Remember where you came from. Just as David did in Psalm 78:71, "From following the ewes great with young, He brought him to shepherd Jacob His people, And Israel His inheritance." This is mentioned by the psalmist as a holy meditation to keep his heart humble. This is the first direction.
2. Do not attribute your wealth solely to your own industry and diligence in your trade, but acknowledge the blessing of God upon your efforts. If He has granted you an increase in riches through your trade, it is because of His blessing. The reason for this is that no matter how hard a person works, waking up early and going to bed late, and putting in great efforts in the world, without the blessing of God, it will all be in vain. As stated in Deuteronomy 8:17-18, "Then you say in your heart, 'My power and the might of my hand have gained me this wealth.' And you

shall remember the Lord your God, for it is He who gives you power to get wealth." Beloved, be cautious of attributing your riches solely to your own industry, for without the blessing of God, nothing can prosper. Beware of sacrificing to your own nets and burning incense to your own traps simply because you have acquired wealth in the world.

3. Do not take pride in the riches that God has bestowed upon you. In 1 Timothy 6:17, the Apostle charges those who are rich in the world not to be haughty. The worm of pride often breeds in the hearts of the wealthy, and it is a difficult task to keep your heart humble when your estate is abundant. It is challenging to keep pride at bay when God has elevated you above your brethren. As mentioned in Ezekiel 28:4-5, "By your wisdom and understanding in trade you have amassed great wealth for yourself, and your heart has become proud." As God lifts you up in wealth, be cautious not to let pride lift your heart.
4. Do not place your trust in possessions and riches, thinking that they can protect you from dangers and deliver you from troubles. Solomon says that the wealth of the rich is like a strong tower and a high wall in their own perception. However, it is difficult for those who trust in riches to enter the Kingdom of God. Juvenal could say, "As much as one saves in their chest, that much they have in faith." Your silver and gold cannot shield you from the wrath of God.
5. For those who have acquired great estates and possessions, do not view yourselves as owners, but as stewards of the abundant blessings of God. Beloved, God is the true owner of all that you possess; even the cattle on a thousand hills belong to Him. You are merely stewards of your abundance. Therefore, if God has blessed you with abundant riches in the world, making you worth hundreds of pounds per year, consider that you are not the owner, but a steward of God's blessings. They are entrusted to you for a temporary period, so do not misuse them through

excess and indulgence. Instead, use them for the glory of the giver and true owner of all things. As stated in Luke 16:11-12, "If you have not been faithful in unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? And if you have not been faithful in what is another man's, who will give you what is your own?" Likewise, in verse 9, "Make friends for yourselves by unrighteous mammon."

6. If God has blessed you with great wealth, you may possess it, but do not let your wealth possess you. If your riches increase, do not set your hearts on them. Your eyes, hands, and tongues may be involved with them, but do not let your hearts be attached. Let your money stay no closer to your heart than your hands. Even a pagan could say that although he may lend himself, he would not give himself to his wealth. Possessions in the world are like a rose in a person's hand: if handled gently, it will preserve its fragrance, color, and beauty for a long time; but if crushed and handled roughly, it will quickly lose its color and sweetness. Similarly, if you use and employ your wealth wisely, you will possess it for a longer time. However, if you become too attached to it, you will quickly lose it. And thus, I have concluded these cautelary directions, and now I will present to you some astonishing considerations.

You, who have acquired great estates in the world, even if it has been done honestly, should consider that God, in His gracious dispensations, often distributes the blessings of eternal life more commonly among the poorer and humbler individuals rather than the rich and those with great possessions. In 1 Corinthians 1:26-27, the Apostle says, "For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called" (he does not say "not any," but "not many"). Great and virtuous individuals, like stars of the highest magnitude, are sparsely scattered in the firmament of a state. However, God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and the weak things of the world to confound the mighty. He has chosen the base things

of the world and the things which are despised. Similarly, in James 2:5, it is stated, "Has God not chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom?" It is worth noting that among the seven churches of Asia, the poorest church was the best, while the richest church was the worst. The Church of Laodicea was considered the worst of all the churches, as it was lukewarm, neither hot nor cold. And yet, the text describes it as rich and increased in goods, claiming to need nothing. On the other hand, the Church of Smyrna, one of the best churches, was acknowledged by Christ in Revelation 2:9: "I know your works, tribulation, and poverty (but you are rich)." Although they were outwardly poor, they were inwardly rich. God usually bestows His grace more abundantly upon the poor than the rich. Therefore, this may be an astonishing consideration for you. Just as in the past, God chose humble and simple creatures for sacrifice, not the lion or the eagle, which are considered the kings of beasts and birds, but the lamb and the dove, poor, innocent, and insignificant creatures, not as noble or highly regarded as the lion and the eagle. In His elections for grace and glory, God chose the lamb and the dove, symbolising the poorer and humbler individuals rather than those with great wealth and possessions in the world.

Consider that in the early preaching and establishment of the Gospel, it was rare for a rich man to embrace Christ and become His follower. The poor were the ones who received the Gospel and embraced Christ, as stated in Matthew 11:6. In John 7:48, when the officers and soldiers who came to arrest Christ heard Him speak, they were convinced and said, "No man ever spoke like this Man!" However, the chief priests asked them, "Have any of the rulers or Pharisees believed in Him?" It is worth noting in Matthew 27:57 that Joseph of Arimathea, a rich man, was one of those who followed Christ. This is mentioned as a remarkable occurrence, as Mark says that Joseph went boldly to Pilate (Mark 15:43), while John states that he was secretly a disciple of Christ for fear of the Jews. It was primarily the poor and humble fishermen who most readily received the Gospel.

Consider that while some individuals may be improved by their abundance and wealth in the world, there are multitudes who are made worse by them. Therefore, let this consideration startle you. Ecclesiastes 5:13 states, "There is a severe evil which I have seen under the sun: riches kept for their owners to their hurt." Beloved, where riches may benefit one person, they can harm a thousand others.

I recall reading about Pope Pius V, who recounted that when he was of humble and lowly status in the world, he had a strong hope of his salvation. However, when he was elevated to the position of cardinal, he began to doubt and question it. And when he was further promoted to the position of Pope, he began to despair completely. His wealth and advancements in the world caused him to deteriorate spiritually.

May not some of you also truthfully complain that when I was poor and in a low condition, I continually remembered to pray in my family, to read and hear the word of God, and to attend the ordinances of God. But now that I have become rich, my family goes without prayer, and my worldly affairs interrupt and distract me from the worship and service of God, from reading, hearing, and praying both publicly and privately in my family. I am now much worse off than when I was poor, and I have ungratefully repaid the Lord for all His mercies. People's character often changes with their rise in wealth; as they increase in wealth, they decrease in grace. The people of God are usually better in a state of affliction than in prosperity. You will find that David was much better when he was hunted by Saul like a partridge on the mountains than when he sat upon the throne. Therefore, it is said in 2 Chronicles 17:3 that Jehoshaphat walked in the early ways of his father David; it seems his later ways were not as good. Many people in their later days, when they become old and wealthy, are then consumed by their riches, even if they no longer possess them physically. Therefore, seriously consider whether your early days in the world were not your best days, and whether your later and richest days are your

worst. It is observed of the children of Israel that they were better off under bondage in Egypt than they were in the land of Canaan, where they had all they needed. For in the land of Canaan, they became proud and forgot the Lord. That is why Moses gave them such a warning in Deuteronomy 8, from verse 7 to 15.

Consider, beloved, that your wealth and possessions in the world, though they may be lawful and honestly acquired, put you under greater difficulty in reaching Heaven than other people. In Matthew 19:23-24, when Jesus told the young man that if he wanted to be perfect, he must sell all that he had and give to the poor, the young man went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions. Then Jesus said to His disciples, "How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of heaven! Again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." On what difficult terms can a rich man hope to enter Heaven? Some are of the opinion that the word here translated as "camel" properly signifies a thick cable rope, and Mr. Perkins shares that view. He says, though a thick cable rope cannot go through the eye of a needle as it is, if you untwist it, there is a possibility of getting it through. So, if people untwist themselves from the world and live with diminished attachment to their wealth and possessions, this is the way for them to reach heaven. Heaven is compared to a stately palace with a narrow gate. The expression shows the great difficulty that rich men face in entering heaven. Mark and Luke emphasize this with passion, saying, "Oh, how hard it is!" But Christ says, "What is impossible with man is possible with God." The riches of the world are perplexing and enticing vanities that make it more difficult for you to reach Heaven, and it is highly likely that they ensnare and entangle you.

