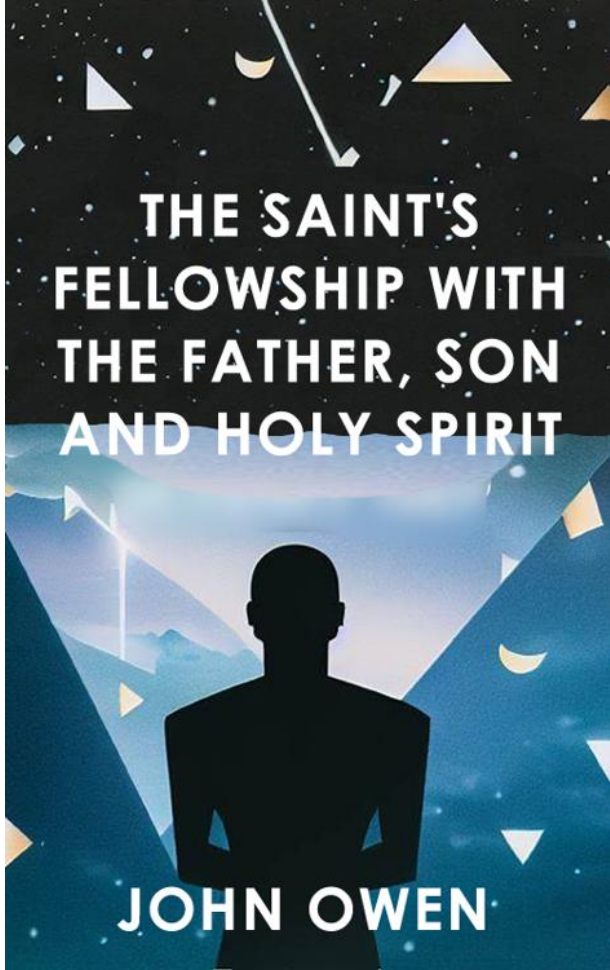


**THE SAINT'S  
FELLOWSHIP WITH  
THE FATHER, SON  
AND HOLY SPIRIT**

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# **THE SAINTS' FELLOWSHIP WITH THE FATHER, SON, AND HOLY GHOST UNFOLDED**

**by John Owen**

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"God is love."—1 JOHN 4:8.

"Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest."—CANT.  
1:7.

"Make haste, my beloved."—CANT. 8:14.

"Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the  
day of redemption."—EPH. 4:30.

"Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are  
differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are  
diversities of operations, but it is the same God."—1 COR. 12:4–6.

## **PREFATORY NOTE**

The reader can refer to the Life of Dr. Owen (vol. i. p. lxxii.) for a general critique of the merits of the following treatise. It was published in 1657, shortly after he had finished serving as Vice-Chancellor at the University of Oxford. According to the brief preface attached to it, it appears that he had been committed to publishing the substance of the work for over six years. Consequently, it can be inferred that it comprises some sermons he had preached in Oxford. However, since he became Vice-Chancellor only in September 1652, it is more probable that these are the sermons that brought comfort and joy to his devoted congregation in Coggeshall. There are two noteworthy aspects that deserve attention in this treatise. Misunderstanding one of them has led to some misconceptions about the author's intention, causing some to believe that he deviates from it in various passages that are actually in line with his primary and original purpose in the work. The term "Communion" as used by Owen carries a broader meaning than what is commonly understood in religious language today. It not only signifies the exchange of emotions between God in His merciful nature and a soul in a state of grace, but also the gracious relationship on which this sacred exchange is built. For instance, it encompasses all of Christ's work and its outcomes, from the atonement to its actual effect in justifying the sinner. The most distinctive characteristic of this treatise is the extensive use of illustrations to elaborate on the communion that believers enjoy with each person of the Godhead. To fully grasp his perspectives on this matter, it is necessary to bear in mind Owen's interpretation of the term "Communion."

## ANALYSIS

PART I.—The fact of communion with God is asserted, CHAP. I. Scripture passages are cited to demonstrate that communion with each of the persons of the Trinity is specifically mentioned, II. Communion with the FATHER is described, III.; and practical conclusions are drawn from it, IV.

PART II.—The reality of communion with CHRIST is proven, CHAP. I.; and its nature is subsequently examined, II. It is shown to consist of grace; then the grace of Christ is presented in three categories:—his personal grace, III–VI.; within this category, there are two extensive digressions aimed at revealing the glory and beauty of Christ;—grace obtained through His redemptive work, VII–X.; where the mediatorial work of Christ is thoroughly discussed in relation to our acceptance by God, VII., VIII.; sanctification, IX.; and the privileges of the covenant, X.;—and grace communicated by the Spirit, apparent in the fruits of personal holiness. This last category is exemplified through sanctification, which is encompassed by the section on obtained grace.

PART III.—Communion with the HOLY SPIRIT is explained in the following eight chapters;—its foundation, CHAP. I.; His gracious and effective influence on believers, II.; the components of this communion, III.; the effects it produces in the hearts of believers, IV.; and general conclusions and specific guidelines for communion with the Spirit, V–VIII. The arrangement of the treatise may seem intricate and complex, and the numerous divisions and subdivisions may sometimes distract rather than assist the reader's focus. However, the passionate fervor of sanctified emotions and occasional thoughts of remarkable strength and originality found throughout the treatise maintain interest and more than compensate for the

effort required in reading. Few passages in theological literature are as stirring as the mention of the immaculate humanity of Christ, conveyed in sanctified language on page 64. An account of the peculiar controversy that arose many years after the publication of this treatise can be found on page 276.—ED.

## **PREFACE**

CHRISTIAN READER,

It has been six years since I made a promise to publish some meditations on the subject that you will find discussed in the following treatise. The reasons for the delay, which are not of public concern, need not be mentioned. Those who have been expecting this work from me have mostly been aware of my circumstances and activities, which have explained the postponement of their desires. The only thing I have to add now is this: since the time I first delivered anything publicly on this subject (which led to the commitments I mentioned), I have had many opportunities to revisit and enhance the initial ideas. I have made improvements and additions to the main theme and content of the treatise, so that my initial obligation has become the mere occasion for what is now offered to the saints of God. I will not discuss the subject matter of this treatise here; I trust it will speak for itself, carrying a spiritual flavor and appeal to those whose hearts are not so preoccupied with other matters as to find the sweet things of the gospel bitter. The overall purpose of the treatise can be found, Christian reader, in the first chapters of the first part. I will not detain you here with

anything that will present itself to you in its proper place. Just know that the entire work has been earnestly prayed over, seeking God's grace for its usefulness to those who are interested in the topics mentioned therein.

John Owen

Oxford, Christ Church College, July 10, 1657

### TO THE READER

It is said that Alphonsus, the king of Spain, found sustenance and healing in reading Livy, and Ferdinand, the king of Sicily, in reading Quintus Curtius. But here you have nobler nourishment, vastly richer delicacies, and incomparably more powerful remedies—I would even dare to say that the very food of angels is presented to you. As Pliny said, "*permista deliciis auxilia*"—things that contribute to grace and comfort, to a holy and vibrant life.

Such is this treatise—the only existing work on its significant and necessary subject. Its praises have long resounded in the churches and have been adorned with honorable reproaches from more than one English Bolsec. Its esteemed author, like the sun, is well-known in the world for his heavenly wisdom and laborious efforts. This treatise, like his many other works, is nothing less than manna to devout Christians, but to Socinians and their allies, it is as worthless as stone and serpent.

It is through persistence that I find myself saying more about this work of Dr. Owen's than I would have thought necessary. It is indeed necessary in our time, a time when "few cling to the Holy Scriptures, many content themselves with scholastic and senseless jargon, and most people anchor their faith to the teachings of their mentors."



I will only add this: among the countless books that emerge daily, there are few that find readership. Yet, if I understand correctly, there are not many readers who do not need this book.

In expressing this judgment, I do not consider myself a tyrant, which the philosopher rightly names as the worst of wild beasts. And I certainly do not flatter, which he justly calls the worst of tame beasts—Καὶ ταῦτα μὴν δὴ ταῦτα.

Let those simple souls who deem the doctrine of distinct communion with the Divine Persons as novel and unfamiliar take note of the words of the Reverend Mr. Samuel Clarke (the Bible annotator) in his sermon on 1 John 1:7: "It is to be noted that there is a distinct fellowship with each of the persons of the blessed Trinity." Let them also pay attention to Mr. Lewis Stuckley's words in his preface to Mr. Polwheil's book on Quenching the Spirit: "It is a most glorious truth, though considered by only a few, that believers have, or may have, distinct communion with the three persons—Father, Son, and Spirit. This truth is attested by the finger of God and solemnly acknowledged by the early and best age of Christianity." To mention just one more, let them carefully read the second chapter of this treatise, and it is hoped that they will no longer "contra antidotum insanire"—no longer rage against God's holy medicinal truth, as St. Augustine said he did while he was a Manichean, testifying in his own words that his error was his very god.

Reader, I am

Your servant in Christ Jesus,

Daniel Burgess



# PART I

## CHAPTER I

That the saints have communion with God—1 John 1:3 considered to that purpose—Somewhat of the nature of communion in general

In the First Epistle of John, chapter 1, verse 3, the apostle assures those he is writing to that the fellowship of believers "is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ." He expresses this with an unusual kind of emphasis that carries the weight of an affirmation. Hence, we have translated it as "Truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ."

Given the lowly and despised outward appearance and condition of the saints in those days— their leaders being regarded as the scum of the earth and the refuse of all things—inviting others to partake in fellowship with them and to share in the precious things they enjoy may seem subject to various opposing arguments and objections. "What benefit is there in having communion with them? Is it anything more than sharing in troubles, reproaches, scorn, and all kinds of evils?" To prevent or dispel these and similar objections, the apostle emphatically assures those he is writing to (with a sense of urgency) that despite all the disadvantages that may be apparent to a carnal eye, in truth, their fellowship is, and will be found to be (with regard to certain individuals), highly honorable, glorious, and desirable. For he says, "Truly, our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ."

Since the entrance of sin, no one has communion with God by nature. He is Light, and we are darkness. What communion can light have with darkness? He is life, and we are dead. He is love, and we are enmity. How can there be any agreement between us? Those in such a state have neither Christ, nor hope, nor God in the world (Ephesians 2:12). They are alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them (Ephesians 4:18). Two cannot walk together unless they agree (Amos 3:3). As long as this distance exists between God and humanity, there can be no walking together in fellowship or communion. Our initial relationship with God was so lost through sin that we, in ourselves, had no possibility of recovery. We had deprived ourselves of all power to return to Him, and He had not revealed any way for sinners to approach Him in peace. No work or attribute of God could shed light on such a possibility.

The manifestation of grace and pardoning mercy, which is the only gateway into such communion, is entrusted solely to the one in whom it resides, who purchased that grace and mercy and dispenses it, and who reveals it from the Father's bosom. Hence, this communion and fellowship with God is not explicitly mentioned in the Old Testament. While it is present, its clear light and the boldness of faith in it are revealed in the gospel through the administration of the Spirit. Through the Spirit, we have this liberty (2 Corinthians 3:18). Abraham was a friend of God (Isaiah 41:8), David was a man after His own heart, and Enoch walked with Him (Genesis 5:22)—all experiencing this communion and fellowship in substance. However, while the first tabernacle stood, the way into the holiest was not yet made manifest (Hebrews 9:8). Although they had communion with God, they did not have *παρρησίαν*—boldness and confidence in that communion. This comes with the entrance of our High Priest into the most holy place (Hebrews 4:16; 10:19). They were also veiled, lacking *ἐλευθερίαν*—freedom and liberty in their

access to God (2 Corinthians 3:15, 16, etc.). However, in Christ, we have boldness and access with confidence to God (Ephesians 3:12). This boldness and access with confidence were unfamiliar to the saints of old. It is only through Jesus Christ, based on all considerations of existence and full manifestation, that this distance is removed. He has consecrated for us a new and living way, "through the veil, that is, his flesh" (Hebrews 10:20), and "through him we have access by one Spirit to the Father" (Ephesians 2:18). "You who were once far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ, for He is our peace" (Ephesians 2:13, 14). More will be said about this foundation of all our communion with God later, in great detail. Sinners are admitted into communion with God and have fellowship with Him on this new foundation and through this new and living way. Truly, for sinners to have fellowship with the infinitely holy God is a remarkable dispensation. To speak generally about it, communion involves things and persons. The shared participation in anything—whether good or evil, duty or enjoyment, nature or actions—gives rise to this designation for those who partake in it. A common interest in the same nature creates fellowship or communion among all people. Concerning the elect, it is said, "For as much then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same" (Hebrews 2:14)—they share the same common nature as the rest of humanity. Thus, Christ also partook in the same fellowship: "And he likewise took part of the same." There is also communion in terms of state and condition, whether good or evil, either internally and spiritually (as seen in the communion of the saints among themselves) or in relation to external things. This was the case with Christ and the two thieves, as they shared one condition, and one of the thieves shared in another condition. They were under the same sentence of crucifixion (Luke 23:40, "ejusdem doloris socii"), sharing in that evil condition to which they were condemned, and one of them requested (and obtained) participation

in the blessed condition into which our Savior was about to enter. There is also communion or fellowship in actions, whether good or evil. In the good sense, it is the communion and fellowship in the gospel or in the performance and celebration of the worship of God instituted in the gospel, which the saints enjoy (Philippians 1:5). This is the general kind of communion that David rejoiced in (Psalm 42:4). In the evil sense, it was the communion that Simeon and Levi had as brothers in their cruel act of revenge and murder (Genesis 49:5). Our communion with God does not fit into any of these categories; it excludes some of them. It cannot be natural; it must be voluntary and by consent. It cannot be based on state and conditions, but on actions. It cannot be in the same actions toward a third party, but in a reciprocal exchange between two parties. The infinite disparity between God and humanity led the great philosopher to conclude that there could be no friendship between them. He could allow for some distance between persons in a friendship, but in his understanding, there was no room for it between God and man. Another philosopher indeed stated that there is "*communitas hominum cum Deo*"—a certain fellowship between God and man—but he only apprehended the general interaction of providence. Some ventured to use loftier expressions, but they did not understand what they were talking about. This knowledge is hidden in Christ, as will become evident later. It is too wonderful for fallen and corrupted human nature. It guides only to terror and apprehensions of death in the presence of God. However, as mentioned before, we have a new foundation and a new revelation of this privilege.

Now, communion is the mutual sharing of those good things in which the participants take delight, based on a certain union between them. This was the case with Jonathan and David; their souls were deeply connected in love (1 Samuel 20:17). They had a union of love, and as a result, they genuinely shared all the expressions of love with

each other. In spiritual matters, this is even more significant. Those who experience this communion have the most excellent union as its foundation, and the shared expressions that flow from that union are the most precious and remarkable.

I have extensively discussed the union that serves as the foundation for all our communion with God elsewhere, and I have nothing more to add to that discussion.

So, our communion with God consists of Him communicating Himself to us, and our response to Him by offering what He requires and accepts. This flows from the union we have with Him through Jesus Christ. There are two aspects to this communion: 1. A perfect and complete communion, where we fully enjoy His glory and surrender ourselves completely to Him, finding our ultimate satisfaction in Him. We will experience this when we see Him as He truly is. 2. An initial and incomplete communion, where we experience the first fruits and glimpses of that perfection here in our experience of God's grace. I will only address this aspect.

Therefore, what we are discussing is the mutual communication of giving and receiving, in the most holy and spiritual manner, between God and His saints as they walk together in a covenant of peace sealed by the blood of Jesus. If God permits, we will delve into this further. In the meantime, let us pray to the God and Father of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who, out of the abundance of His grace, has restored us from a state of enmity to a condition of communion and fellowship with Himself. May both the writer and the readers of His merciful words taste the sweetness and excellencies of His presence, stirring up a deeper longing for the fullness of His salvation and the eternal enjoyment of Him in glory.

## CHAPTER II

The Saints' Distinct Communion with the Father, Son, and Spirit—Understanding 1 John 5:7, 1 Corinthians 12:4–6, and Ephesians 2:18—Joint Communion with the Father and Son; Sole Communion with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—Respective Regard in Worship—Faith in the Father, Love towards Him—Prayer and Praise—The Son's Communion—Our Communion with the Holy Spirit—Further Confirmation of the Truth.

In the previous chapter, I established that the saints have communion with God and explained the nature of communion in general. Now, I will discuss how this communion is carried out and what it entails. In terms of the distinct persons of the Godhead with whom they have fellowship, the saints have either distinct and particular communion or joint and common communion. It is important to understand that the saints have distinct communion with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (specifically with each of them individually), and we must first explore the unique aspects of this distinct communion with each person.

In 1 John 5:7, the apostle informs us that "There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost." They exist in heaven and bear witness to us. What is their testimony? It testifies to the sonship of Christ and the salvation of believers through His blood. The apostle discusses the ongoing process of salvation, involving both the shedding of blood and purification with water, which represent justification and sanctification. Now, how do they bear witness to this? As three distinct witnesses. When God testifies about our salvation, it is our duty to receive His testimony.



And as He bears witness, we are to receive it. This receiving is done distinctly. The Father bears witness, the Son bears witness, and the Holy Spirit bears witness; they are three distinct witnesses. Thus, we are to receive their respective testimonies, and in doing so, we have communion with each of them individually. For our fellowship with God, the act of giving and receiving testimony is a significant component. The nature of their distinct witness will be explained later.

In 1 Corinthians 12:4–6, the apostle discusses the distribution of gifts and graces among the saints and attributes them distinctly to the respective persons who are the source of these blessings. "There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit"—referring to the Holy Spirit in verse 11. "And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord"—referring to the Lord Jesus in verse 5. "And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God"—referring to the Father in Ephesians 4:6. Therefore, graces and gifts are bestowed and received accordingly.

Moreover, the same distinction is observed not only in the emanation of grace from God and the workings of the Spirit within us but also in all our approaches to God. "For through Christ we have access by one Spirit unto the Father" (Ephesians 2:18). Our access to God, which involves communion with Him, is through Christ, in the Spirit, and unto the Father. In this context, the persons are considered as individually engaged in accomplishing God's revealed will in the gospel.

At times, only the Father and the Son are explicitly mentioned, such as in 1 John 1:3: "Our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." The conjunction "and" both distinguishes and unites them. Additionally, John 14:23 states, "If a man love me, he will keep

my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." It is in this communion that the Father and the Son abide with the soul.

Sometimes, the Son alone is mentioned for this purpose. For example, 1 Corinthians 1:9 states, "God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord." And in Revelation 3:20, Jesus says, "If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me"—which I will discuss later.

Sometimes, only the Holy Spirit is mentioned. In 2 Corinthians 13:14, it says, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all." This distinct communion of the saints with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is clearly evident in the Scriptures, but it can still be further demonstrated. However, I must caution that whatever is affirmed in the pursuit of this truth is done in relation to the explanation that follows at the beginning of the next chapter.

The means by which the saints enjoy communion with God in Christ are all the spiritual and holy acts and outpourings of their souls in those virtues and ways that encompass both the moral and prescribed worship of God. Faith, love, obedience, and other such virtues are the natural or moral worship of God, through which those who possess them have communion with Him. These acts can either be directly focused on God, without any outward means of manifestation, or they can be further expressed through solemn prayer and praise in the manner that He has appointed. The Scriptures clearly assign all these acts to the Father, Son, and Spirit, indicating that the saints, in all their expressions of worship, both purely moral and in accordance with prescribed forms, have regard

for each person respectively. This will be further illustrated through specific instances to shed light on the assertion at hand.

Regarding the FATHER, the saints yield faith, love, obedience, and more to Him in a distinct and specific manner. He is uniquely revealed in these ways as acting particularly towards them, which should motivate and stir them to respond accordingly. He testifies to and bears witness of His Son, as stated in 1 John 5:9, "This is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son." In His testimony, He becomes an object of belief. When He testifies (as the Father, because it pertains to the Son), His testimony is to be received by faith. This is affirmed in verse 10, "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself." To believe in the Son of God in this context means to receive the Lord Christ as the Son, the Son given to us for all the purposes of the Father's love, based on the credibility of the Father's testimony. Therefore, faith is immediately directed towards the Father in this act. The following words support this notion: "He that believeth not God" (referring to the Father who testifies to the Son) "hath made him a liar." Our Savior also says, "Ye believe in God" (meaning the Father as such), in John 14:1, followed by "Believe also in me" or "Believe in God; believe also in me." God, as the ultimate truth upon whose authority all divine faith is ultimately grounded, should not be considered in a specific personal sense, but rather comprehensively as the entire Deity. However, in this specific context, we speak of the testimony and authority of the Father (as such), which faith is distinctly fixed upon. This is further supported by the fact that the Son could not say, "Believe also in me" if it were not so.

The same is also said about love. In 1 John 2:15, it states, "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." Here, it refers to the love that we have for Him, not the love that we receive from Him.

The Father is presented as the object of our love, in contrast to the world which captures our affections—the love of the Father. The term "Father" denotes the subject and object, not the effective cause, of the love in question. And this love for Him as a Father is what He calls His "honour" in Malachi 1:6.

Furthermore, when these virtues are expressed in prayer and praise, and when they are clothed with prescribed worship, they are specifically directed towards Him. In 1 Peter 1:17 and Ephesians 3:14-15, it is stated, "Ye call on the Father," and "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named." Bowing the knee encompasses the entire act of worship, both the moral aspect of universal obedience that God requires and the particular ways in which it is carried out as appointed by Him. In Isaiah 45:23, it says, "Unto me," says the Lord, "every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear." In verses 24 and 25, it explains that this consists of acknowledging Him as righteousness and strength. Moreover, it sometimes encompasses the orderly submission of the entire creation to His sovereignty. However, in this passage by the apostle, it has a more limited meaning and is a figurative expression of prayer, derived from the most expressive bodily posture used in that duty. The apostle further clarifies this in Ephesians 3:16-17, explaining his intention and focus during that act of bowing his knees. The workings of the Spirit of grace in that duty are specifically directed to the Father as the source of the Deity and all good things in Christ—the "Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." Therefore, the same apostle, in another instance, explicitly combines and yet distinguishes the Father and the Son in directing his supplications in 1 Thessalonians 3:11, "God himself even our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way unto you." A similar example is found in Ephesians 1:3-4, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus

Christ." I won't list all the many places where the various aspects of divine worship, which cannot be shared with anyone not God by nature without idolatry, and in which the saints have communion with God, are distinctly directed to the person of the Father.

2. The same is true in relation to the SON. In John 14:1, Christ says, "Ye believe in God...believe also in me." He urges them to believe specifically in Him, to have faith that is divine and supernatural—the faith by which they believe in God, that is, the Father. There is a belief in Christ, namely, that He is the Son of God, the Savior of the world. Neglecting this belief is what our Savior threatened to the Pharisees in John 8:24, "If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins." In this sense, faith is not directly focused on the Son, as it is simply acknowledging Him (that is, the Christ) by accepting the testimony of the Father concerning Him. However, there is also a belief in Him, known as "Believing on the name of the Son of God" in 1 John 5:13 and John 9:36. It involves placing distinct faith, trust, and confidence in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, as the Son of God, which is frequently emphasized. In John 3:16, it says, "God so loved the world...that whosoever believeth in him" (that is, the Son) "should not perish." The Son, who is given by the Father, is the object of belief. "He that believeth on him is not condemned" (verse 18). "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life" (verse 36). "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent" (John 6:29, 40; 1 John 5:10). The foundation for all of this is established in John 5:23, "That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him." However, I have extensively discussed this honor and worship of the Son elsewhere and will not delve into it again. As for love, I will only add the apostolic benediction

found in Ephesians 6:24, "Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity," referring to divine love, the love of religious worship, which is the only pure Love of the Lord Jesus.

Furthermore, it is abundantly clear that faith, hope, and love, expressed through obedience and appointed worship, are distinctly owed by the saints and specifically directed to the Son. In Revelation 1:5-6, it states, "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." This is further illustrated in Revelation 5:8, where it says, "The four living creatures, and the four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints." In verses 13 and 14, it continues, "Every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever." The Father and the Son (He who sits upon the throne and the Lamb) are presented jointly yet distinctly as the appropriate object of all divine worship and honor forever and ever. Therefore, in his final invocation before his martyrdom, Stephen directs his faith and hope specifically to Him in Acts 7:59-60, saying, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit" and "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." He knew that the Son of Man also had the power to forgive sins. The apostle also identifies this worship of the Lord Jesus as the distinguishing characteristic of the saints in 1 Corinthians 1:2, saying, "With all...that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours," referring to all the saints of God. Invocation generally encompasses the entirety of God's worship. This, then, is

the rightful due of our Mediator, not only as God but also as the Son —not solely as Mediator.

3. This is also true in relation to the HOLY SPIRIT of grace. The rejection of the Holy Spirit is still described as opposing and resisting Him. There is also a distinct mention of the love of the Spirit in Romans 15:30. The apostle specifically directs his supplication to the Spirit in the solemn benediction of 2 Corinthians 13:14, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all." Such benedictions are essentially prayers. Additionally, the Holy Spirit is entitled to all appointed worship, starting from the institution of baptism in His name as stated in Matthew 28:19. More on these matters will be discussed later.

Now, in summary of what has been conveyed, every grace by which our souls reach out to God, every act of divine worship offered to Him, and every duty or obedience performed, are distinctly directed to the Father, Son, and Spirit. Through these and similar means, we engage in communion with God, as described before.

Furthermore, this becomes even more apparent when we consider how distinctly the persons of the Deity are revealed to act in the communication of the blessings in which the saints have communion with God. Just as all the spiritual aspirations of their souls are attributed to them respectively, their internal reception of God's communications to them is presented in such a way that indicates distinct origins and sources (not of being in themselves, but) of dispensations to us. This is demonstrated in two ways:

(1.) When the same thing is ascribed jointly and yet distinctly to all the persons in the Deity, as well as to each of them individually. For example, grace and peace are mentioned together in Revelation 1:4-

5, "Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne; and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness," etc. The seven Spirits before the throne refer to the Holy Spirit of God, seen as the perfect source of every perfect gift and dispensation. All are mentioned together here, yet they are also distinguished in their communication of grace and peace to the saints. "Grace and peace be unto you, from the Father, and from," etc.

(2.) When the same thing is individually and separately attributed to each person. Indeed, there is no gracious influence from above, no infusion of light, life, love, or grace into our hearts that does not follow this pattern. I will provide only one comprehensive example that may be seen as encompassing all other aspects: TEACHING. God's teaching is the actual communication of every particular emanation from Himself to the saints, allowing them to partake in it. The promise "They shall be all taught of God" encompasses the entire mystery of grace, both in its actual dispensation to us and in our becoming true recipients of it. Now, this teaching is assigned to:

[1.] The FATHER. The fulfillment of this promise is specifically attributed to Him in John 6:45, "It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me." This teaching, which translates us from death to life, brings us to Christ, and enables us to participate in life and love in Him, comes from the Father. We hear from Him, we learn from Him, and He leads us to union and communion with the Lord Jesus. He is the one who draws us, regenerates us according to His will and by His own Spirit, and employs ministers of the gospel in this work, as seen in Acts 26:17-18.



[2.] The SON. The Father proclaims Him from heaven as the great teacher, as heard in the solemn charge to listen to Him that resounded from the excellent glory: "This is my beloved Son; hear him." His entire prophetic role, and a significant part of His kingly office, is focused on teaching. He is said to draw people to Himself, just as the Father does through His teaching, as mentioned in John 12:32. He does so with such efficacy that "the dead hear his voice and live." The teaching of the Son imparts life, breathes the spirit—it is a powerful influence of light, shining into darkness; a communication of life that brings the dead to life; an opening of blind eyes and a transformation of hardened hearts; an outpouring of the Spirit and all its fruits. Therefore, He claims the privilege of being the sole master in Matthew 23:10, "One is your Master, even Christ."

[3.] The SPIRIT. In John 14:26, it says, "The Comforter, he shall teach you all things." The apostle also affirms in 1 John 2:27, "But the anointing which ye have received abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him." This anointing of teaching, which is not only true but truth itself, refers specifically to the Holy Spirit of God. Thus, He also teaches us, having been given to us "that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God" (1 Corinthians 2:12). I have chosen this particular example because, as I mentioned before, it is comprehensive and includes most of the aspects that could be enumerated—quickenings, preserving, and so on.

This, then, further emphasizes the truth that is clearly demonstrated—since there is a distinct communication of grace from the different persons of the Deity, the saints must necessarily have distinct communion with them.

It remains only to briefly indicate where this distinction lies and what its basis is. Now, it is as follows: the Father does it through original authority, the Son does it through communication from a purchased treasury, and the Holy Spirit does it through immediate efficacy.

Firstly, the Father communicates all grace through original authority. He quickens whom He wills, as stated in John 5:21. It is by His own will that He has begotten us, as mentioned in James 1:18. The power to give life is invested in the Father by way of eminence in terms of original authority. Therefore, when the quickening Spirit is sent, it is said to be done either by Christ from the Father or by the Father Himself. As seen in John 14:26, "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send." And in John 15:26, "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father." Although it is also said that Christ sends Him Himself for another reason, as mentioned in John 16:7.

Secondly, the Son does it through making out a purchased treasury. "Of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace," as stated in John 1:16. And from where does this fullness come? "It pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell," as mentioned in Colossians 1:19. You can see the reason why He has been entrusted with the dispensation of that fullness in Philippians 2:8–11. "When thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in His hand. He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied: by His knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for He shall bear their iniquities," as stated in Isaiah 53:10–11. And along with this fullness, He also has the authority for its communication, as seen in John 5:25–27 and Matthew 28:18.

Thirdly, the Spirit does it through immediate efficacy. Romans 8:11 says, "But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwells in you." Here we see all three— the Father's authoritative quickening, for He raised Christ from the dead and He will quicken you; the Son's mediatory quickening, for it is accomplished through the death of Christ; and the Spirit's immediate efficacy, as it will be done by the Spirit that dwells in you. Those who wish to further explore this entire matter can refer to what I have written elsewhere on this subject. Thus, the distinct communion that we are discussing has been both proven and demonstrated.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **The Peculiar Communion with the Father**

To further clarify the distinct communion we have discussed concerning the Father, Son, and Spirit, it is necessary to provide specific instances that demonstrate how the saints hold this communion with each person. However, before doing so, I will make some observations that need to be considered beforehand, as promised, to provide clarity to what has been discussed. These observations are as follows:

1. When I mention something as peculiar in which we hold distinct communion with a specific person, it does not mean that the other persons are excluded from communion with the soul in

the same regard. Rather, I mean that primarily, immediately, and in an eminent way, we have communion with one particular person in that specific thing or manner, and then, secondarily and consequentially, we have communion with the others based on that foundation. It is important to note that the person, as a person, of any one of them is not the primary object of divine worship, but rather as it is identified with the nature or essence of God. The outward works of God (referred to as "Trinitatis ad extra") that are commonly said to be common and undivided are either entirely common in all respects, such as works of common providence, or if they are common in terms of their acts, they are distinguished based on the principle or immediate source of operation. For example, creation is attributed to the Father and redemption to the Son. This is the sense in which we discuss these matters.

2. There is a collaboration of the actions and operations of the entire Deity in the dispensation of salvation, where each person contributes to the work of our salvation and to every act of our communion with each individual person. No matter which act of communion we have with any person, there is an influence from every person in the manifestation of that act. For instance, if we consider the act of faith, it is given to us by the Father, as it is not of ourselves but the gift of God (Ephesians 2:8). It is the Father who reveals the gospel and Christ in it (Matthew 11:25). It is also granted to us for the sake of Christ to believe in Him (Philippians 1:29). We are blessed with spiritual blessings in Him (Ephesians 1:3), and He bestows and increases faith within us (Luke 17:5). Furthermore, faith is worked in us by the Spirit, who administers His exceeding greatness of power to those who believe, according to the working of His mighty power displayed

in raising Christ from the dead (Ephesians 1:19-20; Romans 8:11).

3. When I mention a specific aspect in which we have communion with a person, I do not do so to exclude other means of communion. Instead, I provide it as a notable and prominent example to prove and demonstrate the previous general assertion. In reality, there is no grace or duty in which we do not have communion with God in the manner described. In everything we partake of the divine nature, there is a communication and receiving between God and us. Such is our closeness to Him in Christ.
4. By affirming this distinct communion that specifically relates to the order in which God reveals His grace through the gospel, I do not in any way intend to confine all communion with God within these boundaries. God's ways are vast and encompass a perfection that has no end. Furthermore, I do not mean to undermine the holy fellowship we have with the entire Deity as we walk before Him in covenant obedience. I will address this matter with God's help in the subsequent discussion.

These few observations having been stated, I will now declare what it is in which the saints particularly and significantly have communion with the Father. It is LOVE—free, undeserved, and eternal love. The Father specifically directs this love towards the saints, and they are to focus on it, receive it from Him, and respond to it in ways that please Him. This love is the great revelation of the gospel. While the Father, as the source of the Deity, is known only for His wrath, anger, and indignation against sin, and this is the only view that humanity has of Him (Romans 1:18; Isaiah 33:13-14; Habakkuk 1:13; Psalm 5:4-6; Ephesians 2:3), He is now specially revealed as love,

abounding in love towards us. The manifestation of this love is a unique work of the gospel (Titus 3:4).

1. "God is love" (1 John 4:8). Here, the term God is used personally to refer to the person of the Father, not essentially. This is evident from verse 9, where He is distinguished from His only begotten Son, whom He sends into the world. Therefore, the Father is love, not only in terms of having an infinitely gracious, tender, compassionate, and loving nature, as He has proclaimed Himself to be (Exodus 34:6-7), but also in terms of uniquely and remarkably bestowing Himself upon us in free love. The apostle further emphasizes this in the following verses, stating that we should take notice of the fact that He demonstrates His love by sending His only begotten Son into the world so that we may live through Him (verse 9). Additionally, verse 10 declares, "He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." The Holy Spirit plainly indicates that this love should be primarily regarded in our communion with the Father, as it precedes the sending of Christ and all the mercies and benefits received through Him. This love, in itself, existed before the purchase made by Christ, although its entire fruit is realized through Him (Ephesians 1:4-6).
2. In the apostle's solemn parting benediction in 2 Corinthians 13:14, where he attributes various things to the distinct persons, he specifically assigns love to the Father. The fellowship of the Spirit is mentioned alongside the grace of Christ and the love of God because it is through the Spirit alone that we have fellowship with Christ in grace and with the Father in love, even though we also have unique fellowship with the Spirit, as will be explained.

3. Our Saviour states in John 16:26-27, "I say not that I will pray the Father for you, for the Father himself loves you." It may seem contradictory that our Saviour says, "I say not that I will pray the Father for you," when in Chapter 14, He plainly declares, "I will pray the Father for you." However, the disciples, through all the gracious words, comforting and faithful promises of their Master, had already become fully convinced of His dear and tender affections towards them. They were also assured of His continued care and kindness, knowing that He would not forget them when He physically departed from them, as He was about to do. However, their concerns shifted towards the Father and how they would be accepted by Him and what regard He had for them. Our Saviour reassures them, saying, "Do not worry about that, and do not burden me with the task of securing the Father's love for you. Know that the Father Himself loves you in a special way. It is true that I will pray to the Father to send you the Spirit, the Comforter, and all the gracious fruits of His love. But in terms of love itself, free love, eternal love, there is no need for any intercession. The Father Himself loves you in an extraordinary manner. Be certain of this, so that you may have communion with Him in His love and cease to be troubled about it. In fact, your lack of belief in His love is the only way you can truly trouble or burden Him." This is inevitably the case when sincere love is questioned.
  
4. The apostle affirms the same in Romans 5:5, stating that "the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us." It is clear that the God whose love is being referred to is distinct from the Holy Spirit, who pours forth that love. In verse 8, God is also distinguished from the Son, as it is from God's love that the Son is sent. Therefore, the apostle is specifically referring to the Father in this passage.

What does he attribute to Him? Love. In verse 8, he commends this love to us, presenting it in a significant and remarkable manner so that we may take notice of it and embrace it. To emphasize this further, there are not only frequent references to the love of God where the Father is particularly intended and explicit mentions of the love of the Father, but He is also called "The God of love" (2 Corinthians 13:11) and is said to be love itself. Thus, whoever desires to know Him (1 John 4:8) or abide in fellowship or communion with Him (verse 16) must do so as He is love.

5. Moreover, while there are two types of divine love—*beneplaciti* (love of good pleasure and destination) and *amicitiæ* (love of friendship and approbation)—both are specifically attributed to the Father in an exceptional manner.

(1) John 3:16 states, "God so loved the world, that he gave," etc. This refers to the love of His purpose and good pleasure, His determined will to do good. It is specifically attributed to Him as the cause of sending His Son. Similarly, Romans 9:11-12, Ephesians 1:4-5, 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14, and 1 John 4:8-9 affirm this truth.

(2) In John 14:23, the other kind of love we are discussing is mentioned. Jesus says, "If a man loves me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come to him, and make our abode with him." This refers to the love of friendship and approval that is particularly ascribed to the Father. Jesus says that both the Father and the Son will come to those who love Him and dwell with them, primarily through the work of the Holy Spirit. However, it is important to note that in terms of love itself, the Father possesses a unique prerogative: "My Father will love him."



Furthermore, as this love is specifically to be focused on in relation to the Father, it should be considered as the source of all subsequent gracious dispensations. Christians often walk with troubled hearts, uncertain about the Father's thoughts towards them. They may be fully convinced of the Lord Jesus Christ and His goodwill, but the difficulty lies in understanding their acceptance with the Father and His disposition towards them. They may say, "Show us the Father, and it will be enough for us" (John 14:8). However, it should be understood that His love should be viewed as the fountain from which all other blessings flow. The apostle expresses this in Titus 3:4, where he speaks of "the kindness and love of God our Saviour towards man" as originating from the Father. He emphasizes that the Father abundantly sheds forth and reveals His love to us through Jesus Christ our Saviour. This love serves as the turning point for the great transformation and restoration of the saints. As the apostle states in verse 3, we were once foolish, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various passions and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. We were completely corrupt and wretched. How, then, is our redemption possible? It is solely due to God's love, which is manifested through the ways described. When the kindness and love of God appeared—referring to their fruits and expressions—this transformation occurred. To assure us of His love, God compares Himself to all things in the world that have a loving and tender nature. Despite any weaknesses or imperfections they may possess, they still bear great impressions of love. He is likened to a father, a mother, a shepherd, a hen with her chicks, and more (Psalm 103:13; Isaiah 63:16; Matthew 6:6; Isaiah 66:13; Psalm 23:1; Isaiah 60:11; Matthew 23:37).