Consider that those to whom God has granted great possessions in the world are exposed to more distracting, distressing, and unsettling cares than poor men. Poor men have no reason to complain about their poverty if they have food and clothing because they are free from the cares and troubles that often befall the rich. Who would

desire silk stockings if they had gouty legs underneath? The gout is a disease that commonly afflicts the wealthy. Who would desire a satin doublet or a purple robe if they had a leprous and infirm body beneath them? It is better for you to remain poor as you are than to have riches accompanied by so many troubles, crosses, and afflictions. In 1 Timothy 6:9-10, the Apostle says that those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, a snare, and many foolish and harmful lusts that lead to ruin and destruction. The love of money is the root of all evil, and those who covet it bring upon themselves many sorrows. Ecclesiastes 5:12 states that the sleep of a laboring man is sweet, but the abundance of the rich will not allow them to rest. Ecclesiastes 2:26 also highlights how the pursuit of wealth can bring sorrow and trouble. Therefore, riches are likened to thorns that can pierce and wound you. A rich man constantly has three vultures feeding on his heart: great care in acquiring wealth, fear in preserving it, and grief in parting with it, all of which disrupt his peace. It is worth noting that the same Hebrew word that signifies merchandise also signifies trouble, indicating that those who entangle themselves in worldly affairs will encounter much trouble, anguish, and vexation.

Consider that often your wealth and riches can hinder and obstruct the success, power, and benefit of the word of God in your souls. In Matthew 13:22, it is said of the thorny ground that the deceitfulness of riches choked the word and made it unfruitful. Just as a crop of corn cannot grow in a hedge of thorns, the word of God cannot thrive in a heart filled with worldly cares.

Beloved, these awakening considerations I have presented to you regarding riches may lead some of you to resolve never to pursue wealth or strive for a great estate in the world. However, do not misunderstand me and conclude from this that it is a sin to be rich. It is a danger to be rich, but not a sin. It is a snare and temptation, and therefore you should be cautious both in how you acquire and how you use and employ your riches.

Because there is a danger in wealth, do not, therefore, discard your wealth and spend it frivolously and wastefully, casting away the blessings of God. As Crates the Thebane is reported to have said about his wealth, "I will destroy thee, lest thou shouldst destroy me." And this brings me to the third point I promised to address, which is to provide you with useful directions and admonitions on how to have God's blessing upon your estates, thereby preserving and increasing them.

1. Infuse grace into your possessions, let grace be mingled with your goods, and seek true riches to accompany your worldly wealth. This is the way to preserve and enhance them. As stated in Psalm 112:1-3, "Blessed is the man who fears the Lord, who delights greatly in his commandments. His descendants will be mighty on earth; the generation of the upright will be blessed. Wealth and riches will be in his house." When God asked Solomon what he desired, he did not ask for riches but for wisdom, knowledge, and understanding. Because of Solomon's heart's desire, God granted him wisdom and knowledge, and added riches, wealth, and honor beyond any king before or after him. Beloved, seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all other things will be added unto you. The way to preserve and increase your riches is to acquire grace in your hearts.
2. Allocate a portion of your increase to pious and Christian purposes, to promote and advance religion, and do so during your lifetime. Proverbs 3:9-10 instructs, "Honor the Lord with your wealth and with the first fruits of all your produce; then your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will be bursting with wine." As an expression of gratitude to God for His blessings, utilize a portion of your wealth for His glory and for good and pious causes.
3. Allocate a portion of your increase to charitable causes, towards relieving the needs of the poor. Proverbs 11:24 states, "One gives

freely, yet grows all the richer; another withholds what he should give, and only suffers want." Being stingy and withholding tends to poverty. God may diminish an estate that is well acquired if it is poorly managed. Acts of mercy done wisely have never hindered, but rather advanced people's outward estates. Just as good usage of other gifts brings augmentation, in 2 Corinthians 9:10, the Apostle refers to works of charity as sowing seeds. There is no field as fruitful to sow in as the poor members of Christ, and there is no better seed than mercy. Liberality will bring you a crop of corn that is most beneficial. However, exercise discretion, as Psalm 112:5 advises. The wise person is merciful but orders their affairs wisely. You should be judicious in determining how much you should give according to your ability, and no more; also, consider when and to whom you should give. Do not give haphazardly to every beggar you encounter on the streets without any discernment. Instead, give to those poor individuals who pursue a livelihood, work diligently to sustain themselves in the world, and lead a holy and religious life. If you give in this manner, I assure you that you will not be poorer at the end of the year, or at least at the end of your life. Being miserly is the path to poverty.

Things acquired dishonestly are easily lost, and poorly managed possessions will not endure. If you desire God's blessing on your possessions, cultivate a tender and compassionate heart towards the poor. Do not only give to those who come and ask of you, but actively seek out the poor and provide assistance. As the Prophet Isaiah says, the generous person will plan how to give generously. Seek out those who will benefit most from your help and support. Cast your money upon the waters, and after many days, you will find it again. This is a proverbial expression for seemingly fruitless expenditures. We often say, "I might as well have thrown my money into the river." Although it may appear that you have wasted your money, you will find that God will bring about an increase and a significant return for all that you have given to the poor, for the sake of Christ. Therefore, do not hold back or be stingy towards the poor. Do not only give a small

morsel of bread at your doorstep for others to see. Give in secret when nobody is watching, and give to those who are most in need of your charity. This is the way for God to bless and increase your wealth.

4. Lastly, for those of you whom God has blessed in your endeavors and increased your possessions, continue to pursue your calling with conscientiousness and diligence. As God has blessed you thus far, do not resort to dishonest or deceitful means to acquire more wealth. Instead, continue to engage in your occupation honestly. Solomon declares that the diligent hand leads to wealth, and in all labor there is profit, whereas idle talk only leads to poverty.

With this, I have concluded addressing these two groups: firstly, those who engage in buying and selling and pursue a trade in the world, yet struggle to make ends meet.

Now, I have also spoken to those who engage in buying and selling and have acquired significant wealth and possessions in the world, and have done so justly and honestly.

In the afternoon, I will dedicate an hour to speaking to those who have acquired possessions and riches in the world, but through dishonest and fraudulent means.

SERMON 12

"And they that buy, as though they possessed not." - 1
Corinthians 7:30

We now turn our attention to those who have acquired possessions in the world through dishonest and unjust means, such as using false weights or measures or engaging in other sinful and indirect practices. It is worth dedicating an hour of our time to discuss this final part of the sermon, especially considering the size of our audience. Perhaps what will be said today may resonate with some of you.

In addressing this, I will do the following three things:

- Show you some indicators that may suggest a person has acquired their wealth unjustly.
- Provide cautionary counsel and guidance to such individuals.
- Present some alarming considerations for their reflection.

Firstly, let us consider what indicators may point to a person who has obtained their wealth unjustly. I will mention three such indicators:

1. You may suspect that a man has obtained his wealth dishonestly if he has acquired a great fortune suddenly. When a beggar suddenly becomes a rich man, it is a notable occurrence. As stated in Proverbs 28:20, "He that maketh haste to be rich shall not be innocent," and there is a curse attached to it in Proverbs 20:21, "An inheritance may be gotten hastily at the beginning, but the end thereof shall not be blessed." In Plutarch's account of Sylla's life, a Roman senator spoke to Sylla, saying, "How can you be a good man when you possess such wealth, when nothing was left to you by your father?" Menander also said, "A just man never grows rich all of a sudden." In 1 Timothy 6:9-10, it is stated that those who eagerly and hastily desire to be rich fall into temptations and a snare.
2. You may suspect that a man has acquired his wealth through dishonest means when he follows a trade and gains wealth honestly, while no one else in the same trade and profession can achieve such great wealth despite putting in the same amount of

effort and receiving similar returns. It is a sign that there is some form of deceitful practice involved in his trade. Comparing Proverbs 22:2 with Proverbs 29:13, we see the contrast between the poor and the rich, and the poor and the deceitful. Seneca also provides a rule: if a person is rich alone, it is highly probable that they have acquired their wealth dishonestly and unjustly.