There is no need to provide further evidence. It has been demonstrated that love, peculiarly emanating from the person of the

Father, is held out to the saints as the means through which they can have communion with Him.

To fully engage in communion with the Father in love, believers are required to do two things: (1) receive His love and (2) offer suitable responses in return.

(1) Believers are to receive His love. Communion involves both giving and receiving. Until the love of the Father is received, there can be no communion with Him in this aspect. So, how is the Father's love to be received in a way that fosters fellowship with Him? The answer is through faith. Receiving His love is synonymous with believing in it. God has fully and prominently revealed His love, and it can be received through faith. In John 14:1, the phrase "Ye believe in God" refers to the Father. And what are we to believe about Him? We are to believe in His love because "God is love" (1 John 4:8). It is true that we do not immediately place our faith in the Father directly but through the Son. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6). He serves as the merciful high priest who grants us access to the throne of grace. Through Him, we have our introduction to the Father, and through Him, we believe in God (1 Peter 1:21). When we have access to the Father through Christ, we can behold His glory and see His unique love for us, and we can exercise faith in response. We should focus on, believe in, and receive His love through Christ, knowing that its outcomes and fruits are made manifest to us solely through Christ. Although we perceive the sun's light only through its rays, we can still see the sun itself, the source of that light. Though all our refreshment lies in the streams, they lead us back to the fountain. Jesus Christ, in terms of the Father's love, is like a beam or a stream, in which our light and refreshment are found, yet through Him, we are led to the fountain—the eternal sun of love itself. If believers were

to practice this, they would experience significant spiritual growth in their walk with God.

This is the goal. Many dark and troubling thoughts may arise regarding this matter. Only a few can elevate their hearts and minds to such heights of faith as to find rest for their souls in the love of the Father. They often dwell in the troublesome region of hopes and fears, storms and clouds. However, they do not know how to reach this level of communion with Him. Yet, it is the will of God that we always regard Him as benevolent, kind, tender, loving, and unchanging, particularly as the Father—the great source and origin of all gracious communications and expressions of love. This is what Christ came to reveal: God as a Father (John 1:18). He declares this name to those who are given to Him out of the world (John 17:6). Through Himself, as the only means of approaching God as a Father—specifically as love—Christ effectively leads us to this understanding. By doing so, He grants us the rest He promised, for the love of the Father is the soul's only true rest. As previously mentioned, we do not initially reach this level of communion formally at the very moment of believing. We believe in God through Christ (1 Peter 1:21), and faith seeks rest for the soul. Christ presents this rest as the only means of attainment. Although we do not remain there, through Christ, we gain access to the Father (Ephesians 2:18)—access to His love. We discover that He is love and that He has eternally purposed love, good pleasure, and a benevolent disposition towards us. All causes for anger and aversion are removed. Through faith and by means of Christ, the soul is brought into the embrace of God, where it experiences a comforting persuasion, a spiritual perception, and a sense of His love. It rests and finds solace in this reality. This is the first step that believers take in their communion with the Father, and further improvement in this regard will be discussed later.

(2) As for the suitable response that is required, it mainly consists of love. God loves us so that we may love Him in return. When He commands us to reciprocate His love and complete our communion with Him, He says, "My son, give me thine heart" (Proverbs 23:26)—your affections, your love. The greatest commandment is to "love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind" (Luke 10:27). This is the response that God demands. When the soul perceives God, in His expression of love, as infinitely lovely and loving, it rests in and delights in Him accordingly. In faith, the soul recognizes that God first loved us, and in response, we love Him. I will not delve into an extensive description of divine love at this time. In general, love is an affection that unites and draws us near, and it finds complacency in that nearness. When the Father is seen under any other perception apart from Him acting in love towards the soul, it evokes fear and aversion. This is why sinners in the Scriptures tend to flee and hide from Him. However, when the Father is viewed as a Father who lovingly acts upon the soul, it stirs the soul to love Him in return. In this dynamic, faith becomes the foundation of all acceptable obedience (Deuteronomy 5:10; Exodus 20:6; Deuteronomy 10:12, 11:1, 13, 13:3).

Thus, the entire matter is explained by the apostle in Ephesians 1:4: "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love." It begins with the love of God and culminates in our love for Him. This is the ultimate purpose and effect of God's eternal love for us. It is true that our overall obedience falls under the scope of our communion with God, but in our communion with Him as the Father, the blessed sovereign, lawgiver, and rewarder, we do so in love. And by love, I do not merely refer to the love that is the essence and foundation of all moral obedience, but also a particular delight

and contentment in the Father who is effectively revealed as love to the soul.

To further clarify and illuminate this communion with the Father in love, I will present two points: (1) the areas in which God's love for us and our love for Him share some semblance and similarity, and (2) the ways in which they differ, which will shed light on the nature of each.

(1) They share commonalities in two aspects: Firstly, they are both loves of rest and complacency. Regarding God's love:

- Zephaniah 3:17 states, "The LORD thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy, he will rest in his love; he will joy over thee with singing." Here, God's love is characterized by REST and DELIGHT. The Hebrew phrase used is **יַחַרִּישׁ בְּאַהֲבָתוֹ** (yacharish b'ahavato), which can be translated as "He shall be silent because of his love." Rest with contentment is denoted by silence, indicating an absence of complaint or discontent. God, in His perfect and complete love, does not complain about anything concerning those whom He loves. Alternatively, "rest in his love" signifies that He will not remove or seek another object of His love. Once it is fixed, His love will abide in the soul forever. Furthermore, there is DELIGHT and COMPLACENCY. God "rejoices with singing," expressing His complete satisfaction in the object of His love. Two words, **יָשִׁישׁ** (yasis) and **יָגִיל** (yagil), are used here to depict the delight and joy that God experiences in His love. The former denotes an inward joy of the heart, intensified by the phrase **בְּשִׂמְחָה** (besimchah), which means "in gladness" or "with joy." To have joy of heart in gladness is the utmost expression of delight in love. The latter word, **יָגִיל** (yagil), conveys the outward

manifestation of joy: exultation or leaping in response to overwhelming joy. This is akin to the concept of "tripudiare," to leap or dance due to joyful surprise. Therefore, God is said to rejoice "with a joyful sound" or singing. Rejoicing with gladness of heart and exulting with singing and praise signifies the highest form of delight and complacency. Conversely, when referring to the absence of this love, it is said that God "was not well pleased" (1 Corinthians 10:5) or "takes no pleasure" (Hebrews 10:38; Jeremiah 22:28; Hosea 8:8; Malachi 1:10). God finds pleasure in those who remain with Him. He sings to His church, saying, "I the LORD do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day" (Isaiah 27:2-3; Psalm 147:11; 149:4). There is rest and complacency in His love. Interestingly, in Hebrew, there is a mere metathesis of a letter between the word signifying a love of will and desire (אָהַב, aheb) and the word denoting a love of rest and acquiescence (אָוַח, avah), and both are ascribed to God. He wills good for us so that He may rest in that will. Some say that ἀγαπᾶν (to love) is derived from ἄγαν πόθεσθαι, meaning "to perfectly acquiesce in the thing loved." When God calls His Son "beloved" (Matthew 3:17), He adds, as an explanation, "in whom I am well pleased."

Regarding our response to God's love:

- The love we offer in return, to complete our communion with Him, shares a certain resemblance to His love, as it is also a love of rest and delight. David implores, "Return unto thy rest, O my soul" (Psalm 116:7). He makes God his rest, indicating that his soul finds rest in God alone, without seeking any other object. He declares, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee" (Psalm 73:25). In this

way, the soul gathers itself from all its wanderings and turns away from all other beloveds to find its rest solely in God. The soul chooses the Father as its present and eternal rest. Moreover, this love is accompanied by delight. The psalmist declares, "Because thy lovingkindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee" (Psalm 63:3). The phrase "better than life" (מֵחַיִּים, mecha-yim) emphasizes that God's lovingkindness surpasses all aspects of life, encompassing every aspect that makes life meaningful. Though he finds himself on the brink of death, amidst countless troubles, he discovers more sweetness in God than in a long and prosperous life filled with all the pleasures and comforts that make it enjoyable. Hosea 14:3 captures this sentiment of forsaking all other sources of rest and contentment, declaring, "Asshur shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses; neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, 'Ye are our gods.' For in thee the fatherless findeth mercy." The people reject the enticing appearances of rest and satisfaction, choosing instead to find all they need in God, upon whom they cast themselves as helpless orphans.

Secondly, the mutual love between God and the saints is characterized by the fact that the communication of the outcomes and fruits of these loves occurs solely through Christ. The Father communicates His love to us only through Christ, and we offer our love to Him only through Christ. Christ is the storehouse in which the Father dispenses all the riches of His grace, drawing from the boundless depths of His eternal love. Christ is also the priest to whom we entrust all the offerings we return to the Father. Therefore, Christ is said to be loved by the Father not only as His eternal Son, who was the delight of His soul before the foundation of the world (Proverbs 8:30), but also as our mediator and the means through which His love is conveyed to us (Matthew 3:17; John 3:35, 5:20,

10:17, 15:9, 17:24). Through Christ, we believe in God and have access to Him.

Firstly, the Father loves us and "chose us before the foundation of the world," but in the pursuit of that love, He blesses us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ (Ephesians 1:3-4). From His love, He pours out the Holy Spirit abundantly upon us through Jesus Christ our Savior (Titus 3:6). In the pouring out of His love, not a single drop falls apart from the Lord Christ. Just as the anointing oil was poured on the head of Aaron and flowed down to the skirts of his clothing (Psalm 133:2), love is first poured out on Christ, and from Him, it drips like the dew of Hermon upon the souls of His saints. The Father desires Christ to have preeminence in all things (Colossians 1:18). He is pleased that in Christ, all fullness should dwell (verse 19), so that "of His fullness we might receive, and grace for grace" (John 1:16). Although the Father's love of purpose and good pleasure originates solely from His grace and will, its accomplishment is solely through Christ. All its fruits are first given to Him, and it is in Him alone that they are dispensed to us. Thus, while the saints may indeed perceive an infinite ocean of love towards them in the Father's bosom, they should not expect a single drop to come directly from Him except through Christ. Christ is the sole means of communication. The Father's love is like honey in a flower—it must be in the comb before it is usable. Christ must extract and prepare this honey for us. He draws this water from the fountain through the union and dispensation of His fullness, while we, by faith, draw from the wells of salvation that exist in Him. This was partly explained earlier.

Secondly, our returns of love are all through Him and in Him. It is indeed for our benefit that this is the case, for otherwise, we would present lame and blind sacrifices to God. Christ bears the iniquity of



our offerings, and He adds incense to our prayers. Our love is directed towards the Father, but it is conveyed to Him through the Son of His love. He is the only way for our graces, as well as our persons, to reach God. Through Him, all our desires, delights, complacency, and obedience pass. More will be discussed on this matter later.

In these two aspects, there is some resemblance between the mutual love of the Father and the saints, which facilitates their communion.

Furthermore, there are several points of difference between them:

Firstly, the love of God is a love of bounty, whereas our love for Him is a love of duty.

Firstly, the love of the Father is a love of bounty—a love that extends towards us, motivating Him to do good things for us, great things on our behalf. His love underlies all His dealings with us, and wherever it is mentioned, it is portrayed as the cause and source of some freely given gift. He loves us and sends His Son to die for us; He loves us and blesses us with all spiritual blessings. Loving involves choosing (Romans 10:11-12). He loves us and disciplines us. It is a love similar to that of the heavens for the earth, which, filled with rain, pours forth showers to make it fruitful. It is like the sea that bestows its waters upon the rivers out of its own abundance, and they return to it only what they have received from it. It is the love of a spring, of a fountain—always pouring forth, a love from which springs every lovely thing in its object. It infuses goodness into and creates goodness within the beloved. This aligns with the philosopher's description of love: "To love," he said, "is to will what one deems good for someone and to practically act accordingly to the best of one's ability." God's power and will are commensurate—what He wills, He accomplishes.

Secondly, our love for God is a love of duty—a love befitting a child. His love descends upon us with bounty and fruitfulness, while our love ascends to Him with duty and gratitude. He enriches us through His love, and we have nothing to offer Him through ours. Our goodness does not extend to Him. Though our love is directly fixed on Him, no fruit of our love reaches Him directly. While He demands our love, He is not benefited by it (Job 35:5-8; Romans 11:35; Job 22:2-3). Our love consists of four elements: rest, delight, reverence, and obedience. Through these, we engage in communion with the Father in His love. This is why God refers to the love due to Him as a father as "honour" (Malachi 1:6): "If I am a father, where is My honour?" It is a deserved act of duty.

Secondly, they differ in this: The love of the Father towards us is a love that precedes, while our love towards Him is a love that follows.

Firstly, the love of the Father towards us is a preceding love, and it can be understood in two ways:

Firstly, it precedes our love. As stated in 1 John 4:10, "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us." His love comes before ours. The father loves the child even when the child does not know the father, let alone love him. By nature, we are haters of God. However, God, in His own nature, is a lover of humanity. Therefore, any mutual love between Him and us must originate from His side.

Secondly, it precedes all other causes of love. It precedes not only our love, but also any loveliness within us. Romans 5:8 says, "God commendeth his love towards us, in that whilst we were yet sinners Christ died for us." Not only does His love exist, but its remarkable manifestation is directed towards sinners. Sin represents all that is unlovely and undesirable in a creature. The mention of sin removes all causes and incentives for love. Yet, even as sinners, we receive the

commendation of the Father's love through an extraordinary testimony. He loves us not only when we have done no good, but when we are in a state of spiritual filthiness. He loves us not because we are better than others, but because He Himself is infinitely good. His kindness is revealed even when we are foolish and disobedient. Hence, it is said that "God so loved the world" — that is, those who possess nothing but what is worldly, those whose entire portion lies in evil.

Secondly, our love is consequential in both respects:

Firstly, it follows the love of God. No creature ever turns their affections towards God unless God's heart has first been set upon them.

Secondly, it follows sufficient causes for love. God must be revealed to us as lovely and desirable, as a fitting and suitable object for our souls to find rest in, before we can bear any love towards Him. The saints (in this sense) do not love God for nothing, but because of the excellency, loveliness, and desirability that reside within Him. Just as the psalmist states in one instance, "I love the LORD, BECAUSE!" — so we can say in general, "We love the Lord, BECAUSE!" Or, as David says in another case, "What have I now done? Is there not a cause?" If anyone were to inquire about our love for God, we could say, "What have we now done? Is there not a cause?"

Thirdly, they also differ in the following way: The love of God is like Himself—equal, constant, and not capable of being increased or diminished. On the other hand, our love is like ourselves—unequal, fluctuating, growing, waning, increasing, and declining. God's love, like the sun, is always the same in its light, though occasionally obscured by clouds. Our love, like the moon, experiences phases of enlargement and constriction.

Firstly, the love of the Father is equal, etc. When He loves someone, He loves them to the end, and His love for them remains constant. "The Strength of Israel is not a man, that he should repent." Once He sets His love upon someone, it is unchanging. His love is eternal, having no beginning and no end. It cannot be heightened by our actions or diminished by anything within us. In itself, His love remains constant. However, in two regards, it may be subject to change:

Firstly, in relation to its fruits. As mentioned before, it is a fruitful love, a love of bounty. In regard to these fruits, it may sometimes be greater, sometimes lesser, as its manifestations vary. Among the saints, how often do we witness varying degrees of life, light, and strength! God, according to His good pleasure, either bestows or withholds the fruits of His love. All the graces of the Spirit within us, all sanctified enjoyments, are fruits of His love. These are dispensed in different ways and at different times to the same individuals, as ample experience can attest.

Secondly, in relation to its revelations and manifestations. God "sheds abroad his love in our hearts by the Holy Ghost," as mentioned in Romans 5:5. He gives us a sense of His love and reveals it to us. This sense of His love is subject to change—it may be more or less intense at times. He may shine upon us, and then momentarily hide His face, according to His purposes for our benefit. Our Father does not always rebuke us, lest we be cast down; nor does He always smile upon us, lest we become complacent and neglectful. Nonetheless, His love in itself remains the same. Even when He momentarily hides His face, He gathers us with everlasting kindness.

Objection: But you might say, "This comes close to the blasphemy that God loves His people in their sinning as much as in their strict

obedience. If that is the case, who will bother to serve Him more or to walk with Him to please Him?"

Answer: Few truths of Christ have not encountered similar objections from someone or other. Terms and appellations are imposed at the whim of the individual; however, they do not alter the essence of things. The love of God, in itself, is an eternal purpose and act of His will. It is no more changeable than God Himself. If it were, no flesh would be saved. But His love does not change, and we are not consumed. Does He love His people in their sinning? Yes, He loves His people—not their sinning. Does He alter His love towards them? Not the purpose of His will, but the dispensations of His grace. He rebukes them, chastens them, hides His face from them, afflicts them, and fills them with a sense of His indignation. However, woe unto us if He were to change His love or withdraw His kindness from us! The very things that appear to be demonstrations of a change in His affection towards His people also proceed from love, just as much as those things that appear to be its most genuine expressions. "But doesn't this encourage sin?" Anyone who seriously raises this objection has never truly tasted the love of God. The doctrine of grace can be perverted into licentiousness, but the principle itself cannot. I will not offer another response to this objection, as it would be unfair to the saints. Detestation of sin in anyone can coexist with the acceptance of their persons and their designation for eternal life.

However, our love for God ebbs and flows, waxes and wanes. We lose our initial love, only to experience its resurgence—there is scarcely a day of stability. How feeble we are! How unlike the Lord and His love! We are as unstable as water, unable to excel. At times, we declare, "Though all men forsake Thee, I will not." Yet, in an instant, we deny, "I know not the man." One day we claim, "I shall never be

moved; my hill is so strong." The next, we lament, "All men are liars; I shall perish." Has there ever been a time, a place, where our love for God remained constant for even a single day?

Thus, these agreements and discrepancies further illustrate the mutual love between the Father and the saints, in which they find communion. I will refrain from providing additional instances concerning the person of the Father and instead seek to draw some conclusions from this in the next chapter.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **Inferences on the former doctrine concerning communion with the Father in love**

Having explored the nature of the distinct communion that we have with the Father, it is now necessary to provide some exhortations to this communion, offer directions for it, and draw some observations from it.

1. First and foremost, it is evident that Christians are rarely engaged in the duty of immediate communion with the Father in love. Our lack of familiarity with our blessings and privileges is both a sin and a source of distress. We fail to listen to the voice of the Spirit given to us "so that we may know the things freely bestowed on us by God." This results in a heavy heart when we could rejoice and in weakness when we could be strong in the Lord. Very few saints have experiential knowledge of the

privilege of holding immediate communion with the Father in love. They regard Him with anxious and doubtful thoughts and question His goodwill and kindness. At best, many believe that there is no sweetness in Him towards us apart from what is obtained through the high price of Jesus' blood. It is true that Jesus is the only means of communication, but the free fountain and source of it all lies in the bosom of the Father. Eternal life was with the Father and is revealed to us. Therefore, let us:

(1.) Regard the Father as love. Do not perceive Him solely as an always stern Father, but as one who is exceedingly kind and tender. Look at Him by faith as someone who has had thoughts of kindness towards us from eternity. Misunderstanding God causes many to turn away from Him, even though they have the slightest inclination towards Him. "Those who know You will trust in You." Men cannot abide with God in spiritual meditations; they lack insight into His love. They only fix their thoughts on His terrible majesty, severity, and greatness, thereby failing to be drawn near to Him. If a soul continually beheld His everlasting tenderness and compassion, His eternal thoughts of kindness, and His present gracious acceptance, that soul would not bear a moment's absence from Him. However, currently, such a soul might not even watch with Him for one hour. Therefore, the saints' initial perception of the Father should be as one full of eternal and free love towards them. Let their hearts and thoughts break through any discouragements they may encounter. To encourage them in this, they should consider:

[1.] Whose love it is. It is the love of the One who is completely self-sufficient, infinitely satisfied with Himself and His own glorious excellencies and perfections. He has no need to extend His love to others or seek an object of love outside of Himself. He could delight and find satisfaction within Himself for all eternity. He has His Son,

His eternal Wisdom, in whom He rejoices and finds delight from all eternity. This could fully satisfy the Father's delight, yet He chooses to love His saints as well. Moreover, His love not only seeks His own satisfaction but also our good. It is the love of a God, the love of a Father, whose natural expression is kindness and generosity.

[2.] What kind of love it is. And it is:

Firstly, eternal. It was fixed upon us before the foundation of the world. Even before we existed or had done any good, His thoughts were upon us, and He took delight in us. The Son rejoiced in the thought of fulfilling His Father's delight in Him. The delight of the Father in the Son mentioned in Proverbs 8:30 refers not only to His absolute delight in Him but also to the Son as the express image of His person and the brightness of His glory, through whom He could behold all His own excellencies and perfections, particularly in relation to His love and delight in the sons of men. Thus, the order of the words requires us to understand it as follows: "I was daily His delight," and "My delights were with the sons of men"—that is, in the thoughts of kindness and redemption for them. In this respect, the Son was also the Father's delight. The Father had laid in His own bosom a plan for our happiness from eternity. The mere thought of this is enough to cause every fiber of our being to leap for joy. The awareness of it cannot help but humble our souls to the lowest depths of humble and holy reverence and make us rejoice before Him with trembling.

Secondly, it is free. He loves us because He wills it; there is nothing in us that merits His love. If we were deserving of His love, its value would be diminished. Things that are owed to us rarely evoke gratitude, but that which predates our existence must be absolutely



free in its regard for our well-being. This is what gives His love its life, purpose, and value.

Thirdly, it is unchangeable. Though we change every day, His love does not. If any provocation could turn it away, it would have ceased long ago. Its unchangeableness is what leads the Father to exercise infinite patience and forbearance towards us, without which we would die and perish (2 Peter 3:9). Furthermore, His love is:

Fourthly, distinguishing. He has not loved all the world in this way. "Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated." Why He chose to set His love upon us and pass by millions who are not fundamentally different from us by nature, so that we become partakers of that love and all its fruits, is a question that exceeds our understanding. I have merely touched upon the main points, but let those whose hearts have been touched by these truths explore further.

Therefore, I say, let the soul frequently contemplate the Father's love, considering all these aspects that are both captivating and endearing.

(2.) Contemplate it in order to receive it. Without this, all is in vain regarding communion with God. We do not have communion with Him until His love is received by faith. This is what I urge the saints of God to do—to believe in this love of God for themselves, to believe that such is the Father's heart towards them, and to accept His testimony concerning it. His love is not ours in its sweetness until it is received in this manner. Therefore, continually place your thoughts of faith in God as one who loves you, embracing you with the eternal free love described above. When the Lord, through His Word, presents Himself as such to you, let your mind recognize it and affirm that it is true. Let your will embrace it as a reality, and let all your affections be filled with it. Give your whole heart to it, let it

bind you with the cords of this love. If the King is bound in the galleries with your love, should you not be bound in heaven with His?

(3.) Let it produce its proper fruit and have its effect on your heart in return of love to Him. In doing so, we will walk in the light of God's countenance and hold holy communion with our Father throughout the day. Let us not treat Him unkindly or respond to His goodwill with indifference. May we never have such a heart as to deal ungratefully with our God.

2. Now, to assist us in this duty and its daily practice, I will present a couple of considerations that may be helpful. Firstly, it is extremely pleasing to God, our Father, that we should hold communion with Him in His love, receiving Him into our souls as One full of love, tenderness, and kindness towards us. Flesh and blood often entertain harsh thoughts of Him, believing that He is perpetually angry and even unforgiving. They think it inappropriate for poor creatures to draw near to Him and consider nothing more desirable than to avoid His presence, as if wherever He is involved, it becomes troublesome. "Who among us can dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us can dwell with everlasting burnings?" say the sinners in Zion. And the wicked servant in the Gospel says, "I knew you to be a harsh man." These thoughts are highly displeasing to the Lord and serve the enemy's purpose of slandering Him in the soul. Satan rejoices when he can fill the mind with such thoughts of God; it satisfies his desires. This has been his strategy from the beginning. The first murder he committed was accomplished through this means. He led our first parents to develop harsh thoughts about God, questioning whether God had truly spoken and threatening them with death. He knew well that by using

this tactic, he could overthrow all of humanity at once. Remembering his early victory, he continues to employ the same weapons successfully. It deeply grieves the Spirit of God to be slandered in the hearts of those whom He loves dearly. He challenges Zion, saying, "What wrong have you found in me? Have I been a barren wilderness to you, a land of darkness?" Zion responds, "The LORD has forsaken me, my Lord has forgotten me." The Lord detests nothing more than these harsh thoughts, fully aware of the bitter fruit they will bear—alienation of heart, retreating, unbelief, and wavering in our walk with Him. Just as a child is reluctant to come into the presence of an angry father, consider this: by receiving the Father as One who extends love to the soul, you give Him the honor He desires, and this is exceedingly pleasing to Him. He often emphasizes this so that it may be received in this way. "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us" (1 John 3:1). So, why do people shy away from having positive thoughts about God? They believe it to be audacious to regard God as good, gracious, tender, kind, and loving. I am speaking about believers, but on the other hand, they can easily consider Him as harsh, severe, almost unforgiving, and fierce—the worst affections of the worst individuals, abhorred by God (Romans 1:31; 2 Timothy 3:3)—and they think they are doing right. Is this not a deceitful notion implanted by Satan? Was it not his intention from the beginning to inject such thoughts about God? Be assured, therefore, that there is nothing more pleasing to the Father than for us to continually direct our hearts towards Him as the eternal source of all the rich grace that flows out to sinners through the blood of Jesus. And secondly, this practice will greatly endear your soul to God, causing you to take delight in Him and make your

abode with Him. Many saints struggle with the burden that their hearts do not consistently and fully delight and rejoice in God—that there is an inclination of the spirit that hinders them from walking closely with Him. What lies at the root of this ailment? Is it not their lack of skill or neglect of this duty of communing with the Father in love? The more we perceive God's love, the more we will delight in Him and no more. Any other revelation of God without this aspect will only drive the soul away from Him. However, if the heart becomes captivated by the preeminence of the Father's love, it will be overwhelmed, conquered, and endeared to Him. If anything can encourage us to make our abode with Him, it is this. If a father's love cannot make a child take delight in him, what will? So, I urge you to give it a try. Direct your thoughts towards the eternal, free, and abundant love of the Father and see if your heart is not stirred to delight in Him. I boldly declare that believers will find this to be the most fruitful pursuit they have ever undertaken in their lives. Take a moment to sit by the fountain, and you will soon discover the sweetness of its streams. Those of you who have been running away from God will find yourselves unable to stay away for even a moment.

Objection 1: But some may say, "Alas! How can I commune with the Father in love? I do not know if He loves me at all. Should I dare to cast myself upon it? What if I am not accepted? Should I not perish due to my presumption rather than find sweetness in His embrace? To me, God seems only as a consuming fire and eternal burnings. Therefore, I dread to look up to Him."

Answer: I do not fully comprehend what is meant by knowing the love of God. Although it is based on spiritual sense and experience, it is received solely through faith. Our knowledge of it is our belief in it

as revealed. "We have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love" (1 John 4:16). This is the assurance that you can have at the very beginning of your walk with God regarding His love. He who is truth has spoken it, and regardless of what your heart or Satan may say, unless you accept it on this basis, you are attempting to make God a liar (1 John 5:10).

Objection 2: "I can believe that God is love to others, for He has said so, but I see no reason to be convinced that He will be loving towards me. There is no cause or reason in the world for Him to turn His thoughts of love and kindness towards me. Therefore, I dare not engage in communion with Him in His special love."

Answer: He has spoken this love as specifically to you as to anyone else in the world. And He has just as much reason to fix His love upon you as He does upon any of His children, which is none at all apart from Himself. So, I can swiftly address this objection. Throughout the history of the world, anyone who believed in such love from the Father and responded with love towards Him was never deceived. Nor will anyone, until the end of the world, be deceived by doing so. Therefore, in this regard, you are on the most secure foundation. If you believe and receive the Father as love, He will unquestionably be so to you, even if others may experience His severity. But...

Objection 3: "I cannot find my heart responding with love to God. If I could sense my soul being devoted to Him, then I could believe that His soul delights in me."

Answer: This is the most backward thinking your mind can conceive, a sure way to rob God of His glory. "In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us first" (1 John 4:10, 11). Yet you would

reverse this order and say, "In this is love, not that God loved me, but that I love Him first." This is to deprive God of His glory. While He loves us without any reason within ourselves, and we have every reason in the world to love Him, you suggest the opposite—that there should be something within you for God to love you, namely, your love for Him. You propose that you should love God before knowing anything lovely about Him, such as whether He loves you or not. This is a course devised by the flesh and will never bring glory to God or peace to your own soul. Therefore, set aside your reasoning, embrace the love of the Father through pure faith, and your soul will be opened to pour out love to the Lord in communion.

To further explore and emphasize this truth that has been presented and encouraged, it reveals the eminence and privilege of the saints of God. Despite any low opinions that people may hold of them, it will become evident that they have access to a spiritual nourishment that the world is unaware of. They enjoy close communion and fellowship with the Father. Individuals are generally esteemed based on the company they keep. It is an honor to stand in the presence of princes, even as servants. So, consider the great honor bestowed upon all the saints, to stand confidently in the presence of the Father and experience His bosom love. The queen of Sheba pronounced a blessing upon the servants of Solomon who stood before him and heard his wisdom. How much more blessed, then, are those who continually stand before the God of Solomon, hearing His wisdom and enjoying His love! While others fellowship with Satan and indulge their own desires, seeking fleeting pleasures from them (whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and who glory in their shame, focusing on earthly things), the saints have this sweet communion with the Father.

Furthermore, it serves as a safe and delightful refuge for the saints amidst the scorn, reproach, scandals, and misrepresentations they endure in the world. When a child is mistreated by strangers outside, they swiftly run to the comforting bosom of their father, where they voice their complaints and find solace. In the same way, when the saints face harsh judgments and verbal persecution in the world, they can run with their sorrows to their Father and find comfort. The Lord says, "As one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you" (Isaiah 66:13). Therefore, the soul can say, "If I am hated in the world, I will go where I am certain of love. Even though others may treat me harshly, my Father is tender and full of compassion. I will go to Him and find satisfaction in Him. Here, I may be despised, frowned upon, and rejected, but I have honor and love from Him whose kindness surpasses life itself. There, in my Father's love, I will find everything desirable. In Him is the sweetness of all blessings in their purest and most enduring form."

Clearly, the saints are the most misunderstood people in the world. When they say, "Come and fellowship with us," others are quick to respond, "Who are you? A sorry company of rebellious and contentious individuals. Know that we despise your fellowship. We will come to you only when we abandon fellowship with all honorable and worthy men." But alas, how mistaken they are! Truly, the saints' fellowship is with the Father. Regardless of what others may think, they experience close, spiritual, and heavenly refreshment through the mutual exchange of love with the Father Himself. The apostle Paul eloquently expresses how they are generally misconceived in 2 Corinthians 6:8-10: "As deceivers, yet true; as unknown, yet well known; as dying, and behold, we live; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, yet possessing everything." This applies to them in general, but particularly in this matter, they are considered poor,

lowly, and despised individuals, when in reality, they are the truly great and noble ones in the world. Consider the company they keep—it is with the Father. Who could be more glorious? The commodity they trade in is love. What could be more precious? Undoubtedly, they are the distinguished ones on the earth (Psalm 16:3).

Furthermore, this reveals a significant difference between the saints and empty professors. When it comes to performing outward duties and enjoying external privileges, fruitless professors often appear to walk hand in hand with the saints. But when you look at their secret retreats, what a difference there is! The saints have communion with God, while hypocrites, for the most part, engage with the world and their own lusts. They converse and communicate with them, listen to what they have to say, and make provisions for them, while the saints are enveloped in the sweet embrace of their Father's love. Outwardly, believers may not always surpass those who have corrupt hearts, but they possess this spiritual sustenance that others are unaware of. They find refreshment in the banqueting house, a joy that others do not share. In the multitude of their thoughts, the comforts of their Father, God, revive their souls.

Therefore, if these things are true, "what kind of people should we be in all aspects of holy conduct?" After all, "our God is a consuming fire." What communion is there between light and darkness? Can sin and lust dwell in the same thoughts that receive and express love from and to the Father? Holiness is fitting in His presence forever. An unclean spirit cannot approach Him, and an unholy heart cannot abide with Him. A licentious person will not desire to have fellowship with a sober individual. So, will someone with vain and foolish imaginations have communion and dwell with the most holy God? Every consideration of this love serves as a powerful motive for holiness and leads to it. Ephraim exclaimed, "What more have I to do



with idols?" when he found salvation in God. Communion with the Father is completely incompatible with a loose lifestyle. "If we claim to have fellowship with Him, yet walk in darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth" (1 John 1:6). "Whoever says, 'I know Him' (I have communion with Him), but does not do what He commands is a liar, and the truth is not in that person" (1 John 2:4). Any impressive and glorious pretense of familiarity with the Father, without holiness and obedience to His commandments, only serves to prove the pretenders to be liars. The love of the world and the love of the Father cannot coexist.

And if this is the case, then many who bear the name of Christians fall short of its reality. How unfamiliar are the majority of professors with the mystery of this communion and its fruits! Isn't it evident that many clearly engage in communion with their own lusts and with the world, yet they desire to be considered as having a portion and inheritance among those who are sanctified? They lack both a new name and a white stone, yet they want to be called the people of the Most High. Can it not be said of many of them that God is not in all their thoughts rather than that they have communion with Him? May the Lord open the eyes of people so that they may see and understand that walking with God is not a matter of mere form but of true power! This concludes our discussion on the particular communion with the Father, focusing on the instance of love that we have emphasized. "He who called us is faithful; He will surely do it" (1 Thessalonians 5:24)—this pertains to the fellowship we have with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, which we will address next.

## **PART II**

### **CHAPTER I**

On the fellowship that the saints have with Jesus Christ the Son of God—Proof of such fellowship, 1 Corinthians 1:9; Revelation 3:20; Song of Solomon 2:1–7 explained; also Proverbs 9:1–5.

In the previous chapters, we discussed the distinct communion we have with the person of the Father. Now we will turn our attention to the fellowship we have with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Our fellowship with the second person is through Him as the Mediator, in the office to which He willingly submitted for our sake. He "was made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons" (Galatians 4:4, 5). In this regard, I will do two things: I. Declare that we have such fellowship with the Son of God. II. Explain the nature of that fellowship or communion:

I. First, I will present a few passages of Scripture to confirm that it is indeed so: 1 Corinthians 1:9, "God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord." This is the calling of all the saints, and by God's faithfulness, they will be preserved in fellowship with Jesus Christ our Lord. We are called by God the Father, who, out of His love, invites us to have communion with the Son as our Lord. Revelation 3:20, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." Without a doubt, this is fellowship, or else I don't know what it is. Christ will dine with believers; He refreshes Himself with His own graces in

them through the Holy Spirit bestowed upon them. The Lord Christ takes great delight in tasting the sweet fruits of the Spirit in the saints. This is why the bride earnestly prays for her garden to bring forth something for His enjoyment when He comes to her, as expressed in the Song of Solomon 4:16, "Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out. Let my Beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits." The souls of the saints are the garden of Jesus Christ, the fertile ground (Hebrews 6:7) that brings Him joy. "His delights are with the sons of men" (Proverbs 8:31), and "He rejoices over them" (Zephaniah 3:17). It is a garden that bears pleasant and delightful fruit, as described in the Song of Solomon 4:12–14. Every sweet and delicious taste, every savory and fragrant aroma, and everything useful and healing can be found in this garden. There is a variety of spiritual refreshments of all kinds in the souls of the saints, ready for the Lord Jesus. This is why the bride fervently prays for an increase in these things so that her Beloved may dine with her, as He has promised. "Awake, O north wind" and so on, "O that the breathings and workings of the Spirit of all grace might stir up all His gifts and graces in me, so that the Lord Jesus, the beloved of my soul, may have suitable and pleasing enjoyment from me!" God complains of a lack of fruit in His vineyard (Isaiah 5:2; Hosea 10:1). The bride feared and endeavored to prevent the lack of good food for Christ's enjoyment. A barren heart is not fit to receive Him. The delight He takes in the fruit of the Spirit is indescribable. He expresses this in detail in the Song of Solomon 5:1, saying, "I am come; I have eaten, I am refreshed." He calls it "the fruit of his sweetness" or what is most pleasing to Him. Moreover, just as Christ dines with His saints, He has promised that they shall dine with Him, completing the fellowship they have with Him. Christ provides for their entertainment in an exceptional manner. Animals are slaughtered, wine is mixed, and a table is prepared, as stated in Proverbs 9:2. He

refers to the spiritual delights He has for them as a "feast," a "wedding," "a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine," and so on. The fatted calf is killed for their entertainment. This is the communion and mutual enjoyment of Christ and His saints in that communion. Song of Solomon 2:1–7, "I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys. As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters. As the apple-tree among the trees of the wood, so is my Beloved among the sons. I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste," and so on. In the first two verses, you have the description that Christ gives, first of Himself and then of His church. He describes Himself in verse 1, expressing what He is to His bride: "I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys." In the Scriptures, the Lord Christ is compared to all things of eminence in creation. In the heavens, He is the sun and the bright morning star; among beasts, He is the lion of the tribe of Judah; among flowers, here He is the rose and the lily. The rose is renowned for its fragrance, and the lily for its beauty ("Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these"). Christ, in the aroma of His love and righteousness (which is like the garment in which Jacob received his blessing and had a fragrance like a pleasant field, Genesis 27:27), is like this excellent rose, attracting and captivating the hearts of His saints. Just as God smelled a sweet fragrance from the blood of Christ's atonement (Ephesians 5:2), so the saints receive a refreshing and invigorating fragrance from the graces with which Christ, for their sake, is anointed (Song of Solomon 1:3). A sweet fragrance represents that which is acceptable and delightful (Genesis 8:21). He is also "the lily of the valleys," the flower that excels in beauty (Matthew 6:29). He is most desirable for the comeliness and perfection of His person, surpassing the beauty of all human beings. This will be explained further. Thus, He is all these things to His saints (satisfying all their spiritual senses) — their refreshment, their adornment, their delight, and their glory. In the next verse, He tells

us what they are to Him: "As the lily among thorns, so is my beloved among the daughters." The likeness and identification of Christ and His church (as represented here by the lily) are a result of their union through the indwelling of the same Spirit and the conformity and likeness to which the saints are appointed. Now, the bride is a lily, very beautiful to Christ, "as the lily among thorns." First, she excels others, just as the lily surpasses the thorns in comparison. No greater comparison could be made, and no greater exaltation of excellence could be expressed. This is how Christ regards them in verse 1, and this is indeed their status in His sight, as expressed in verse 2. The way Christ esteems them and the way they truly are is further explained in verse 3.

"As the apple-tree among the trees of the wood, so is my Beloved among the sons. I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste." To continue this intimate connection, the bride begins to express her thoughts and reveal her delight in the Lord Christ. Just as He compared her to the lily among thorns, she compares Him to the apple-tree among the trees of the wood. And she provides a reason for this comparison, because He possesses two exceptional qualities that other trees lack:

1) Fruit for sustenance, and 2) Shade for refreshment. She consumes His fruit, and she rests beneath His shade, both with immense delight. All other sons, whether angels (God's sons through creation) as mentioned in Job 1:6 and 38:7, or the sons of Adam (the best of his offspring, the leaders of those groups referred to as daughters or sons of the old creation, the pinnacle of all desirable things), offer no food or refreshment to a hungry, weary soul seeking shade and fruit. They resemble fruitless, leafless trees in the forest that provide neither sustenance nor refreshment. "In Christ," she says, "there is fruit, fruit that is sweet to the taste. Indeed, His flesh is true food,

and His blood is true drink," as stated in John 6:55. Moreover, He has brought forth an everlasting righteousness that abundantly satisfies any hungry soul who has searched in vain among barren trees for sustenance. Furthermore, He abounds in precious and delightful graces that she can partake of abundantly. He invites her to do so. These are the fruits that Christ bears. They speak of a tree that provides everything necessary for eternal life in terms of sustenance and clothing. Christ is that tree of life who has provided everything needed for eternal life. In Him is the righteousness that we hunger for, and in Him is the living water that, once drunk, quenches all thirst. Oh, how sweet are the fruits of Christ's mediation to the faith of His saints! Those who find no relief in mercy, forgiveness, grace, acceptance with God, holiness, sanctification, and so on are completely unfamiliar with these spiritual delights (represented by wine on the lees) prepared for believers. He also provides shade for refreshment and shelter, protecting them from external wrath and offering refreshment in times of weariness. The primary purpose of shade is to shield us from the scorching heat of the sun, as demonstrated by Jonah's gourd. When the heat of divine wrath threatens to scorch the soul, Christ interposes and bears it all. Under the shadow of His wings, we can sit down constantly, quietly, and safely, placing our trust in Him, and all this with great delight. Who can express the joy of a soul that is safely sheltered from wrath in the refuge of the righteousness of the Lord Jesus? In His shade, there is also refreshment for weariness. He is like "the shadow of a great rock in a weary land," as mentioned in Isaiah 32:2. In Him, there is peace, rest, and relief from the power of corruption, the distress of temptations, and the persecution we face. In Him, there is tranquility, rest, and repose, as expressed in Matthew 11:27-28.

After describing each other in this way, making it clear that they cannot help but find delight in fellowship and communion, the

subsequent verses vividly illustrate and describe their communion. I will briefly note four aspects of their communion:

(1) Sweetness, (2) Delight, (3) Safety, and (4) Comfort.

Firstly, sweetness is portrayed through expressions of utmost sweetness and delightful refreshment, such as flagons, apples, and wine. The bride exclaims, "He entertains me as if I were a great personage." Great personages are invited to banqueting houses, where they are treated to wine and delicacies. These expressions represent the preparations of grace and mercy, love, kindness, and the blessings revealed in the gospel, declared in the assemblies of the saints, and bestowed by the Spirit. This love is superior to wine, as mentioned in Song of Solomon 1:2. It is not merely food and drink but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. The spiritual delights of the gospel are refreshing, strengthening, comforting, and filled with sweetness for the souls of the saints. Woe to those who are satiated and find these honeycombs distasteful! Christ makes all His assemblies into banqueting houses, where He provides His saints with delightful sustenance.

Secondly, delight is expressed. The bride is overwhelmed by the sweetness of this communion and discovers love, care, and kindness bestowed by Christ in the assemblies of the saints. Therefore, she cries out in verse 5, "Sustain me with flagons, refresh me with apples; for I am sick with love." Upon encountering the excellence and sweetness of Christ in the banqueting house, the soul is immediately overcome and cries out to partake fully in this experience. She is "sick with love," not (as some may think) fainting due to a lack of experiencing love or under the fear of divine wrath, but rather overwhelmed and faint from the intense outpouring of divine affection after having tasted the sweetness of Christ in the

banqueting house. Her deferred desire makes her heart sick, so she pleads, "Sustain me, refresh me," indicating her longing to be supported by His presence in His ordinances—the flagons and apples of His banqueting house—or else she will utterly sink and faint. When a person is on the verge of fainting, two actions are necessary: providing support to prevent them from collapsing and offering comforting things to revive their spirits. This is precisely what the overwhelmed and fainting soul, elevated by a sense of Christ's love, prays for. It desires the strengthening grace to sustain it in that condition so that it can fulfill its duties, as well as the consolations of the Holy Spirit to content, revive, and satisfy it until it fully enjoys Christ. Thus, communion is carried out with great delight.

Thirdly, safety is emphasized. In verse 4, the bride declares, "His banner over me is love." A banner is a symbol of safety and protection, signifying the presence of an army. Those belonging to an army take refuge under their banner, secure in their encampments. This banner also signifies success and victory, as stated in Psalm 20:5. Christ has a banner for His saints, and that banner is love. Their protection comes solely from His love, and they will receive all the protection that His love can offer. This love safeguards them from hell, death, and all their enemies. Whatever threatens them must pass through the banner of the Lord Jesus' love. Therefore, they enjoy great spiritual security, which is another adornment or excellence of their communion with Him.

Lastly, verse 6 conveys support and consolation. Christ assumes the position of a tender friend toward anyone who is sick and sorrowful. The soul faints with love, longing for the presence of Christ. In response, Christ enfolds the soul in His embrace. He nurtures and cherishes His church, as mentioned in Ephesians 5:29 and Isaiah 63:9. His hand beneath the head provides support and sustaining



grace during times of pressure and difficulty. His hand that embraces signifies joy and consolation, enveloping the heart. Christ delights in both, just as a bridegroom rejoices over his bride, as expressed in Isaiah 62:5. Thus, to rest in the arms of Christ's love, constantly receiving support and refreshment, is undoubtedly communion with Him. In verse 7, the bride earnestly implores that their fellowship may continue, urging everyone to conduct themselves in a manner that does not trouble her Beloved or cause Him to depart.

In short, the entire book is devoted to describing the communion between the Lord Christ and His saints. Therefore, there is no need to provide any more specific examples from it. However, I will add one more from Proverbs 9:1-5: "Wisdom has built her house; she has set up its seven pillars. She has prepared her meat and mixed her wine; she has also set her table. She has sent out her servants, and she calls from the highest point of the city, 'Let all who are simple come to my house!' To those who have no sense, she says, 'Come, eat my food and drink the wine I have mixed.'"

The Lord Christ, the eternal Wisdom of the Father, and the one who is made wisdom to us by God, establishes a spiritual house where He provides for the reception of the guests He invites so freely. His church is the house He has built, supported by a perfect number of pillars to ensure a strong foundation. The slain beasts and mixed wine that furnish His table symbolize the spiritual abundance of the gospel, which He has prepared for those who respond to His invitation. Surely, partaking of this bread and wine, which He has graciously provided, is to commune with Him, for what other ways or things could bring us closer together?

I could further demonstrate this truth by considering all the relationships between Christ and His saints, which necessitate

communion if we assume faithfulness in those relationships. However, this topic is commonly addressed, and I will discuss it in more detail in a later example.

## CHAPTER II

What it is wherein we have peculiar fellowship with the Lord Christ—This is in grace—This proved, John 1:14, 16, 17; 2 Cor. 13:14; 2 Thess. 3:17, 18—Grace of various acceptations—Personal grace in Christ proposed to consideration—The grace of Christ as Mediator intended, Ps. 45:2—Cant. 5:10, Christ, how white and ruddy—His fitness to save, from the grace of union—His fulness to save—His suitableness to endear—These considerations improved.

II. Now that we have established that the saints have a distinct communion with the Lord Jesus, it is necessary to explain in what way this unique fellowship exists.

This communion is found in GRACE. Grace is attributed to Jesus in an exceptional manner. In John 1:14, it is said that He dwelt among us, full of grace and truth – grace in its true and substantive form. All that came before Him was merely symbolic and representative, but in Christ, grace is realized in its truth and substance. "Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ" (verse 17), and "from His fullness we have all received, grace upon grace" (verse 16) – meaning we have communion with Him in grace. We receive every kind of grace from Him, and that is how we fellowship with Him.

Likewise, in the apostolic benediction, where the imparting of spiritual blessings from the three persons of the Trinity to the saints

is precisely distinguished, grace is ascribed to the Lord Jesus Christ: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all" (2 Cor. 13:14).

Paul is so pleased with this that he adopts it as his motto and the sign by which his epistles are recognized: "The salutation of Paul with my own hand, which is the sign of every letter; this is how I write. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all" (2 Thess. 3:17, 18). He even considers "Grace be with you" and "The Lord Jesus be with you" to be equivalent expressions. Although he stated that the former was the sign in all his letters, he sometimes uses one expression alone, sometimes the other, and at times combines them both. Therefore, it is specifically grace, gospel grace revealed in or exhibited through the gospel, that we are to focus on in the Lord Jesus. He is the capstone in the building of God's temple, to whom we cry out, "Grace, grace!" (Zech. 4:7).

The term "grace" has various meanings. In its most prominent senses, it can be understood under one of these three headings:

1. Grace of personal presence and attractiveness. We speak of a person being "graceful and comely," either in terms of their inherent qualities or their adornments. In the case of Christ, this is essentially the subject of nearly half the book of Song of Solomon. It is also mentioned in Psalm 45:2: "You are the most handsome of the sons of men; grace is poured upon your lips." I also include in this category, with regard to Christ, the acceptance of grace that I place in the third position in relation to us. The incomprehensible gifts and fruits of the Spirit bestowed upon Him and manifested in Him contribute to His personal excellence, as will become evident later on.

2. Grace of free favor and acceptance. "By this grace we are saved" – that is, through God's free favor and gracious acceptance in Christ. This sense is found in the common expression, "If I have found favor in your sight," meaning if I am freely and favorably accepted by you. For example, it is said that God "gave grace" (favor) to the humble (James 4:6). Other instances can be seen in Genesis 39:21, 41:37; Acts 7:10; 1 Samuel 2:26; 2 Kings 25:27, and so on.
3. The fruits of the Spirit that sanctify and renew our nature, enabling us to do good and restraining us from evil, are also referred to as grace. When the Lord told Paul, "My grace is sufficient for you," He meant the assistance against temptation that He provided (Col. 3:16; 2 Cor. 8:6, 7; Heb. 12:28).

Regarding the latter two, which relate to Christ in terms of our reception of them, I call them "purchased grace," for they were indeed purchased by Him for us. Our communion with Him in these aspects is referred to as "participation in His sufferings and the power of His resurrection" (Phil. 3:10).

Let's begin with the first point, which I refer to as personal grace. Regarding this, I will do two things: (1) explain what it is and its essence, specifically the personal grace of Christ, and (2) explain how the saints have immediate communion with Him in this grace.

To address the first point, I would like to make the following observation: We are discussing Christ as the mediator, and when I mention the "grace of His person," I do not mean:

1. The glorious qualities of His Deity considered in isolation, apart from the office that He undertook for us as both God and man.

2. The outward appearance of His human nature, whether during His earthly sojourn, bearing our infirmities (which the prophet Isaiah describes quite differently in Isaiah 52:14), or His current exalted state of glory. It is a vain imagination to place undue emphasis on the exaltation of His human nature, as it leads to a false and corrupted view of Christ based on carnal perceptions. Such a view amounts to knowing Christ only in His earthly form, as warned in 2 Corinthians 5:16, which is further exacerbated by the proliferation of foolish imagery. Instead, what I mean is this: the graces of Christ's person as He is vested with the office of mediation, His spiritual preeminence, comeliness, and beauty, as appointed and anointed by the Father for the great work of reconciling all His elect to Himself.

In this regard, the Scripture describes Him as surpassingly excellent, comely, and desirable, far beyond any comparison with the most exceptional and valuable created goods, or any imaginable endearment. Psalm 45:2 proclaims, "You are fairer than the children of men; grace is poured into your lips." Christ's beauty and graciousness far exceed anything found among mortals. The Hebrew term used here, יָפִיּוּתָא (japhiaphitha), is doubled to emphasize its significance and elevate its subject beyond all comparison. The Chaldee paraphrase affirms, "Your fairness, O King Messiah, is more excellent than the sons of men." It is exceedingly desirable. While inward beauty and glory are expressed here through physical form and appearance, which held great esteem in those who were to rule or govern, the true essence lies in the spiritual beauty and glory that dwells within Him. As Colossians 2:9 states, "For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily."

In Song of Solomon 5:9, the daughters of Jerusalem inquire about the personal excellencies of the Lord Christ, asking the bride, "What

is your Beloved more than another beloved, O fairest among women?" She responds in verse 10, "My Beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand." She proceeds to provide a detailed description of His excellencies until the end of the chapter, concluding that "he is altogether lovely" in verse 16. In particular, she affirms that He is "white and ruddy," a combination of colours that creates the most beautiful complexion.

Firstly, He is white in the glory of His Deity and ruddy in the preciousness of His humanity. Genesis 49:12 portrays this, stating, "His teeth are white with milk, and his eyes are red with wine." Whiteness represents the complexion of glory. When describing the appearance of the Most High, the "Ancient of days" in Daniel 7:9, it is said, "His clothing was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool." In Christ's transfiguration, when He displayed the radiance of His Deity, His face shone like the sun, and His garments were white as light, as recorded in Matthew 17:2. Mark 9:3 describes it as "white as snow, so white that no launderer on earth can bleach them." It was a divine, heavenly, and surpassing glory. This is further emphasized in Revelation 1:14. The angels and glorified saints, who continually behold Him and are fully transformed into the same glory, are said to be clothed in white robes. His whiteness signifies His Deity and the glory that accompanies it. Hence, the Chaldee paraphrase attributes this entire passage to God, stating, "They say to the house of Israel, 'Who is the God you will serve?' ... Then the congregation of Israel began to declare the praises of the Ruler of the world and said, 'I will serve that God who is clothed in a garment white as snow, whose countenance shines with the splendour of fire.'" He is also ruddy in the beauty of His humanity. The name Adam derives from the red earth from which he was formed. The word used here points to Christ as the second Adam, who partook of flesh and blood, as mentioned in Hebrews 2:14. The beauty and

comeliness of the Lord Jesus, resulting from the union of these two aspects in one person, will be further explained.

Secondly, He is white in the beauty of His innocence and holiness, and ruddy in the blood of His sacrifice. Whiteness symbolizes purity and holiness. Lamentations 4:7 describes the Nazarites, who exhibited symbolic holiness, as being "purer than snow" and "whiter than milk." The prophet Isaiah associates scarlet, red, and crimson with sin and guilt, contrasting them with the whiteness that represents innocence in Isaiah 1:18. Our Beloved was "a Lamb without blemish or spot" (1 Peter 1:19). As stated in 1 Peter 2:22, "He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth." He was "holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners" (Hebrews 7:26). However, despite His whiteness, He became ruddy through the shedding of His own blood. Naturally, His blood was poured out in agony when thick drops fell to the ground during His soul's anguish, as described in Luke 22:44. Additionally, His blood was abundantly poured out through the scourging, thorns, nails, and spear. John 19:34 states, "But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water." He was saturated in His own blood. Morally, His redness was due to the imputation of sin, whose colour is red and crimson. As 2 Corinthians 5:21 affirms, "For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin." He who was white became ruddy for our sake, pouring out His blood as an offering for sin. This aspect also enhances His gracefulness: through His whiteness, He fulfilled the law, and through His redness, He satisfied justice. "This is our Beloved, O daughters of Jerusalem."

Thirdly, His endearing excellence in the administration of His kingdom is also expressed here. He is white in love and mercy towards His own, and red with justice and vengeance towards His enemies, as stated in Isaiah 63:3 and Revelation 19:13.

In general, the personal excellence and grace of the Lord Christ can be understood in three aspects:

1. His fitness to save, which stems from the grace of union and its necessary effects.
2. His fullness to save, resulting from the grace of communion and its free consequences.
3. His excellence to endear, based on His complete suitability to the needs of human souls.

Firstly, His fitness to save arises from the grace of union. The uniting of the divine and human natures in one person makes Him a suitable Saviour. By partaking in God's nature, He reaches out to God, as stated in Zechariah 8:7. By partaking in our nature, as mentioned in Hebrews 2:14 and 16, He reaches out to us. Thus, He becomes the mediator between God and man, bridging the gap caused by sin and bringing us near to God. It is through this union that He has the capacity to receive and bear the wrath intended for us. Sin's infiniteness lies in its object, and the punishment's infiniteness rests in its subject. These arise from His union.

Union refers to the conjunction of the divine and human natures in one person, as mentioned in John 1:14, Isaiah 9:6, Romans 1:3, and Romans 9:5. Its necessary consequences include:

1. The subsistence of the human nature in the person of the Son of God, without having a separate subsistence of its own, as indicated in Luke 1:35 and 1 Timothy 3:16.
2. The communication of attributes in the person, whereby the properties of both natures are ascribed to Christ interchangeably, regardless of whether He is referred to as God or man, as seen in Acts 20:28 and Acts 3:21.



3. The execution of His office of mediation in His single person, taking into account both natures. This involves the agent, Christ Himself, who is both God and man. He is the principle that gives life and efficacy to the entire work (*principium quo*), and He operates through both natures (*principium quod*). This includes the active working of each nature (*energeia* or *drastikē tēs phuseōs kinesis*) and the resulting effect (*energēma* or *apotelesma*), encompassing and relating to all of them. Thus, the excellency I am referring to is rooted in His personal union.

Secondly, His fullness to save comes from the grace of communion, which includes all the resources given to Him by the Father through the anointing of the Spirit for the purpose of our salvation. As Hebrews 7:25 states, "He is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him." He has been granted all fullness for this purpose, as Colossians 1:19 declares, "For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell." He did not receive the Spirit in limited measure, as mentioned in John 3:34. From this fullness, He provides a suitable supply to all who belong to Him, "grace upon grace," as stated in John 1:16. If His fullness had been given in limited measure, we would have exhausted it.

Thirdly, His excellency to endear stems from His complete suitability to fulfill all the needs of human souls. Whoever has any lack in relation to the things of God will find that Christ fulfills that lack. This applies specifically to those given to Him by the Father. Is someone spiritually dead? Christ is life. Is someone weak? Christ is the power and wisdom of God. Does someone carry the burden of guilt? Christ is complete righteousness—the LORD our Righteousness. Many individuals are aware of their needs but do not know where to find the remedy. Whether it is life, light, power, or joy, all of it is found in Christ.

This is a general overview of the personal grace of the Lord Christ. He possesses the fitness to save, combining compassion and ability, tenderness and power, to carry out the work of salvation to the utmost. He has the fullness to save, encompassing redemption, sanctification, righteousness, and the Spirit. Moreover, He has the perfect suitability to meet the needs of every soul. Therefore, He becomes exceedingly desirable and altogether lovely, as will be further explored in detail. In the first place, the saints have distinct fellowship with the Lord Christ in relation to this grace, which will be explained in the following chapter.

Now, from the introduction made into the description of the one with whom the saints have communion, we can draw some motives to stir us up to seek that communion. We can also consider the inadequacy and insufficiency of all other ways and things that people engage their thoughts and desires in. This is what the daughters of Jerusalem, ordinary and common believers, did when they heard the spouse describing her Beloved. They were instantly stirred up to seek Him together with her. They asked, "Where has your Beloved gone, that we may seek Him with you?" (Song of Solomon 6:1).

Just as Paul said of those who crucified Him, the same can be said of all who reject Him or refuse communion with Him: "If they had known Him, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." If people truly knew Him, if they had any acquaintance with Him, they would not reject the Lord of glory. Christ Himself calls those who despise His gracious invitation "simple ones," "fools," and "scorners" (Proverbs 1:22). Those who despise Christ are the ones who do not know Him, whose eyes the god of this world has blinded so that they cannot see His glory. The souls of men naturally seek something to find rest and satisfaction in, something to commune with. There are two ways in which people pursue what they desire. Some set a certain

end before them, such as pleasure, profit, or even acceptance with God in religion. Others seek after an end, but without certainty, pleasing themselves with various paths and thoughts. They keep searching because they gain something along the way, even if they grow weary (Isaiah 57:10).

Regardless of your condition, whether you are eagerly pursuing a specific end, whether secular or religious, or whether you are wandering in your own imaginations and tiring yourself with the breadth of your ways, compare what you aim at or what you do with what you have already heard about Jesus Christ. If anything you desire or pursue resembles Him, if anything is equal to Him, then reject Him as someone who lacks form and attractiveness. But if indeed all your ways are mere vanity and a source of frustration compared to Him, why do you spend your resources and efforts on what does not satisfy, on what is not true sustenance?

Here are two practical uses to consider:

Use 1: Those of you who are still young, in the prime of your lives, full of health, strength, and the vigor of your spirits, earnestly pursuing various things—consider, I beseech you, what are all your beloveds in comparison to this Beloved? What have you gained from them? Have they brought you peace, tranquility, and the assurance of eternal blessedness? Their paths are twisted paths, and those who follow them will not experience true peace. Look, here is a worthy object for your deepest affections, someone in whom you can find rest for your souls, someone who will never grieve or trouble you for eternity. He stands at the door of your souls and knocks. Oh, do not reject Him, or else you may seek Him and not find Him! Take some time to study Him; you do not love Him because you do not know Him. Why does one of you waste time in idleness, folly, and

debauchery? Why does another associate with those who scoff at religion and the things of God? It is simply because you do not know our dear Lord Jesus. Oh, when He reveals Himself to you and tells you that He is Jesus whom you have ignored and rejected, how your hearts will break and you will mourn like a dove for neglecting Him! And if you never come to know Him, it would have been better if you had never existed. Therefore, while it is still called Today, do not harden your hearts.

Use 2: For those of you who are perhaps earnestly seeking righteousness and are religious individuals, consider within yourselves: Does Christ hold the rightful place in your hearts? Is He your everything? Does He dwell in your thoughts? Do you know Him in His excellence and desirability? Do you truly consider all things as loss and refuse for the sake of His surpassing excellency? Or do you prefer almost anything else in the world over Him? But we will discuss these matters further later on.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **The Manner of Communion in Conjugal Relation**

(2.) The next aspect to consider is the way in which we hold communion with the Lord Christ concerning personal grace. The Scripture reveals that this is accomplished through a conjugal relationship. He is married to us, and we are married to Him. This spiritual connection is accompanied by appropriate conjugal

affections, which allow us to have fellowship with Him in His personal excellencies.

The spouse expresses this in Song of Solomon 2:16, saying, "My Beloved is mine, and I am His." She declares that He is hers, that she possesses Him and has an interest in Him as her head and husband, and she belongs to Him, being owned by Him and fully surrendered to Him. This is a conjugal relationship with her Beloved.

Likewise, in Isaiah 54:5, it is proclaimed, "Thy Maker is thine husband; the LORD of hosts is His name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; The God of the whole earth shall He be called." This is given as the reason why the church will not be ashamed or confounded in the midst of trials and tribulations—she is married to her Maker, and her Redeemer is her husband. In Isaiah 61:10, the mutual glory of Christ and His church is portrayed as their walking together, likened to a bridegroom adorning himself with ornaments and a bride adorning herself with jewels. Such is their condition because of their relationship. This relationship is further emphasized in Isaiah 62:5, where it is stated, "As the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee." As it is with such individuals on the day of their wedding, in the joyfulness of their hearts, so it is with Christ and His saints in this relationship. He is a husband to them, ensuring that their state and condition align with His purpose.

The faithfulness of Christ is affirmed in Hosea 2:19-20, where He declares, "I will betroth thee unto me forever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving-kindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness." The primary aim of the gospel ministry is to persuade people to fully give themselves to the Lord Christ as He reveals His kindness in this

commitment. Therefore, Paul tells the Corinthians in 2 Corinthians 11:2 that he has "espoused them to one husband, that he might present them as a chaste virgin unto Christ." Through the preaching of the gospel, he successfully convinced them to surrender themselves as a pure virgin to Him who had betrothed them as a husband.

This conjugal relationship is one that brings immense delight to the Lord Jesus, and He invites others to behold Him in His glory. In Song of Solomon 3:11, He calls the daughters of Jerusalem (representing all sorts of believers) to witness King Solomon with the crown given to Him by His mother on the day of His espousals and the joy in His heart. He urges them to consider Him in the act of betrothing and espousing His church to Himself. Furthermore, He assures them that in this act, they will find two prominent things: honour and delight. It is a day of coronation, and His bride is the crown with which He is adorned. Just as Christ is a source of beauty and glory to Zion, Zion herself is a diadem and crown to Him. This relation with His saints is His glory and honour. Moreover, the day of espousals, when He embraces sinful souls into His embrace, is a day of great gladness in His heart. John the Baptist, as a friend of the Bridegroom, rejoiced greatly upon hearing His voice during the process of taking the bride to Himself. How much more joyful and glad must the Bridegroom Himself be! It is the joy that is expressed in Zephaniah 3:17: "he rejoiceth with joy, he joys with singing."

It brings immense joy to the heart of Christ, the joy of His soul, to enter into this relationship with poor sinners. He rejoiced in the anticipation of it from eternity, and always displays the utmost willingness to fulfill the requirements. He was even pained like a woman in childbirth until He accomplished it. He loved His church so much that He gave Himself for her, enduring the shame and the

cross, in order to enjoy His bride exclusively, and for her to be exclusively His. This is the joy that accompanies His coronation. Believers are the mother and brethren of this Solomon, crowning Him on the day of His espousals as they give themselves to Him and become His glory.

Thus, this conjugal relationship is frequently depicted throughout the Scriptures. The moment when Christ takes the church unto Himself is referred to as the day of marriage, and the church is described as His bride and wife. The fellowship He provides for His saints is compared to a wedding supper, and the virtues of His church are portrayed as the adornments of His queen. The communion He shares with His saints resembles that of those who are deeply in love within a conjugal relationship. Therefore, Paul, in his description of these two relationships, seamlessly transitions from one to the other in Ephesians 5, from verse 22 to verse 32, concluding the entire passage with an application to Christ and the church.

The next question to address is how we engage in communion with the person of Christ in terms of conjugal relations and affections, and what this entails. In this regard, there are some aspects that are common to both Christ and the saints, as well as some elements that are unique to each of them, as dictated by the nature of this relationship. The entirety can be summarized under two headings: mutual surrender or commitment to one another and mutual, consequential, conjugal affections.

Firstly, there is a mutual surrender, where they give themselves completely to one another. This is the initial act of communion concerning the personal grace of Christ. Christ surrenders Himself to the soul, being devoted to the soul with all the love, care, and

tenderness of a husband. The soul, in turn, wholly gives itself to the Lord Christ, submitting obediently with love and tenderness. This mutual surrender forms the foundation of the espousal between Christ and His saints. In the prophet's words, this is depicted through a parable of himself and a harlot in Hosea 3:3: "Thou shalt abide for me," says Christ, "thou shalt not be for another, and I will be for thee." Christ, the compassionate Bridegroom, has bought the soul for Himself with the price of His own blood. The agreement is that "I WILL BE FOR THEE, AND THOU SHALT BE FOR ME," and for no other.

1st. Christ freely gives Himself to the soul, along with all His excellencies, righteousness, preciousness, graces, and eminence, to be its eternal Saviour, head, and husband. He looks upon the souls of His saints favorably, considering them fair and beautiful because He has made them so. In Song of Solomon 1:15, the spouse declares, "Behold, thou art fair, my companion; behold, thou art fair; thou hast doves' eyes." Even if others think otherwise, Christ reaffirms that the souls of His saints are truly beautiful and perfect, made so by His own loveliness bestowed upon them (Ezekiel 16:14). Their spiritual light is exceptional and glorious, like the eyes of a dove—tender, discerning, clear, and radiant. Thus, He passionately desires to see the countenance and hear the voice of His beloved, as expressed in Song of Solomon 2:14. He urges the soul not to hide itself or be dejected but to openly communicate with Him. He cherishes the sweet sound of their sighs, groans, and prayers, finding delight in their spiritual countenance and heavenly appearance. Moreover, He urges the soul to draw closer to Him in this conjugal bond, as stated in Song of Solomon 4:8. He invites them to come to Him for refreshment, just as the wandering Israelites were called to leave their troubles behind and find solace. Upon receiving this invitation, the spouse confidently concludes that Christ desires her,



truly loves her, and seeks to unite her with Himself. Thus, in this union, Christ freely bestows Himself upon the soul. Though precious and excellent, He becomes ours. He chooses to be ours, and with Him come all His graces. Therefore, the spouse declares, "My Beloved is mine; in all that He is, He is mine." Christ is our righteousness, referred to as "The LORD our Righteousness" in Jeremiah 23:6. He is the wisdom and power of God, described as "made unto us wisdom" in 1 Corinthians 1:30. Truly, "the branch of the LORD is beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth is excellent and comely for them that are escaped of Israel" (Isaiah 4:2). This is the first aspect on the part of Christ—the voluntary gift of Himself to us as our Christ, our Beloved, fulfilling all the purposes of love, mercy, grace, and glory within the eternal marriage covenant. This is the essence of what is intended: the Lord Jesus Christ, perfectly equipped and prepared as the mediator, with His abundant grace and glory, offers Himself to His saints, His church, in all His desirability. He convinces them of His goodwill and all-sufficiency to meet their needs. Once they consent to accept Him, which is all He requires or expects from them, He commits Himself in an everlasting marriage covenant to be theirs.

2nd. On the part of the saints, it is their free and willing consent to receive, embrace, and submit to the Lord Jesus as their husband, Lord, and Saviour. They commit to abide with Him, subjecting their souls to Him and allowing Him to rule over them eternally. This consent can be either initial, occurring at the moment of union, or consequential, expressed in renewed acts of consent throughout their lives. Here, I focus on the latter sense, which is relevant to communion, rather than the former, which primarily pertains to union.

There are two elements that complete this self-resignation of the soul:

(1st) The soul's preference for Christ's excellency, grace, and suitability above all other beloveds, acknowledging Him as incomparable and surpassing all created goods or endearments. In Song of Solomon 5:9, when urged by others to express her thoughts on her Beloved's excellence compared to other endearments, the spouse emphatically responds that He is "the chiefest of ten thousand" and "altogether lovely"—infinitely superior to any other object of affection. The soul surveys everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—and recognizes their vanity. It concludes that "the world passeth away, and the lust thereof" (1 John 2:16-17). These beloveds cannot be compared to Christ. It also considers legal righteousness, blamelessness before others, upright conduct based on conviction, and, like Paul, regards them all as loss compared to the excellence of knowing Christ Jesus the Lord (Philippians 3:8). The church likewise rejects all apparent sources of assistance, such as the glorious Asshur or promising idols, in order to exalt God alone (Hosea 14:3). This marks the soul's entry into conjugal communion with Jesus Christ in terms of personal grace—a constant preference for Him above all contenders for its affections, considering all else as loss and worthless compared to Him. Beloved peace, beloved natural relationships, beloved wisdom and learning, beloved righteousness, and beloved duties—all pale in comparison to Christ.

(2nd) The soul's acceptance of Christ by the will as its only husband, Lord, and Saviour. This is referred to as "receiving" Christ in John 1:12. It encompasses not only the initial act of embracing Him but also the soul's continuous disposition of abiding with Him and acknowledging Him as such. It involves the soul's consent to take

Christ on His terms and be saved in His way. The soul acknowledges, "Lord, I once wanted You and salvation in my way, partly through my efforts and as if by the works of the law. But now, I am willing to receive You and be saved purely by grace. Although I used to follow my own desires, I now fully surrender myself to be guided by Your Spirit. For in You, I find righteousness, strength, justification, and glory." This is receiving the Lord Jesus in all His splendor and eminence. Believers should deeply contemplate this and exercise their hearts in embracing Him. It is the essence of intimate communion with the Son, Jesus Christ—to receive Him with all His excellencies as He offers Himself to us. Let us frequently meditate upon this, comparing Him to other beloveds such as sin, the world, and legal righteousness. Let us prioritize Him above all else, counting everything else as loss and worthless compared to Him. Let us be convinced of His sincerity and willingness to give Himself, with all that He is as our mediator, and declare our wholehearted surrender to Him. Let us make it known to Him that we belong to Him alone. He delights to hear our declaration, for our voice is sweet to Him and our countenance is comely. As a result, we shall undoubtedly find sweet refreshment in Him.

## **DIGRESSION I**

To strengthen our hearts in the aforementioned surrender of ourselves to the Lord Christ as our husband, and to pave the way for stirring up the consequential conjugal affections that will be discussed later, I will digress to provide a more comprehensive

description of some of the personal excellencies of the Lord Christ. These excellencies truly endear the hearts of His saints to Him.

First and foremost, His Deity and the glory that accompanies it make Him exceedingly excellent and desirable. He is known as "Jehovah our Righteousness" in Jeremiah 23:6. When Zion rejoices at His coming, the foundation of that joy is the declaration, "Behold thy God!" as mentioned in Isaiah 40:9. The apostle declares, "We have seen His glory," referring to the glory of the only-begotten Son of God (John 1:14). Even the holiest saints have been awestruck by the beauty of an angel, and the most hardened sinners have trembled before the glory of these celestial beings, who themselves bow in the presence of our Beloved, acknowledging their unworthiness to bear the radiance of His glory (Isaiah 6:2; John 12:39–41). He is described as "the fellow of the Lord of hosts" in Zechariah 13:7. Though He once appeared in the form of a servant, He never regarded it as robbery to be equal with God (Philippians 2:6). His majesty dwells in an incomprehensible light. We, as finite beings, cannot fully comprehend the perfection of the Almighty. His greatness is as high as heaven, deeper than hell, longer than the earth, and broader than the sea (Job 11:7–9). We can only admit our foolishness and lack of understanding. We have not acquired wisdom or knowledge of the holy. Who among us has ascended to heaven or descended? Who has gathered the wind in their fists or bound the waters in a garment? Who has established the ends of the earth? What is His name, and what is His Son's name, if you can tell? (Proverbs 30:2–4).

If one were to ask, as they do in the Song of Solomon, what sets the Lord Jesus, our beloved, apart from other beloveds and makes Him so desirable, lovely, and worthy of acceptance, I would ask, what sets a king apart from a beggar? The distinction is vast. However, this

comparison is insignificant since both are born alike, must die alike, and will face judgment thereafter. What sets an angel apart from a worm? A worm is a creature, and an angel is no more; the Lord has made one to crawl in the earth and the other to dwell in heaven. There is a proportion between these two creatures—they share certain qualities. But how do all the insignificant things in the world compare to the infinitely blessed God? Can a speck of dust or a drop of water be weighed against Him in the balance? This is the God who strikes fear in the sinners of Zion, causing them to cry out, "Who among us can dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us can dwell with everlasting burnings?" I could offer a glimpse of His excellency through many of His properties and attributes, by which He reveals Himself to the faith of poor sinners. However, just as one does not pick every flower they see in a garden filled with countless varieties, I will attempt to open a door and provide a glimpse into the infinite excellency of the graces of the Lord Jesus as "God blessed for evermore." I will present the reader with one or two instances and allow them to gather for their own benefit whatever else they please.

One such instance is the endless, unfathomable grace and compassion that exist in Him as the God of Zion, who is our husband. It is not the grace of a creature or all the grace that can reside in a created nature that will suffice for us. We are too needy to be satisfied by such a limited supply. There was a fulness of grace in the human nature of Christ, for He did not receive the Spirit by measure (John 3:34). His fulness is comparable to the abundance of light in the sun or the vastness of water in the sea (I am not referring to communication but sufficiency). It is a fulness far surpassing that of angels, yet it is still a created and therefore limited fulness. If we were to separate it from His Deity, surely the countless thirsty, guilty souls who daily drink deep and large draughts of grace and mercy from Him would exhaust this fulness and cause it to run dry. In that

case, it would provide no supply at all apart from a moral perspective. However, when His humanity is inseparably united with the infinite, inexhaustible fountain of His Deity, who can fathom its depths? If there is enough grace for sinners in an all-sufficient God, it is found in Christ. There can be no sufficiency elsewhere. The Lord provides this reason for the peace and confidence of sinners in Isaiah 54:4-5: "Thou shalt not be ashamed, neither be thou confounded; for thou shalt not be put to shame." But how is this possible? How can we bear so much sin without shame? How can we carry so much guilt without confusion? The Lord declares, "Thy Maker is thine husband; the LORD of hosts is His name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; The God of the whole earth shall He be called." This is the foundation of all peace, confidence, and consolation—the grace and mercy of our Maker, the God of the whole earth. In Him, kindness and power are united. He is both our Creator and our Redeemer. He says, "Look unto me and be ye saved; for I am God, and there is none else" (Isaiah 45:22). Surely someone will say, "In the LORD have I righteousness" (verse 24).