3. When a person has obtained their wealth through means that God disapproves of, such as selling false goods, using false weights, measures, or deceptive tactics, their acquisition of wealth is dishonest. Using any of these methods in trade, which God condemns, is an unjust means of gaining wealth. This concludes the first point. Now I move on to the second: what cautionary rules and directions can be given to those who have acquired riches and possessions unjustly? I will provide you with three of them.

Do not deceive yourself by thinking that you can satisfy your conscience or justify your unjust gains by using them religiously and charitably at your death.

Many people are inclined to believe that if they have been unjust and deceitful in their dealings throughout their lives, they can make amends by using their ill-gotten gains for good purposes when they die—giving legacies, building hospitals or churches—and that this will satisfy God for all their injustice. But it is not so; God will not be satisfied with such offerings. God does not love a sacrifice that is obtained through theft and violence. In Isaiah 61:8, God declares, "I love justice and hate robbery and wrongdoing." It is worth noting that in Deuteronomy 23:18, the Lord explicitly commanded that the wages of a prostitute or the price of a dog should not be brought to the altar as an offering to God. The Lord could not accept money earned through immoral means as a sacrifice. Therefore, consider this: if you use money acquired through oppression, violence, and

deceit for good purposes, the Lord will not be pleased with it. This is the first direction.

Think promptly about making restitution if you desire salvation. Make restitution to those whom you have wronged. God would rather have you make restitution to those you have harmed than build hospitals or allocate it to any other pious or charitable cause. As Zacchaeus declared, "If I have taken anything from anyone by false means, I will restore it fourfold." When Sultan Selymus's counselor Pyrrbus urged him to use the great wealth he had taken from Persian merchants to establish a notable hospital for the relief of the poor, the dying Turk commanded that it be returned to its rightful owners. When King Henry III of England sent a load of cloth to the Franciscan Friars to clothe them, they sent it back with a message stating that he should not give alms from what he had unjustly taken from the poor, and they refused to accept that abominable gift. See Leviticus 6:4.

Do not justify yourself in pursuing dishonest gain when your conscience tells you that you have dealt unjustly. This was the great sin of Ephraim as described in Hosea 12:7. Ephraim is a merchant who uses deceitful balances and loves to oppress. And Ephraim says, "Yet I have become rich; I have found wealth for myself. In all my labors, they shall find in me no iniquity that is sin." He justified himself despite using deceitful balances, but you should not do the same. Even if you justify yourself, God will not justify you. In Micah 6:11, God states, "Can I tolerate dishonest scales and bags of false weights? Your rich people are violent; your inhabitants are liars; their tongues speak deceitfully." No, I will not tolerate it, says God.

Now I will present some terrifying and astonishing considerations. All of you who have acquired your estates unjustly and dishonestly, let these six dreadful considerations weigh heavily on your hearts.

1. Consider that an ill-gotten estate is viewed by God no differently than robbery, even if it is obtained through commerce and

trading in the world. God sees it as robbery, as if you had played the role of a thief and stolen it from someone's house or picked their pocket. In Psalm 62:10, it is said, "Trust not in oppression, and become not vain in robbery." Oppression and robbery are considered the same. Similarly, in Proverbs 21:6-7, it is stated, "The getting of treasures by a lying tongue is a fleeting vapor, the pursuit of death. The violence of the wicked shall sweep them away, because they refuse to do justice." An estate obtained through a deceitful tongue is called robbery by God, and though we may not view it as such, in God's eyes it is no different than if you had robbed or pickpocketed someone.

Therefore, beloved, it is worth noting that Zacchaeus gave as restitution for the things he had acquired unjustly what God required as restitution for stolen goods, as stated in Exodus 22:1-3, even though he did not steal them himself. For example, if a man stole a sheep, the law required him to restore fourfold. David also judged in a similar manner in 2 Samuel 12:6. Zacchaeus, although not a thief, said, "If I have taken anything from anyone unjustly, I will restore it fourfold." This indicates that riches obtained through a deceitful tongue and through oppression are no better than robbery in the sight of God. Beloved, none of you would be willing to bear the label of a thief when in reality you are one, and no better in God's eyes, if you acquire an estate dishonestly.

Take into account this terrifying consideration: the guilt you accumulate in your trades through dishonest gains on weekdays is remembered by the Lord on the Sabbath day. You bring the curse of your sins from the entire week with you on the Lord's day. In Ezekiel 28:18, God said to Tyre, "You have defiled your sanctuaries by the multitude of your iniquities, by the iniquity of your trading." Beloved, the sins of your trades and your business practices defile your worship and your approach into God's presence. When you come to pray before Him, the sins of your shops taint your prayers and pollute the ordinances of God for you. The Lord considers all your unjust gains as if you were defiling His sanctuary. In Ezekiel

14:3-4, it is written, "Son of man, these men have set up their idols in their hearts, and put the stumbling block of their iniquity before their faces. Should I be inquired of at all by them? Therefore speak to them, and say, 'Thus says the Lord God: "Everyone of the house of Israel who sets up his idols in his heart, and puts the stumbling block of his iniquity before his face, and comes to the prophet, I the Lord will answer him who comes according to the multitude of his idols."'"

Oh beloved, when you approach the solemn assemblies to make your addresses to God, He knows that unjust gain is your idol, and He Himself will answer you according to your iniquities and will not hear your prayers. Let this consideration terrify you: the sin of your shops will defile your sanctuary and negate the benefits of your prayers and services.

3. Consider that if God ever awakens your conscience, you will not be able to look upon your unjust gains without a great deal of unease, horror, and inner turmoil. Perhaps now stolen waters seem sweet to you, and deceitful bread is pleasant, but when God comes to awaken your conscience, oh, what horror, terror, and consternation will seize your spirit! Job 20:15, 18, 20 says, "He has swallowed down riches, and he shall vomit them up again." The riches obtained unjustly will be like undigested food in a person's stomach, causing them to vomit it up. In verse 18, it is said, "That which he labored for he shall restore; he shall not feel quietness in his belly, that is, in his conscience." Those who are the great oppressors of the world, swallowing riches through oppression, will not find peace in their consciences. Proverbs 6:7 states, "The getting of treasures by a lying tongue is a vanity tossed to and fro of those who seek death; the robbery of the wicked shall destroy them." The word translated as "destroy" in the original signifies "to saw," which implies that ill-gotten goods obtained through deceit and oppression will trouble and torment those who acquire them, just as a saw troubles and torments a person when their arm or leg is sawed off with it. When a person comes to the end of their life and

considers that all the wealth they labored for will leave them in death, and that their riches are the price of their souls, obtained through defrauding and overreaching their neighbour, lying, cheating, and oppressing them, how can such a person look God in the face? Isaiah 33:14 asks, "Who shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who shall dwell with the everlasting burnings?" Only those who walk righteously, speak uprightly, and despise the gain of oppression. None of those who acquire dishonest gain and defraud their brethren can look God in the face. What horror and terror of conscience will it be for you when you come to die and consider that all your riches were purchased with your soul's blood? This was the case with Judas (Matthew 27:3).

4. Consider that sometimes those who have obtained great estates unjustly are punished by God in such a way that they become objects of shame and reproach among the people where they dwell. In Habakkuk 2:9-10, it is said, "Woe to him who covets an evil covetousness for his house, that he may set his nest on high; you have consulted shame to your house." When people acquire houses upon houses and oppress the poor, they bring shame upon their own house. This may not be their intention, but it happens nonetheless. Through experience, we see that many times the great oppressors and exploiters bring shame upon themselves in the places where they live.
5. Consider that sometimes God, in His just judgments, may destroy the estates acquired through dishonest means even in this life. The oppressor's estate may perish before their own demise; it happens at times. Solomon says in Proverbs 13:11, "Wealth gotten by vanity shall be diminished." Ill-gotten goods are likened to treasures of snow, for just as snow melts away when held in one's hand, God often causes unjustly acquired riches to melt away. A significant expression can be found in Proverbs 20:21: "An inheritance may be gotten hastily at the beginning, but the end thereof shall not be blessed." It is noteworthy to observe that among all the tribes of Israel, the

tribes of Gad, Reuben, and half the tribe of Manasseh were the most eager to take possession of the promised land. However, the Lord allowed them to lose their possessions long before the others did. You can see this in 1 Kings 10:33. I mention this to illustrate that even if you are hasty in acquiring an estate, God can swiftly take it from you. Another relevant text is found in Jeremiah 17:11: "As the partridge sits on eggs and hatches them not, so he that getteth riches, and not by right, shall leave them in the midst of his days, and at his end shall be a fool."