It is on this basis that even if the entire world were to come together to drink freely from the wells of salvation, drawing continuously from a single promise, and an angel were to cry out, "Drink, O my friends, yes, drink abundantly! Take as much grace and pardon as will be more than sufficient for the world of sin that resides in each of you," they would not be able to deplete the grace of that promise by a hair's breadth. There is enough grace for millions of worlds, if they were to exist, because it flows from an infinite, unfathomable fountain. "Fear not, O worm Jacob, I am God, and not man" is the source of sinners' consolation. This is the "head of gold" mentioned in the Song of Solomon 5:11, the most precious fountain of grace and mercy. The infiniteness of this grace, stemming from its source and fountain, addresses any objections that might hinder our souls from

drawing near to communion with Him and freely embracing Him. Does this not suit us in all our distress? What is our finite guilt in comparison to it? Show me a sinner who can magnify their iniquities to the dimensions of this grace. Herein lies enough mercy for the greatest, oldest, and most stubborn transgressor. "Why will ye die, O house of Israel?" Beware of those who would deny the deity of Christ. If there were no grace for me beyond what can be contained in a mere human, I would rejoice even if my portion were found under rocks and mountains.

Consider, therefore, His eternal, free, unchangeable love. If Christ's love towards us were merely the love of a human being, no matter how excellent, innocent, and glorious, it would have a beginning, an end, and perhaps be fruitless. The love of Christ in His human nature towards us is exceedingly intense, tender, precious, compassionate, and heightened by His sense of our miseries, His understanding of our needs, and His experience of our temptations. All of this flows from the rich store of grace, pity, and compassion bestowed upon Him for our benefit. However, as wonderful as this love is, it cannot be infinite, eternal, or absolutely unchangeable in and of itself. If that were the case, our Saviour could not say, as He does, "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you" (John 15:9). His love would not be comparable to and equalled with the divine love of the Father, which possesses the properties of eternity, fruitfulness, and unchangeableness, serving as the main anchors for the soul that rests upon the bosom of Christ. But now, let us consider the following:

1. His love is eternal. He declares, "Come near to me, hear this: I have not spoken in secret from the beginning; from the time that it was, there am I. And now the Lord GOD and His Spirit have sent me" (Isaiah 48:16). He Himself is "yesterday, today, and forever" (Hebrews 13:8), and so is His love. He is the Alpha and

Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end, who is, who was, and who is to come (Revelation 1:11).

2. His love is unchangeable. Our love is reflective of ourselves; as we change, so do all our affections. But the love of Christ remains constant, just as He Himself does. We may love someone today and hate them tomorrow. Our affections fluctuate, but Jesus Christ remains the same, and so does His love. "In the beginning, You laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of Your hands. They will perish, but You remain; they will all wear out like a garment. You will roll them up like a robe; like a garment, they will be changed. But You are the same, and Your years will have no end" (Hebrews 1:10-12). He is the LORD, and He does not change, which is why we are not consumed. Those whom He loves, He loves to the end. His love never had a beginning, and it will never have an end.
3. His love is fruitful. A person may love another as they love themselves, yet that love may be powerless to help them. They may pity them in their imprisonment but cannot release them, sympathize with them in their misery but cannot provide relief, suffer with them in their troubles but cannot ease their burden. We cannot love grace into a child or mercy into a friend. We cannot love them into heaven, although it may be the fervent desire of our souls. Abraham's love made him cry out, "Oh, that Ishmael might live before You!" but it was not to be. However, the love of Christ, being the love of God, is effective and fruitful in producing all the good things that He wills for His beloved. He loves life, grace, and holiness into us. He loves us into covenant and loves us into heaven. His love is truly desiring the



good of others, and whatever good He wills by His love, that willing brings about the desired good.

These three qualities of Christ's love make it exceedingly remarkable and Him exceedingly desirable. How many millions of sins, each of which would be enough to condemn us all, has His love overcome! What mountains of unbelief it has moved! Consider the life of any saint, examine the state of their heart, and see the many stains, blemishes, defilements, and weaknesses that mar their lives. Tell me, is the love that bears with all this not worthy of admiration? And does it not exhibit the same love towards thousands every day? What streams of grace—purifying, pardoning, quickening, assisting—flow from it each day! This is our Beloved, O daughters of Jerusalem.

2. He is also desirable and worthy of our acceptance in His humanity. Even in His humanity, He is exceedingly desirable, and I will highlight two aspects: (1) His freedom from sin, and (2) His fullness of grace. The Scriptures portray Him as exceedingly lovely and amiable in both of these regards.
3. He was free from sin. He was the Lamb of God without spot or blemish, the chosen male offering to be presented to God, while all other sacrifices and those who offered them were subject to the curse (Malachi 1:14). The purity of snow cannot compare with the whiteness of this lily, this Rose of Sharon, even from His birth. "For such a high priest was fitting for us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners" (Hebrews 7:26). Even sanctified individuals, whose stains have been somewhat washed away, are exceedingly fair in the eyes of Christ Himself. He says, "You are all fair, my love, and there is no spot in you." If someone who has never had the slightest blemish or stain is fair, how much fairer is He?

It is true that Adam had this spotless purity at his creation, as did the angels. However, they were created directly by God without the involvement of any secondary cause. Jesus Christ, on the other hand, is like a plant and root that emerges from dry ground, a blossom from the stem of Jesse, a bud from the loins of sinful humanity. He was born of a sinner, at a time when there had been no innocent flesh in the world for four thousand years, and every person in his genealogy was infected with sin. To have a rare and untainted flower grow in paradise, a garden planted by God Himself, is not so surprising. But as the psalmist says, to hear of it in a wood, to find it in a forest, to have a spotless bud brought forth in the wilderness of corrupted nature, is something that even angels would marvel at. Moreover, this entire human nature was not only defiled but also cursed. It was not only unclean but also guilty—guilty of Adam's transgression, in whom we all sinned. That the human nature of Christ should be derived from this sinful nature yet remain free from guilt and pollution is truly worthy of adoration.

Objection: But you might ask, "How is this possible? How can a clean thing be brought forth from an unclean thing? How could Christ assume our nature without its defilements and guilt? If Levi paid tithes in the loins of Abraham, how is it that Christ did not sin in the loins of Adam?"

Answer: There are two aspects to original sin:

1. The guilt of the first sin, which is imputed to us. We all sinned in Adam. Whether we understand it relatively as "in whom" or illatively as "since all have sinned," it is all the same: that one sin is the sin of us all. We were all in covenant with Adam, and he was not only our natural head but also our federal head. Just as

Christ is to believers, so was Adam to us all. His transgression of that covenant is counted as our own.

2. The inheritance of a polluted, corrupted nature from Adam. "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean thing?" "That which is born of the flesh is flesh," and nothing more. The wisdom and mind of the flesh are also corrupted. A polluted fountain will produce polluted streams. The corruption of the first person infects the nature of all subsequent persons. However, Christ was most free from both aspects:

Firstly, He was never federally united with Adam, and therefore not liable for the imputation of Adam's sin. It is true that sin was imputed to Him when He was made sin, thereby taking away the sin of the world. But this imputation occurred in the covenant of the Mediator through His voluntary acceptance, not in Adam's covenant through legal imputation. If Adam's sin had been reckoned to Christ as his descendant, He would not have been a suitable high priest to offer sacrifices for us, as He would not have been "separate from sinners." If Adam had remained innocent, there would have been no need for Christ to be incarnate and mediate for sinners. Therefore, the purpose of His incarnation did not take effect until after the fall. Although He was in Adam in a natural sense from his creation, according to God's purpose, He was not in him in a legal sense until after the fall. Thus, in relation to His own person, He had no more connection to Adam's first sin than to any personal sin of any individual whose punishment He voluntarily bore. We are not liable for the guilt of our ancestors who followed Adam, even though we are naturally connected to them. Therefore, this in no way diminishes His perfection.

Secondly, as for the pollution of our nature, it was prevented in Him from the moment of conception. "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore, also, that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35). He was "made of a woman" (Galatians 4:4), but the portion from which He was made was sanctified by the Holy Spirit so that what was born of it would be holy. The sanctification of the Holy Spirit not only prevented the union of soul and body, which would have made Him partaker of the whole nature and its pollution as a son of Adam, but it also accompanied the very separation of His bodily substance in the womb for that sacred purpose for which it was set apart. Therefore, on every account, He is "holy, harmless, undefiled." Furthermore, He "committed no sin, and no deceit was found in His mouth" (1 Peter 2:22). He "fulfilled all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15), and His Father was always "well pleased" with Him (verse 17) because of His perfect obedience. Even in the sense that He charges His angels with folly and finds the inhabitants of heaven not clean in His sight, His excellence and desirability shine forth. Such was He, such is He. And yet, for our sake, He was willing not only to be regarded as a transgressor by the vilest of men but also to endure from God the punishment due to the most wicked sinners. But more on that later.

Moreover, the fullness of grace in Christ's human nature highlights its loveliness and desirability. If I were to fully consider His perfections in this regard—from what He possessed in the womb to His growth and development during His earthly life, as well as the culmination of all those perfections in glory—it would all contribute to the purpose at hand. However, I am only providing a brief overview of these matters. Two things are readily apparent upon initial consideration: all kinds of grace were present in Him, and all degrees of grace were perfected in Him. Both aspects contribute to

the fullness that was in Him. I am referring to created grace, so I speak of its kinds. It is grace inherent in a created nature, not infinite, so I also speak of its degrees.

As for the source of grace, the Holy Spirit was not given to Him in measured amounts (John 3:34), and the Father was pleased to have all the fullness dwell in Him (Colossians 1:19) so that He might have preeminence in all things. But these points are commonly discussed.

This is the Beloved of our souls, "holy, harmless, undefiled," "full of grace and truth"—abundantly filled to meet every purpose of grace, fully equipped to be an example of obedience to both men and angels, completely sufficient for uninterrupted communion with God, ready to provide supply to others, perfectly suited to the needs and occasions of human souls, gloriously reflecting His status as the Son of God, victorious over all temptations, perfectly aligned with the entirety of God's righteous and holy laws, capable within the limits of His limited, created, finite nature, exuding the utmost beauty and glory as the living temple of God, and pleasing to the soul of His Father. He is an eternal monument to the glory of God, who bestowed such inconceivable excellencies upon the Son of Man.

And this is the second point to consider in endearing our souls to our Beloved.

3. Consider that He possesses all these qualities in one person. We have not been discussing two separate entities—a God and a man—but one who is both God and man. The Word that was with God from the beginning and was God (John 1:1) also became flesh (verse 14). This was not a mere appearance or a conversion into flesh, but rather the assumption of that holy thing born of the virgin (Luke 1:35) into personal union with Himself. Thus, the "mighty God" (Isaiah 9:6) is a "child given" to

us, and that holy thing born of the virgin is called "the Son of God" (Luke 1:35). The union of soul and body makes a man what he is, and in the case of the man Christ Jesus, the subsistence of both united in the person of the Son of God makes Him who He is. I have extensively discussed the proof of this elsewhere; here I present it only in general terms to demonstrate the loveliness of Christ for this reason. From this arises the grace, peace, life, and security of the church and all believers, as can be clearly seen through a few considerations:

4. Because of this union, He was fit and able to suffer whatever was due to us in the very act in which the Son of Man gave His life as a ransom for many (Matthew 20:28). God redeemed His church with His own blood (Acts 20:28), and in this act, the love of God was manifested as He gave His life for us (1 John 3:16). It was on this account that His breast was spacious enough to receive the points of all the swords sharpened by the law against us and His shoulders strong enough to bear the burden of the curse that was due to us. Therefore, He willingly undertook the work of our redemption (Hebrews 10:7-8), saying, "Lo, I come to do Your will, O God," because He knew His ability to complete it. If He had not been a man, He could not have suffered; if He had not been God, His suffering would have availed neither Himself nor us—He would not have satisfied the infinite demands. Had the great and righteous God gathered all the sins committed by His elect from the foundation of the world, searched the hearts of all who would exist until the end of the world, and accumulated every sin from their fallen nature to the smallest deviation from His holy law, even in their regenerate and unregenerate states, and laid them upon a holy, innocent creature—how overwhelming and burying they would have been, forever separating that creature from the presence of God's love!

Therefore, the apostle precedes his glorious description of Christ with regards to purging our sins: "He has spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power" has "purged our sins" (Hebrews 1:2-3). It was He, the Son and heir of all things, through whom the world was made, the brightness of His Father's glory and the express image of His person, who accomplished it. He alone was able to purge our sins. For this work, "God was manifested in the flesh" (1 Timothy 3:16). The sword awakened against Him who was the companion of the Lord of hosts (Zechariah 13:7), and it is through the wounds of that great shepherd that the sheep are healed (1 Peter 2:24-25).

5. Because of this union, He becomes an endless, unfathomable fountain of grace for all who believe. The fullness that the Father entrusted to Christ to be the great treasury and storehouse of the church does not lie, and has never lain, in the human nature considered on its own. Instead, it resides in the person of the mediator, who is both God and man. Consider what His communication of grace entails, and this will become evident. The foundation of all grace lies in His satisfaction, merit, and redemption. These are the moral causes of all the grace we receive from Christ. Therefore, all grace belongs to Him. All the promises, mercy, love, grace, and glory of the new covenant became His to bestow. However, it is not that they are all actually present and reside in the human nature, and from there are communicated to us by sharing a portion of what is inherent in it. Rather, they are morally His, by a covenant, to be bestowed according to His wisdom as the mediator who is both God and man—the only begotten Son made flesh (John 1:14). From His

fullness, we receive grace upon grace. The real communication of grace occurs when Christ sends the Holy Spirit to regenerate us and create all the habitual grace, along with its daily supplies, in our hearts, making us participants. This sending of the Holy Spirit by Christ as mediator, God and man, is extensively explained in John 14, 15, and 16. I will elaborate on this later. This is what I mean by the fullness of grace in Christ, from which we derive our beginning and all our supplies. This makes Him, as the Alpha and Omega of His church, the initiator and perfecter of our faith, excellent and desirable to our souls. Upon the payment of the great price of His blood and full acquittal based on the satisfaction He provided, all grace (which I will discuss at length later) becomes, in a moral sense, His, at His disposal. He bestows it on us or works it in our hearts through the Holy Spirit according to His infinite wisdom and as He deems necessary. How glorious is He to the soul on this account! What is most excellent to us is that which meets us in our needy condition—giving bread to the hungry, water to the thirsty, and mercy to the perishing. All our relief is found in our Beloved. He is the life of our souls, the joy of our hearts, our refuge from sin, and our deliverance from the wrath to come.

(3.) He is perfectly suited to be a mediator, a peacemaker, an arbiter between God and us. He is one with Him, one with us, and one within Himself, in the unity of one person. His ability and universal fitness for His role as mediator are often demonstrated. Herein lies "Christ, the power of God and the wisdom of God." The infinitely glorious wisdom of God shines forth in this, something we may better admire than express. What soul acquainted with these truths does not bow down in reverence and astonishment? How glorious is the Beloved of our souls! What reason could be lacking to encourage us to find our rest and peace in His embrace? Unless unbelief



obstructs every avenue of relief and refreshment, rendering our hearts impervious to any consolation, it is impossible not to gather from this the endearing qualities that make Him the one we must deal with. Let us dwell on these thoughts. This is the hidden mystery, unquestionably great and eternally admirable. Yet, how often do we waste our contemplations on trivial and perishing things? Even if we gained no advantage from this astonishing dispensation, its excellence, glory, beauty, and depths still deserve our utmost inquiries, the vigor of our spirits, and the substance of our time. But when our life, peace, joy, inheritance, and eternity are all wrapped up in this, should the thoughts of it not constantly reside in our hearts, always refreshing and delighting our souls?

(4.) He is excellent and glorious in the fact that He is exalted and invested with all authority. When Jacob heard of the exaltation of his son Joseph in Egypt and saw the chariots sent for him, his spirit fainted and then revived with an abundance of joy and overflowing affection. Is our Beloved lost, He who, for our sakes, was on earth poor and persecuted, reviled and killed? No! He was dead, but now He is alive. Behold, He lives forever and ever, and He holds the keys of hell and death. Our Beloved is made a lord and ruler (Acts 2:36). He is made a king, established by God as king on His holy hill of Zion (Psalm 2:6), and He is crowned with honor and dignity after being "made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death" (Hebrews 2:7-9). And what is He made king of? "All things are put in subjection under His feet" (verse 8). What power does our Beloved possess over them? "All power in heaven and on earth" (Matthew 28:18). He has been given power over all flesh (John 17:2). And how does He exercise this authority in glory? He grants eternal life to His elect, ruling them in the power of God (Micah 5:4) until He brings them to Himself. As for His enemies, His arrows pierce their hearts (Psalm 14:5); He stains His vesture with their blood. Oh, how

glorious is He in His authority over His enemies! In this world, He terrifies, frightens, and awes them, convicting and crushing their hearts and consciences, filling them with fear, terror, and unrest until they yield Him feigned obedience. Sometimes, with outward judgments, He bruises, breaks, and turns the wheel against them, staining the earth with their carcasses. Ultimately, He will gather them all—beasts, false prophets, nations, and more—and cast them into the lake of fire and brimstone.

He is gloriously exalted above both good and evil angels in this authority (Ephesians 1:20-22), "far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come." They are all under His feet, subject to His command and absolute control. He is seated at the right hand of God in the highest exaltation possible, fully reigning over the entire creation. He has received a name above every name (Philippians 2:9). Thus, He is glorious in His throne, which is at "the right hand of the Majesty on high"; glorious in His commission, which is "all power in heaven and on earth"; glorious in His name, a name above all names—"Lord of lords and King of kings"; glorious in His sceptre, for "a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of His kingdom"; glorious in His attendants, with "chariots numbering twenty thousand, even thousands of angels," among whom He rides on the heavens and sends forth the voice of His strength, attended by ten thousand times ten thousand of His holy ones; glorious in His subjects, as all creatures in heaven and on earth are put in subjection to Him; glorious in the manner of His rule and the administration of His kingdom, full of sweetness, efficacy, power, serenity, holiness, righteousness, and grace towards His elect, and filled with terror, vengeance, and certain destruction towards rebellious angels and men; glorious in the outcome of His kingdom, when every knee shall bow before Him, and all shall stand before His

judgment seat. And what we have pointed to here is only a small fraction of His glory. This is the Beloved of the church, its head, its husband, and the one with whom we have communion. However, I will discuss the entire exaltation of Jesus Christ at length elsewhere.

Having discussed these general aspects to further motivate communion with Christ in the mentioned relationship, drawing from His excellencies and perfections, I shall now turn to the description given by the bride in the Song of Solomon for the very same purpose. "My Beloved is white and ruddy, the chief among ten thousand. His head is like the finest gold; his locks are bushy, black as a raven. His eyes are like doves beside the streams of water, bathed in milk, and set like jewels. His cheeks are like beds of spices, yielding fragrance. His lips are like lilies, dripping with sweet-scented myrrh. His hands are like gold rings, set with beryl. His body is like bright ivory, adorned with sapphires. His legs are like pillars of marble, set upon bases of fine gold. His countenance is like Lebanon, as majestic as the cedars. His mouth is most sweet; yes, He is altogether lovely. This is my Beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem."

The previous general description given of Him, in verse 10, has already been considered. The following specifics are provided as evidence to support the claim that He is "the chiefest among ten thousand."

The bride begins by describing His head and face in verses 11-13. Regarding His head, she first speaks generally about its substance, stating that it is "fine gold." Some interpret it as "pure gold" or "solid gold." The Greek translation, LXX, renders it as "mass of gold" by retaining elements of both Hebrew words,  $\text{זָהָב}$   $\text{מַסָּה}$ . Gold possesses two prominent qualities—splendor or glory and durability. These are what the bride refers to when speaking of Christ's head. His head

symbolizes His government, authority, and kingdom. It is said, "A crown of pure gold was on His head" (Psalm 21:3), and here, His head is described as gold due to the crown of gold adorning it. Similarly, in Daniel, the monarchy that represented the pinnacle of glory and durability is referred to as the "head of gold" (Daniel 2:38). These two qualities—splendor and eternity—are characteristic of Christ's kingdom and authority.

(1.) His kingdom is glorious. He is full of glory and majesty, and in His majesty, He rides triumphantly (Psalm 45:3-4). "His glory is great in the salvation of God; honor and majesty are laid upon Him. He is made blessed forever and ever" (Psalm 21:5-6). We could delve into the particulars and demonstrate that there is no aspect that can make a kingdom or government glorious, which is not found in Christ's kingdom with all its excellencies. It is a heavenly, spiritual, universal, and unshakable kingdom, all of which contribute to its glory. However, that is a discussion for another time.

(2.) His kingdom is also enduring, even eternal—solid gold. "His throne is forever and ever" (Psalm 45:6). "Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever" (Isaiah 9:7). His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom (Daniel 7:27), a kingdom that will never be destroyed (Daniel 2:44), for He must reign until all His enemies are subdued. This is the head of gold—the splendor and eternity of His government.

If we consider the head in a natural sense, the focus may be on the glory of His Deity or the fullness and excellence of His wisdom, which the head represents. The allegory should not be limited as long as it aligns with the analogy of faith.

Regarding the adornments of His head, the bride describes His locks, which are said to be "bushy" or curled, and "black as a raven." His curly locks are black, and the reference to the raven emphasizes their darkness, not alluding to the nature of the raven itself. If we interpret the head in a political sense, His locks of hair, described as curly and seemingly entangled but actually falling in perfect order and beauty, represent His thoughts, counsels, and ways in governing His kingdom. They are black or dark due to their depth and unsearchability, just as God is said to dwell in thick darkness. They are also curly or bushy because of their intricate interweaving, emanating from His infinite wisdom. His thoughts are numerous, resembling the hairs on one's head, seemingly perplexed and entangled, but in reality, they are arranged in perfect order, like curly bushy hair. They are deep, unfathomable, and dreadful to His enemies, while exuding beauty and comeliness to His beloved. Thus, His thoughts, counsel, and wisdom in governing His kingdom are characterized by darkness, complexity, and manifold orderliness—a mystery to the carnal eye but deep, multilayered, and appealing to His saints.

In a natural sense, black and curly locks signify comeliness and youthful vigor. The strength and power of Christ in executing His counsels and ways are revealed as glorious and lovely.

The next aspect described is His eyes in verse 12: "His eyes are as the eyes of doves by the rivers of waters, washed with milk, and fitly set." The allusion is clear—doves are gentle birds, not birds of prey, and they possess bright, shining, and penetrating eyes. They are also known for their affinity for streams of water. The mention of washed eyes in milk or clear, white, crystal water enhances their beauty. Furthermore, they are said to be "fitly set," meaning they are

proportionate and contribute to their beauty and radiance, like precious stones in a ring setting.

Eyes are meant for sight, discernment, knowledge, and understanding of things to be seen. Therefore, the reference here pertains to the knowledge and discernment of the Spirit of Christ Jesus. In this allusion, four qualities are attributed to His eyes: tenderness, purity, discernment, and glory.

1. Tenderness and compassion toward His church are denoted by the comparison to dove's eyes. He looks upon His church with the eyes of gentle doves, exhibiting tenderness and compassionate care. There is no anger, fury, or thoughts of revenge in His gaze. This understanding of the eyes aligns with the interpretation in Deuteronomy 11:12, "The eyes of the LORD your God are always on it [the promised land]." Why? "Because the LORD your God cares for it." Christ's eyes are on us with tender care, expressing His wisdom, knowledge, and understanding in all aspects of His love for us. He is the stone, the foundation stone of the church, adorned with seven eyes, representing perfect wisdom, knowledge, care, and kindness for its guidance.
2. Purity is represented by the allusion to washed dove's eyes. This can be understood subjectively as the excellence and unstained purity of His sight and knowledge within Himself, or objectively as His delight in beholding purity in others. "He is of purer eyes than to behold evil" (Habakkuk 1:13). "He has no pleasure in wickedness; the foolish shall not stand in His sight" (Psalm 5:4-5). If the righteous soul of Lot was vexed by witnessing the vile deeds of wicked men (2 Peter 2:8), despite having human eyes tainted with impurity, how much more does the pure eyes of our

dear Lord Jesus abhor the filthiness of sinners! Yet, His love for us is exemplified by His willingness to cleanse us from our defilement. When we are so stained that no other solution suffices, He washes us with His own blood (Ephesians 5:25-27). His aim is to present the church to Himself in glorious holiness since His eyes are too pure to take joy and delight in any other condition. He does not abandon His bride until He can say to her, "You are altogether beautiful, my love; there is no flaw in you" (Song of Solomon 4:7). He removes our spots and blemishes through the renewing work of the Holy Spirit and adorns us completely with His righteousness, all because of the purity of His own eyes that cannot behold iniquity.

3. Discernment—His eyes see as doves do, swiftly, clearly, and comprehensively, penetrating to the depths of what they observe. In another passage, His eyes are likened to a flame of fire (Revelation 1:14). This is to convey that the churches should understand that He is the One who searches the hearts and minds of individuals (Revelation 2:23). Christ possesses discerning eyes, nothing is hidden from Him, and all things are open and exposed before Him. He is the One who "knows all men" and does not require any testimony about man because He knows what is in man (John 2:24-25). His penetrating gaze cuts through the thick veil of hypocrisy and reveals the true nature of individuals. He sees the innermost being and the reality of people before Him. His vision is not like ours; He contemplates the hidden recesses of the heart. Not a single sigh, groan, longing of love, or desire is hidden from Him. He sees in secret. Glorious performances by the most accomplished hypocrites are useless before Him. His eyes penetrate all, and the filth in their hearts lies bare before Him.

4. Beauty and glory are also implied. Every aspect of Christ is beautiful, for He is "altogether lovely" (verse 16). However, His sight and wisdom are especially glorious. He embodies the wisdom of God itself, and His understanding is infinite. Our knowledge is stained with imperfections, even when perfected, it remains finite and limited. In contrast, His understanding is untainted by darkness, unmarred by limitations.

Thus, he is beautiful and glorious. His head is like pure gold, and his eyes resemble gentle doves, washed in milk and set perfectly in place.

The next aspect emphasized is his cheeks. They are likened to a bed of spices or sweet flowers, symbolizing a pleasant fragrance, beauty, and orderliness. The mention of sweet savour, spices, and well-grown flowers denotes the cheeks of Christ. The interpretation that these cheeks represent the two tables of stone with various lines drawn on them, as suggested by the Chaldee paraphrast, is strained and speculative.

In a man, the cheeks represent comeliness and courageous masculinity. Christ's comeliness, as previously explained, stems from His fullness of grace for us, while His masculine courage relates to His authority and rule. These attributes of comeliness and courage are ascribed to His cheeks, highlighting His spiritual beauty and desirability. The cheeks possess a:

1. Sweet savour, order, and eminence. Just as God delights in the sweet fragrance of the grace and obedience of His servants, believers find a sweet savour in the grace of Christ. They find rest, delight, and refreshment in His grace. The graces of Christ please their spiritual senses, revive their spirits, and bring joy to their souls. When Christ is near, believers perceive His aroma, much like Isaac smelled Jacob's clothes, saying, "The smell of



my son is as the smell of a field that the LORD has blessed" (Genesis 27:27). Their souls are refreshed by His presence.

2. Order and beauty, like spices arranged in a garden bed. The graces of Christ are akin to spices meticulously organized in rows, enabling believers to recognize and receive from them according to their needs. The beauty lies in their harmonious correspondence with one another. Christ's graces are distinctly and orderly presented in the gospel, allowing sinners to observe them by faith and draw from His abundant provision as required. These graces are intended for the use of believers, found in the promises of the gospel. Light, life, power, and all forms of consolation reside in Christ—a constellation of shining, glorious graces. Believers survey all His graces, recognizing their splendor and excellence, while focusing primarily on those most relevant to their particular circumstances. Through faith and prayer, they gather these blessings from the bed of spices. No one who comes to Him leaves without refreshment. Everything they need is available and provided. What can they not take? What can they not gather? Every necessity of the weary soul is met, as the promises of the gospel serve as the beds where these spices are arranged for their benefit. It is through this orderly arrangement that the covenant is declared to be "ordered in all things" (2 Samuel 23:5).
3. Eminence. His cheeks are lifted up like a tower of perfumes, made conspicuous, visible, and prominent. Similarly, when the graces of Christ are proclaimed and lifted up in the preaching of the gospel, they become a tower of perfumes—a fragrant offering to God and mankind.

The next phrase in the verse states, "His lips are like lilies, dropping sweet-smelling myrrh." It alludes to two natural perfections: the glorious colour of lilies and the sweet fragrance of myrrh. The beauty and splendor of the lilies surpassed even that of Solomon's magnificence, as stated by Jesus (Matthew 6:29). Myrrh's aroma is so exceptional that Scripture compares it to excellence (Psalm 45:8). Christ's lips, dripping sweet-smelling myrrh, symbolize His Word—its fragrance, excellence, and usefulness. His Word is truly remarkable and surpasses the glory, beauty, and utility of natural things. Those who preach His Word for the salvation of souls are referred to as a "sweet savour unto God" (2 Corinthians 2:15), manifesting the aroma of the knowledge of God (verse 14). While there are various properties of myrrh that can be explored, and the allegory can be extended to describe the excellencies of the Word, I will focus on the general concept. The Holy Spirit intends to convey that the Word of Christ is sweet, savory, and precious to believers. They perceive His excellence, desirability, and beauty in the precepts, promises, exhortations, and even in the most severe warnings contained in it.

The spouse continues, "His hands are like gold rings set with the beryl." The word "beryl" in the original text is "Tarshish," which the Septuagint has retained without specifying a particular precious stone. Some suggest it may be onyx or chrysolite—any precious stone shining with a sea-green colour, as the word also signifies "sea." Gold rings adorned with precious, shimmering stones possess value and desirability for profit and adornment. Similarly, the hands of Christ represent all His works—the effects brought about by the cause. All His works are glorious, stemming from wisdom, love, and generosity.

Furthermore, it is stated, "His belly is like bright ivory, overlaid with sapphires." This refers to the smoothness and radiance of ivory,

along with the preciousness and heavenly colour of sapphires, used to enhance the excellence of Christ. In this case, "belly" actually signifies His inward bowels, encompassing His heart. It is unnecessary to prove that in Scripture, whether ascribed to God or man, "bowels" denotes affections. Christ's tender love, indescribable affections, and kindness toward His church and people are portrayed through this imagery. Just as polished ivory adorned with heaps of precious sapphires is a beautiful sight, the tender affections, mercies, and compassion of the Lord Jesus towards believers are even more glorious.

Verse 15. The strength of his kingdom, the faithfulness and stability of his promises, the exalted glory of his person in his dominion, and the sweet and excellent communion with him are depicted in these words: "His legs are like pillars of marble set upon sockets of fine gold; his countenance is majestic like Lebanon, surpassing the splendor of the cedars. His mouth is exceedingly sweet."

Having gone this far in describing him, the spouse concludes with a general assertion: "He is wholly desirable—completely to be desired or beloved." It's as if she were saying, "I have enumerated some of the perfections of earthly creations, the most valuable, precious, useful, beautiful, and glorious things below. I have compared some of their excellences to those of my Beloved. Through this allegory, I cannot go any higher; I find nothing better or more desirable to portray and present His loveliness and desirability. But alas! all of this falls short of His perfections, beauty, and comeliness. He is entirely to be desired, to be beloved."

He is lovely in His person—the glorious all-sufficiency of His deity, the gracious purity and holiness of His humanity, His authority and majesty, His love and power.

He is lovely in His birth and incarnation—when He, who was rich, became poor for our sake, taking on flesh and blood because we share in the same. He was made of a woman, so that He could be made under the law for our sake.

He is lovely throughout His entire life, displaying more than angelic holiness and obedience, even amidst poverty and persecution—doing good while receiving evil, blessing and being cursed, reviled, and reproached all His days.

He is lovely in His death, yes, most lovely to sinners—never more glorious and desirable than when He came broken and dead from the cross. He carried all our sins into a land of forgetfulness; He made peace and reconciliation for us; He obtained life and immortality on our behalf.

He is lovely in His entire mission, in His great undertaking—in His life, death, resurrection, and ascension. He serves as a mediator between God and us, to restore the glory of God's justice and to save our souls. He brings us to the enjoyment of God, bridging the infinite gap caused by sin.

He is lovely in the glory and majesty with which He is crowned. He is now seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high. Although He is fearsome to His enemies, He is full of mercy, love, and compassion towards His beloved ones.

He is lovely in all the provisions of grace and consolation, in all the dispensations of His Holy Spirit, in which His saints participate.

He is lovely in all the tender care, power, and wisdom that He exercises in protecting, safeguarding, and delivering His church and people, even in the face of opposition and persecution.

He is lovely in all His ordinances and in the entirety of the spiritually glorious worship that He has ordained for His people, enabling them to draw near and commune with Him and His Father.

He is lovely and glorious in the vengeance He takes and will ultimately execute upon the stubborn enemies of Himself and His people.

He is lovely in the forgiveness He has purchased and dispenses, in the reconciliation He has established, in the grace He imparts, in the consolations He provides, in the peace and joy He gives to His saints, and in His assured preservation of them until they reach glory.

What more can I say? There is no end to His excellences and desirability. "He is altogether lovely. This is our beloved, and this is our friend, O daughters of Jerusalem."

## **DIGRESSION II**

All solid wisdom laid up in Christ—True wisdom, wherein it consists—Knowledge of God, in Christ only to be obtained—What of God may be known by his works—Some properties of God not discovered but in Christ only; love, mercy—Others not fully but in him; as vindictive justice, patience, wisdom, all-sufficiency—No property of God savingly known but in Christ—What is required to a saving knowledge of the properties of God—No true knowledge of ourselves but in Christ—Knowledge of ourselves, wherein it consisteth—Knowledge of sin, how to be had in Christ; also of righteousness and

of judgment—The wisdom of walking with God hid in Christ—What is required thereunto—Other pretenders to the title of wisdom examined and rejected—Christ alone exalted.

A second consideration of the excellencies of Christ, which serves to endear the hearts of those who stand in the relationship we have been discussing, arises from what is greatly cherished by men in their mistaken understanding, and is the great aim of the saints when rightly understood—wisdom and knowledge. If it can be demonstrated that all true and substantial knowledge is stored up in, and can only be attained from and through, the Lord Jesus Christ, then the hearts of people, if they are true to themselves and their most dominant principles, must necessarily be drawn to him. This is the great aspiration of all people who turn away from the enslavement to the world and the pursuit of sensual and licentious paths—that they may be wise. The various ways in which the majority of people engage in order to achieve this end shall be considered later. For the glory and honour of our dear Lord Jesus Christ, and to strengthen our hearts in communion with him, the purpose of this digression is to demonstrate that all wisdom is stored up in him and can only be obtained from him.

In 1 Corinthians 1:24, the Holy Spirit tells us that "Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God." Not the essential Wisdom of God as he is the eternal Son of the Father (as referred to in the book of Proverbs, chapter 8:22, 23), but as he is crucified, as stated in verse 23. When he is crucified, he becomes the wisdom of God, signifying that all the wisdom that God presents for the revelation and manifestation of himself and for the salvation of sinners, which renders foolish all the wisdom of the world, is found in Christ crucified. It is held out in him, through him, and can only be obtained from him. And through him, we behold the glory of God (2

Corinthians 3:18). For he is not only referred to as "the wisdom of God," but also as "made unto us wisdom" (1 Corinthians 1:30). He is made wisdom unto us, not only by teaching us wisdom (using metonymy of the effect for the cause) as the great prophet of his church, but also because through knowing him, we become acquainted with the wisdom of God, which is our wisdom (metonymy of the adjunct). However, verily promised, this wisdom can only be obtained in this way. The essence of what is contended for is clearly asserted in Colossians 2:3, "In him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."

There are two things that might appear to have some claim in this matter: 1. Civil wisdom and prudence for the management of affairs, and 2. The ability of learning and scholarship. However, both of these are rejected by God as being of no use at all for the true purpose and goal of wisdom. There is what is called "understanding" in the world, but it amounts to nothing. There is what is called "wisdom," but it is turned into foolishness, as stated in 1 Corinthians 1:19, 20. "God renders futile the understanding of the wise and makes foolish the wisdom of the world." And without the knowledge of God, there is neither wisdom nor knowledge (as undoubtedly there is not), for it is all confined to the Lord Jesus Christ. "No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known" (John 1:18). He is not seen at any other time, nor known by any other means, except through the revelation of the Son. The Son has revealed him from his own intimate relationship with the Father. Therefore, in verse 9, it is said that he is "the true Light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world"—the true Light, having light in himself. No one receives light except from him, and all who come to him have it. Those who do not come to him are in darkness.

The essence of all true wisdom and knowledge can be summed up in three categories: I. The knowledge of God—his nature and attributes. II. The knowledge of ourselves in relation to God's will for us. III. The ability to walk in communion with God. The understanding of the works of God and the ultimate purpose of all things necessarily accompany these three. 1. All true wisdom and knowledge can be summed up in these three, and 2. None of them can be obtained or manifested in any meaningful way except in and through the Lord Christ.

God, through the act of creation itself, revealed many of His attributes to His creatures capable of understanding Him—His power, goodness, wisdom, and all-sufficiency are made known. The apostle affirms this in Romans 1:19-21. In verse 19, he refers to it as the "knowledge of God," and in verse 20, he specifically mentions God's eternal power and divine nature. All of this is made known through creation. However, there are certain attributes of God that cannot be revealed or known through the works of creation alone, such as His patience, long-suffering, and forbearance. Since all things were originally made good, there was no opportunity for the exercise or manifestation of these attributes. When considering the entire fabric of heaven and earth as initially created, patience and forbearance in God cannot be discerned. Yet, these are prominent attributes of His nature, as He proclaims in Exodus 34:6-7.

Therefore, the Lord goes further and reveals these attributes through His providential works of preserving and governing the world He has made. While He has revealed His wrath against ungodliness and unrighteousness through signs of anger and judgment, He has also demonstrated patience and forbearance by not immediately destroying all things. The apostle Paul explains this in Romans 1:18, where he states that God has revealed His wrath from heaven against



all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. However, by not immediately bringing destruction, He has shown patience and forbearance to all. Paul also mentions this in Acts 14:16-17, stating that God allowed all nations to walk in their own ways but did not leave Himself without witness, providing rain and fruitful seasons and filling their hearts with food and gladness. The psalmist extensively praises God's goodness and wisdom in these providential works in Psalm 104. Through these ways, God bears witness to His own goodness and patience. As it is stated in Romans 9:22, He endures with much long-suffering. However, the world remains in a state of ignorance. Despite all these manifestations, they only catch a glimpse of God and do not see more than His "back parts." Moses himself did not see it until he was placed in the rock, and that rock was Christ. Some of the most remarkable and glorious attributes of God (in terms of their manifestation and glory) cannot be glimpsed apart from the Lord Christ; they can only be known through Him. Additionally, there are other attributes of God that we have little understanding of except through Him, and for all the remaining attributes, we can only have true knowledge of them through Him.

One attribute of God that cannot be grasped or imagined by the human heart without Christ is love—specifically, love towards sinners. Without this attribute, man is most miserable among all creatures, and there is no glimpse of it to be found except in Christ. As stated in 1 John 4:8 and 16, "God is love." This means that God not only possesses a loving and tender nature, but He also acts in the dispensation of His eternal love towards us. He has had purposes of love for us from ancient times and will fulfill them in due season. How is this love manifested? Verse 9 explains, "In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him." This is the only revelation of such an attribute in the nature of God, the only

indication that He has any thoughts of exercising His love towards sinners. It is demonstrated through the sending of Jesus Christ into the world so that we may live through Him. So, where are the wise, the scribes, and the debaters of this world with all their wisdom? Their voice must be that of hypocrites in Zion, as mentioned in Isaiah 33:14-15. Any wisdom that fails to teach me that God is love shall forever be regarded as foolishness. Let people turn to the sun, moon, stars, rain showers, and fruitful seasons and honestly consider what they learn from them. They should not think themselves wiser or better than those who came before them, who gained nothing from these things and were left without excuse.

Another attribute of God that can only be understood through Christ is pardoning mercy or grace. Without this, even His love would be futile. We can see evidence of this in the case of our forefather, Adam, who, after sinning, had no expectation of mercy and hid himself when the wind blew slightly at the presence of God, as described in Genesis 3:8. This act was foolish, as he attempted to hide among the trees. Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ, as stated in John 1:17—grace in its truth and substance. Pardoning mercy comes solely through Christ. It is manifested in the gospel and is an aspect in which God will be glorified for all eternity, as mentioned in Ephesians 1:6. I am not referring to a general mercy or a mere inclination towards acceptance, which some may hope for. Such an understanding, which attributes this to God, dishonours Him greatly. True pardoning mercy is God's free and gracious acceptance of a sinner based on the satisfaction made to His justice through the blood of Jesus. Any revelation of it, in relation to justice, is consistent with the glory of God. It is an unimaginably condescending mercy, tempered with exact justice and severity. Romans 3:25 states that God "put forward [Christ] as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's

righteousness because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins." God's righteousness is also manifested in the forgiveness of sins, and it is consistently stated to be found in Christ alone (Ephesians 1:7). Therefore, this gospel grace and pardoning mercy are exclusively obtained and revealed through Him. This was the primary purpose of all the ceremonial institutions—to reveal that forgiveness and remission are completely wrapped up in the Lord Christ and cannot be inferred or experienced outside of Him. Without God setting forth the Lord Christ, neither the angels in heaven nor the people on earth could have conceived of such mercy in the nature of God. The apostle affirms that the full manifestation and exercise of this mercy are only in Christ, as stated in Titus 3:4-5. It is after the kindness and love of God our Saviour appeared, through the sending and declaration of Christ in the gospel, that this pardoning mercy and salvation apart from works were made known.

These are some of the attributes of God that can only be known and grasped through and in Christ. Whoever does not know Him through these attributes does not know Him at all. They know an idol, not the one true God. As stated in 1 John 2:23, "No one who denies the Son has the Father. Whoever confesses the Son has the Father also." To not have God as a Father is to not have Him at all. God is known as a Father only in His nature of love and fullness of pardoning mercy, which are revealed in Christ. The Holy Spirit tells us how this knowledge is obtained in 1 John 5:20: "And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true." It is through Him alone that we gain understanding to know the true God. Christ reveals these attributes in His teachings and in the revelation of God and His will as the great prophet of the Church, as mentioned in John 17:6. Therefore, the knowledge of these attributes is available to all, with an indescribable evidence surpassing that which is provided by the creation itself regarding

God's eternal power and divine nature. However, the essence of this knowledge lies in knowing His person, in whom the exact representation and radiance of His Father's glory shine forth, as stated in Hebrews 1:3.

(2.) There are other attributes of God that, although they may be discovered in other ways, are only clearly, prominently, and salvifically revealed in Jesus Christ. These attributes include: [1] His vindictive justice in punishing sin; [2] His patience, forbearance, and long-suffering towards sinners; [3] His wisdom in managing things for His own glory; [4] His all-sufficiency in Himself and towards others. While some glimpses of these attributes may be seen outside of Christ, they shine most brightly in Him, and it is wise for us to be acquainted with them.

[1] His vindictive justice. God has indeed manifested His anger and indignation against sin in various ways, so that people cannot deny that "those who practice such things deserve to die," as stated in Romans 1:32. In the law, He threatened to kindle a fire of His anger that would burn to the depths of hell. Even in His providential dealings, "His wrath is revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people," as mentioned in Romans 1:18. Thus, people acknowledge that He is a God of judgment. When considering that angels were cast out of heaven for their sin, being held in chains of darkness until the judgment of the great day (a belief that seems to have spread among the Gentiles, as even the poet's Jupiter threatened the rebellious deities with that punishment), and when contemplating the condemnation and destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah as an example to the ungodly, as described in 2 Peter 2:6, one can perceive God's vindictive justice and His anger towards sin. However, this justice is even more clearly revealed in the Lord Christ:

Firstly, in Christ, God has demonstrated the necessity of this righteousness being satisfied. Those who argue that satisfaction is only necessary due to a free act and determination of God's will do not provide a just and essential basis for the death of Christ; they base it on a supposition that could have been otherwise. However, by not sparing His only Son but making His soul an offering for sin and accepting no atonement apart from His blood, God abundantly manifests that it is necessary for Him, due to His holiness and righteousness, to render indignation, wrath, tribulation, and anguish to sin. Understanding the naturalness of vindictive justice and its necessity in the face of sin is the only true and beneficial knowledge of it. To view it as something that God may exercise or withhold makes His justice not a characteristic of His nature but a discretionary act of His will. A will to punish when it is possible to do otherwise without injustice is closer to ill-will than justice.

Secondly, the penalty inflicted on Christ for sin gloriously manifests this justice. While one can observe glimpses of the effects of sin, such as seeing a good and beautiful world wrapped in wrath and curses, covered in thorns and thistles, witnessing the entire creation subjected to futility and corruption, hearing it groaning in pain under the burden, considering the legions of angels, glorious and immortal creatures, cast into hell, bound in chains of darkness, and reserved for a more dreadful judgment—all because of one sin—and witnessing the ocean of spilled blood of souls for eternity, these insights pale in comparison to what can be seen through spiritual eyes in the Lord Christ. All these things are insignificant compared to Him. To see Him, who is the wisdom and power of God, who is eternally beloved by the Father, experiencing fear, trembling, bowing, sweating, praying, and dying; to see Him lifted up on the cross, with the earth trembling beneath Him as if unable to bear His weight, the heavens darkened above Him as if closed to His cry, and

Himself hanging between both as if rejected by both—all because our sins converged upon Him—this above all else abundantly manifests the severity of God's vindictive justice. Here, and nowhere else, can it be truly learned.

[2] His patience, forbearance, and long-suffering towards sinners. While glimpses of God's patience can be observed in His providential works, the discovery of it in Christ surpasses all others, especially in three aspects:

Firstly, the manner of its discovery. It is evident to all that God does not ordinarily immediately punish people for their offenses. This can be observed through His constant governance of the world, in which, despite all provocations, He bestows goodness upon humanity by causing the sun to shine, sending rain and fruitful seasons, and filling hearts with food and gladness. From this, people can conclude that He is abundantly good and patient. However, this understanding is still limited as it relies on human reasoning based on observations. Moreover, the way in which God's patience has been demonstrated has often proved to be a snare for those towards whom it has been exercised, as mentioned in Ecclesiastes 8:11, and a temptation for those who observe it, as seen in Job 21:7, Psalm 73:2–4, Jeremiah 12:1, and Habakkuk 1:13. The discovery of God's patience in Christ is of an entirely different nature. In Him, the very nature of God is revealed as love and kindness, and He has promised, sworn, and solemnly engaged Himself through a covenant to exercise these attributes towards sinners. Furthermore, to dispel any doubts about His intentions, there is a firm foundation for acting in accordance with His gracious attributes, namely, the reconciliation and atonement achieved through the blood of Christ. Even if people were taught about God's goodness and forbearance through the provision of rain and fruitful seasons, without the simultaneous

revelation that God's other attributes, such as His justice and wrath against sin, also have their full expression, there would be little consolation in the former. Therefore, although God may teach people about His goodness and forbearance by providing temporal blessings, He simultaneously reveals "His wrath from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people," as stated in Romans 1:18. Consequently, people cannot do anything but fluctuate and tremble at the outcome of these providential dealings, and yet this is the best that can be obtained outside of Christ, the highest attainment possible. While people may temporarily focus on the possession of earthly goods obtained through this patience, they are still in bondage to death and the darkness that accompanies it. The law reveals no patience or forbearance in God; it speaks only of sword and fire as the consequences of transgressions, were it not for God's intervention through an act of sovereignty. However, as previously stated, the revelation of forbearance in Christ also includes the satisfaction of God's justice and wrath against sin. Therefore, we need not fear any conflicting acts from these attributes that might undermine the works of His patience, which are so sweet to us. This is why God is said to be "in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself," as mentioned in 2 Corinthians 5:19. He manifests Himself in Christ as one who has no further need to demonstrate all His attributes—meaning, to glorify Himself—other than to exercise forbearance, reconciliation, and forgiveness of sin through Him.

Secondly, consider the nature of it. What does the forbearance revealed outside of Christ entail? It is simply the act of not immediately punishing offenses while also granting and sustaining temporal blessings—things that people are prone to misuse and can perish with, carrying their sins into eternity. On the other hand, what is hidden in Christ and revealed through Him is filled with love, sweetness, tenderness, kindness, and grace. It is the Lord's waiting to

show mercy and kindness to sinners, waiting for an opportunity to demonstrate love and kindness in order to deeply endear a soul to Himself, as Isaiah 30:18 states: "Therefore the LORD waits to be gracious to you, and therefore he exalts himself to show mercy to you." There is nothing that brings greater sweetness to the soul than this realization. When one is experientially convinced that God has repeatedly overlooked countless iniquities, they are astonished at this thought and marvel that God did not seize the opportunity of their provocations to cast them out of His presence. They come to understand that, with infinite wisdom and in all long-suffering, God has orchestrated His providential dealings to rescue them from the power of the devil, to rebuke and discipline their spirits for sin, and to draw them close to Himself. There is nothing more delightful to the soul than this. Hence, the apostle declares in Romans 3:25 that everything is "through the forbearance of God." It is through this forbearance that God paves the way for complete forgiveness of sins, something that cannot be achieved otherwise.

Thirdly, they differ in their aims and purposes. What is God's intention in exercising the forbearance that is revealed outside of Christ? The apostle reveals in Romans 9:22 that it is for the purpose of making His power and wrath known and enduring with much long-suffering those vessels of wrath prepared for destruction. It is to leave them without excuse and manifest His power and wrath in their destruction. Thus, it is described as "allowing them to walk in their own ways," as stated in Acts 14:16. This, in itself, is a dreadful judgment, as it inevitably leads to disastrous consequences. For instance, in Psalm 81:12, it is said, "So I gave them up to their stubborn hearts to follow their own devices," which is the most terrible condition a creature can fall into in this world. Acts 17:30 describes it as "overlooking the times of ignorance," implying that God did not pay close attention to their dark state, as evident from



the contrast when it says, "But now he commands all people everywhere to repent." He did not take notice of their sins to the extent of clearly revealing His mind and will for them to repent. Therefore, the apostle's exhortation in Romans 2:4, "Or do you despise the riches of his kindness, forbearance, and patience, not realizing that God's kindness is intended to lead you to repentance?" is directed towards the Jews, who had the advantage of learning the natural tendency of the goodness and forbearance that God exercises in Christ, which indeed leads to repentance. Alternatively, it implies that, from a rational perspective, people ought to make a different use of those things than they usually do, as charged in verse 5, "But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart..." At best, then, God's patience towards people outside of Christ, due to their stubbornness and incorrigible nature, resembles the waters of the River Phasis, sweet at the surface but bitter at the bottom. They enjoy the fleeting pleasures of this life for a while, as described in Luke 16:25, but eventually sink into the depths of bitterness.

However, the evident and direct purpose of God's patience and forbearance, which is exercised in Christ and revealed to us through Him, is to save and bring those towards whom He extends it closer to Himself. As Peter declares in 2 Peter 3:9, He is "patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance." This refers to all of us who experience His forbearance, as it is intended to accomplish His desire for our repentance and salvation. The nature of this forbearance and its purpose is well expressed in Isaiah 54:9, comparing it to the waters of Noah: "As I swore that the waters of Noah would never again cover the earth, so I have sworn that I will not be angry with you..." It is an expression of God's infinite wisdom and goodness, ensuring that we are not destroyed despite our sins. In Romans 15:5, God is described as "the God of endurance and encouragement," and His patience brings the greatest comfort. This

is another attribute of God that, while it may manifest to some extent in other things, is hidden in Christ. No one can truly grasp it and derive spiritual benefit from it unless they learn about it in Him.

Lastly, consider His wisdom, His infinite wisdom in orchestrating all things for His own glory and the good of those He loves. The Lord has undoubtedly displayed and manifested infinite wisdom in His works of creation, providence, and the governance of the world. He has created all His creatures with wisdom: "How many are your works, LORD! In wisdom you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures," as expressed in Psalm 104:24. His providence encompasses the support and guidance of all things, harmonizing them towards their appointed ends and His own glory. As stated in Isaiah 28:29, "All this also comes from the LORD Almighty, whose plan is wonderful, whose wisdom is magnificent." Furthermore, His law is to be eternally admired for its excellence in wisdom, as mentioned in Deuteronomy 4:7-8. However, there is an aspect that even Paul marvels at, a dimension in which God will forever be exalted. He refers to it as "the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God" in Romans 11:33. This depth of wisdom is only revealed and hidden by Christ. That is why Christ is described as "the wisdom of God" and "made to us wisdom." The purpose of God, which is carried out through Him and revealed in the Gospel, is called "the wisdom of God" and a "mystery," even "the hidden wisdom that God ordained before the world began, which none of the rulers of this age understood," as stated in 1 Corinthians 2:7-8. Ephesians 3:10 refers to it as "the manifold wisdom of God." To fully comprehend the depth and richness of this wisdom, the verse tells us that even the principalities and powers, even the angels themselves, have only begun to grasp it since God revealed it by gathering a church of sinners. Peter also informs us that even those who are familiar with all the works of God still bow down and eagerly desire

to look into these matters—the things of God's wisdom in the Gospel—as mentioned in 1 Peter 1:12. It requires great wisdom to craft a skillful work, structure, or building, but to restore the same structure to even greater beauty and glory after it has been defaced, that is the epitome of wisdom. In the beginning, God created everything good, glorious, and beautiful. When all things possessed innocence and beauty, reflecting the clear imprint of His wisdom and goodness, they were truly magnificent, particularly man, who was created for God's special glory. However, this beauty was marred by sin, and the entire creation was plunged into darkness, wrath, curses, confusion, and the suppression of God's great praise. Above all, man was utterly lost and fell short of the glory of God for which he was created, as Romans 3:23 proclaims. In this context, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God is revealed. A design hidden within Christ, lodged in the depths of eternity, shines forth to restore all things to a state far more advantageous for God's glory than what was initially perceived and to place sinners in an inconceivably better condition than before the entrance of sin. He now appears glorious, known as a God who pardons iniquity and sin, and magnifies the riches of His grace, which was His purpose, as Ephesians 1:6 affirms. He has also infinitely vindicated His justice before the eyes of men, angels, and devils by presenting His Son as a propitiation. This restoration is to our advantage, firmly establishing us in His favor and leading us towards a weight of glory surpassing anything previously revealed. Hence, the ancient writer exclaims, "O felix culpa, quae talem meruit redemptorem!" (O happy fault, which gained for us such a Redeemer!). As Paul declares, "Great is the mystery of godliness" in 1 Timothy 3:16, and without controversy, "From his fullness we have all received grace upon grace" (John 1:16)—grace lost in Adam but surpassed by even greater grace in Christ. Undeniably, this is a profound depth of wisdom. Additionally, the union between Christ and His church, and His love for her, in order

to accomplish this purpose, is called "a great mystery" in Ephesians 5:32, emphasizing the greatness of the wisdom contained within.

So, then, this great and indescribable treasure of God's wisdom is hidden in Christ—the wisdom of pardoning sin, saving sinners, satisfying justice, fulfilling the law, restoring His own honor, and providing us with an exceedingly weighty glory. All of this is accomplished in a way that angels and men could never have conceived, whereby the glory of God is restored and sinful creatures are delivered from eternal ruin. As it is written, on the last day, God "will be glorified in his holy people and will be marveled at among all those who have believed" (2 Thessalonians 1:10). The bringing of believers to Himself will be a marvelous event, forever magnifying God. Saving sinners through faith will be recognized as a work far more admirable than creating the world out of nothing.

Lastly, I will mention His all-sufficiency. God's all-sufficiency in Himself refers to His absolute and universal perfection, where nothing is lacking in Him and no increase or decrease can occur in His fullness. There is also an all-sufficiency in Him for others, which is His power to impart and share His goodness and Himself in a way that satisfies and fills them to their utmost capacity with all that is good and desirable. Concerning the former aspect—the all-sufficiency for the communication of His goodness in its outward effects—God abundantly demonstrated this in creation by making all things good and perfect in their own kind. He imprinted His own goodness upon all of them. However, regarding the latter aspect—the giving of Himself as an all-sufficient God to be enjoyed by creatures, providing everything necessary for their blessedness—this is solely revealed through and in Christ. In Christ, He is a Father and a God in covenant, promising to pour Himself out for them. He has pledged to

give Himself for their eternal enjoyment as their exceedingly great reward.

Thus, I have focused on the second category of God's properties, where though we may catch glimpses in other things, the clear knowledge and understanding of them can only be obtained in the Lord Christ.

Now, it is necessary to declare briefly that no property of God can be known in a saving and consoling manner except in Him. Therefore, all wisdom and knowledge of God is hidden solely in Him and obtained from Him.

2. No saving knowledge of any of God's properties, nor one that brings consolation, can be acquired apart from Christ Jesus. They are stored up in Him and revealed through Him. Some people may perceive God's justice and recognize that "those who do such things" (as sin) "deserve death" (Romans 1:32). However, this knowledge only leads them to ask, "Who of us can dwell with the consuming fire?" (Isaiah 33:14). Others may focus on His patience, goodness, mercy, and forbearance, but it does not lead them to repentance. Instead, they "despise the riches of his kindness, forbearance, and patience, not realizing that God's kindness is intended to lead you to repentance" (Romans 2:4). Some may come to know His eternal power and divine nature through the works of creation and providence, but they do not glorify Him as God or show gratitude. Instead, their thinking becomes futile, and their foolish hearts are darkened (Romans 1:20). Whatever truth men may discover apart from Christ, they suppress it in unrighteousness (Romans 1:18). Therefore, as Jude tells us, "they blaspheme in matters they do not understand" (Jude 10).

To have a saving knowledge of God's properties accompanied by consolation, three things are required: (1) God must have actually manifested the glory of all His attributes by doing good to us, (2) He must still exercise and display them to the utmost on our behalf, and (3) once manifested and exercised, they must be capable and powerful in bringing us to the everlasting enjoyment of Himself, which is our blessedness. All three of these requirements are hidden in Christ, and even the slightest glimpse of them outside of Him cannot be attained.

(1) We must acknowledge that God has actually manifested the glory of all His attributes by doing us good. What benefit will it bring to our souls, what comfort will it provide, what endearment will it inspire in our hearts towards God if we know that He is infinitely righteous, just, holy, unchangeably true, and faithful, yet we do not know how He can preserve the glory of His justice and faithfulness in His judgments and threats without our ruin and destruction? If all we can say is that it is right for Him to repay us with tribulation for our iniquities, what fruit did Adam reap from such considerations in the garden (Genesis 3)? What sweetness or encouragement is there in knowing that He is patient and full of forbearance if the glory of these attributes is exalted through enduring vessels of wrath fitted for destruction? Furthermore, what use is it to hear Him proclaim Himself as "The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness" while also stating that He "will by no means clear the guilty" (Exodus 34:6-7), thereby shutting off the exercise of His other attributes towards us on account of our iniquities? Undoubtedly, there is no benefit at all. When faced solely with these considerations of God's properties, justice will make people flee and hide (Genesis 3; Isaiah 2:21, 33:15-16), patience will harden them (Ecclesiastes 8:11), and holiness will utterly deter them from approaching Him (John 20:19). What relief

do we gain from thoughts of His immensity and omnipresence if we can only devise ways to flee from Him (Psalm 139:11-12) and have no assurance of His gracious presence with us? True salvation comes when we see that God has glorified all His attributes by doing us good. And indeed, He has done so in Jesus Christ. In Christ, He has made His justice glorious by making all our iniquities converge upon Him, causing Him to bear them all like the scapegoat in the wilderness. He did not spare Him but gave Him up for us all, thus exalting His justice and wrath against sin in a way that frees us from its condemnation (Romans 3:25, 8:33-34). In Christ, He has also made His truth and faithfulness glorious by perfectly fulfilling all His absolute threats and promises. The initial threat and curse from which all others flow, "You must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die" (Genesis 2:17), is fulfilled in Him. By the grace of God, He tasted death for us, delivering us from the fear of death (Hebrews 2:9, 15), and He has fulfilled the curse by becoming a curse for us (Galatians 3:13). Therefore, even in His threats, His truth is gloriously manifested for our good. As for His promises, "All of God's promises have been fulfilled in Christ with a resounding 'Yes!' And through Christ, our 'Amen' (which means 'Yes') ascends to God for his glory" (2 Corinthians 1:20). And regarding His mercy, goodness, and the richness of His grace, how magnificently are they made glorious in Christ and elevated for our good! In Christ, God has revealed Himself as a God who pardons iniquity and sin, exalting the glory of His forgiving mercy towards sinners. The manifestation of this is the great purpose of the gospel, as Paul splendidly proclaims in Ephesians 1:5-8. Our souls must come to know these truths, or else we will forever dwell in darkness.

Now, a saving knowledge, full of consolation, is achieved when we can see all the properties of God gloriously manifested and exalted in

a way that benefits us. And this wisdom is only found in Jesus Christ. Therefore, when Jesus desired His Father to glorify His name in the work of redemption He was undertaking, He was instantly answered from heaven, "I have both glorified it and will glorify it again." God will give His name, nature, properties, and will the utmost glory in Him.

(2) Furthermore, God will continue to exercise and utilize His properties to the fullest extent on our behalf. Although He has gloriously manifested them in a way that can contribute to our good, it does not necessarily mean that He will use them for our good. After all, do we not see countless individuals perishing eternally despite God's manifestation of Himself in Christ? Therefore, God has entrusted all His properties to Christ, so to speak, to be managed on our behalf and for our good. Christ is "The power of God and the wisdom of God." He is "The LORD our Righteousness" and is "made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption." Having glorified His Father in all His attributes, Christ has now been given the authority to exercise them as the captain of salvation for those who believe. Thus, if there is anything in the righteousness, goodness, love, mercy, or all-sufficiency of God that can benefit us, the Lord Jesus is fully responsible for dispensing it on our behalf. That is why God is said to be "in Him, reconciling the world to Himself." Whatever is in Him, He devotes it to the reconciliation of the world through the Lord Christ. He becomes "The LORD our Righteousness." And this is the second requirement.

(3) Finally, it remains that these manifested and exercised attributes of God are powerful and capable of bringing us to the eternal enjoyment of Him. To demonstrate this, the Lord encapsulates the entire covenant of grace in one promise: "I will be your God." In the covenant, God becomes our God and we become His people, thereby



making all His attributes ours as well. And to dispel any doubts we may have—once our eyes are opened to the immense difficulty and insurmountable obstacles we face—God expresses it in this way: "I am God Almighty" (all-sufficient). He declares, "I am completely able to fulfill all my promises and be your exceedingly great reward. I can overcome all difficulties, address all objections, pardon all sins, and conquer all opposition. I am an all-sufficient God." Now, you know that this covenant and all its promises are ratified in Him and confirmed by His blood, namely, in the Lord Christ alone. It is only in Him that God is an all-sufficient God to anyone and an exceedingly great reward. That is why it is said that Christ "is able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him." These three things, I reiterate, are necessary to have a saving knowledge, accompanied by consolation, of any of God's attributes. And since all these are hidden only in Christ, they can only be obtained from Him.

Therefore, this concludes the first part of our first demonstration: that all true and sound wisdom and knowledge are stored in the Lord Christ and can only be obtained from Him. This is because our wisdom primarily consists in the knowledge of God, His nature, and His attributes, all of which are wholly hidden in Christ and cannot be attained through any other means.

II. As for the knowledge of ourselves, which constitutes the **SECOND** part of our wisdom, it encompasses three aspects that our Saviour sends His Spirit to convict the world of: sin, righteousness, and judgment. To truly know ourselves in relation to these three is a crucial part of true and sound wisdom, as they pertain to our supernatural and eternal destiny. However, we can only attain knowledge of them in Christ.

1. Regarding sin, every person by nature retains a sense and awareness of sin in their conscience. They can discern good and evil in many matters, approve or disapprove of their actions with respect to a future judgment, and need not look further than themselves for this knowledge (Romans 2:14-15). However, this knowledge is limited and mostly pertains to major sins. It can be summarized by the apostle in Romans 1:32, "They know the judgment of God, that those who practice such things deserve to die." This is included among the common presumptions and notions accepted by mankind, namely, that it is "righteous for God to punish those who practice such things with death." If it is true, as commonly believed, that no nation is so barbaric or uncivilized as to lack a sense of deity, then it is also true that no nation is devoid of a sense of sin and God's displeasure for it. This is the very first notion of God in the world—that He is the rewarder of good and evil. Hence, the prevalence of sacrifices, purifications, and expiations found throughout the world. However, this knowledge of sin, along with its implications, is limited.

A deeper understanding of sin, in all its dimensions, is imparted through the law. This law was added because of transgressions and doctrinally revives the innate sense of good and evil implanted in humanity. It serves as a mirror through which those spiritually inclined can perceive the hideousness and deformity of sin. Indeed, when one contemplates the law's purity, holiness, scope, perfection, and the manner in which it was delivered—with dread, terror, thunder, earthquakes, and fire—as well as its sanctions of death, curse, and wrath, it unveils the true nature of sin in all its filth, guilt, and enormity. However, even this does not suffice to truly convince a person of sin. Not because the mirror is flawed, but because we lack the eyes to see into it and the ability to apply its standard. Therefore,

Christ sends His Spirit to convict the world of sin (John 16:8). While the law serves certain purposes in this regard, the work of conviction, which alone leads to a fruitful knowledge of sin, is a unique work of the Spirit. Hence, the revelation of sin can also be attributed to Christ, as part of the wisdom hidden in Him. Nevertheless, there are two further aspects in which this wisdom is hidden in Him. First, there are certain implications of sin that are more clearly revealed in the fact that the Lord Christ was made sin for us than in any other way. Second, there can be no true and spiritually beneficial knowledge of sin apart from Him.

Firstly, there are four aspects of sin that are clearly revealed in the cross of Christ: (1) its deserving nature, (2) our helplessness because of it, (3) its deathly consequences, and (4) the establishment of a new purpose.

(1) The deserving nature of sin is prominently displayed in the cross of Christ for two reasons: (1.1) the person who suffered for it, and (1.2) the penalty He endured.

(1.1) Concerning the person who suffered for sin, the Scriptures emphatically emphasize this point. For instance, John 3:16 declares, "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son." It was His only Son whom God sent into the world to suffer for sin (Romans 8:32). "He spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all." To witness a slave being beaten and punished indicates a committed offense, but perhaps the gravity of the offense is not significant. However, the correction of a son indicates a great provocation, and the correction of an only son signifies the most unimaginable offense. Never has sin appeared more abominably sinful and provocative than when it burdened the Son of God. By making His Son, the beloved Son of His love, His only begotten Son, full of grace

and truth, bear the weight of sin for us, God demonstrates His anger against sin and how it is utterly impossible for Him to let even the slightest sin go unpunished. He laid His hand upon Him and did not spare Him. If sin could be imputed to His dear Son, as He willingly assumed it (for He said to His Father, "Behold, I come to do Your will," and all our iniquities converged upon Him), and He did not spare Him any part of its deserved punishment, is it not abundantly clear from the blood of Christ's cross that the merit of sin is such that it is utterly impossible for God to let even the smallest sin go unpunished? If God were willing to do so for anyone, it would have been for His only Son, yet He did not spare Him.

Moreover, God took no delight in nor desired the blood, tears, cries, and indescribable torments and sufferings of His beloved Son (for He does not delight in the anguish of anyone—He does not afflict willingly or grieve the children of men, let alone the Son of His bosom). He only required the fulfillment of His law, the satisfaction of His justice, and the atonement for sin. Nothing less than this would suffice. If the debt of sin could have been settled at a lower cost, it would not have required the price of Christ's blood. Therefore, soul, behold the deserving nature of sin in the cross of Christ, which is far more evident than in all the threats and curses of the law. You may even say, "I indeed thought that sin, when found in such a lowly creature as myself, deserved death. However, I never imagined that it would have such an effect when laid upon the Son of God."

(1.2) Consider also what He suffered. Although He was extraordinary, perhaps His affliction and trial were light, especially considering His strength to endure. Yet whatever it was, it caused this "fellow of the LORD of hosts," this "lion of the tribe of Judah," this mighty one, this wisdom and power of God, to tremble, sweat,

cry, pray, and wrestle with fervent supplications. Some devoted Catholics tell us that even a single drop of Christ's blood would have been more than sufficient to redeem the entire world. However, they err because they do not understand the merit of sin or the severity of God's justice. If one drop less than what was shed, one pang less than what was endured, would have been sufficient, then those additional drops would not have been shed, nor would those additional pangs have been endured. God did not torment the beloved of His soul in vain. Moreover, it pleased God to crush Him, to afflict Him, to make His soul an offering for sin, and to pour out His life unto death. He hid Himself from Him, He was far from the voice of His cry until He exclaimed, "My God, my God, why have You forsaken Me?" He made Him sin and a curse for us, executed upon Him the sentence of the law, and brought Him into such agony that He sweat drops of blood, was greatly troubled, and His soul was heavy unto death. The power and wisdom of God stooped under the burden, causing all of nature to be astonished. Thus, as I mentioned earlier, just as it reveals God's indignation against sin, the cross of Christ clearly demonstrates its deserving nature. If you wish to perceive the true merit of sin, look to Christ's mediation, particularly His cross. It brought the Son of God, who is equal to God, blessed forever, into the form of a servant who had nowhere to lay His head. It pursued Him throughout His life with afflictions and persecutions and ultimately subjected Him to the rod of God, crushing and breaking Him, and slaying the Lord of life. Hence, deep humiliation is warranted for sin because of Him whom we have pierced. This constitutes the first spiritual understanding of sin that we derive from Christ.

(2) The wisdom of comprehending our helplessness due to sin is concealed in Him. By our helplessness, I mean two things: (2.1) our inability to make amends with God for sin, and (2.2) our inability to fulfill His mind and will in any aspect of obedience due to sin.

(2.1) The revelation of this helplessness is found in Christ alone. Throughout history, people have tirelessly searched for an atonement, exploring various avenues to achieve it. They inquire, as in Micah 6:6-7, "Will any number of sacrifices, even those appointed by God, such as burnt offerings and year-old calves, or even the most extravagant offerings, like thousands of rams or ten thousand rivers of oil, or even dreadful and extreme measures, like sacrificing their own children in the fire—will any of these things make an atonement?" David decisively answers this question in Psalm 49:7-8, "None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him, for the redemption of their soul is precious, and it ceases forever." It cannot be done, yet people persist in their attempts. This led them to heap up sacrifices, some costly and others involving bloodshed and inhumanity. To this day, the Jews believe that God was atoned for sin through the sacrifices of bulls, goats, and the like. Similarly, the Socinians only recognize an atonement through repentance and obedience. However, in the cross of Christ, all mouths are silenced in regard to this matter.

Firstly, God has revealed in Christ that no sacrifices, even those appointed by Him, could ever make those who offered them perfect (Hebrews 10:11). Those sacrifices could never take away sin, and the services performed could never make anyone perfect in conscience (Hebrews 9:9; 10:1). Therefore, the Lord rejects all sacrifices and offerings for the purpose of atonement. In their place, Christ declares, "Behold, I come," and through Him, we are justified from all things that the law cannot justify us from (Acts 13:39). In Christ, God has condemned all sacrifices as entirely insufficient to make atonement for sin. The outcome of this instruction is evident.

Secondly, God has declared the futility of all other attempts made to accomplish atonement. In Romans 3:24-26, by presenting His only

Son as a propitiation, He leaves no doubt in the minds of men that they themselves cannot make atonement. For if righteousness could be attained through the law, then Christ's death would have been in vain. There would be no purpose in Him being made a propitiation if we were not weak and powerless to achieve such a purpose. This is the Apostle's argument in Romans 5:6, that when we were powerless, Christ made atonement through His death.

This wisdom, therefore, is also hidden in Christ. While other means may provide enough understanding to fill people with dread and astonishment, only in this heavenly treasury, the Lord Jesus, can one find a sight and view of sin that leads to true comfort and assurance.

Furthermore, our inability to fulfill God's mind and will in obedience is also discovered only in Him. Indeed, many people today are unwilling to acknowledge this truth. It is not an easy task to teach someone that they cannot do what they ought to do, for which they condemn themselves if left undone. When faced with the conviction of their impotence, people rise up with all their power to refute it. Not to mention the prideful thoughts and expressions of philosophers, many who claim to be Christians still harbor the belief, to varying degrees, in their ability to fulfill the law. And from where should they gain knowledge that we lack? Nature does not teach it; it is proud and conceited. It is a part of its pride, weakness, and corruption to be completely ignorant of it. The law does not teach it either, for although it reveals our wrongdoings, it does not disclose our inability to do better. By demanding perfect obedience, it assumes that we have the power to do so, without considering that we have lost it. This knowledge, too, is hidden in the Lord Jesus. In Romans 8:2-4, it is stated that "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, weakened by the flesh, God did by sending his own Son

in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin: he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us." The law cannot produce righteousness or obedience; it is weak in that regard due to the flesh and our fallen state. These two things are accomplished in and through Christ. Firstly, sin is condemned in terms of its guilt, and we are set free from it. Through His obedience, the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in us, which we could never achieve on our own. Secondly, the obedience that is required of us is worked in us by His Spirit. Thus, His perfect obedience is imputed to us, and the sincerity of our obedience is bestowed upon us by His Spirit. This excellent mirror reveals our impotence, for why would we need His perfect obedience to be counted as ours if we already possessed it? Why would we need His life-giving Spirit to quicken us if we were not dead in our trespasses and sins?

Thirdly, the death of sin is to be known—sin dying in us, to some extent, while we are still alive. This is a third aspect of sin that we need to understand, and it is hidden only in Christ. There are two types of the death of sin: the cessation of its exercise in our mortal bodies and the eradication of its root, principle, and power in our souls. The former can be partially learned outside of Christ, for Christless individuals may experience the dying of sin in terms of its outward expression. Their bodies may be incapacitated for serving their lusts, or the practice of sin may conflict with their self-interest. However, sin is never more alive than when it appears to be dying in this manner. But there is a dying of sin in terms of its root and principle—the gradual decay of its strength, power, and life. This can only be found in Christ. Sin, in and of itself, is not inclined to die or decay; it tends to grow, gain strength, and perpetuate in its subject for eternity. Even if its actual eruptions are prevented, its inherent enmity against God will continue to grow. In believers, sin continues



to die and decay until it is completely abolished. This mystery is unfolded in Romans 6:3-6 and beyond. Through baptism into Jesus Christ, we were baptized into His death. We were buried with Him by baptism into death so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too may walk in newness of life. If we have been united with Him in the likeness of His death, we will also be united with Him in the likeness of His resurrection. We know that our old self was crucified with Him so that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, that we should no longer be enslaved to sin. This understanding is hidden in Christ alone. Moses retained all his strength and vigor until the day of his death, and similarly, sin and the law have full power over those outside of Jesus. At their dying moment, sin has not diminished in any way. Therefore, apart from receiving the righteousness prepared for us, understanding this truth is the most significant aspect of our wisdom. To truly grasp the principle of the death of sin, to feel virtue and power flowing from the cross of Christ for this purpose, and to witness sin crucified in us as Christ was crucified for us—this is true wisdom found only in Him.