Oh, beloved, contemplate this: the curse of God awaits ill-gotten wealth, and He will bring destruction upon it, perhaps even before your death. In Ezekiel 22:12-13, it is stated, "Thou hast taken usury and increase, and thou hast greedily gained of thy neighbours by extortion, and hast forgotten me, saith the Lord. Behold, therefore, I have smitten my hand at thy dishonest gain which thou hast made." God will strike with His hand and destroy all ill-gotten gain.

[Objection] But I hear some rich men say, "Surely what you say is not true, for I have acquired wealth through dishonest means, I have acted in this manner, and have amassed a great estate. I am still a rich man, and I have left each of my children with a substantial yearly income. I still possess a significant wealth overall. Therefore, I do not see the truth in what you say."

[Answer] I respond by affirming that it is true, individuals can sometimes accumulate wealth dishonestly and still die as wealthy individuals, passing their riches on to their children. As Jeremiah 5:27 states, "As a cage is full of birds, so are their houses full of deceit; therefore they have become great and grown rich." God may allow those who live and trade deceitfully to become great and accumulate riches.

2. Consider that you will find no true comfort or peace of mind in the wealth acquired through dishonest means. Even though you have obtained it unjustly, you cannot maintain it peacefully. The

riches you have greedily consumed will be vomited up, and you will surely find no rest within.

3. Suppose you may retain your estate throughout your lifetime, but in the end, you will be a great loser because of it. For what is the worth of gaining and keeping the whole world if you lose your own soul in the process? Habakkuk 2:10 states that by your unjust gains, you have brought shame upon your household and sinned against your own soul. This concludes the fifth consideration.
4. Consider that through dishonest gains, you are risking the greatest loss of all—a precious and eternal soul. As mentioned earlier in Habakkuk 2:10, woe to the one who acquires wealth through dishonesty and oppression, for they sin against their own soul. James 5:3 also pronounces woe upon rich men whose gold and silver will become corroded, serving as witnesses against them on the final day. Hebrews 2:11 warns that the very walls and beams of the houses acquired unjustly will cry out for vengeance. A Lapidé presents a fitting fable that compares unjust individuals to spiders and the righteous to bees. The spider reproaches the bee, but the bee responds, "It is most foolish to sacrifice life for life, to pour out the dearest marrow for a worthless thing, to exchange certainty for uncertainty, and to lose the great for the smallest."

Therefore, wicked man, consider that though you may possess a grand estate, it will cost you your soul's blood unless you repent. Let this consideration weigh heavily on your hearts, as you put your precious souls in danger through your unjust gains.

With this, I have concluded the three sections of the discourse, addressing three groups of people: 1. Those who engage in buying and selling in the world but struggle to make ends meet. 2. Those who trade and amass great estates but do so unjustly and dishonestly. And finally, those who have acquired substantial estates

and possessions through just and commendable means. Now, I will bring everything to a close with another brief and practical application, and thus, I shall conclude.

I have already delivered four sermons on the topic of commerce and trading in the world, and now, in concluding this subject, I shall offer this earnest exhortation and plea to you amidst all your buying, selling, and trading: Engage in a trade for Heaven. Labour to possess grace alongside worldly goods. Allow me to present three considerations to encourage you in this pursuit.

1. Don't you expect to gain and increase through your trades? Each one of you hopes to profit from your trading. Therefore, don't just trade for Heaven without striving to grow and improve through it. In Luke 19:5, the Lord expects us to make use of our talents and gain through our trading for Heaven. If you anticipate gaining through your worldly trades, shouldn't God also expect you to gain more grace, knowledge, experience, humility, holiness, heavenly-mindedness, and similar virtues through your trading for Heaven?
2. Wouldn't it be a cause for grief if you spent a long time buying, selling, and trading in the world without increasing your stock? Beloved, shouldn't it also grieve you that you have been trading for Heaven for a long time, yet from the beginning until now, have seen no increase? Wouldn't it sadden you if your worldly possessions declined despite all your hard work and efforts in trading? And shouldn't it trouble you even more to be further away from Heaven now than you were at the beginning?
3. Isn't it unreasonable for all your pursuits and endeavours to focus solely on gaining and procuring things for the body, while neglecting to care for and provide for the soul? Beloved, would you not consider someone unnatural if they took care to clothe their servant but let their own child go naked? Similarly, is it not unreasonable for you to exert great efforts to preserve your

bodies while showing no concern for the well-being of your precious and immortal souls? It is a foolishness to be so anxious about preserving your bodies while neglecting the welfare of your souls.

And now I have covered these three aspects of the text: those who weep as though they did not weep, those who rejoice as though they did not rejoice, and those who buy as though they did not possess.

Next, I will address the fourth and final part: "and those who use this world as not abusing it, for the fashion of this world is passing away."

SERMON 13

"And they that use this world as not abusing it, for the fashion of this world passeth away." - 1 Corinthians 7:31

In these words, there are two main parts:

1. A commanded duty.
2. The reason for it.

First, the duty commanded is expressed in the words, "and they that use this world as not abusing it."

Secondly, the reason for the duty is given, stating that the fashion or scheme of this world is passing away. The word "fashion" here refers to a mere notion or appearance without substance. I will mainly focus on the first part of the words.

Doctrine: While people enjoy the lawful comforts of this world, they must be cautious not to misuse them. This is the doctrine I will

address in this sermon. It is not only necessary to avoid sinful things but also to be mindful of certain lawful things, for although they may not be sinful in themselves, they can still become a snare.

In discussing this point, I will proceed as follows:

1. I will provide the reasons why you must not abuse the lawful comforts of this world.
2. I will explain when a person can be said to abuse lawful comforts in their use.
3. Lastly, I will offer some directions on how a Christian can use the lawful comforts of life without abusing them.

I will begin with the first point and present the reasons why you must not abuse the lawful comforts of this life.

There are four compelling reasons for this, two of which are found in Scripture, and the other two are deduced from Scripture.

1. Do not abuse anything you use. Why? Because nothing you use is your own, but belongs to God. He is the true owner of all that you possess, and it is considered dishonest to abuse other people's belongings. Everything you have belongs to God. The cattle on a thousand hills are His, and your crops and wine are God's. If you indulge in excess or drunkenness with any of them, you are abusing something that does not belong to you. This is the first reason derived from Scripture.
2. There are two reasons found in Scripture why you should not abuse the comforts you enjoy. One is mentioned before my text, and the other after it. The reason before my text is this: "But I say, brethren, the time is short, so it remains that whatever you use in the world, since you cannot use them for long, you should use them well." Our time is short, and therefore do not abuse the comforts you enjoy. The reason after my text is that all our

comforts are temporary and fleeting. They pass away quickly, so use the world without abusing it, for the fashion of this world is passing away. They pass away swiftly like eagles, but they come to you like sparrows. Your comforts vanish like smoke. It was a custom in Rome, when the Pope passed by, to have an officer burn flax before him as a reminder that his honour and riches would soon vanish and pass away like smoke. It was also a thought-provoking meditation to see a running river, knowing that the water I see now runs away and I will never see it again. The comforts of this world are like a running river that keeps gliding away from us. Since we cannot enjoy these comforts for long, let us use them well without abusing them.