Lastly, there is a glorious purpose and end appointed for sin, which is revealed and known only in Christ. Sin, by its very nature, tends to dishonor God, diminish His majesty, and bring ruin upon the creature in whom it dwells. Hell itself is the result of wretched creatures reaping the fruit of their own devices. The threats and condemnations in the law reveal another purpose of sin—to demonstrate the vindictive justice of God by administering appropriate recompense. However, the law, and all other sources of light, stop there and do not disclose any other use or end of sin. In the Lord Jesus, a different and more glorious purpose is revealed—the manifestation of God's glorious grace in the forgiveness and pardon of sin. God, through Christ, ordained that something that solely dishonored Him should be turned into an instrument for His

infinite glory. It is His desire to be known and believed as a "God who pardons iniquity, transgression, and sin." Returning to our demonstration,

In understanding ourselves and our eternal condition, a significant part of our wisdom lies. There is nothing that concerns us more in this corrupted state of nature than sin. Without knowledge of sin, we do not truly know ourselves. "Fools make a mock of sin." True and saving knowledge of sin can only be obtained in the Lord Christ. In Him, we can see the deserving punishment and defilement of our iniquities, which could only be borne and expiated by His blood. And it is only in Christ that we can have a proper view of these aspects of sin. In Him and His cross, we discover our complete powerlessness to atone for God's justice or to live according to His will. The death of sin is procured and revealed in Christ, as well as the manifestation of the riches of God's grace in the forgiveness of sin. Our true wisdom lies in having a genuine and experiential acquaintance with all of this, and it surpasses all the wisdom of the world.

Secondly, righteousness is another matter that the Spirit of Christ convicts the world of, and it is crucial for us to be acquainted with it. All people are convinced that God is supremely righteous. It is a natural understanding of God, as Abraham insisted, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just?" (Genesis 18:25). They know that "those who practice such things deserve to die," and that it is right for God to recompense tribulation to wrongdoers (Romans 1:32; 2 Thessalonians 1:6). God's eyes are too pure to look upon evil, and the ungodly cannot stand in judgment (Habakkuk 1:13; Psalm 1:5). Therefore, everyone, who is aware of immortality and the coming judgment, is deeply concerned about the righteousness with which they can stand in the presence of this righteous God.

Throughout their lives, they are anxious about the outcome of their righteousness, fearing that it may lead to death and destruction.

For those who are engaged in this inquiry, the first and most natural recourse for direction and assistance, promising a righteousness that can withstand God's judgment if followed, is the law. The law presents many compelling reasons for a soul to embrace it as a righteousness before God. It was given by God Himself for that very purpose, encompassing the complete obedience required of all human beings. It is accompanied by the promise of life: "Do this and you will live." "The doers of the law will be justified." "If you want to enter into life, keep the commandments." It is certain that the law must be entirely fulfilled if we ever hope to stand boldly before God. Therefore, no one seeking righteousness can avoid attending to the law and attempting to follow its direction. Many people do so every day, even if they do not openly acknowledge it. They endeavor to improve their lives, amend their ways, perform the required duties, and pursue righteousness according to the law's prescription. Many people continue in this course for a long time, experiencing great perplexity—sometimes hopeful, more often fearful; sometimes on the verge of giving up, and at other times making vows to continue, even though their consciences remain unsatisfied, and righteousness remains elusive. After perhaps exhausting themselves for a long period, following their own broad paths, they eventually reach the conclusion that the apostle proclaims: "By the works of the law, no human being will be justified." They cry out in dread, realizing that if God marks their wrongdoings, they cannot stand before Him. The apostle testifies to their outcome in Romans 9:31-32, "Israel, who pursued a law that would lead to righteousness, did not succeed in reaching that law. Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as if it were based on works of the law." It was not solely due to their lack of effort that they were disappointed, for they earnestly pursued

the law of righteousness. Their failure stemmed from the nature of the law itself—it could not provide what they sought. Righteousness could not be attained through this path. The apostle explains, "If those who depend on the law are heirs, faith means nothing and the promise is worthless, because the law brings wrath" (Romans 4:14-15). The law, in its current state, cannot bring life (Galatians 3:21). If there were a law that could give life, righteousness would have come through it. However, the Scripture confirms that all are under sin, meaning that all people are sinners, and the law speaks only of death and destruction to sinners. Therefore, the apostle plainly states that God Himself found fault with this method of attaining righteousness (Hebrews 8:7-8). He declared it insufficient for that purpose.

There are two considerations that reveal to people the futility and hopelessness of seeking righteousness in this manner:

[1.] They have already sinned: "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). They are well aware that even if they could fulfill the entire law in the future, there is already a debt, an account, that they do not know how to answer for. When they consult their guide, the law itself, for direction on how to settle the past account, it offers no guidance or consolation; it simply tells them to prepare to die. The sentence has been pronounced, and there is no escape.

[2.] Even if all past debts were forgiven, they are in no way able to fulfill the law in the future. They have as much chance of moving the earth with a finger as they do of achieving its perfection. Therefore, as I mentioned before, they conclude that their efforts are in vain. "No human being is justified by the works of the law."

Secondly, being disappointed by the severity and inflexibility of the law, people generally turn to another way that may satisfy them in

regard to the considerations that led them away from their previous hopes. This usually involves seeking atonement to satisfy God and relying on hopes of mercy for the rest. Without delving into the various ways of atonement and expiation chosen by the Gentiles or the manifold methods invented by the Papists—such as satisfactory works, indulgences, and purgatory in the end—it is common for convinced individuals to seek righteousness by attempting to make amends for the past while hoping for general mercy. The apostle refers to this as seeking righteousness "as it were by the works of the law" (Romans 9:32), not directly, but mixing one thing with another. He explains the outcome of this pursuit in Romans 10:3, "For, being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness." They were, in fact, enemies of God's righteousness. The reason they sought to establish their own righteousness was their ignorance of God's righteousness. If they had understood God's righteousness and the exact conformity to His will that He requires, they would never have embarked on such a fruitless endeavor to achieve righteousness "as it were by the works of the law." However, many remain stuck in this mindset for a long time. They do something and hope for something; they try to compensate for past faults with new obedience. This temporarily appeases their consciences, but when the Spirit comes to convict them of righteousness, even this will not hold. Therefore,

(3.) The matter ultimately comes down to this: they perceive themselves as having two qualifications:

[1.] Sinners, liable to God's law and its curse. Unless this is satisfied, unless nothing from the law can ever be brought against them, it is utterly futile to seek an appearance in God's presence.

[2.] Creatures made for a supernatural and eternal purpose, obligated to fulfill the entirety of God's will and the obedience required of them. Now, since they have already discovered that both these qualifications are beyond the scope of their own efforts and the assistance they previously relied upon, if their eternal condition matters to them, their wisdom lies in finding a righteousness that can meet both these requirements to the fullest extent.

Now, both of these qualifications can only be found in the Lord Christ, who is our righteousness. This wisdom, along with all its treasures, is hidden in Him.

First, He expiates past iniquities, satisfies for sin, and secures forgiveness. "Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed" (Romans 3:24-25). "All we like sheep have gone astray," etc. (Isaiah 53:6). "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins" (Ephesians 1:7). "God did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all" (Romans 8:32). This, and this alone, is our righteousness, at least in terms of removing the guilt of sin that caused us to fall short of God's glory. It is on this account that we are assured that no one will ever bring any charge against us or condemn us (Romans 8:33-34), for "there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1). Through Christ's sacrifice, we are cleansed to the point where we "no longer have a consciousness of sins" (Hebrews 10:2), meaning we are no longer troubled by them. This wisdom is hidden in the Lord Jesus alone. He alone reveals atonement, and I would gladly possess the wisdom that settles all accounts regarding sin, even if the rest of the world takes what remains. However,

Secondly, something more is required. It is not enough that we are no longer guilty; we must also be actually righteous. Being innocent is not sufficient for a person to go to heaven or receive reward. I have no knowledge that an innocent person will be rewarded if that is all they are. Adam was innocent at his creation, but he was required to "do this" and "keep the commandments" before he could enter into life. Innocence alone did not grant him a claim to life. Therefore, in addition to having the guilt of sin removed, the entire law must be fulfilled, and all the obedience that God requires from us must be performed. This is the soul's second inquiry, and it finds its answer only in the Lord Christ: "For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life" (Romans 5:10). His death reconciled us, and it is through His life that we are saved. The actual obedience He rendered to the entire law of God is the righteousness by which we are saved. This is true if we are found in Him, not having our own righteousness that comes from the law, but the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith (Philippians 3:9). I will have the opportunity to discuss this further later on.

To begin again: I suppose it is not a difficult task to persuade individuals who believe in immortality and the impending judgment that their main source of wisdom lies in finding a righteousness that will accompany them for eternity and withstand God's severe judgment. The wisdom of the world, however, is nothing but folly when it comes to discovering this righteousness. The best human wisdom can achieve is to find ways of perishing eternally that are wretched, burdensome, and vexatious. The treasures of this wisdom are hidden in Christ; He is made unto us wisdom and righteousness by God (1 Corinthians 1:30).

Now, let's move on to the last point, which I will only touch upon briefly: judgment. The true wisdom concerning judgment, especially the judgment to come, is also hidden in the Lord Christ. By "judgment" in this context, I mean the future judgment. I will not discuss the significance of understanding this judgment, as it is what distinguishes humans from perishable beasts. Nor will I dwell on the obscure hints of it found in the current workings of Providence in governing the world or the greater clarity provided by the threats and promises of the law. The wisdom of judgment, in two aspects, is hidden in the Lord Jesus: (1) regarding its truth and (2) regarding its manner.

Firstly, concerning its truth, Christ confirms it through His death and resurrection. Through Christ's death, God punished and condemned sin in the flesh of His own Son, before the eyes of humans, angels, and demons. This serves as abundant assurance of a righteous and universal judgment to come. For what other reason would God burden Christ in such a manner if He did not intend to reckon with every person for their works, ways, and conduct before Him? Christ's death serves as a solemn exemplar of the final Judgment, and those who acknowledge Him as the Son of God will not deny the existence of a coming judgment.

Secondly, Christ confirms the truth of judgment through His resurrection. In Acts 17:31, it is stated that He has given faith and assurance of this truth to all by raising Christ from the dead and appointing Him as the judge of all. In Him and through Him, God will judge the world in righteousness.

Regarding the manner of judgment, it will be carried out by the one who loved us and gave Himself for us. He is both the righteousness that He requires from us and the one who has been reviled, despised,



and contemned in His person, grace, ways, and worship by the people of the world. This holds unspeakable consolation on one hand and terror on the other. Therefore, the wisdom of the manner of judgment is also hidden in Christ.

This concludes the second part of our first demonstration. Knowing ourselves in relation to our supernatural end is a significant aspect of wisdom. The most crucial aspects related to this are sin, righteousness, and judgment, all of which find their wisdom exclusively in the Lord Jesus, as we have proven.

III. The third part of our wisdom is to walk with God. For two individuals to walk together, six things are required: (1) agreement, (2) acquaintance, (3) a way, (4) strength, (5) boldness, and (6) aiming for the same end. All these aspects, along with the wisdom they entail, are hidden in the Lord Jesus.

1. Agreement: The prophet tells us in Amos 3:3 that two cannot walk together unless they agree. Without agreement, there is no communion, no walking together. By nature, God and humanity (while in a state of nature) are in a state of enmity. God reveals nothing to us but wrath (Romans 1:18). We are said to be children of wrath, born under its condemnation (Ephesians 2:3), and as long as we remain in this condition, "the wrath of God abides on us" (John 3:36). The only revelation God makes of Himself to us is that He is incredibly provoked, preparing wrath against the day of wrath and the revelation of His righteous judgment. The day of our encounter with Him and sinners is called "The day of wrath" (Romans 2:5-6). On our part, we do not fall short in our enmity towards God; in fact, we initiated it and continue in it. The apostle tells us that even our minds, the best part of us, are enmity against God (Romans 8:7-8). We are

neither subject to Him nor willing or able to be so. Our enmity manifests itself through rebellion against Him. Anything we do that appears contrary to this enmity is mere hypocrisy or deceit. Moreover, it is part of this enmity to downplay its extent. In this state, the wisdom of walking with God is far removed from our souls. God is light, and there is no darkness in Him, while we are darkness with no light at all. He is life, a living God, while we are dead sinners, dead in trespasses and sins. He is holiness and glorious in it, while we are wholly defiled, an abominable thing. He is love, while we are filled with hatred, both hating and being hated. Surely, there is no foundation for agreement, and therefore, no possibility of walking together. This frame of mind is completely incompatible with such a condition. The foundation for agreement, therefore, is laid in Christ and hidden in Him. He is our peace; He has made peace for us (Ephesians 2:14-15). He removed the cause of enmity between God and us, namely, sin and the curse of the law. He put an end to sin by making atonement for iniquity (Daniel 9:24), and He erased the record of debt that stood against us by being made a curse for us (Galatians 3:13). He also destroyed the one who perpetuated enmity and widened the divide by His death. Through death, He destroyed the devil, who held the power of death (Hebrews 2:14), and He triumphed over principalities and powers, spoiling them (Colossians 2:15). He made reconciliation for the sins of the people by offering Himself as a sacrifice (Hebrews 2:17), making atonement with God through His blood and turning away the wrath that was due to us, thereby making peace. It is said that God is in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself (2 Corinthians 5:19), having been reconciled Himself (verse 18). He has put down enmity on His part and proceeds to what remains: slaying the enmity on our part, so that we may also be reconciled. And indeed, through Him, we have access to the

Father (Ephesians 2:18). The entire wisdom of this agreement, without which there can be no walking with God, is hidden in Christ. Apart from Him, God, on His part, is a consuming fire, and we are like fully dry stubble setting ourselves up for destruction. Any approach to Him outside of Christ is to our own detriment. We can only have this agreement through His blood. Let none of us assume that we have taken any step in the ways of God, that any of our actions are accepted, or that anything remains intact for eternity if it is not done on the basis of this agreement.

2. Additionally, there must be acquaintance to walk together. Two individuals may meet on the same path without quarrel or enmity, but if they are mere strangers to each other, they pass by without any meaningful interaction. It is not enough for the enmity between God and us to be removed; we must also be given acquaintance with Him. Our lack of knowledge about Him is a significant cause and part of our enmity. Our understanding is darkened, and we are alienated from the life of God (Ephesians 4:18). Therefore, if we are to ever walk with God, which is our wisdom, this acquaintance must be provided. And once again, it is hidden in the Lord Christ and revealed through Him. While it is true that God has given various means such as His word and His works to make Himself known to humanity and grant them some acquaintance with Him, the knowledge of God derived from His works is weak and imperfect. Likewise, due to our blindness, the knowledge we gain from the written word alone is not saving if we do not have any other help. Even though the word is as bright as the sun in the sky, it is of no use to us if we do not have eyes to see. Without Christ giving us understanding, we cannot obtain a saving acquaintance with God that directs us in walking with Him. It is only in Christ that

this knowledge is found. He has given us understanding so that we may know the true God (1 John 5:20). Any other light without His granting us understanding will not suffice. He is the true Light that enlightens everyone (John 1:9). He opens our understanding so that we may comprehend the Scriptures (Luke 24:45). No one has ever truly known God except through the revelation of Jesus Christ. God dwells in unapproachable light (1 Timothy 6:16), and no one has ever had such acquaintance with Him as to claim to have seen Him except through the revelation of Jesus Christ. Jesus tells the Pharisees that, despite their professed knowledge, they had never heard the voice of God or seen His form (John 5:37). They had no spiritual acquaintance with God; He was to them like a man they had neither heard nor seen. Acquaintance with God as love, full of kindness, patience, grace, and forgiving mercy (which alone enables us to walk with Him) is found only in Christ. But I will discuss this further later. Therefore, this also is hidden in Him.

3. Moreover, there must be a way in which we can walk with God. Initially, God assigned us the path of innocence and perfect holiness in the covenant of works. However, due to sin, this path has become filled with thorns, obstructed by curses and wrath, and no living being can take a single step on that path. If we ever hope to have communion with God, a new way for us to walk in must be discovered. Once again, this way is found only in Christ. Apart from Him, the entire world cannot uncover a path on which a person can take a single step in walking with God. Therefore, the Holy Spirit tells us that Christ has consecrated and dedicated "a new and living way" into the holiest of all (Hebrews 10:20). It is a new way because the first old way was useless, and it is a living way in contrast to the dead way. Thus, the exhortation is given in verse 22: "Let us draw near" now that

we have a way to walk in. This way that He has prepared is none other than Himself (John 14:6). When addressing those who desire to approach the Father and have communion with Him, Jesus declares, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." He is the means of all communication between God and us. In Him, we meet; in Him, we walk. All influences of love, kindness, and mercy from God to us come through Him. Likewise, all our responses of love, delight, faith, and obedience to God are mediated through Him. He is the "one way" that God frequently promises His people, and it is a glorious way (Isaiah 35:8), a high way of holiness that guarantees we will not go astray once we enter it. This is further described in Isaiah 42:16. All other ways, all paths except this one, lead to the chambers of death and cause us to walk contrary to God.

4. However, even if we assume all of the above—agreement, acquaintance, and a provided way—if we lack the strength to walk in that way, what good is it? This is another crucial aspect that must be added. By ourselves, we are weak; we are incapable of making progress in the ways of God (Romans 5:6). When we are set on the path, either we stumble and fall or temptations cast us down, preventing any advancement. The Lord Jesus plainly states that without Him, we can do nothing—nothing that will be accepted by God (John 15:5). Neither all the creatures in heaven nor on earth can offer us the slightest assistance. Human efforts to rely on our own strength amount to nothing. This aspect of wisdom is also hidden in Christ. All the strength to walk with God comes from Him. As Paul says, "I can do all things through him who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:13). He denies that we have any sufficiency in ourselves (2 Corinthians 3:5). Although we are weaklings, incapable of doing

anything on our own, through Jesus Christ, we can accomplish all things as if we were giants. Therefore, in Him, we are "more than conquerors" against all obstacles on our path (Romans 8:37). This is because from His fullness, we receive grace upon grace (John 1:16). We receive from Him the Spirit of life and power, which carries us swiftly and safely on the paths of walking with God, just as an eagle soars on its wings. Any step taken in any other way, relying on strength that does not come directly from Christ, is a step toward damnation. He first takes us by the arm and teaches us to walk, leading us toward perfection. He provides us with both milk and solid food for nourishment. He strengthens us with all His might and accompanies us as we run the race set before us. Nevertheless—

5. From where do we derive the confidence to walk with God, particularly our God, who is "a consuming fire" (Hebrews 12:29)? Was there not such fear among His people of old that seeing God was believed to be unbearable, leading to certain death? Can anyone, without extreme horror, contemplate the dreadful appearance God made to them on Mount Sinai? Even Moses, their mediator, said, "I tremble with fear" (Hebrews 12:21), and all the people said, "Do not let God speak to us, or we will die" (Exodus 20:19). Even though individuals may have notions of God's goodness and kindness, when faced with the revelation of His glory, they tremble with fear and astonishment. Has this not been the case even with His choicest saints (Habakkuk 3:16; Isaiah 6:5; Job 42:5-6)? Where, then, do we find the audacity to walk with God? The apostle will answer this for us in Hebrews 10:19: "We have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus." Similarly, Ephesians 3:12 states, "In him we have boldness and access with confidence." Rather than standing at a distance like the people during the giving of

the law, we draw near to God with boldness, and this is possible because of one reason: The fear and terror of God are a result of sin. Adam did not consider hiding himself until he had sinned. The guilt of sin on our conscience and the common notion ingrained in our hearts that God is a righteous avenger cause us to dread His presence, fearing that He has come to bring our sins to remembrance. However, by His sacrifice and atonement, the Lord Jesus has removed this conscience of sin, along with the dread of God's revenge on its account. He has taken away the sword of the law that condemns us, granting us great boldness before God. He now reveals Himself not as a vengeful Judge but as a tender, merciful, and reconciled Father. Moreover, while we naturally possess a spirit of bondage that torments us with numerous fears, Jesus takes it away and grants us the Spirit of adoption. Through this Spirit, we cry out, "Abba, Father," and confidently and graciously behave as children. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom" (2 Corinthians 3:17), specifically freedom from all the dread and terror associated with the administration of the law. Since there is no sin that God will more severely avenge than any audacity displayed by individuals outside of Christ, there is no grace more pleasing to Him than the boldness He grants us through the blood of Jesus. Consequently, there is—

6. One more thing to add: Two individuals cannot walk together unless they share the same purpose and aim for the same end. In a word, this purpose is given to us in the Lord Jesus. God's ultimate goal is to magnify His own glory, and only in the Lord Jesus can we aim for this end. To summarize, all the wisdom of walking with God is hidden in Christ, and it can only be obtained from Him. This has been demonstrated through an enumeration of specific aspects. And thus, I have brought the first part of my

demonstration to a close, showcasing that all true wisdom and knowledge are stored in and dispensed through the Lord Jesus. I have only one more point to add, and I will be brief.

SECONDLY, then, I say that this truth will be further revealed by considering the insufficiency and vanity of anything else that claims or pretends to wisdom. There are two things in the world that fall under this category: 1. Learning or literature, which includes skill and knowledge of arts, sciences, languages, and knowledge of past events. 2. Prudence and skill in managing ourselves in relation to others, in civil affairs for the public good, which is considered the most commendable virtue in the natural realm. Now, I will briefly demonstrate regarding both of these: (1) They are entirely inadequate for achieving the specific ends for which they are intended. (2) Even in conjunction and with their utmost development, they cannot reach the true ultimate end of wisdom. Both of these considerations ultimately affirm the supremacy of Jesus Christ.

Let us begin with the first of these, particularly in relation to the first point. Learning itself, even if it were possessed by a single individual, is incapable of attaining the specific end for which it is intended. This fact renders it futile and vexatious.

The specific purpose of literature (though often overlooked, as people's attention is fixed on false aims, causing them to deviate from the true goal) is nothing other than to alleviate some of the curses that have befallen us as a result of sin. Learning is the soul's attempt to grapple with the curse of sin. Adam, at his creation, was fully equipped with all the knowledge necessary for the ultimate end of humanity, except for matters that did not exist at the time, neither in themselves nor in any natural causes, such as languages and



historical events. There was no limitation, let alone darkness, on his understanding that would have necessitated effort to enhance and actualize his general understanding of things. Concerning his knowledge of nature, it is evident from his appropriate naming of all creatures (the specific reasons for which are now lost to us). Based on the approval given to his naming of things in Scripture and the significance that remains evident, it is clear that he named them based on a deep understanding of their natures. Hence, Plato observed that the one who first imposed names on things was the wisest and possessed wisdom beyond that of a mere mortal. If the wisest person alive or a gathering of all the wise men in the world were to attempt to name all living creatures according to their natures and qualities, they would quickly realize their limitations. Adam was created perfect for the purpose of ruling over the creatures and living unto God, and this could not have been accomplished without knowledge of the nature of the creatures and the will of God. However, due to sin, all of this knowledge was lost, and the multiplication of languages became a curse as a consequence of subsequent rebellion. The entire purpose of learning is to disentangle the soul from the consequences of this curse. Ignorance, darkness, blindness, the loss of familiarity with the works of God (both spiritual and natural), the estrangement caused by the multiplication of languages, the tumult of passions and affections, and countless confusing prejudices have all resulted from sin. The aim and purpose of literature is to remove and alleviate these effects—to disentangle the mind in its reasoning, to regain familiarity with the works of God, and to overcome the repercussions of the curse of divided languages. This is its objective. Anyone who pursues any other aim in literature is merely chasing after ravens and shells. Now, without delving into the vanity and vexation of spirit, along with the countless evils associated with this pursuit, I simply assert that literature, in itself, is in no way sufficient for achieving its intended purpose. This

insufficiency is indelibly written on its forehead. In this regard, I would like to make the following observations:

(1) The knowledge that is sought to be regained was given to humanity in order for them to walk with God, towards the supernatural end for which they were created. After being equipped with all their faculties, the law of life and death was given to them so that they might understand the purpose for which they received these faculties. Therefore, knowledge in Adam was spiritualized and sanctified. Even the knowledge he possessed by nature, in terms of its source and purpose, was spiritual.

(2) The loss of this knowledge is part of the curse that was inflicted upon us because of sin. Whatever we lack in comparison to the state of the first man in innocence, whether in terms of the loss of good or the addition of evil, is all a consequence of the curse resulting from sin. Furthermore, the blindness, ignorance, darkness, and deadness that are ascribed to us in a state of nature encompass what we are discussing here.

Based on these two considerations, it is abundantly clear that learning, on its own, cannot achieve the end it seeks.

[1] The knowledge it uncovers (which, truth be told, is very limited, weak, obscure, imperfect, and uncertain, often serving only to fuel quarrels and opposition among people, thereby disgracing reason) is not, in the slightest measure, spiritualized or brought into alignment with the original purpose of living for God and with God. This surpasses its capabilities. In this regard, the apostle assures us that the ultimate outcome of people's pursuit of knowledge is darkness and folly (Romans 1:21-22). What did the profound inquiries, subtle disputations, acute reasonings, and remarkable discoveries of Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and others achieve in terms of the specific

purpose at hand? The apostle declares that "they became fools." Even the individual who is universally recognized as the pinnacle of wisdom among them, with whom living was deemed an incomparable blessing, died like a fool, sacrificing a rooster to Aesculapius. Another apostle assures us that Jesus Christ alone is "the true Light" who enlightens us (John 1:9), and no one possesses true light apart from Him. After all the learning of humanity, without an immediate connection to Christ, they remain natural people who cannot comprehend the things of God. Their light is still darkness, and how great is that darkness! Only the Lord Jesus, anointed to open the eyes of the blind, can spiritualize a concept and arrange it in a manner that glorifies God. Despite all their efforts, they are still blind and in darkness, knowing nothing as they ought to. I am well aware of how those who have achieved such knowledge are prone to say, with great contempt for others, "Are we also blind?" However, God has shattered their pride, declaring, "Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe?" (1 Corinthians 1:20). I will refrain from adding what Paul further cautions us about, seemingly condemning philosophy as being capable of plundering souls, or what Tertullian and other ancient writers have said on the matter. I am confident that they opposed not the true use and benefit of philosophy but its abuse.

[2] The darkness and ignorance that learning seeks to dispel, being a curse upon us, cannot be removed or alleviated in the slightest measure by that same curse. Even if someone attains the pinnacle of learning, without Christ, they are as much under the curse of blindness, ignorance, dullness, and stupidity as the poorest and most ignorant soul in the world. The curse can only be lifted by the one who became a curse for us. Any penal consequence can only be removed by the one upon whom all our sins were laid as punishment. This curse becomes more entrenched as the mind becomes more

proficient, strengthening itself in opposition to God. All that learning accomplishes is to bolster pride and foster rebellion against the Lord Christ. Therefore, this knowledge falls short of its specific purpose and cannot be the substantial wisdom we seek.

There are various other aspects that can easily mar the reputation of this wisdom due to its complexity, difficulty, uncertainty, and unsatisfactory nature, leading its followers into the very things they claim to avoid: blindness and folly. It can be rightly labeled as "vanity and vexation of spirit." I hope I won't need to add anything else to prove that I hold literature in high esteem and respect. My intention is simply to humbly submit it before Jesus Christ and place the crown upon His head.

Now, let us consider the second part of the finest wisdom outside of Christ, which is the prudence in managing civil affairs. There is nothing more magnificent yet perishable than this, and nothing more beneficial for the common good of humanity. The immediate purpose of this prudence is to maintain order and boundaries within the rational world, drawing circles around human beings and preventing them from crossing their designated limits and causing mutual disturbance and destruction. All trouble and discord arise from disorder and the violation of rights, customs, interests, and relationships. The ultimate aim of all earthly wisdom is to ensure that everything functions within its proper sphere, minimizing interference just as celestial bodies move in harmony despite their diverse and varied motions. The specific goal of this wisdom is to keep everything within its assigned boundaries.

It will be quite simple to demonstrate that all civil prudence, apart from the frustration involved in acquiring it and the disappointment upon attaining it, is entirely inadequate in achieving this goal. The

present state of affairs in the world, as well as historical eras, provide ample evidence. However, I will further expose the futility of civil prudence for this purpose through a few observations.

Firstly, it is evident that, by the righteous judgment of God, many of those who possess great abilities in this regard often employ them for purposes directly contrary to their natural tendency and aim. The majority of the world's upheavals and breaches of boundaries can be traced back to such individuals. If people were not so wise, perhaps the world would be more peaceful, even though the purpose of wisdom is to maintain tranquility. It seems that God has afflicted the wisdom of the world, especially in those who possess it in abundance, causing it to be used in direct opposition to its intended purpose.

Secondly, it is God's constant way of promoting His own glory to mix the wisdom and counsel of the wisest people with folly and madness. In their profound strategies, they often propose measures as unsuitable as those suggested by a child or a fool, ultimately leading to their own disappointment and ruin. "He destroys the wisdom of the wise and brings to nothing the understanding of the prudent" (1 Corinthians 1:19). This is described extensively in Isaiah 19:11-14. Drunkenness and staggering are the outcomes of their wisdom because the Lord gives them a spirit of confusion. Job 5:12-14 also describes their encounter with darkness in broad daylight, when everything appears clear and one would wonder how they could go astray. God sets them to work and ensures their plans come to nothing, as stated in Isaiah 8:9-10. Psalm 2:3-4 portrays God as deriding and mocking their plots and schemes, witnessing these poor creatures diligently working towards their own downfall. This has never been more evident than in the present age. The destruction of

most wise individuals can be attributed to their own folly, as their counsel is often no better than madness.

Thirdly, this wisdom, which should bring about universal tranquility, has consistently brought about restlessness and grief among those who possess it most prominently. "In much wisdom is much grief" (Ecclesiastes 1:18). Some have even taken their own lives, like Ahithophel, while others have met violent ends. There seems to be no end to the foolishness associated with this wisdom. The great men of the world may be acclaimed for it, but in reality, only a few truly possess it. Most of the achievements attributed to them are simply the result of common events, in which they contribute very little. Ordinary people, who recognize the greatness above them, revere the gatherings and conferences of the esteemed and powerful. The weakness and folly of these wise men remain largely unknown. In cases where this wisdom has been most prominent, it has bordered on atheism and has been accompanied by falsehood and injustice, leading its possessors into wickedness and infamy.

I won't need to provide more examples to demonstrate the inadequacy of this wisdom in achieving its own specific and immediate end. It is the nature of anything that falls short of its intended target to be considered vain. Therefore, it is far from being true and substantial wisdom, as its very essence is marked by disappointment.

This is the first reason why true wisdom cannot be found in either of these pursuits, as they fail to even reach their particular and immediate goals. However, it is important to note that both of them, even when combined and maximally developed, are unable to attain the ultimate and true end of wisdom. This claim can be easily demonstrated, and their incapacity and unsuitability for the true end

of wisdom could be readily revealed. Yet, this has already been explicitly done by the one who possessed the greatest abundance of both (Solomon in his book of Ecclesiastes), so I will not dwell on it any further.

In conclusion, if true and substantial wisdom cannot be found among these pursuits, if the precious pearl is not hidden within this field, if both of them are characterized by emptiness and disappointment, then it would be futile to seek wisdom in anything else below them. These pursuits are incomparably excellent, and therefore, let us all unanimously place the crown of wisdom upon the head of the Lord Jesus.

In a few words, let the reader consider the purpose of this entire digression: to encourage our hearts to joyfully embrace and delight in the Lord Jesus. If all wisdom is stored in Him and can only be obtained through a connection with Him, and if everything else that claims wisdom apart from Him is foolishness and vanity, then those who desire wisdom must learn where to find true solace for their souls.

## CHAPTER IV

Of communion with Christ in a conjugal relation in respect of consequential affections—His delight in his saints first insisted on, Isa. 62:5; Cant. 3:11; Prov. 8:21—Instance of Christ's delight in believers—He reveals his whole heart to them, John 15:14, 15; himself, 1 John 3:23; his kingdom; enables them to communicate their mind to him, giving them assistance, a way, boldness, Rom. 8:26, 27—The saints delight in Christ; this manifested Cant. 2:7, 8:6—Cant. 3:1–5, opened—Their delight in his servants and ordinances of worship for his sake.

The communion that begins between Christ and the soul is further carried out through appropriate consequential affections that befit such a relationship. Christ, having given Himself to the soul, loves the soul, and the soul, having given itself to Christ, loves Him in return. Christ loves His own, and He loves them unceasingly. The saints also love Christ, loving Him sincerely.

The love of Christ toward His saints encompasses four aspects: delight, valuation, pity or compassion, and bounty. Likewise, the love of the saints toward Christ can be classified under these four headings: delight, valuation, chastity, and duty. Two of these aspects are of the same nature, while the other two are distinct, as is fitting for a relationship where all things are not on equal terms.

Firstly, on the part of Christ, there is delight. Delight is the expression of love and joy, the satisfaction and pleasure of the mind in the enjoyment of something suitable and desirable. Christ takes immense delight in His saints. As a bridegroom rejoices over his bride, so shall God rejoice over His people. The day of espousals is a



day of gladness in His heart. This delight is unparalleled, surpassing the joys experienced by mere mortals in their earthly journey. The bridegroom's delight on the day of his espousals represents the pinnacle of expressed delight. In Christ, this delight corresponds to the relationship He enters into with us. His heart is filled with joy in us, without any sorrow. Each day we live is His wedding day. It is written, "The LORD your God is in your midst" (dwelling among us, assuming our nature) "as a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love; he will exult over you with loud singing." This description encompasses all the elements of delight—joy, exultation, tranquility, and satisfaction. Christ says, "I rejoiced in the inhabited world and my delight was with the sons of men." The thoughts of communion with the saints were the joy of His heart from eternity. Based on the covenant and agreement between Him and the Father, that He would share a portion with the strong and save a remnant for His inheritance, His soul rejoiced in the anticipation of the pleasure and delight He would find in them when they would be fully united with Him in communion. Thus, it is said that He was brought up with Him. Christ took us into His care and delighted in the execution of His trust. He says, "Here I will dwell, for I have desired it. I will abundantly bless her provisions; I will satisfy her poor with bread. Her priests I will clothe with salvation, and her saints will shout for joy." He has chosen His saints as His temple and dwelling place because He takes delight in them. This is why He draws them so close to Himself in every aspect of their relationship. As God, they are His temple; as a king, they are His subjects—He is the king of saints; as a head, they are His body—He is the head of the church; as a firstborn, He calls them His brothers—He is not ashamed to call them brethren.

As evidence of this delight, I will provide one particular instance among many: Christ reveals His secrets, His thoughts, to His saints

and enables them to reveal the secrets of their hearts to Him. This is a clear demonstration of great delight. It was Samson's carnal delight in Delilah that led him to reveal to her the most important matters concerning him. He did not hide his thoughts from her, even though it cost him his life. We only reveal our hearts to a bosom friend. There is perhaps no greater evidence of delight in intimate communion than this: when one reveals their heart to someone they have invited into their fellowship, not sharing common and widely known matters. Therefore, I have chosen this example from among countless others to illustrate Christ's delight in His saints.

Christ communicates His thoughts to His saints and to them alone—His thoughts, the counsel of His love, the meditations of His heart, and the purposes of His will for their eternal good. He reveals to them the ways of His grace, the workings of His Spirit, the principles of His rule, and the obedience required by His gospel. All spiritual revelation comes from Christ. He is the true Light that enlightens everyone who comes into the world. He is the Day-spring, the Day-star, and the Sun. Thus, no light can exist apart from Him. It is through Him that "the secret of the LORD is with those who fear him, and he makes known to them his covenant." He fulfills this by saying, "You are my friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you." He treats them as friends and discloses all His mind to them. Everything that the Father has entrusted to Him as the Mediator to be revealed, He imparts. The apostle explains this by saying, "God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. For who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received not

the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God." Christ sends His Spirit, as promised, to reveal His mind to His saints and lead them into all truth. Therefore, the apostle concludes, "We have the mind of Christ," for He treats us as friends and reveals His mind to us. There is nothing in the heart of Christ that concerns His friends which He does not disclose to them. He reveals all His love, goodwill, the secrets of His covenant, the paths of obedience, and the mystery of faith to them.

And all of this is spoken in contrast to unbelievers, with whom he has no communion. They do not understand the mind of Christ as they should. "The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God" (1 Corinthians 2:14). There is a significant difference between merely understanding the doctrine of Scripture in its literal form and truly knowing the mind of Christ. We have this knowledge through the special anointing from Christ (1 John 2:27): "We have received an anointing from the Holy One, and we know all things" (1 John 2:20).

Now, the things that Christ reveals to those in communion with Him, whom He delights in, can be categorized into two main aspects: Himself and His kingdom.

1. Himself. In John 14:21, Jesus says, "Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him." This manifestation includes revealing His graces, desirability, and loveliness. He allows those whom He delights in to know Him as He truly is—a Saviour, a Redeemer, the most excellent among thousands. They come to understand the true worth and value of the precious pearl, even

if others may see no beauty or desirability in Him. He reveals Himself and His excellencies to those in whom He delights, and they behold His beauty and glory with an unveiled face, being transformed into the same image by the Spirit of the Lord (2 Corinthians 3:18).

2. His kingdom. They come to know the governance of His Spirit in their hearts and understand His authority and rule as revealed in His Word and among His churches.

First and foremost, He manifests His delight in His saints by sharing His secrets with them. He enables them to know His person, His excellencies, His grace, His love, His kingdom, His will, the riches of His goodness, and the depths of His mercy, beyond what the world can see or know.

Secondly, He empowers His saints to communicate their minds and reveal their souls to Him, so that they may walk together as intimate friends. Christ knows the thoughts of all, for He knows what is in man and searches the hearts and minds (John 2:25; Revelation 2:23). However, not everyone knows how to express their minds to Christ. It is not enough for Christ to know a person's mind, for He knows everyone's mind whether they will it or not. But for a person to be able to reveal their heart to Christ brings consolation. The prayers of the saints are like incense, pleasing aromas to Him, while the prayers of others are like howling, cutting off a dog's neck, or offering swine's blood—a abomination to the Lord. To communicate one's heart to the Lord Jesus, three things are required:

1. Assistance for the task, for we cannot do it on our own. The saints have this assistance through the Spirit of Jesus (Romans 8:26-27). Without the help of the Spirit of supplication, all efforts and attempts to commune with God are in vain and serve

no purpose. Christ takes great delight in our opening our hearts and souls to Him. Hence, His affectionate call to us to engage in such communication through prayer (Song of Solomon 2:14).