3. Another reason why we should not abuse the comforts of this world is that people are naturally more prone to venture into the abuse of lawful things than in committing outright unlawful acts. More people die from eating food than from poison. A learned man believed that more people go to Hell by doing lawful things unlawfully than by doing things that are inherently sinful and unlawful. Blatant and gross wickedness is easily recognised and resisted, but who suspects lawful things? Who suspects that their table could become a snare to them while eating or drinking? When someone gets married, they do not expect that their marriage could weaken their union with Jesus Christ. When buying and selling and engaging in worldly trades, one does not suspect that they may be selling away their soul. Therefore, be cautious not to abuse lawful things because people are naturally more prone to abusing them than engaging in clearly sinful and unlawful acts. One can lose themselves while trying to preserve their comforts. Surfeiting with sweets and delicacies has caused more harm than consuming bitter-tasting food. It is noteworthy that in Luke 14:18, there were three people who made excuses for not attending the feast of the great King, and none of them pleaded any sinful reasons for their absence. One said, "I have bought a piece of land and must go and see it; please excuse me." Another said, "I have bought five

yoke of oxen and am going to test them; please excuse me." And another said, "I have married a wife, so I cannot come." None of them used sin as an excuse for their absence, such as cheating their neighbour out of their land like Ahab did to Naboth's vineyard, stealing oxen, or engaging in wanton dalliance with whores and harlots. Instead, they used lawful things as grounds for their excuse. This clearly demonstrates that the abusive use of lawful things is a great sin, and therefore, we need to be careful and cautious not to offend in this regard.

And thus, I have completed the discussion on the first question concerning why we must not abuse the lawful comforts of this life.

Now, let us proceed to the second question, which is to show when a person can be said to abuse the lawful comforts.

I will provide you with these four or five specific instances:

1. A person can be said to abuse the lawful comforts of this life when they use them excessively. Many individuals hold their comforts so tightly in their arms that they ruin them, just as an ape kills its young by squeezing them too hard. Beloved, if you were to use the things of the world gently and moderately, their splendour, beauty, and comfort would last longer for you. However, by crushing them and excessively loving them, you spoil them. If your riches increase, do not set your hearts upon them. It is a wise observation made about the verse in Job 38:22 where God challenges Job, asking if he has entered the treasures of snow or seen the treasures of hail. The comparison is made that all the comforts of this world are like treasures of snow. If you take a handful of snow and squeeze it in your hand, it will quickly melt away. But if you leave it on the ground, it will last for a while. The same applies to the things of this world. If you hold the comforts of this life too close to your heart with excessive affection and love for them, they will quickly melt and disappear. However, if you keep them in their proper place and

do not develop an immoderate attachment to them, they will last longer with you. It is good to line a garment with linen, but if you line it with pitch or glue so that it sticks to the body, you ruin both the garment and the person wearing it. Similarly, when the world is glued to your hearts, it spoils the comforts of the blessings you enjoy. Therefore, the first way a person can be said to use the lawful comforts of this life abusively is by using them excessively. For whatever a person loves excessively, they make it their god. The covetous person makes a god of their gold, the ambitious person of their honour, and so on. This is a significant misuse of the created things to make gods out of them.

2. People abuse lawful things when they approach worldly matters too eagerly. When individuals rise early and stay up late, consume themselves with worries, and become consumed by worldly pursuits, they are abusing the world in their use of it, as mentioned in James 4:13.

[Obj.] Objection: But when can a person be said to approach the things of this world too eagerly?

[Answ.] Answer:

1. When your worldly engagements hinder you from performing sacred duties, then you are too eager in pursuing worldly things. Even though you engage in lawful and commendable trades, if it causes you to neglect your obligations to God, such as family duties and personal devotion, you are abusing lawful things. This is exemplified by Martha's abuse of lawful things in Luke 10:40. Jesus said, "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things." She was preoccupied with household matters but neglected the one necessary thing, which was to listen to Christ's teachings. Therefore, all of you who are tradesmen and have significant worldly responsibilities, examine your hearts seriously and consider whether you are

depriving God of His due and neglecting your duties of His service due to excessive pursuit of worldly matters.

2. When you cannot find peace and tranquility in enjoying God's blessings, you are too entangled and engulfed in the world. If, as Solomon said, due to your abundance you cannot sleep, and you have no time to eat during the day or rest at night, then you are too eager about worldly things. Furthermore, when a person is restless and dissatisfied with their condition, desiring to be greater and richer or to engage in a larger trade, this is being too eager about worldly matters.
3. Another way in which people abuse lawful things is by depending on them excessively. When individuals place excessive trust and reliance on the things of this world, they are misusing them. The comforts of this life can be likened to the reeds of Egypt, which not only disappoint expectations and break when leaned upon but also pierce and injure one's hand. Similarly, if you rely too heavily on the things of this world, they will shatter your hopes, elude your grasp, and inflict you with many sorrows. It is a valid observation that someone made: "The world hangs upon nothing, so why should we depend on something that has no foundation?"
4. A person misuses lawful things when they become excessively anxious and troubled about their future and the well-being of their family, to the point where they cannot find any comfort or peace in their current possessions. This is an abuse of worldly things. Since worldly possessions are not permanent and enduring, we should not set our hearts on them or be distressed about our future circumstances. As the Apostle says in the next verse after my text, we should not be overly anxious and worried about worldly matters.

[Quest. 3] Now let us address the third question: What should a Christian do to use the lawful comforts of this life without abusing

them? How can a Christian use lawful things properly?

[Answ.] I will provide a brief answer to this and show you four ways in which you can use lawful things properly and avoid abusing them.

1. If you want to use lawful things properly, use them with a spiritual mindset. By approaching earthly things with a heavenly perspective, you will not abuse them. Just as wicked individuals use spiritual things in a carnal manner, you should use carnal things in a spiritual way. While you engage in worldly matters, make a spiritual use of them. Jesus demonstrated this when the people came to Him for bread; He took the opportunity to teach them about the bread of life and the heavenly manna that sustains and gives eternal life. Similarly, when the Samaritan woman was drawing water from the well, Jesus used that situation to speak about the living water that quenches spiritual thirst. Christ applied spiritual meaning to earthly things. It is permissible to discuss worldly matters such as buying, selling, and trading, but always conclude with a touch of something spiritual and heavenly. One cannot use the world well until they approach it spiritually. As an example, someone once observed a little robin perching on their window and chirping. They reflected spiritually on this sight, noting that even though the bird does not know where to find shelter or its next meal, it can still sing and be merry. The observer questioned why they, who have an abundance of worldly possessions, should be dejected and burdened with excessive care and worries about them.
2. Reflect on the things of this world, and you will not abuse them. Direct your thoughts from the world towards God. When you are enjoying any of the comforts of this life and find pleasure and sweetness in any of the created things, take a moment to reflect and consider: If there is such sweetness and delight in the creature, how much greater sweetness is there in God the Creator? If there is beauty and excellence in the creature, how much more beauty and glory and surpassing excellence is there

in God and in the Lord Jesus Christ? If a candle emits light and brightness, imagine the light of the sun, the glory of heaven, and the radiance of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is infinitely brighter than the sun. If you use the world in this way, you will not abuse it. If the creature is filled with goodness and sweetness, how much more is God filled with goodness? If there is comfort in having an earthly estate, imagine the comfort of having grace in our hearts and enjoying the incorruptible treasures that neither moth nor rust can destroy, nor thieves break in and steal. Use the world as a mirror that reflects, not as a muddy wall. Oh beloved, if we could use all creature comforts in this way, looking up to God and reflecting on the giver of them, we would never abuse them.

3. You must use the comforts of the world with detachment and weaned affections. David exemplified this even though he was the King of Israel and sat on the throne. He was like a weaned child when it came to worldly things (Psalms 131:1).

Beloved, even if you have great wealth in this world, you should live with affections that are detached from the world. The Scriptures not only instruct Christians to crucify the flesh but also the world. Those who belong to Christ have not only crucified the flesh with its passions and desires (Galatians 5:24), but they are also crucified to the world. Paul was like this; he said, "I am crucified to the world, and the world is crucified to me." The world did not matter to Paul, and he did not care for the world. To use the world well, one must use it with a sense of detachment.

4. If you want to avoid using the comforts of the world abusively, you must use them in an orderly manner. First, seek the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and then all other things will be added to you (Matthew 6:33). Before pursuing worldly matters, seek heavenly things. Prioritize the Kingdom of Heaven in your thoughts and value it as the supreme object of your desires and delight. Let your heart be primarily inclined

towards spiritual things. Make it your purpose for which you were sent into the world. You may pursue worldly things, but when you attain them, use them in service to heavenly and spiritual matters. You may follow your vocation in obedience to God's command, but have the intention to better provide for your family, serve God in that role and position He has assigned you, assist the poor, comfort the needy, and support others who require your charitable help. Keep your focus on spiritual matters as your primary concern and utilize all your comforts as steps to bring you closer to Heaven. You should be subservient to God in whatever circumstances He has placed you and not use the world for the sake of the world. Engage in your vocation, trade, and business not merely for the purpose of gaining wealth and worldly greatness, while making religion and godliness subordinate to the world. This would be a significant misuse of the world. Instead, let everything in this earthly realm be secondary and subservient to spiritual and heavenly matters.