2. A way to approach God with our desires, which is provided by Him (John 14:5-6). The original way to approach God, established at our creation, is closed due to sin. The flaming sword of the law blocks all paths to communion with God. Jesus Christ has consecrated a new and living way for believers, a way through the veil, that is, His flesh (Hebrews 10:20). This way is exclusively for those who believe. Others may claim to approach God with their prayers, but they do not draw near to Him because they do not come through the designated way. Christ alone is the way to the throne of grace, and no one comes to God except through Him. Through Him, believers have access in one Spirit to the Father (Ephesians 2:18).
3. Boldness to approach God. Sinners, upon realizing the terror of the Lord, often ask, "Who among us can dwell with the consuming fire? Who among us can dwell with everlasting burnings?" (Isaiah 33:14). It is no wonder that shame and trembling before God are the natural responses to sin. God will avenge the audacious boldness displayed by sinners outside of Christ towards Him. However, we now have boldness to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, a new and living way He consecrated for us through the curtain, that is, His flesh. With Jesus as our High Priest, we can approach God with a sincere heart and full assurance of faith (Hebrews 10:19-20). Indeed, the glory and terror of the Lord, coupled with the perfect holiness of His being, may lead one to conclude that they cannot serve Him on their own, and any attempt to draw near to Him would only intensify His righteous wrath. It is only through

Christ and on the basis of His sacrifice and intercession that we have the confidence to approach God. These are the three advantages that the saints have in communicating their minds to the Lord Christ, provided by Him because He delights in them.

To briefly address an important point, I will illustrate one of these advantages, although I could do so for each one, to demonstrate the difference between spiritually revealing our minds to Christ in this acceptable manner and the form of prayer practiced by others. I will focus on the first advantage, which is the assistance we receive from the Spirit.

First, the Spirit of Christ reveals to us our own needs so that we may reveal them to Him. "Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God" (Romans 8:26-27). No teaching, apart from the Spirit of God, can make us aware of our own needs, burdens, and temptations. It is a heavenly revelation for the soul to know its own needs and weaknesses. With this assistance, prayer is more than halfway accomplished even before it begins. The conscience is deeply affected, and the mind and spirit contend within, especially in areas of constraint. The burdens are carried on the shoulders, and the soul unloads itself before the Lord Christ. Through a holy sense and weariness of sin (not through perplexing conviction), the soul realizes where it is dead, dull, cold, unbelieving, and tempted beyond its strength. It discerns when the light of God's countenance is absent. The Spirit grants the soul an indescribable sense and experience of all these things. Without this, prayer is not truly prayer; it may be heard outwardly, but the heart does not speak. The

sense of need is the source of desire—natural desires arise from natural needs, and spiritual desires from spiritual needs. Without this sense, given by the Holy Spirit, there can be neither desire nor prayer.

2ndly. The expressions or words of such individuals fall far short of the intensity of their hearts' longing. Therefore, during and after their supplications, "the Spirit intercedes with groans that cannot be expressed." Some people's words exceed the depth of their hearts. If only their spirits matched their expressions, it would be satisfactory. Those who have this assistance cannot find clothing broad and spacious enough to adequately convey the desires of their hearts. Hence, even in their most fervent prayers, they experience a twofold dissatisfaction: 1. They cannot rely on their prayers as righteousness; they would not be able to withstand scrutiny if God were to mark any flaws. 2. The heartfelt desires and struggles within them are not fully poured out or adequately represented in their prayers. However, they may find great refreshment in Christ through these prayers. The more they speak, the more they realize how much remains unsaid.

3rdly. The intercession of the saints, assisted in this way, aligns with God's will. They are guided by the Spirit to make requests to God for things they should desire—things that God knows are good, beneficial, and suitable for them in their current condition. There are several ways to determine whether our supplications align with God's will. I will mention just one: when our prayers align with the promises. When our prayers are governed by the promises, they are in accordance with God's will. For example, David in Psalm 119:49 says, "Remember your word to your servant, in which you have made me hope." He prays and aligns his desires with the promises on which he has relied. However, one can ask for something promised and yet not have prayers governed by the promise. They may pray for

what is promised but not in the manner prescribed by the promise. James states that some "ask and do not receive, because they ask wrongly, to spend it on their passions" (James 4:3). Although they ask for things included in the promise, their motives and intentions are amiss.

Two things are required to pray for things according to the promise:

1. We must view them as promised and promised in Christ. This means that our hope for attaining the things we ask for rests solely on the mediation and redemption of Christ, in whom all the promises are fulfilled. This is what it means to pray to the Father in Christ's name—to approach God as a Father, the source, and Christ as the one who procures these promises.
2. We must pray for these things for the purpose of the promise, not to satisfy our own selfish desires. When we pray for forgiveness of sin but secretly intend to continue in sin, we are seeking the choicest mercy of the covenant to fulfill our lusts. The purpose of the promise, as explained by the apostle, is to cleanse ourselves from all defilement of body and spirit, pursuing holiness in the fear of God (2 Corinthians 7:1). When we ask for what is promised, in accordance with the purpose of the promise, our supplications are in line with God's will. This is the first conjugal affection Christ exercises toward believers—He delights in them. This is evident from numerous considerations, including the example provided.

In response to Christ's affection, believers delight in Him. He is their joy, crown, rejoicing, life, food, health, strength, desire, righteousness, salvation, and blessedness. Without Him, they have nothing, but in Him, they find everything. Galatians 6:14 states, "But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus



Christ." Since the beginning of time, He has been the hope, expectation, desire, and delight of all believers. The promise of Him was all that God gave Adam in his indescribable distress to console and comfort him (Genesis 3:15). Eve perhaps believed that the promised seed was born in her firstborn when she said, "I have gotten a man with the help of the Lord" (Genesis 4:1). Lamech, upon receiving Noah as a type of Christ and salvation through Him, exclaimed, "This one shall bring us relief from our work and from the painful toil of our hands because of the ground that the Lord has cursed" (Genesis 5:29). He rejoiced in Him who would remove the curse by becoming a curse for us. When Abraham returned from his conquest over the eastern kings who had opposed the confederate kings of Sodom, God appeared to him with a glorious promise, saying, "Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great" (Genesis 15:1). What more could his soul desire? However, he cried out, "O Lord God, what will you give me, for I continue childless?" He trusted in the promise that all the earth would be blessed through his offspring, and without that offspring, all other things would be of no value to him. Thus, it is said that Abraham "rejoiced that he would see my day; he saw it and was glad" (John 8:56). The anticipation of Christ's coming, even from a distance of two thousand years, brought joy and delight to his heart. Jacob, while blessing his sons, exulted when he came to Judah, seeing him as the one through whom Shiloh would come (Genesis 49:8-9). He found relief from his foreknowledge and consideration of his descendants' distress by turning his attention to the one who would remove the curse and be the salvation of his people. This list could go on indefinitely. Simeon summed it up by declaring Christ to be God's salvation and the glory of Israel (Luke 2:30-31). Whatever was considered glorious in the past was either Christ Himself or a type of Him. He is referred to as the "Desire of all nations" in Haggai 2:7. Those who delight in Christ long for and desire Him—the one whom

their souls love and find delight in. Thus, the delight of the saints in Christ is a defining characteristic of Him, as stated in Malachi 3:1: "Behold, I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple; and the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the LORD of hosts." "The Lord whom you seek, in whom you delight" is a description of Christ. He is their delight and their most desirable one—the object of their affection. To provide a specific example:

The Song of Solomon extensively explores this pattern of communion with Jesus Christ. The bride declares that she sits under His shadow with great delight (Song of Solomon 2:3). She manifests this delight in various ways, which we should strive to emulate in our hearts' affections toward Him:

1. She demonstrates her great care to be in His company and to maintain fellowship with Him once she has obtained it. In Song of Solomon 2:7, she implores the daughters of Jerusalem, "I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, by the gazelles or the does of the field, that you not stir up or awaken love until it pleases." Having experienced sweet communion with Christ, as described in the preceding verses (which I mentioned earlier), she expresses her delight and desire for its continuation. In a manner similar to speaking to a beloved companion, she says, "I charge you, by everything dear to you—by the things you find most delightful and lovely among all creation—that you do not disturb Him." Her ultimate aim and desire are to prevent anything, particularly sin or provocation, from causing Christ to depart from her or withdraw from the sense of His presence that He seemed to enjoy with her. She implores them not to stir Him up until He pleases, which means never. הַאֲהַבָּה (love itself,

abstractly) is used to express intense affection, as is often the case with that word. When a believer's soul has once experienced sweet and genuine communion with Christ, they become vigilant against all temptations and potential avenues through which sin could disrupt their enjoyment of their beloved Lord and Savior, their rest and desire. They are eager not to neglect anything or commit any act that may interrupt the communion they have attained. Since the most common entrance for temptations that disturb the rest and satisfaction Christ finds in the soul arises from delightful diversions that draw the believer away from actual communion with Him, their desire is strong and active, urging their companions and those with whom they interact not to divert them into any frame or state that would prevent Christ from finding delight and rest in them. A believer who holds Christ in their arms is like someone who has discovered great spoils or a precious pearl. They are watchful and fear anything that might deprive them of it. Riches make people vigilant, and possessing the tangible and real presence of the one in whom all the riches and treasures of God are found compels individuals to be cautious in safeguarding Him. The path to the highest level of communion is also the path of greatest spiritual vigilance. A careless attitude toward enjoying Christ is clear evidence of a false heart.

2. The bride expresses her delight in him through her intense longing for his presence and her desire for even closer communion with him. In chapter 8, verse 6, she says, "Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm, for love is strong as death, jealousy is fierce as the grave. Its flashes are flashes of fire, the very flame of the LORD." This imagery is undoubtedly derived from the high priest of the Jews, who symbolically represented the church before God. The high priest

wore a breastplate with the names of the twelve tribes of Israel engraved on it like seals or signets (Exodus 28:29). He also had similar engravings on his shoulders or arms (verses 11-12), symbolizing the priesthood of Christ, who bears the names of all believers before the Father in the heavenly sanctuary (Hebrews 9:24). Now, the seal on the heart represents near, intimate, and tender love and care that leaves an impression and image on the heart of the beloved. The bride says, "Set me as a seal upon your heart, let me always be securely placed in your tender and affectionate love. Let there be an engraving, a powerful impression of love, on your heart that will never fade away." The soul is never satisfied with thoughts of Christ's love for it. Its language is, "O that it were more, that it were more! That I could be like a seal on his heart!" The soul knows, on serious reflection, that the love of Christ is inconceivable and cannot be increased, but it yearns to grasp and comprehend it. Therefore, she adds, "Set me as a seal upon your arm." The heart is the source, hidden and deep, while the arm represents manifestation and power. The bride desires Christ's love to be visibly demonstrated to her through His tender and powerful affection towards her. This request reveals two things: first, Christ's constant mindfulness of the soul, keeping its condition always in His view, engraved on His arm, as stated in Isaiah 49:15-16, and His display of His power to preserve it in accordance with the love of His heart; and second, the manifestation of Christ's hidden love and care for the soul, made evident through the fruit and visible effects of His love. This is what she seeks assurance of, and without a sense of this, there can be no rest obtained.

The reason she gives for her earnest supplications is what primarily demonstrates her delight in Him: "Love is strong as death, jealousy is

fierce as the grave." This is the meaning behind the lofty metaphors used in this and the following verse: "I cannot bear the workings of my love for you unless I may always have fellowship and communion with you. My love cannot be satisfied without it. It is like the grave, which always demands more and says, 'Give, give.' Death is not satisfied unless it claims its full share; if it does not have everything, it has nothing. Regardless of what happens, if death does not have its complete desire, it has nothing at all. Nor can it be resisted or bribed to divert from its appointed time. That is how my love is. If I do not have you completely, I have nothing. And no matter what the world offers, it cannot tempt my love away; it cannot be swayed any more than death can be diverted from its course. I also cannot bear my jealous thoughts. I fear that you do not love me, that you have forsaken me, because I know that I do not deserve to be loved. These thoughts are as hard and oppressive as hell itself. They bring no rest to my soul. If I do not find myself in your heart and on your arm, it is like lying down in a bed of coals." This also reveals a holy eagerness for delight.

3. She further demonstrates this by her anxiousness, trouble, and perplexity when he is absent and withdraws. People lament the loss of something they take great delight in, but they easily bear the absence of that which does not bring them joy. This state of the bride is revealed in chapter 3, verses 1-3: "On my bed by night I sought him whom my soul loves; I sought him, but found him not. I will rise now and go about the city, in the streets and in the squares; I will seek him whom my soul loves. I sought him, but found him not. The watchmen found me as they went about in the city; they beat me, they bruised me; they took away my veil, those watchmen of the walls." It is now night for the soul—a time of darkness, trouble, or affliction. Whenever Christ is absent, it is night for a believer. He is the sun, and if he sets

upon them, if his radiance is eclipsed, if they do not see light in his light, then darkness reigns. Here, it is not specified whether the onset of trouble made her realize Christ's absence or if Christ's absence caused her distress, resulting in darkness. I lean towards the latter because, aside from that, everything seems to be going well for her. The absence of Christ will indeed make it night—a darkness as dark as can be—in the midst of all other comforting consolations. But is the bride content with this situation? She is on her bed, a place of ease (in this book, the bed signifies rest and contentment, not tribulation), but even in the greatest peace and the opportunity for ease and rest, a believer finds none in the absence of Christ. Even if they are on their bed, undisturbed by anything, they cannot rest if Christ, their true rest, is not there. She sought him. Seeking Christ by night, on the bed (alone, in earnest inquiry, and in darkness), involves two aspects: searching her own soul for the cause of his absence and searching the promises for his presence.

(1.) When the soul does not find Christ present in his usual way—warming, nurturing, reviving it with love, being close to it, always occupying its thoughts, and infusing it with the sweetness of love—but instead finds that other thoughts fill and trouble the heart, and Christ is not near when sought, it immediately investigates the cause of all this. It examines itself, asking how it has conducted itself that it has lost its Beloved. "Where have I been wandering after other lovers?" And when the wrongdoing is discovered, it is filled with revenge and indignation.

(2.) Having reached some conclusion, the soul turns to the promises of the covenant, in which Christ is graciously revealed. It considers one promise after another, searching for a taste of him. It diligently examines whether it can perceive the delightful countenance and

favor of Christ in them. However, if (as often happens) the soul finds nothing but the mere letter, the carcass, in the promise—if it approaches the promise as though seeking Christ's tomb, of which it may be said (not in itself, but in relation to the seeking soul), "He is risen; he is not here"—this bewilders the soul, and it knows not what to do. It is like a person who possesses a precious jewel but has no occasion to use it. They set it aside in what they believe to be a safe place. Then, in a moment of desperate need, they search for the jewel but cannot find it where they expected, and they are filled with astonishment and do not know what to do. This is the experience with this pearl of the gospel. After selling everything for it and enjoying it for a time, to suddenly find it missing in a time of need is deeply perplexing. This was the case with the bride here. "I sought him," she says, "but I found him not." This often occurs in our communion with Christ.

But what does she do now? Does she give up and stop searching? No, she says, "I will arise; I will not give up like that. I must have Christ, or I will die. I will now rise up, or let me rise up, and pursue this matter."

[1.] She resolves to take a different approach, a more vigorous search: "I will arise and use other means besides private prayer, meditation, self-reflection, and examining the promises," which she had focused on before. It shows: 1st. Determination and a zealous, intense rejection of the state in which she lost her love. "I will arise; I will not remain in this state. I am undone if I do." Just as God sometimes calls his church to arise and shake off the dust, they should not remain in that condition. 2ndly. Diligence. "I will now take another course. I will leave no stone unturned, no means untried, in order to possibly restore communion with my Beloved."

This is the state of a soul that does not find the familiar presence of Christ in its private and more secluded seeking—dull in prayer, distracted in meditation, infrequent in thoughts of him. "I will not tolerate this state. I will vigorously pursue, in God's strength, whatever way he has appointed until this state is changed, and I find my Beloved."

[2.] The approach she takes is to go about the city. Without delving into specific details or stretching the allegory too far, the city referred to here is the city of God, the church. Going through the broad and narrow streets represents the diligent inquiry the bride makes in all the paths and ordinances given to her. This is what the soul turns to when Christ is not found in its private efforts: when it cannot find him in any private pursuit, it earnestly seeks him in the public worship, in prayer, preaching, and the administration of the sacraments. In every ordinance, the primary inquiry of believers' souls is for Christ. The more they find of him, the more sweetness and refreshment they experience. Especially when experiencing desertion, they eagerly listen to every word, every prayer, searching for any glimpse of Christ, any light, life, or love that may appear to them. "Oh, if Christ would finally meet me in this sermon or that, and restore my poor heart to a glimpse of his love, a taste of his kindness!" The zeal of a believer in their quest for Christ, when they do not find his presence, either in grace or consolation as in the past, is truly indescribable. Much of the disposition of such a heart is expressed in the repetition of the phrase, "I sought him, I sought him," revealing an immeasurable passion and an industrious desire. Thus, when disappointed at home, the bride continues.

But observe the outcome of this as well: "She sought him, but found him not." Sometimes it happens that all efforts are in vain. "They shall seek him and not find him; they shall not come near him." Let



those who enjoy the presence of Christ be cautious; if they provoke him to depart, if they lose him, it may require many bitter inquiries before they find him again. When a soul prays and meditates, searches the promises privately, and earnestly attends all public ordinances, desperately seeking even a glimpse of the face of Jesus Christ, and yet finds nothing, it is a sorrowful condition.

What follows in this state? Verse 3, "The watchmen found me," etc. It is acknowledged that these watchmen of the city of God are the watchmen and officers of the church. It is truly disheartening that the Holy Spirit sometimes mentions them in an unfavorable manner. Clearly, in chapter 5:7, they become persecutors. It was Luther who said, "Religion is never in greater danger than among the most reverend." Here, however, they show a more gentle nature, and upon seeing the distressed and forsaken soul, they appear to take notice of her condition.

Indeed, it is the duty of faithful watchmen to pay attention to troubled, deserted souls, not keeping their distance but being willing to assist. And a truly distressed soul on account of Christ's absence cannot conceal its longing; it must inquire after him. "Did you see the one whom my soul loves? This is my condition: I have experienced sweet communion with my blessed Jesus, but now he has withdrawn from me. Can you help me? Can you guide me to my consolation? What is your acquaintance with him? When did you last see him? How did he reveal himself to you, and in what manner?" All these efforts in his absence adequately reveal the soul's delight in the presence of Christ. Take one step further to the rediscovery that she experiences, and it will become even more apparent. In verses 4 and 5, she says, "I had only just passed them when I found him whom my soul loves. I held onto him and would not let him go until I brought

him to my mother's house, to the chamber of her who conceived me. I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem," etc.

First, let me tell you how she came to him: "She found him." The specific ways and means are not mentioned. It often happens in our communion with Christ that when private and public means fail and the soul has nothing left but to wait silently and walk humbly, Christ appears. His appearance in such times is clearly an act of grace. Let us never give up in this condition. When all avenues seem closed, when summer and harvest pass without relief, when neither rest nor watchmen can assist, let us wait a little longer, and we will see the salvation of God. Christ sometimes honors his immediate and direct actions, although he usually blesses his ordinances. Christ often reveals himself directly, outside of ordinances, to those who wait for him within them. Whether he will do the same for those who despise the ordinances, I do not know. Although he may meet people unexpectedly, he will not meet them outside of his appointed way. Let us wait as he has ordained; let him appear as he pleases.

Next, let me explain how she deals with him when she finds him: "She held him and would not let him go," etc. These expressions convey the greatest imaginable joy and delight. In summary, once the soul has regained sweet communion with Christ, it firmly grasps him in faith (to "hold fast" is an act of faith), refuses to part with him any longer, and fervently seeks to keep him in the ordinances within the house of its mother, the church of God. The soul employs all means to strengthen the mutual love between Christ and itself. The expressions and allusions used in this context demonstrate the delight to the utmost capacity of the soul. If I were to explore all the instances and testimonies given in the Song of Solomon on this matter, I would need to undertake an exposition of the majority of the book, which is not my present purpose. Let those who are

familiar with these experiences allow their hearts to draw their own conclusions. What do they long for? What brings them joy? What satisfies them completely and gives them sweet contentment in every circumstance? Is it not their Beloved, and him alone?

Furthermore, they also demonstrate their delight in everything that belongs uniquely to Christ in this world. Delighting in everything that pertains to him is evidence of delight. Christ's significant interests in this world lie in his people and his ordinances—the members of his household and their provision. The saints greatly delight in both of these for his sake. Let's consider an example of both kinds in one person, namely, David. In Psalm 16:3, he says, "As for the saints in the land, they are the noble ones in whom is all my delight." Christ says of his church that she is "Hephzibah" (My Delight Is in Her). Here, David says the same about the saints, "Hephzibah—my delight is in them." Just as Christ delights in his saints, they also delight in one another for his sake. David says, "Here is all my delight." Whatever satisfaction he found in other people was nothing compared to the delight he found in them. This is why it is mentioned to "lay down our lives for the brethren" or for any common cause that concerns the interests of the community of believers.

Secondly, let's consider their delight in the ordinances. We can look at the same person, David. Psalms 42, 84, and 48 provide ample testimonies on this matter, and there is no need for further investigation. I will not embark on a new discourse concerning this particular topic.

And so, this is the initial mutual act of conjugal affection in the communion between Christ and believers: he delights in them, and they delight in him. He takes pleasure in their prosperity, and they

take delight in his honor, glory, and presence with them. For his sake, they find delight in his servants (though despised by the world) as the most excellent in the world, and in his ordinances, which are considered the wisdom of God even though they may appear foolish to the world.

## CHAPTER V

Other consequential affections:—1. On the part of Christ—He values his saints—Evidences of that valuation:—(1.) His incarnation; (2.) Exinanition, 2 Cor. 8:9; Phil. 2:6, 7; (3.) Obedience as a servant; (4.) In his death. His valuation of them in comparison of others. 2. Believers' estimation of Christ:—(1.) They value him above all other things and persons; (2.) Above their own lives; (3.) All spiritual excellencies. The sum of all on the part of Christ—The sum on the part of believers. The third conjugal affection—On the part of Christ, pity or compassion—Wherein manifested—Suffering and supply, fruits of compassion—Several ways whereby Christ relieves the saints under temptations—His compassion in their afflictions. Chastity, the third conjugal affection in the saints. The fourth—On the part of Christ, bounty; on the part of the saints, duty.

II. Christ values his saints, he values believers, which is the second aspect of the conjugal affection he has towards them since he has entered into the relationship we are discussing. I won't need to dwell on this for long; there are countless evidences of it in heaven and on earth. A few considerations will support this assertion. Consider

them in two ways: 1. Absolutely; 2. In comparison to others, and you will see the high value he places on them.

1. Everything that Christ has done or does, everything he has undergone or suffered as a mediator, was for their sake. These things were so great and difficult that had he not esteemed believers above all else, he would never have undertaken them. Let's look at a few examples:

(1.) He was "made flesh," manifested in the flesh, for their sake. Hebrews 2:14 states, "Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same nature." The apostle further emphasizes the extent of his valuation of them in verse 16: "For surely it is not angels that he helps, but he helps the offspring of Abraham." He did not hold angels in such high esteem. Whether you interpret "took part" (ἐπιλαμβάνεσθαι) as properly "took" or "took hold of," as our translators did, and supply the word "nature" and refer it to Christ's incarnation, where he took on our nature and not that of angels, or whether you interpret it as "helped" (ἀναλαμβάνεσθαι) and consider it as the result of Christ's incarnation, it doesn't matter for our current purpose. The fact that he preferred the offspring of Abraham over angels, valuing them more, is clearly expressed. And note that he came to help the offspring of Abraham, that is, believers. His esteem and valuation are reserved for them alone.

(2.) For their sake, he became "flesh" in such a way that there was an emptying, a self-humbling, an eclipse of his glory, and he became poor. 2 Corinthians 8:9 says, "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor." While being rich in eternal glory with his Father (John 17:5), he became poor for believers. The same person who was rich also

became poor. It is evident that the riches referred to here can only be those of the Deity, as they are opposed to the poverty he undertook as a man. This is also expressed more fully in Philippians 2:6-7: "Though he was in the form of God, he did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men." Several factors indicate that the "form of God" refers to the essence of the Deity. First, it denotes equality with God the Father. Nothing other than God can be equal to God. Not even Christ, in his role as mediator and in his greatest glory, can be equal to that which is infinite, except that which is also infinite. Second, the "form of God" is contrasted with the "form of a servant," which is referred to as the "likeness of men" in verse 8. "Taking the form of a servant" is explained in the following words: "being found in human form." This phrase is used to describe his incarnation in Romans 8:3. God sent him "in the likeness of sinful flesh" (ἐν ὁμοιώματι σαρκὸς ἁμαρτίας). Thus, in taking on true flesh, he was in the "likeness of sinful flesh." In this act, he "humbled" and "emptied" himself, making himself of no reputation. By assuming flesh, there was a condescension, a debasement of the person of the Son of God, which was inevitable. If God humbled himself to "look down on the heavens and the earth" (Psalm 113:6), then it was certainly an inconceivable condescension and abasement to not only behold but also unite himself with our nature. Although nothing could diminish the essential glory of the Deity, when that person appeared in the form of a man and the form of a servant, the glory of his manifestation was eclipsed. He appeared completely different from what he truly was and had been from eternity. Hence, he prays to his Father to "glorify him with the glory that I had with you before the world existed" (John 17:5) in terms of its manifestation. Therefore, although the divine nature was not debased, the person was.

(3.) For their sake, in taking on flesh, he humbled and emptied himself to become a servant, considered of no esteem or value in the eyes of the world, and a true and genuine servant to the Father. He humbled himself and became obedient for their sake. Everything he did and suffered in his life falls under this consideration, which can be categorized into three aspects: [1.] Fulfilling all righteousness. [2.] Enduring all sorts of persecutions and hardships. [3.] Doing all kinds of good to humanity. For their sake, he assumed a life and a course of action directed toward these goals, as pointed out in Hebrews 5:7-8—a life of prayers, tears, fears, obedience, and suffering. He did all this with cheerfulness and delight, considering his task as his "food and drink," and always professing that the law of obedience was in his heart. He was willing to do God's will. The one who will severely avenge even the slightest opposition from others was willing to endure anything and everything for believers.

(4.) He didn't stop there. For their sake, he became obedient even to the point of death, death on a cross. As he states to his Father, "And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth" (John 17:19). In all that came before, his aim was to die. He was born and lived in order to die. He valued believers above his own life. If we were to consider for a moment what was involved in the death he underwent for them, we would realize the immense value he placed on them. In that death, there was the curse of the law, the wrath of God, and the loss of God's presence. It was a terrifying cup that he tasted and drank from so that believers would never have to taste it. A person would not willingly undergo what Christ endured for us in that one aspect of being forsaken by God, even if it were accompanied by no other distress from which a mere creature might possibly emerge. Christ himself tells us what we should think of this in John 15:13: "Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends." There can be no greater demonstration

or evidence of love than this. What more can anyone do? Yet he tells us elsewhere that there is another heightening and intensification of this love: "But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). When he did this for us, we were sinners and enemies who deserved destruction. What more could be done than to die for us when we were still sinners? Such a death, in such a manner, accompanied by the worst that God had ever threatened sinners with, demonstrates the highest possible value that Christ himself placed on us.

To give up one's glory, riches, ease, life, and love from God, and to endure loss, shame, wrath, curse, and death for someone else, is evidence of a deep valuation. And we are informed that all of this was done for the sake of believers. Certainly, Christ held them in high esteem. Rather than allowing them to perish, to not be his and partake in his glory, he was willing to give up everything for their sake (Ephesians 5:25, 26).

It would be endless if I were to go through all the instances of Christ's valuation of believers in their deliverances, afflictions, and all conditions of sinning and suffering—what he has done, what he does in his intercession, what he delivers them from, what he procures for them. All of these reveal one thing—they are precious to him, his jewels, his diadem, his crown.

2. In comparison to others, the whole world means nothing to him. They are his garden; the rest of the world is a wilderness. As it is written in Song of Solomon 4:12, "A garden enclosed is my sister, my bride; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed." Believers are his inheritance; the rest are his enemies and hold no value in his eyes. In Isaiah 43:3-4, it is said, "For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior. I give Egypt as your



ransom, Cush and Seba in exchange for you. Because you are precious in my eyes and honored, and I love you, I will give people in exchange for you, nations in exchange for your life." Christ deals with his church in this way, giving up all others for their sake, because he loves her. She is precious and honorable in his sight, and therefore he esteems her greatly. He governs all nations and their interests according to what is good for believers. In Amos 9:9, amidst the siftings of nations, God's eyes are on the house of Israel; not a single one of them will perish. In heaven, angels are appointed to minister to believers (Hebrews 1:14). In the world, nations are either blessed or destroyed for their sake, preserved to test them or rejected for their cruelty towards them. They will receive their final judgment from Christ based on how they treated these despised ones. The pillars of the earth are upheld for their sake, and patience is exercised towards the perishing world. In short, even the least, weakest, and poorest believer on earth is valued by Christ more than the entire world. If our hearts were filled with thoughts of this, it would greatly console us.

In response to this, believers also value Jesus Christ. They esteem him above all the world and everything in it. As mentioned earlier, they find delight in him and continually declare in their hearts, like David, "Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you" (Psalm 73:25). Neither heaven nor earth can offer them anything comparable to him, in whom they find their delight.

1. They value him above all other things and persons. One person said, "I would rather fall with Christ than reign with Caesar. The earth is beautiful, the heavens are beautiful, but Jesus is the most beautiful." Christ and a dungeon, Christ and a cross, are

infinitely sweeter to their souls than a crown or a scepter without him. This was true for Moses, who considered the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt (Hebrews 11:26). The reproach of Christ is the worst consequence that the wickedness of the world or the malice of Satan can bring upon his followers. The treasures of Egypt were considered the greatest in the world at that time, yet Moses willingly cast away all of it, regarding them as loss and filth, for the sake of the cross of Christ. Truly, believers are willing to part with the world, even their lives, for him. Acts 20:24 says, "I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the gospel of God." It is known what Ignatius said as he was led to martyrdom: "Let anything come upon me, as long as I may obtain Jesus Christ." The stories of martyrs from the past and present, those who suffered in bearing witness to Christ under persecution, the disregard for life shown by women and children for his sake, and the contempt of torment while his name sweetened their suffering—all of these testify to the truth of this.

2. They value him above all spiritual excellences and righteousness. Philippians 3:7-8 says, "But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ." The apostle Paul recounts the spiritual excellences and privileges he enjoyed under Judaism, which made him highly regarded by his countrymen and set him apart as the only acceptable person to God. Yet, he considers all of it as loss and rubbish compared to knowing the Lord Jesus. He willingly gives up everything he had

worked for and abhors them all. When people have been strongly convinced of their duty and have labored for many years to keep a good conscience, praying, hearing, doing good, denying themselves, and being zealous for God's sake, they are reluctant to part with what they have achieved. How much more reluctant when it comes to things as excellent as their duty to God, blamelessness of conduct, hope of heaven, and the like! But when Christ appears to the soul, when his excellency is known, all these things lose their appeal, their beauty fades, and the soul not only willingly parts with them but considers them defiled. The soul cries out, "In the Lord Jesus alone is my righteousness and glory." Among countless testimonies, Proverbs 3:13-15 confirms this truth: "Blessed is the man who finds wisdom, the man who gains understanding, for she is more profitable than silver and yields better returns than gold. She is more precious than rubies; nothing you desire can compare with her." This passage speaks of Jesus Christ, the Wisdom of God, the eternal Wisdom of the Father. He and his ways are better than silver, gold, rubies, and all desirable things. In the gospel, he compares himself to the "pearl in the Field," for which the merchant sells all he has to obtain. All worldly righteousness, all religious ways, are given up for that one pearl. The glory of his Deity, the excellence of his person, his all-conquering desirability, his incomprehensible love, his wonderful undertaking, his unspeakable condescension, his effectual mediation, his complete righteousness—all of these captivate believers' eyes, fill their hearts, and possess their souls. And this is the second mutual conjugal affection between Christ and believers. All of this, on the part of Christ, can be summed up in two points.

1. He gave up everything, did everything, suffered everything, and continues to do everything as a mediator because of his love for

and esteem of believers. He gave up the greatest glory, endured the greatest misery, and performs the greatest works ever known because he loves his spouse, because he values believers. What more can be said? How little do we truly grasp the depth of these words? How incapable are we of fully comprehending its mysterious depths? He loves and values his saints so much that having undertaken from eternity to bring them to God, he delights in the very thought of it. He pursues this purpose through heaven and hell, life and death, through suffering and action, with mercy and power, and he will not cease until he perfects it. For...

2. He values them so much that he will not lose any of them for eternity, even if the entire world conspires to take them from his hand. When he foresaw the opposition, dangers, and trials they would face, he cried out, "Holy Father, protect them" (John 17:11)—"Let none of them be lost." And he plainly tells us in John 10:28 that no one can snatch his sheep out of his hand. And although he was then in the form of a servant, and it could be assumed that he might not be able to keep hold of them, he truthfully says that his "Father is greater than he" (John 10:29). Therefore, he entrusted them to his Father, and no one can snatch them out of his Father's hand. And while the world, afflictions, and persecutions from the outside may be conquered, there is no guarantee that sin from within, aided by Satan, will not prevail and bring about their ruin. But he has provided against Satan by promising that the gates of hell will not prevail against them, and he has taken care to ensure that sin itself will not destroy them. This indeed reveals the depth of his love—that while his holy soul detests every sin, and his poor spouse is sinful (believers are full of sins, failures, and weaknesses), he covers it all, bears with it all, rather than lose them. He

preserves them by his power from sins for which no remedy is provided in the covenant of grace. Oh, how our dear Lord Jesus bears with an immense amount of sinful follies for this reason! Are not our souls amazed by the thought of it? Infinite patience, forbearance, love, grace, and mercy are all put to work to fulfill his valuation of us.

On our part, this can be summed up in two points:

1. Upon discovering him in our souls, we rejoice in parting with everything we once delighted in or trusted, for his sake, so that we may enjoy him. Sin and lust, pleasure and profit, righteousness and duty—all must go if we are to have Christ.
2. We are willing to part with everything rather than parting with him once we do enjoy him. The thought of parting with peace, health, liberty, family, spouses, and children is distressing and burdensome to even the most devout saints. But their souls cannot bear the thought of parting with Jesus Christ; such a thought is as cruel as the grave. The worst fear they have, in times of fear and abandonment, is that they will be unable to enjoy Jesus Christ. As long as they can enjoy him here, be like him in the future, be ever in his presence, they can freely and cheerfully part with everything, no matter how beautiful or valuable, in this life or the next.

III. The third conjugal affection on the part of Christ is pity and compassion. Just as a man nourishes and cares for his own body, so does the Lord care for his church (Ephesians 5:29). Christ has a deep empathy with his saints in all their troubles, similar to the way a man feels for his own flesh. This aspect of Christ's conjugal love is directed towards the various trials and pressures of afflictions that his saints experience in this earthly life. He does not treat believers

as the Samaritans treated the Jews—fawning over them in prosperity but despising them in trouble. Instead, he is like a tender father who, even though he may love all his children equally, puts in the most effort and presence for the one who is sick and weak, even though that may make them more difficult to bear and seemingly unmanageable. Moreover, he goes beyond mere empathy and actually suffers with them, sharing in all their troubles.

Now, all the sufferings of the saints in this world, where their head and husband displays pity, tenderness, care, and compassion towards them, can be categorized into two types or related to two main areas: 1. Temptations, and 2. Afflictions.

1. Temptations (including sin, which is related to them) arise from, within, and through believers' own weaknesses, as well as from external adversaries. The disposition of Christ's heart and his behavior towards them in this condition is described in Hebrews 4:15: "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities." This verse strongly affirms that we do have a high priest who can and does experience and share in our struggles. The word "touched" falls short of expressing the original meaning; it is "to suffer together" (συμπαθήσαι). The apostle declares that we have a high priest who can and does suffer with us, enduring our weaknesses. He further clarifies how Christ suffers with us and has fellow-feeling for us in our infirmities and temptations in the next verse: "He was tempted in all points like as we are" (Hebrews 4:15). It is in relation to our infirmities, our temptations, and our spiritual weaknesses that he demonstrates compassionate sympathy and shared experience with us. Whatever our infirmities may be, to the extent that they are temptations, he suffers with us under them and shows compassion towards us. That is why on the last

day, he says, "I was hungry," etc. There are two ways of expressing fellow-feeling and suffering with another: (1) Through friendly grieving (*per benevolam condolentiam*), and (2) Through gracious supply (*per gratiosam opitulationem*). Both of these qualities are prominent in Christ:

(1) He grieves and labors with us. In Zechariah 1:12, the angel of the LORD speaks as one deeply affected by the state and condition of Jerusalem. He commands the entire world to take notice that what is done to them is done to him (Zechariah 2:8-9). Jerusalem is "the apple of his eye."

(2) He provides abundant support. Isaiah 40:11 says, "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd; he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and gently lead those that are with young." Here we have both tender compassion and assistance. The entire description of Christ in this passage reflects the utmost tenderness, compassion, and condescension that one can imagine. His people are portrayed as being plagued by many weaknesses. Some are like lambs, others are burdened with pregnancy, and others are very delicate. None of them are strong or comely. Yet, to all of them, Christ is a shepherd who takes care of his own sheep, leading them to pleasant pastures. If he sees a weak lamb, he does not push it away but takes it into his bosom, providing relief and refreshment. He leads it gently and tenderly, just as Jacob led those that were burdened with young. This is what our caring and tender husband desires.

When it is mentioned that Christ is compassionate and suffers with us in Hebrews 4:15, it is added in verse 16 that he provides "grace to help in time of need" (*χάριν εἰς αὐκαιρον βοήθειαν*)—seasonable grace, grace that comes at the right moment to assist. This

demonstrates compassion, for offering timely help, like the Good Samaritan, is crucial. Lamenting our troubles or miseries without providing help serves no purpose. Christ, however, gives timely help—εὐκαιρον βοήθειαν—seasonable help. Help is always excellent because it addresses a need, but when it comes at the right time, it is crowned with success. A pardon given to a criminal when they are about to be executed is sweet and welcome. That is the kind of assistance Christ provides. All his saints can rely on this as a certain rule in both their temptations and afflictions: when they are in need, they will not lack relief, and when they can bear no more, they will be provided for (1 Corinthians 10:13).