It is worth noting that in the Lord's Prayer, there are five petitions for spiritual things and only one for temporal things, which is to ask for our daily bread. This emphasises that our desires and efforts should primarily be directed towards spiritual matters. Furthermore, these spiritual requests are mentioned before worldly matters, indicating that the things of the world should be subservient to spiritual things. By following these four principles, you will not misuse the world.

And thus, I have covered the doctrinal part of this subject. I will only make a brief application before concluding.

[Application] 1. If it is true that we should not abuse the lawful comforts of this life, then as a reproof, this doctrine places a just blame and rebuke (from God) upon all those who do misuse the things of this world. It is permissible for people to eat, drink, and enjoy the comforts of this life, but they must not abuse them by indulging in excess, gluttony, or drunkenness, and so on.

2. By way of exhortation: Since all of you live in the world, in one way or another, you must make use of it. My earnest request, therefore, is that you use the world without abusing it. To persuade you in this matter, I will present several considerations. However, since time has run out, I will save them for another occasion.

SERMON 14

"And they that use this world as not abusing of it, for the fashion of this world passeth away." - 1 Corinthians 7:31

There is still something remaining in terms of practical application from this doctrine: that Christians, in the use of lawful things, must be careful not to abuse them. I will address this in today's sermon and save the inducement, "for the fashion of this world passeth away," for the afternoon session.

[Application] I will make only two uses of it:

1. By way of caution, and
2. By way of exhortation.

If it is true that Christians should exercise caution in the use of lawful comforts and avoid abusing them, but rather use the world as if they did not use it, then beloved, take these few cautions to heart.

1. If you are not to abuse worldly things, then it is even more important that you take care not to abuse spiritual things in their use. Ensure that your actions align with your beliefs and that you do not profess much but practice little. Do not use religion as a cover for impious behavior. While you attend

church and participate in God's ordinances, be cautious not to abuse this practice by using it as a cover for secret villainy or impiety. Do not misuse the word of God or use your tongue to scoff and mock the Scriptures. Do not abuse your gifts and graces or look down upon those who lack them. Just as one is careful not to misuse an iron tool or instrument, one should be even more careful not to misuse a tool made of silver or gold. If you must not abuse things of lesser value, then you should certainly not abuse things of greater value. If you must not abuse worldly things, then you should definitely not abuse spiritual things. Therefore, do not misuse ordinances, sacraments, sermons, or the means of grace by living unfruitfully and unprofitably under them.

2. Take note that these admonitions from the Apostle, to weep as if you wept not, to rejoice as if you rejoiced not, and to buy as if you possessed not, do not apply to spiritual acts, but only to outward matters. The Apostle does not instruct you to weep for sin as if you did not weep, nor does he command you to rejoice in God and Christ as if you did not rejoice. He does not tell you to use spiritual things as if you did not use them, or to buy the things of God as if you did not possess them. Many people, when it comes to worldly things, can rejoice as if their entire joy and happiness depended on these external comforts. Likewise, many can shed tears over outward losses, troubles, or afflictions. However, when it comes to rejoicing in spiritual things, they can act as if they do not truly rejoice, and in mourning for sin, they can weep as if they do not truly weep. They use the things of God as if they do not truly use them. It is astonishing how contrary this is to the rule of the blessed Apostle. They can pray as if they were not truly praying, even while they are praying. While moderation and indifference should be exercised in worldly matters, the same should not be applied to spiritual things. Instead, in spiritual matters, you should pray as if you were truly praying, as it is said of Elijah in James 5:17. Pour out strong cries to God, listen to the word of God as if you were truly

hearing it, and perform every duty with your utmost strength and effort.

Use 2. Allow me to persuade you (through exhortation) to comply with and put into practice this apostolic rule of using the world without abusing it. And to make this exhortation more impactful, I will present ten compelling considerations as motives. Considering the coldness of the season, I will significantly shorten my reflections and provide you with only the main points and essence of the matter.

1. If you desire to use the world without abusing it, contemplate that in abusing worldly things, you pervert God's purpose in granting them to you. God's intention is for every creature to lead you to the Creator, so that you may marvel at His goodness and glorify His name. He expects every blessing bestowed upon you to serve as a lens through which you gain a clearer vision and perception of Him, even from a great distance. In 1 Timothy 4:4, it is stated that every creature of God is good and should be received with thanksgiving. Just as doves look upward as they peck at each grain, so should Christians. Therefore, if you misuse any of His creations, you distort the purpose of the Most High. God provided food for your sustenance, to satisfy your hunger, not to indulge in gluttony. He gave you drink to quench your thirst, not to incite drunkenness. God gave you clothing to cover your nakedness and keep you warm, not to be an instrument of pride or any other excessive comfort. This is the first consideration.
2. To prevent you from abusing worldly possessions, consider that you are not an owner, but only a possessor of the blessings you enjoy in this world. It is commonly said when people are reproved for misusing creatures, "Can't I do what I want with my own?" Well, beloved, the truth is that you cannot, because nothing truly belongs to you; everything belongs to God. As stated in Psalm 50:10-12, "For every beast of the forest is mine, the cattle on a thousand hills. I know all the birds of the hills,

and all that moves in the field is mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell you, for the world and its fullness are mine." So, when you abuse the things of the world, you are abusing what is not your own but God's. And you know, it is dishonest to misuse someone else's possessions. All that you have in the world are borrowed blessings; God has the right and ownership over them. He lends them to us for our use while retaining the ownership for Himself. If there is anything (among all the things we claim as our own) that can truly be said to be our own, it is our bodies because they are closest to us. Yet even our bodies are not our own, as the Apostle says in 1 Corinthians 6:19-20, "Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body." When someone lends something, they expect it to be used properly. Elisha's servant borrowed an axe to cut wood, and when it fell into the water, he cried out, "Alas, my master! It was borrowed" (2 Kings 6:5). The mercies you have are lent to you rather than given. Shall I harm someone with their own weapons? That is what you do to God when you abuse any of His blessings.

3. To prevent you from misusing the lawful comforts of this life, consider what was mentioned earlier, that people are more prone to go astray in the use of lawful things than in committing acts that are inherently sinful. Many more individuals perish from overindulging in wholesome food than from consuming poison. Beloved, millions of people go astray through the use of lawful things.
4. Consider that it is not as easy for people to repent for the abuse of lawful things as it is for the commission of gross sins. Gross sins are more easily recognizable, and the conscience often convicts, controls, and rebukes individuals for such blatant and obvious transgressions. However, one can easily go astray in the use of lawful things without even realizing it. Who suspects

lawful things? These sins are not as easily discerned and, therefore, cannot be repented of as easily.

5. Consider that the creatures you abuse in this world will testify against you on the last day. Your silver and gold will rise up as witnesses against you. Not that the inanimate creatures like silver and gold will vocalise and plead against you, but when God condemns you, He will declare that He is doing so because of your abuse of the creatures He has given you, such as silver, gold, riches, and possessions in the world. The very creatures you have abused will serve as witnesses to condemn you. As the prophet says in Habakkuk 2:10-11, "The stone will cry out from the wall, and the beam from the woodwork will respond" against the wicked and the oppressors on the day of judgment. It is not that the stones and woodwork will have a voice, but God will say, "The cries of the stones and woodwork have reached My ears, witnessing against you, for you have obtained them through violence." And when Christ condemns you, He will say that the word which has been preached to you in His name, inviting and urging you to come and accept mercy and pardon, which you refused to hear and obey, rejecting and disregarding it, that word now testifies against you.
6. Consider that it is part of the curse and bondage of the creatures to be abused by those who use them. When you abuse the creatures, you cause them to groan under your misuse. Let me provide you with a comprehensive passage for this from Romans 8:20-22: "For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and labours with birth pangs together until now." The great burden and bondage of the creatures lies in the fact that although they were created by God to be instruments of His glory and to inspire those who use them to magnify His praise, they are instead employed by wicked

individuals to dishonour God and bring scandal to religion. Under this bondage, the creatures groan because, despite being intended to promote the glory of their Creator, they are compelled to serve the lusts of wicked individuals. Therefore, consider this when you excessively abuse the creatures through drunkenness, gluttony, or pride. If it were possible, those creatures would sigh and groan, lamenting that they are forced to cater to your desires instead of fulfilling their intended purpose to bring glory to their Creator.

7. Consider that by misusing the lawful blessings you enjoy, you provoke the Lord to take them away from you. As God says in Hosea 2:8-9, "For she did not know that I gave her grain, new wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold—which they prepared for Baal. Therefore I will return and take away My grain in its time, and My new wine in its season, and will take back My wool and My linen, given to cover her nakedness." The abuse of blessings often leads God to deprive us of them. We see through experience that many who abuse their wealth and possessions end up in poverty before they die, and many who misuse their intellect become fools.
8. To discourage you from misusing lawful blessings, consider that such practices will foster a sense of security and carelessness in preparing for the coming of Christ in judgment. As Luke 17:27 states, "They ate, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. Likewise as it was also in the days of Lot: They ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built; but on the day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. Even so will it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed." Beloved, many of you are so preoccupied with the world that you are secure and careless in preparing for the last day, or at least in preparing for your own final day—the day of your death.

9. Consider that by abusing the creatures, you compel them to act against their natural instincts and inclinations, as stated in Romans 8:19. The creatures are subjected to vanity, not willingly. This means that they are employed for vain and sinful purposes not by their natural instincts or inclinations, but reluctantly. Your hand that engages in sinful actions, or your legs that carry you to a play, or your tongue that serves as an instrument of lying or swearing, and so on—they do not do these things willingly or according to their natural instincts. They are not inclined to do them, but rather to display the glory of their Creator. The sun does not willingly shine to provide light for wicked people to deceive and oppress their neighbors in their shops. No creature willingly consents to be used for the dishonor of its Creator. The creatures are subjected to vanity, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected them in hope—that is, in the hope that the creatures will not always be subjected to the sinful actions of wicked individuals, serving as instruments of their sin and their Creator's dishonor. The creatures are subjected in hope that one day they will be freed from the burden of being utilized by wicked people for God's dishonor.
10. Consider that you cannot use worldly things for a long time, and therefore you should use them wisely. This is the argument in the text: "Brothers and sisters, the time is short. So, those who weep should be as if they did not weep, those who rejoice as if they did not rejoice, those who buy as if they had no possessions, and those who use the world as if they were not abusing it." Why? Because your time is short, and you cannot enjoy them for long, so you should use them properly.

And thus, beloved, I have finished discussing these apostolic instructions. Now, there remain only the reasons or motives why we should not abuse the things of this world, because the fashion of this world is passing away. Why should we weep as if we did not weep, rejoice as if we did not rejoice, buy as if we had no possessions, and use the world as if we were not abusing it? Because the fashion of

this world is passing away. The fashion of this world: The word signifies a mathematical figure (as previously mentioned) that is merely a notion and not substantial. Such is the nature of the world: all the pomp, glory, honours, riches, and greatness of the world are fading and transient comforts. They are constantly passing away like a flowing stream. The fashion of this world. According to another author, the word signifies a fashion similar to that in a comedy or stage play, where all things are temporary and meant to please the eye. A person may act the role of a king while being a beggar. Similarly, all the comforts, glory, and honours of the world are passing away, like water in a river, continuously flowing away from you. Budaeus reads it as "deceiveth," like a will-o'-the-wisp.

[Doctrine] First and foremost, I should approach these words in a relational context, as a reason why we must use the world without abusing it, because the fashion of this world is passing away. From this, you can observe that the sobering realization that all the comforts and blessings of this world quickly fade away should serve as a strong motivation for Christians not to set their hearts upon them.

[Doctrine 2] Who would set their heart upon something that quickly passes away? Just like running water swiftly flows, the things of the world are transient, and this should motivate Christians not to abuse them but to use them wisely, knowing that they are passing away.

However, I prefer to approach the words as a complete proposition in themselves, and then the teaching derived from them will be this: all the comforts and conditions of this world are passing away from us, even while they are in our possession. This is the teaching that I will spend an hour discussing in the afternoon.

SERMON 15

"For the fashion of this world passeth away." -1 Corinthians 7:31

The fashion of this world is passing away. The observation derived from these words is that all the comforts and contentments of this life are transient and fleeting. They have a temporary and ephemeral nature.

(Beloved) in order to impress this general point upon your emotions, I will first demonstrate to you that this is indeed a truth. Then, I will draw some practical implications from it, and thus conclude this passage.

I will provide you with three or four demonstrations to illustrate that all the things of the world are slipping away from us even while they are in our possession.

1. It can be observed through specific examples that all conditions of men, whether in positions of honour, prosperity, or wealth, etc., are in a state of fading and decay. Consider Adam's condition in his innocence. His state was seemingly firm and lasting, yet Adam did not remain in honour even for a night, but became like the perishable beasts. Similarly, if you examine Solomon, who was the glory of the world, there was none before or after him who could compare. All the things of the earth paid homage and presented gifts to him (2 Chronicles 9:13). The total sum of Solomon's wealth is recorded: in one year, he received 666 talents of gold, and silver was as plentiful as stones in the streets. In his days, silver held no value. He possessed 4,000 stalls for horses and chariots, and 12,000 horsemen. Every day, 232 quarters of wheat were brought into his house. He had silver as abundant as stones, and gold held no value for him. Yet, what happened to all his honour and glory? Solomon, in all his splendour, was not adorned like the lilies in the field, as Christ said. Thus, if you observe the conditions of all men in positions

of honour, they stand on slippery ground, sliding down every day (Job 20:6-9). Even if their excellence reaches the heavens and their heads touch the clouds, they shall perish forever, and those who have seen them will wonder where they are. They will vanish like a dream, unable to be found, chased away like a vision of the night. This passing nature of honour can be seen in the succession of empires from Assyrian to Persian, Persian to Greek, and Greek to Roman. The condition of honour is fleeting. The same applies if one happens to be rich and wealthy in the world; that condition is also transient. Your riches will either come to an end, or you will witness their end. As stated in 1 Timothy 6:17, do not trust in uncertain riches. Proverbs 23:5 declares that riches sprout wings and fly away, while Proverbs 27:24 states that riches do not last forever, and the crown does not endure for every generation.

2. Another demonstration of the fleeting nature of all worldly things is the fact that the entire world is inherently perishable, and therefore the things of the world must also be so. In 2 Peter 3:10, it is stated that the heavens will pass away with a noise, the elements will melt with fervent heat, and the earth and its works will be burnt up.
3. Man, who is God's masterpiece in the world, is continually fading and passing away, which applies even more so to the things of the world. Man's life is like a vapor, fleeting from the womb to the tomb. *Animantis cujusque vita est in fuga*. Here, on earth, man has no enduring city (Hebrews 13:14). As Job proclaimed in the last chapter of Job, "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return." There is no mention of staying in the world; it is merely a journey of coming into and departing from it.
4. This truth is further evident through the similes used in Scripture to describe the world and its belongings.

The Spirit of God, to highlight the uncertainty of all things on earth, compares the world to a sea of glass mingled with fire (Revelation 15). It is likened to a sea due to its constant fluctuation and variation, and to a sea of glass to emphasize its brittleness and uncertainty; it easily breaks. The addition of fire signifies that the world is always in a state of consumption. No one views the sea as a stable and certain element; a drop of water that was here a moment ago is quickly gone and cannot be found.

2. The world is compared to a cloud in Job 30:15. Job remarks that his welfare passes away like a cloud. Clouds are always moving swiftly, just like the world and everything within it. Thus, David says in Psalm 104:3 that God makes the clouds His chariots, symbolising the swiftness and speed with which He works in His acts of mercy or judgment.
3. The world is compared to the wind in Psalm 78:39, described as passing away and not returning. It is also depicted as swift in Psalm 18:10 and 104. The wind gusts and gales pass quickly, and nothing on earth has lasting continuity.
4. The world is compared to grass in James 1:10, stating that the rich will pass away like the flower of the grass. As soon as the sun rises with its scorching heat, the grass withers, the flower fades, and its beautiful appearance perishes. Similarly, the rich man will fade away in his pursuits. Not only is it compared to grass, but specifically to the flower of grass.
5. They are likened to smoke, which the wind scatters and drives away immediately. In Hosea 13:13, it is said that they shall be like the morning cloud and the early dew, which swiftly vanishes as soon as the sun shines. They will also be like chaff driven by a whirlwind from the threshing floor and smoke from a chimney. In this one verse, five resemblances are combined. Therefore, beloved, you can clearly see how these comparisons reveal the

uncertainty, transience, and perishable nature of all the glory and comforts of the world.

I now turn to my main intention, which is to conclude with a practical application. In doing so, I will present seven practical instructions derived from this general Doctrine.

1. If it is true that all worldly things are passing away from us while they are with us, then let this consideration detach your affections from worldly pursuits. Why would you love something that cannot stay with you for long? Solomon advises in Proverbs 23:5: "Why will you set your eyes on that which is not? For riches certainly make themselves wings and fly away." This realization should detach our love from all worldly comforts. Though we may observe the things of the world with our eyes, let our hearts not be fixed upon them. Instead, let them be fixed on the unseen rather than the seen, for the things that are seen are temporary, while the things that are not seen are eternal (2 Corinthians 4:18). Worldly things are not worthy of our attention because they are transient. In the city of Sparta, a man would be king for only one year and then live in retirement and obscurity. Consequently, it was difficult to find someone willing to accept the role. Similarly, the recognition of the fading nature of worldly things should lead us to withdraw our affections from them.
2. If the fashion of this world is passing away, let it motivate and stir your souls to seek after the things of another world, which are more enduring and lasting. Chrysostom compares the world to an eel, and as you know, the harder you try to hold onto an eel, the more quickly it slips out of your hands. Likewise, the more tightly you try to grasp onto the things of the world, the sooner they will slip away. Therefore, strive to lay hold of Christ, grace, glory, heaven, and happiness. The Apostle states in Hebrews 13:14, "Here we have no continuing city, but we seek the one to come." Because they had no lasting abode here, they

looked forward to a city whose builder and maker is God. They set their sights on the things of another world that would not pass away like the things of this world. As mentioned in 2 Corinthians 4:18, "We do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal." Another relevant passage is found in Hebrews 11:15-16, where it speaks of the godly patriarchs who, if they had desired, could have returned to the country they came from. However, they sought a better country, a heavenly one. By not clinging to their own land, the land of Canaan, they demonstrated their longing for a better country, a heavenly kingdom. In a similar manner, as the King of Sparta sent treasures to the place of his exile so that he could live well thereafter, Christians should store up treasures in heaven while they are here (Matthew 6:19-20). Beloved, if the things of this world are so vain, fading, and uncertain, let us set our sights on the things of a better world.

3. If it is true that this world is so fading and vanishing, then strive to be convinced of its truth and let your hearts be aware of the vanity and uncertainty of all things here below. I can say of them what the Apostle says in another context, in Colossians 2:22: "All these things perish with the using." No sooner do you grasp the world than it slips away from you. We have no more hold on these earthly things than on a flock of birds. I cannot claim them as mine, even if they sit in my yard. The glory of Ephraim is said to fly away like a bird. The world withers like a bouquet of flowers while you are smelling it, like snow melting in the hands of children. During the enthronement of popes, it was customary for someone to go before them, burning a bundle of straw or flax, and crying, "sic transit gloria mundi" (thus passes the glory of the world). A learned man makes an admirable observation on the names of the first two men born into the world, Cain and Abel. He says we can learn a lesson from their very names. Cain signifies possession, and Abel signifies vanity, to show that Adam and Eve saw nothing but vanity in all their possessions.

Oh, that you who are the sons and daughters of Adam, who have far less of the world than Adam had, would not set your hearts upon the vanities and uncertainties of this world that pass away so quickly.

4. If it is true that all the comforts of the world are passing away, then it reveals the foolishness and madness of those men who eagerly pursue fading vanities. Oh, what madness it is for people to be so eager in their pursuit of these transient and fading things while neglecting those things that are of greater excellence and lasting value. Yet there are many such fools and madmen among us who seek after vanities and neglect durable and lasting riches. How foolish are many men in the world who busily engage themselves in the petty and insignificant affairs of the world while neglecting the important matters of heaven, like Artaxerxes, who occupied himself with making knife handles but neglected the weighty affairs of his kingdom, or like Archimedes, who was drawing mathematical lines while failing to save the city or his own life. It is said of Caligula, an Emperor of Rome (and for which he is ridiculed by all who have written about him), that he prepared and sent out a great navy of ships. When his men thought he would accomplish great exploits and conquer many kingdoms with them, contrary to their expectations, he commanded them to load all their ships with cockle shells and pebble stones and return. Many men are just like such fools, troubling themselves with acquiring cockle shells and pebble stones—the fading vanities of this world—while neglecting the pursuit of firm, durable, and substantial riches in the Kingdom of Heaven.
5. If the things of this world are fading, then we can see the vast difference and disparity between earthly things and heavenly things. The glory of this world passes away, but the same cannot be said of heavenly things. The former wears out like garments, but the latter does not wear away like the body. Riches are a vanity that comes and goes, but grace is durable riches. The

grass withers and its flower fades, but the word of God endures forever. The grass and its flower represent all the glory of this world, which all fade and wither away. However, the work of grace wrought in your hearts by the word will last and endure forever. It will remain and continue when all the glory of the world passes away. The world passes away along with its desires, but those who do the will of God abide forever. Beloved, you can see the great disparity between heavenly things and the things of the world, such as riches and honors. Even if you are an heir to a crown or kingdom, these are only temporary inheritances that last for a season. However, heavenly inheritance endures forever. It is incorruptible, undefiled, and does not fade away. All your comforts here below are temporary, and riches and honors are not everlasting. But God, Christ, grace, heaven, and glory are everlasting. These are comforts that do not fade away but last forever. Your earthly parents are not everlasting, but your Father in Heaven is everlasting. Your life here is not everlasting, but your life in heaven is everlasting. Here on earth, you may rejoice one day and weep another, but in heaven, your joy shall be everlasting. Everlasting joy shall be upon your heads. The Apostle says in 2 Thessalonians 2:16, "who has loved us and given us everlasting consolation." Your comforts here are short-lived, but in heaven, you shall have everlasting consolation. Your possessions here are not everlasting, but they shall last forever in heaven. Here, you may be soon forgotten, and the memory of your name may be lost, but in heaven, you shall be remembered forever.

6. If the glory and comforts of the world are passing away, then know this for your comfort: the crosses, troubles, and afflictions of the world are passing away too. The afflictions may seem significant, but they are only temporary. Suppose you are a person of modest means, poor and low in the world. Even your poverty shall pass away. Suppose you have a sickly and weak constitution, your sickness shall also pass away. Suppose you are imprisoned and in bondage, yet the prisoner shall shake off their

fetters and prison garments. Your misery shall pass away like a stream of water. As it is written in Isaiah 35:10, sorrow and sighing shall flee away. Your miseries and sorrows, just like your comforts, are passing away. Therefore, beloved, this should support and uplift your hearts.

7. If the pleasures and comforts of this world are passing away, then we should be extremely cautious not to incur eternal punishments for momentary pleasures. Beloved, it would be something if our comforts here were equal to the punishments we would face hereafter. However, why should anyone be so foolish as to damn their soul and purchase eternal misery and torment for the sake of fleeting wealth? Riches and the outward blessings of this life quickly fade away, but the punishment for their misuse endures forever. This is akin to the profane act of Esau, who sold his birthright for a single meal. I urge you, therefore, to choose to endure afflictions with the people of God for a brief period here, so that you may reign and find eternal happiness with them in heaven, rather than enjoying the pleasures of sin for a short time here and thereby subjecting yourselves to everlasting punishment in the world to come.

And so, beloved, in these 15 sermons, I have covered many essential points regarding this subject. Now, it remains that for the time you have left to live in this world, those who encounter crosses, troubles, and afflictions should weep as if they did not. Those who possess riches, honors, and comforts, and experience abundant worldly prosperity should rejoice as if they did not. Those who engage in buying, selling, and trading should do so as if they possessed nothing. And those who use this world in any other way should do so without abusing it, for the fashion of this world is passing away.

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The Combat Between the Flesh and the Spirit, by Christopher love
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