Hebrews 2:18 emphatically states, "For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted." It is true that there is something in all our temptations that goes beyond what Christ experienced in his temptation. There is something within us that sides with every temptation, and there is enough within us to tempt us, even if there is no external opposition. However, instead of diminishing his compassion towards us, this actually increases it. If he will provide us with help because we are tempted, the more severe our temptations are, the more ready he will be to assist us. Here are some ways in which Christ provides timely help (εὐκαιρον βοήθειαν) in and under temptations to sin:

[1.] By keeping the soul, which is vulnerable to temptation and exposed to it, in a strong habitual opposition to the particular sin it is prone to. This was the case with Joseph. Christ knew that Joseph's great trial, the one that could have ruined him if he had been overcome, would come from the hand of his mistress tempting him to commit adultery. Therefore, he fortified Joseph's heart with a steadfast resistance against that sin, as evident from his immediate response without any deliberation (Genesis 39:9). While Joseph was



not as strong in other areas, as seen in his oath by the life of Pharaoh, in regard to that specific sin, he was fortified by habitual grace. Christ is exceedingly kind and tender to his saints in this regard. In the course of their lives, due to the company they keep, the society they are exposed to, and the activities they are involved in, they are prone and susceptible to great and violent temptations, each in their own way. Christ shows great kindness and tenderness by fortifying their hearts with abundant grace against the sins to which they are most exposed. Even though they may be weak and frequently caught off guard in other areas, they are often preserved from falling into their besetting sins.

[2.] Christ, at times, through a strong impulse of actual grace, rescues the soul from the very brink of sin. This was the case with David (1 Samuel 24:4–6). He was on the verge of succumbing to temptation, as he himself testifies. The temptation was about to overpower him when a mighty impulse of grace rescued him. Christ, to show his saints their own weaknesses and frailties, sometimes allows them to approach the edge of the precipice, only to cause them to hear a word behind them saying, "This is the right way, walk in it"—and that word comes with power and effectiveness, leading them back to himself.

[3.] By removing the temptation itself when it becomes so strong and intense that the poor soul does not know what to do. This is referred to as "delivering the godly out of temptation" (2 Peter 2:9). It is like rescuing a person from a trap while leaving the snare behind to capture another. I have known many who have experienced this in various perplexing temptations. When they have become utterly weary, tried every means of help and assistance, and have been unable to find a satisfactory solution, suddenly and unexpectedly, the Lord Christ, in his tenderness and compassion, rebukes Satan so that

they no longer hear a single word from him regarding their temptation. Christ intervenes in the midst of the storm and says, "Peace, be still."

[4.] By providing fresh supplies of grace in proportion to the growth or increase of temptations. This was the case with Paul (2 Corinthians 12:9). When faced with any temptation, regardless of its nature, growing stronger, Paul fervently sought its removal. Yet, he received only the assurance of the sufficiency of God's grace to sustain him, despite the escalation of the temptation.

[5.] By giving them wisdom to make a right, holy, and spiritual use of all temptations. James instructs us to "count it all joy when we fall into various trials" (James 1:2), which can only be done if there is a holy and spiritual purpose to be found in them. James himself demonstrates this in the following verses. Temptations have manifold uses, which experienced Christians, with suitable assistance from Christ, can employ. One of these uses is to bring us to a knowledge of ourselves. Just as Hezekiah was tested to discover what was in him, temptations often reveal hidden corruptions within the soul that were previously unknown. Similar to Hazael and his shocking crimes, lesser sins are also exposed in the saints. They would never have believed that they had such lusts and corruptions within them until they were confronted with temptation. Some, when tempted with pride, worldliness, or loose behavior, have been startled and led to realize their neglect of many duties and their lack of communion with God, which they had previously been oblivious to. This is due to the tender care of Jesus Christ, who provides suitable assistance. Without his help, no one can possibly make use of or improve upon a temptation. This assistance is truly suitable, for a temptation that might otherwise be a deadly wound to another person becomes a lancing of a festering sore and a means of releasing

the corruption that might have endangered their very life (1 Peter 1:6).

[6.] When the soul is at times overcome to a greater or lesser extent by temptations, Christ, in his tenderness, offers mercy and pardon, preventing his saints from sinking entirely under the burden (1 John 2:1-2).

By one, several, or all of these means, the Lord Jesus manifests his conjugal tenderness and compassion towards the saints in and under their temptations.

2. Christ shows compassion towards believers in their afflictions. "In all their affliction he is afflicted" (Isaiah 63:9). It seems that all our afflictions, at least those of a certain kind, namely, persecutions, are primarily his, and we participate in them (Colossians 1:24). Two things clearly demonstrate Christ's compassion in this regard:

- (1.) He intercedes with the Father on their behalf for relief (Zechariah 1:12). Christ intercedes not only for our sins but also for our sufferings. And when the purpose of our afflictions is fulfilled, we will receive the relief he intercedes for. The Father always hears him, and every deliverance from trouble, recovery of health, easing of pain, and freedom from any evil that has afflicted us is granted to us through the intercession of Jesus Christ. Believers are unaware of their true condition if they consider their blessings as mere acts of common providence. Indeed, this may be why we often fail to appreciate and be thankful for them, and why we do not fully enjoy them. We do not see how, by what means, or for what reason they are given to us. The people of God in the world are alive and preserved today solely because of the intercession of the Lord Jesus. His compassion has been the source of their deliverances. Therefore,

he often restrains their sufferings and afflictions so that they do not fully consume them. He is with them when they pass through fire and water (Isaiah 43:2-3).

(2.) He will ultimately avenge the sufferings of his saints upon their enemies. He avenges those who cry out to him, and he does so swiftly. The controversy of Zion leads to the day of his vengeance (Isaiah 34:8). He observes their distress and considers the state of the world in relation to them (Zechariah 1:11). During the affliction of his people, his messengers report to him that the whole earth is at rest and quiet, satisfied and indulgent, feasting and exchanging gifts. Then Christ looks to see who will come to their aid (Isaiah 59:16-17), and when he finds no one willing to help, he takes it upon himself to destroy their adversaries. He accomplishes this vengeance in two ways:

[1.] Temporally, upon individuals, kingdoms, nations, and countries (as illustrated in Isaiah 63:1-6), just as he did with the ancient Roman world (Revelation 6:15-16). He does this in two ways:

- By raising up notable adversaries as examples to the world. Just as he dealt with Pharaoh, saying, "For this very purpose I have raised you up" (Exodus 9:16), he continues to deal with adversaries today. He incites one with fury, another with folly, he frustrates a third, and he utterly and terribly destroys yet another. Like a provoked lion, he does not rest until he has obtained his prey.
- In general, through the outpouring of his wrath upon the antichristian world and all who partake in their vengeance and persecution. He will utterly destroy them, leaving such a mark that whoever hears of it will be shaken to the core.

[2.] He will plead with the adversaries of his beloved in eternal vengeance (Matthew 25:41-46; 2 Thessalonians 1:6; Jude 15). It is evident from this that Christ abounds in pity and compassion towards his beloved. There are numerous examples, but these should suffice and readily come to mind.

In response to this, I emphasize the purity and faithfulness of believers towards Christ in every state and condition. The apostle Paul worked towards this goal for the church in Corinth, desiring to present them as a chaste virgin to Christ, free from corruption and deception (2 Corinthians 11:2-3). Likewise, those who follow the Lamb on Mount Zion are described as not being defiled with women, symbolizing their purity (Revelation 14:4). The nature of this defilement will be further explained.

Now, there are three aspects to this faithfulness:

1. Believers maintain loyalty to Christ by not allowing anything else to take the place of affection and esteem that belongs to Him. This was the failing of the Galatians in their conjugal devotion to Christ. They did not keep themselves faithful to Him. Although they initially received Christ for life and justification, accepting Him as the sole source of their salvation, they were later seduced and began to incorporate the righteousness of the law alongside Him. The apostle Paul vehemently admonished and reproved them for this. Therefore, the first aspect of faithfulness that believers possess towards Christ is that having received Him as their righteousness and salvation before God, as the fountain from which all their blessings flow, they refuse to allow anything else to take His place. For example, if we receive Christ for our acceptance

before God, any competition for our affections must come from our own efforts to establish a righteousness that would please Him. However, such efforts hold no value either before or after we receive Christ. Prior to receiving Him, the apostle Paul regarded all his works, advantages, and privileges as loss and even as dung, focusing solely on Christ and His righteousness. After receiving Christ, any works we do, including those ordained by God for believers to walk in, are of no account when it comes to justification and acceptance before God. It will eventually become evident that Christ abhors debates and arguments concerning the role of our works and obedience in securing acceptance with God. Believers will find no peace in adulterous thoughts of that kind. The faithfulness we owe to Christ demands a different perspective. The necessity, usefulness, and excellence of obedience in light of the gospel will be explained later. It is remarkable how difficult it is for some professing Christians to remain faithful to Christ in this matter. They engage in numerous disputes, invent distinctions, and employ various strategies to maintain some form of compromise, allowing them to play around with their affections for Christ. However, those who truly love Him have a different mindset. Therefore, above all else, the saints strive to keep their affections pure and devoted solely to Jesus Christ. He has been made their righteousness by God, and they acknowledge nothing else for that purpose. At times, they may even question their own interest in Him when He seems absent and withdraws Himself. They remain solitary, refusing to be comforted by anything or anyone else because Christ is not present. When Christ is absent from the soul, when it cannot see its own interest in Him, many lovers offer themselves, enticing its affections to find solace and relief in various things. But despite prolonged mourning, the soul will lean on nothing but Christ.

Even in the wilderness, in the darkest of times, it will wait until Christ comes to take it up, until it can emerge leaning upon Him (Song of Solomon 8:5). The book of Song of Solomon provides numerous instances of this kind of devotion.

2. Believers maintain their conjugal affection for Christ by cherishing the Holy Spirit, the Comforter whom Christ sends to abide with them in His place. Christ Himself states that He sends the Holy Spirit for this purpose (John 16:7). He gives the Holy Spirit to us to abide with us forever, fulfilling all His purposes and working upon us and within us. He dwells in us to keep and preserve us blameless for Christ. The Holy Spirit bears Christ's name and is intimately connected to Him. Whatever is done to any of Christ's followers is done to Him because the Holy Spirit resides in them. Therefore, the saints preserve their conjugal affections for Christ by striving in every way not to grieve the Holy Spirit, whom Christ has sent to dwell with them in His place. The apostle Paul reminds believers of this in Ephesians 4:30, saying, "Grieve not the Holy Spirit."

Christ sends His Spirit to believers for two main purposes: (1) sanctification and (2) consolation. All the specific actions attributed to the Holy Spirit, such as purging, teaching, and anointing, can be attributed to these two purposes. There are also two ways in which we can grieve the Holy Spirit: (1) in terms of sanctification and (2) in terms of consolation.

1. In terms of sanctification, the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of holiness. He is holy in Himself and the source of holiness in us. He works holiness in us (Titus 3:5) and persuades us towards it through His unquenchable motions. When we oppose Him by engaging in unholy, polluted, and defiling behavior while He is

working for our benefit, it deeply grieves Him. The connection between these aspects is evident in Ephesians 4:28-31. The apostle Paul powerfully urges believers towards holiness, citing the Holy Spirit's presence and indwelling as the reason (1 Corinthians 3:16-17). Indeed, nothing grieves a loving and tender friend more than opposition and disregard when they are most concerned about our well-being, especially when that well-being holds such immense significance for us. Consequently, believers make it their mission to keep their hearts loyal and their affections chaste towards Jesus Christ. They strive earnestly not to grieve the Holy Spirit by walking carelessly, negligently, and foolishly. The Holy Spirit has been sent to dwell with them, and therefore, no anger, wrath, malice, or envy should reside in their hearts, as these emotions are contrary to the holy and gentle Spirit of Christ who dwells within them. They pay attention to His promptings, make use of His assistance, utilize His gifts, and nothing weighs more heavily on their hearts than the desire to live in a manner worthy of the presence of this holy substitute of the Lord Jesus Christ.

(2) In terms of consolation, this is the second significant purpose for which Christ gives and sends His Spirit to us, who is specifically called "The Comforter." To achieve this purpose, He seals us, anoints us, establishes us, and grants us peace and joy. I will speak about all of these in detail later. However, there are two ways in which we can grieve the Holy Spirit in relation to His mission and violate our faithfulness to Jesus Christ:

1. By finding our comfort and joy in things other than Him and failing to be filled with joy in the Holy Spirit. When we derive our joy and delight from creatures or worldly pleasures, rather than from what we receive through the Spirit of Christ, we are



unfaithful to Him. This was the case with Demas, who loved the present world. When we view the ways of the Spirit of God as burdensome and long for them to be over so that we can pursue our earthly labours, or when our delight and refreshment lie solely in worldly things, we are not suited to Christ. His Spirit may wonder, "Why do I continue to dwell with these poor souls? I offer them unspeakable and glorious joys, yet they reject them for perishable things. I offer them spiritual, eternal, and enduring consolations, but all is rejected for something of no value." This is something Christ cannot tolerate. Therefore, believers are extremely careful not to place their joy and consolation in anything except what is administered by the Spirit. Their daily task is to crucify their hearts to the world and its allurements, so that they may not have strong affections for transient things. They strive to see the world as a crucified, lifeless entity devoid of beauty or attraction. If they ever become entangled with creatures or inferior forms of contentment and lose their superior joys, they cry out to Christ, "Restore to us the joys of Your Spirit!"

2. The Holy Spirit is grieved when, due to darkness and unbelief, we refuse or fail to receive the consolations He offers us, even though He is abundantly willing for us to receive them. However, I will address this further when discussing our communion with the Holy Spirit.
3. By faithfully observing Christ's ordinances and worship. When Christ marries His church to Himself, establishing a relationship, the essence of their pure and devoted affection for Him lies in their commitment to maintaining His ordinances and worship as He has prescribed. He refers to the breach of this commitment as "adultery" and "whoredom" throughout

Scripture. He is a "jealous God," and this jealousy is directed towards His ordinances. The complete apostasy of the Christian church, turning to false worship, is referred to as "fornication." The church that leads others into false worship is called the "mother of harlots." For this reason, believers who genuinely seek communion with Jesus Christ strive to keep their hearts faithful to Him in His ordinances, institutions, and worship in two ways:

4. They accept, practice, and acknowledge only what is appointed by Him in His worship. They understand that from the beginning of time, God has never allowed nor will He ever allow the will of creatures to determine His honor or the principles of His worship, whether in terms of content or manner. It was both witty and accurate when someone stated regarding the second commandment, "It is not images or idols that are forbidden, but the making of them for ourselves." It is inventing and finding ways of worship or means of honoring God that He has not appointed, which is strictly forbidden. Believers are aware of how will-worship is received by God: "Who has required these things from your hand?" and "In vain do you worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men." These are the responses it receives at best. I will express what is on my heart and endeavor to defend it against the world, with the Lord's help: the principle that the church has the power to institute and appoint anything or any ceremony in the worship of God, beyond the orderly observance of such circumstances that necessarily accompany the ordinances Christ Himself has instituted, is the root cause of all the dreadful superstition, idolatry, confusion, bloodshed, persecution, and wars that have plagued the Christian world for so long. I believe a significant portion of the Book of Revelation aims to expose this truth.

Moreover, I have no doubt that God's great controversy with this nation for many years, pursued with such anger and indignation, was due to the fact that, in contrast to the glorious light of the gospel that shone among us, the wills and fancies of men, under the guise of order, decency, and the authority of the church (a chimera that no one truly understood—its nature, power, or where it resided), were imposed on people regarding the ways and worship of God. The supposed glory, beauty, attractiveness, and conformity that were argued at that time were nothing more than what God described in the Church of Israel (Ezekiel 16:25 onwards). Consequently, the Spirit of God was ridiculed in prayer, the powerful preaching of the gospel was despised, the Sabbath was derided, and holiness was stigmatized and persecuted. What was the purpose of all this? So that Jesus Christ could be deposed from His exclusive privilege and authority in legislating for His church, so that the true bridegroom could be set aside and adulterers of His bride embraced, and so that taskmasters could be appointed over His house, which He never granted to His church (Ephesians 4:11). It was all for the sake of introducing a ceremonial, pompous, outwardly impressive worship derived from pagan, Judaical, and Antichristian practices. Yet, not a single word, jot, or iota of support for such practices can be found in the entire Bible. Therefore, those who commune with Christ are careful to admit, practice, and acknowledge nothing in the worship of God, whether private or public, unless they have His warrant. Unless it comes in His name with the declaration, "Thus says the Lord Jesus," they will not listen to even an angel from heaven. They know that the apostles were commanded to teach the saints only what Christ had commanded them (Matthew 28:20). You are aware that many in this nation, not too long ago, thousands of them, left their homeland and ventured into vast and desolate

wilderness in the farthest corners of the world to keep their souls undefiled and faithful to their dear Lord Jesus in matters of worship and His institutions.

(2) They eagerly embrace, receive, and practice everything that the Lord Christ has appointed. They diligently seek His mind and will in order to understand it. They go to Him for guidance and ask Him to lead them in unfamiliar paths. The 119th Psalm can serve as a model for this. The righteous soul yearns for instruction in the ways, ordinances, statutes, and judgments of God. They are tender in this regard: they willingly submit to, accept, and dedicate themselves to the constant practice of whatever is of Christ, while rejecting anything that comes from any other source.

IV. Christ demonstrates His love for His saints through generosity—through the rich, abundant provision He makes for them. "It pleased the Father that in Him all fullness should dwell" (Colossians 1:19), and this was done so "of His fullness we might all receive, and grace for grace" (John 1:16). I will not go into the details of the provision Christ makes for His saints, including the daily influences of the Spirit of life and grace that they receive from Him, the abundant bread He provides, and the refreshment they derive from Him. I will only observe that Scripture affirms His abundant, bountiful manner in doing all things for them. The general statement is found in Romans 5:20: "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." When grace abounds much more than sin, it is truly abundant grace. Anyone who considers the extent to which sin has abounded in every soul will readily agree. It is therefore said that He is able and that we are to expect Him to do "exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think" (Ephesians 3:20). When it comes to pardoning mercy, He "abundantly pardons" (Isaiah 55:7); He multiplies or adds to pardon, such that grace and mercy abound above all our sins and iniquities.

When He gives us the Spirit, He pours Him upon us abundantly (Titus 3:6), not only inviting us to freely drink from the water of life but also bestowing Him in such copious measure that rivers of water flow from those who receive Him (John 7:38-39)—those who have drunk from Him will never thirst again. When it comes to grace, He also gives abundantly; we receive "abundance of grace" (Romans 5:17), and He abounds toward us in all wisdom and prudence (Ephesians 1:8). This is why the invitation in the Song of Solomon 5:1 is given. If we feel limited in any way, it is because of ourselves; Christ deals bountifully with us. However, the great sin of believers is that they do not make proper use of Christ's bounty; we do not daily partake abundantly of His mercy. The oil never ceases as long as there are vessels to contain it; the supplies from Christ never fail, except when our faith fails to receive them.

Our response to Christ then becomes a matter of duty. Two things are required for this:

1. We must pursue and practice holiness in its power as obedience to Jesus Christ. All gospel obedience is regarded as obedience to Him, as He Himself commands us (Matthew 28:20). As He says in John 15:14, "You are My friends if you do whatever I command you." It is required of us to live for Him who died for us (2 Corinthians 5:15)—to live for Him in all holy obedience, to honor Him as our Lord and King. I do not suggest that there are specific precepts or a unique law of Jesus Christ that, when observed, justifies us, as the Socinians imagine. Surely, the gospel requires nothing more than "to love the Lord our God with all our hearts and with all our souls"—which the law also required. However, now that the Lord Jesus has brought us into a state of acceptance with God where our obedience is pleasing to Him, and since we are to honor Him as we honor the Father,

we must have a distinct regard for Him in all our obedience. As Titus 2:14 says, He has redeemed us for Himself. Believers view Jesus Christ in their obedience in the following ways:

(1) As the author of their faith and obedience, for whose sake they have been granted the ability to believe (Philippians 1:29), and by His Spirit, He works that obedience in them. Thus, the apostle says in Hebrews 12:1-2 that in the course of their obedience, they continually look to Jesus, "the author of our faith." Faith encompasses both the grace of faith and the fruit of faith in obedience.

(2) As the One through whom we have acceptance with God in our obedience. Believers recognize that all their duties are weak and imperfect, unable to endure the presence of God. Therefore, they look to Christ as the One who bears the iniquity of their holy acts, who adds incense to their prayers, and who purifies their imperfect works, making them acceptable to God.

(3) As the One who has renewed God's commands to them, with powerful obligations to obedience. This is seen in 2 Corinthians 5:14-15, where the apostle says, "The love of Christ compels us," which we will explore later.

(4) They consider Him as God, equal with the Father, to whom all honor and obedience are due (Revelation 5:13). However, I have recently discussed these matters in another treatise concerning the worship of Christ as Mediator. In all their obedience, the saints have a special regard for their beloved Lord Jesus. They constantly think of Him, considering Him from these various perspectives. His love for them, His life laid down for them, His death for them—all His acts of kindness and mercy compel them to live for Him.

2. By striving to abound in the fruits of holiness. Just as Christ deals with us generously and abundantly, He also expects us to abound in grateful and obedient responses to Him. We are exhorted to "always excel in the work of the Lord" (1 Corinthians 15:58). This is what I mean: the saints are not content with the level they have reached at any given time; they continually press forward, seeking to be more devoted and fruitful for Christ.

And this is just a small glimpse of the communion we enjoy with Christ. It may seem little, coming from someone who has the least experience of it among all the saints of God, but even so, I have discovered something more valuable than ten thousand worlds. I desire to spend the rest of my few and troubled days in pursuit of this communion—contemplating the excellencies, desirability, love, and grace of our dear Lord Jesus, and responding in obedience according to His will. In the midst of the perplexities of this wretched world and the rebellions of my own heart, this is my great solace: "He who is coming will come and will not delay." "The Spirit and the bride say, 'Come!' And let the one who hears say, 'Come!' And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost." "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

## CHAPTER VI

Of communion with Christ in purchased grace—Purchased grace considered in respect of its rise and fountain—The first rise of it, in the obedience of Christ—Obedience properly ascribed to Christ—Two ways considered: what it was, and wherein it did consist—Of his

obedience to the law in general—Of the law of the Mediator—His habitual righteousness, how necessary; as also his obedience to the law of the Mediator—Of his actual obedience or active righteousness —All Christ's obedience performed as he was Mediator—His active obedience for us—This proved at large, Gal. 4:4, 5; Rom. 5:19; Phil. 3:10; Zech. 3:3–5—One objection removed—Considerations of Christ's active righteousness closed—Of the death of Christ, and its influence into our acceptation with God—A price; redemption, what it is—A sacrifice; atonement made thereby—A punishment; satisfaction thereby—The intercession of Christ; with its influence into our acceptation with God.

OUR focus now is on communion with Christ in purchased grace, as previously proposed: "That we may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, and be conformed to his death" (Philippians 3:10).

By purchased grace, I mean all the righteousness and grace that Christ has obtained or accomplished for us, or that He shares with us for our benefit through His actions, sufferings, and ongoing mediation. Firstly, we need to understand the nature of this purchased grace and where it originates from. Secondly, we need to explore how we have communion with Christ in this grace.

To begin with, the rise or source of this grace can be attributed to three aspects of Christ: His obedient life, His redemptive death, and His ongoing intercession. All the actions of Christ as our mediator that lead to the communication of grace can be categorized under these headings or as their related subservient or subsequent aspects.

As for the nature of this grace, which flows from these sources, it can be classified into three types: justification or acceptance with God,



sanctification or holiness before God, and privileged grace. The latter will be further explained in due course.

The evidence of our communion with Christ in this purchased grace is apparent when we consider that there is hardly anything that Christ has done, which serves as the wellspring of this grace, that we are not said to do with Him. We are "crucified" with Him, "dead" with Him, and "buried" with Him. We are "quickened" and "risen" with Him. We are united with Christ in such a way that, by virtue of the covenant between Him as mediator and the Father, the fruits of His actions are assuredly communicated to those on whose behalf He performed them. Consequently, we are said to have done the same things as Him when we partake in those fruits. The life and power of this truth will be explored in detail at a later point.

Now, let us turn our attention to the first source and spring of this grace, which is the obedience of Christ's life. We need to clarify what this entails and its influence on the grace we are discussing.

Firstly, by the obedience of Christ's life, I mean His complete conformity to the entire will of God as He fulfills every requirement and demand of God's law. Jesus perfectly adhered to the moral law as the angels did, exhibiting perfect holiness in His walk with God. However, He also submitted Himself to every law or ordinance introduced due to sin, although He Himself was not subject to them. This was necessary for Him to "fulfill all righteousness" as He stated in reference to a newly-instituted ceremony (Matthew 3:15).

The Scriptures attest to the fact that obedience is attributed to Jesus Christ as mediator, both in name and reality. He learned obedience and was obedient in His sufferings, which gave meaning to His death. He obediently offered Himself as a sacrifice for sin, pouring out His soul unto death. He sanctified Himself to be an offering and

offered Himself as a sweet-smelling sacrifice to God. Throughout His work, He is referred to as the Father's servant, and He declared that He came into the world to fulfill the will of God, the One who sent Him. His obedience is evident in His willingness and eagerness to do God's will.

There is no need for me to extensively prove Christ's obedience in His role as mediator and His willingness to fulfill His work in obedience to God. It is evident from Scripture that Christ willingly and cheerfully acted in obedience to God.

Now, let's consider the obedience of Christ from two perspectives: First, regarding its foundational root and source; second, concerning its actual components or duties:

First, the habitual righteousness of Christ as a mediator in His human nature was the complete and perfect conformity of His soul to God's will, mind, and law. It was His inherently perfect righteousness that resulted from the grace of union, which made Him a "holy thing." This holiness was necessarily derived from the grace of union, although its effect was brought about through the free work of the Holy Spirit. Christ possessed an abundance of grace on every level. The writer of Hebrews describes this, stating that Christ, as our High Priest, is holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. He is completely separate and distant from sin and sinners. This is why He is referred to as the "Lamb of God without spot or blemish." His habitual holiness far surpasses that of the angels. While God charges His angels with folly and does not trust His saints, Christ is always embraced and well-pleasing to Him. This distinction arises because every other creature receives the Spirit of God in limited measure, whereas Christ was given the Spirit without measure. This abundant grace of Christ, though not infinite in an

absolute sense, surpasses that of any other creature like the water of the sea surpasses that of a pond or pool. Other creatures are hindered from attaining perfection because they exist as created beings dependent on a source outside themselves. In contrast, Christ's human nature exists within the person of the Son of God, allowing His holiness to flow from an inseparable unity with Himself.

Second, the actual obedience of Christ encompasses His willing, cheerful, and obedient fulfillment of every duty or command required by God according to any law to which we were subject or accountable. He fulfilled the requirements of the law of nature in our state of innocence, the moral and positive duties prescribed by ceremonial institutions, and the demands of righteous judicial laws. He subjected Himself to all of them. That is why He is said to have been made under the law, subject to all its precepts and commands. In Matthew 3:15, He declared that it was fitting for Him to fulfill all righteousness, meaning everything that God required. Specific instances, such as His obedience to God and His parents in accordance with the law of nature or His compliance with the Sabbath and other acts of worship as part of the moral law, or His observance of circumcision and the rites of the Jewish ceremonial law, or even His payment of tribute to the governing authorities as demanded by the judicial law, are unnecessary to list here. It suffices to say that He committed no sin and no deceit was found in His mouth. He fulfilled all righteousness, and the Father was always pleased with Him. Christ acknowledged that He came to do the will of God, and He did it.

Furthermore, there was a peculiar law that pertained solely to the mediator, containing acts and duties that are not to be imitated by us. His obedience in dying was specifically in response to this law. In John 10:18, Jesus declared that He had the authority to lay down His

life and take it up again, a commandment He received from the Father. As the mediator, He received this unique command from the Father to lay down His life and take it up again, and He obediently fulfilled it. It is worth noting that the mediator, as a man subject to the law of God in general, performed certain acts, such as praying for His persecutors, while in other instances, as the mediator, He prayed solely for His elect. Despite being subjected to immense cruelty by those who crucified Him, as a man under the law, He forgave them and prayed for them. His Father always heard and answered His prayers when He prayed as the mediator. In all His prayers, He fulfilled His duty perfectly.

This, then, is the obedience of Christ, which was the first aspect to be considered. The next point is to explore its influence on the grace in which we have communion with Him, particularly our free acceptance with God. The nature of this influence will be addressed in due course.

First, regarding His habitual righteousness, there are two key observations: Firstly, it was necessary for our mediator to be God and man in one person. Thus, it was essential that He be holy. While the primary necessary effect of the hypostatic union is the subsistence of the human nature in the person of the Son of God, it was also necessary that the one united to Him be completely holy. Secondly, the connection between Christ's righteousness and the grace we receive from Him is simply this: It made Him fit to accomplish everything He had to do for us. The apostle captures this truth in Hebrews 7:26, describing Christ as the High Priest who perfectly suits our needs. His habitual grace enabled Him to fulfill all that He did. As He Himself declared, the presence of the Spirit with Him was the foundation of His mission, as stated in Isaiah 61:1.

Second, Christ's obedience to the law of mediation, distinct from His passive obedience, served to fulfill His office. Although this obedience is not imputed to us as if we had done it, its effects and fruits are imputed to us. It functions in the nature of His intercession, through which He provides the good things we need, albeit in a subservient manner to His offering and intercession.

Lastly, concerning His actual fulfillment of the law and His performance of all that is required of us, there are three different opinions: Firstly, some argue that Christ's active obedience has no further influence on our justification and acceptance with God beyond its preparatory role for His shed blood and offering, which is the sole cause of our justification. All the righteousness imputed to us originates from that source. Secondly, others propose that Christ's active obedience can be understood in two ways: Firstly, as pure obedience, in which case its role aligns with what was previously mentioned. Secondly, as an obedience accompanied by suffering, integrated into His humiliation, and imputed to us as part of the grounds for our justification. Thirdly, some assert that this obedience of Christ, being done on our behalf, is graciously reckoned to us by God. It is on the basis of this obedience that we are accepted as righteous in His sight. My intention is not to delve into these different views as a point of contention, but rather to provide an understanding that can be readily applied to the practice of godliness and the consolation it brings. This will be accomplished through the following observations.

[1st.] The obedience that Christ displayed was not limited to the peculiar law of the mediator, although He exhibited it as the mediator. As the mediator, He came into the world incarnate, and everything He did and suffered was in that role. Therefore, the term "as mediator" can be understood in two senses: It can be interpreted

strictly, referring solely to obedience to the law of the mediator, meaning that Christ obeyed that law exclusively. However, in the sense being emphasized here, whatever Christ did as a man subject to any law, He did it as the mediator because it was part of the duty He undertook.

[2dly.] Whatever Christ did as the mediator, He did it for those for whom He was the mediator, acting in their place and for their benefit before God. The Holy Spirit attests to this in Romans 8:3-4, explaining that the law, weakened by human flesh, could not accomplish what God intended. In response to this limitation, God sent His Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to condemn sin in the flesh. The purpose of this was so that the righteousness of the law could be fulfilled in us. Due to our weakened condition caused by sin, we were unable to approach God and escape condemnation through the law. Therefore, God sent Christ as the mediator to do and suffer everything required by the law on our behalf, ensuring that we would not be condemned but accepted by God. The aim was "that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us," referring to the obedience required of us. Christ accomplished this for us. When combining this statement with Galatians 4:4, which states that He was "made under the law," meaning He was subject and accountable to it, obeying all its requirements, it encompasses everything that Christ did or suffered. Moreover, the Holy Spirit affirms that all of this was done for us.

[3dly.] The purpose of Christ's active obedience cannot be solely attributed to preparing Him for His death and sacrifice. He fulfilled all types and requirements and was entirely suitable to be offered as a sacrifice due to His union with humanity and His habitual grace. Therefore, if Christ's obedience is not reckoned to us and not done on our behalf, there would be no valid reason for Him to have lived

in perfect obedience to God's laws for as long as He did. If He had died earlier, there would have been perfect innocence and holiness due to His habitual grace and infinite virtue and worth derived from His divine person. Surely, He did not yield a lengthy course of obedience in every way without a significant and specific purpose related to our salvation.

[4thly.] If Christ's obedience had not been for us (in the sense that will be explained shortly), it could have been required of Him during His life to obey the law of nature, the only law applicable to Him as a man in a covenant of works. An innocent man in such a covenant does not require any other law, nor did God give any other law to such individuals (apart from the law of creation and any additional symbols thereof that God chose to include). Nevertheless, His submission to this law was voluntary. It was not merely a matter of choice or arbitrariness, but rather, based on His role as the mediator, it was necessary for Him to voluntarily and willingly submit to and truly subject Himself to its commands. Although He was exempted and elevated above that law due to the hypostatic union, His subjection to it was voluntary. Furthermore, Jesus Christ demonstrated perfect obedience to all the laws that arose due to sin, including the ceremonial law. He even fulfilled the very institutions that symbolized the cleansing and repentance from sin, such as the baptism of John, despite having no personal need for them. Thus, this obedience must undoubtedly be for our sake.

[5thly.] Christ's obedience should not be categorized as part of His sufferings but should be clearly distinguished from them. Doing and suffering are distinct, belonging to different categories and cannot coincide.

Now, let's briefly recap what we have gained from these considerations, and then I will indicate the outcome flowing from this initial source or fountain of acquired grace and its influence within us:

Firstly, through the obedience displayed in Christ's life, you can see the intended meaning: His willing submission and perfect fulfillment of every law of God that any of the saints of God were obligated to follow. It is true that almost every act of Christ's obedience, from the shedding of His blood at circumcision to the shedding of His blood on the cross, involved suffering. Therefore, His entire life could be seen as a form of death. However, considering His willingness and obedience within it, it is distinct from His sufferings, which are specifically referred to as His active righteousness. Thus, this complete accomplishment of God's entire law by Christ, our mediator, is what I mean when I refer to His obedience.

Secondly, Christ's obedience was not performed for Himself, but for us and in our place. While it is true that, during His time in the flesh, He needed to be perfectly and absolutely holy, the primary purpose of His pursuit of holiness—which involves the complete obedience of His entire life to God's law—was no less for our sake than His death. The apostle tells us this in Galatians 4:4-5: "God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law." We must examine this Scripture more closely. Christ was both born of a woman and subject to the law, meaning He obeyed it on our behalf. The purpose of His incarnation and obedience to the law was solely to redeem us. In these two expressions, "born of a woman" and "born under the law," the apostle does not unite His incarnation and death while excluding the obedience of His life. He was subject to the law just as those were who He came to redeem. We, as well, were subject to the law, not



only in terms of being liable to its penalties but also bound to fulfill all its requirements. That is what it means to be "under the law," as the apostle explains in Galatians 4:21: "Tell me, you who desire to be under the law." They desired to be under the law, not merely its penalties, but to be under it in terms of obedience. If we remove the purpose, we destroy the means. If Christ were not incarnate or subject to the law for Himself, then His obedience was entirely for us and our benefit. Now, let us look ahead and consider the influence this has on our acceptance.

Thirdly, I declare that Christ's perfect and complete obedience to the law is imputed to us. Just as it is true that "the day you eat of it, you shall surely die"—death being the consequence of sin—and thus we cannot be freed from death except through the death of Christ (Hebrews 2:14-15), it is equally true that "do this, and you will live"—we cannot attain life unless we fulfill all that the law requires. It remains true that "if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments" (Matthew 19:17). These commandments must be kept either by us or by our Surety. Some object, claiming that if Christ obeyed the law perfectly on our behalf, then we are no longer obligated to obey it. They argue that His death, as the penalty of the law, frees us from it. However, I ask, how did Christ experience death? Solely as a penalty. And how are we delivered from death? Again, solely as a penalty. Yet, we still must experience physical death. Indeed, it serves as the final battle against the effects of sin and as a passage to our Father. So, Christ yielded perfect obedience to the law, but how did He accomplish it? Purely in the context of the conditional arrangement: "Do this, and you will live." He fulfilled the law by relying on the grace He had received, viewing it as a means of procuring life through it, as part of a covenant. Are we, then, exempt from this obedience? Yes, but to what extent? We are freed from performing it in our own strength and from doing it with the aim of

obtaining eternal life. It is in vain for some to confidently assert that we must still work for life. To claim such is to say that we are still under the old covenant, "Hoc fac, et vives" ("Do this, and you will live"). We are freed from obedience as a means of earning salvation, but we are not exempt from obedience as a way of walking with God. I will discuss this further later on.

According to the Holy Spirit, in Romans 5:18-19, "through one righteous act there resulted justification of life for all men... through one man's obedience the many will be made righteous." By Christ's obedience to the law, we are made righteous; His obedience is imputed to us as righteousness. It is false to claim that only Christ's passive obedience is intended here.

Firstly, it is contrasted with Adam's disobedience, which was active. Righteousness is set against fault. Adam's fault involved actively transgressing the law, so the opposing obedience must involve actively fulfilling it. Moreover, obedience, in its essence, denotes actions that conform to the law. Christ came not to abolish but to fulfill the law (Matthew 5:17). That was the purpose of His coming—for us. He came to fulfill the law for us (Isaiah 9:6), and He was born for us (Luke 2:11). His mission was rooted in the will of the Father, which He came to fulfill out of infinite love.

Secondly, it cannot be clearly demonstrated that there is such a thing as passive obedience in proper terminology. Obedience involves doing, to which passion or suffering cannot be attributed. I understand that it is commonly referred to as such when individuals obey until they suffer, but properly speaking, it is not accurate.

Similarly, in Philippians 3:9, the apostle Paul states, "and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from

God by faith." The righteousness we receive is contrasted with our own obedience to the law. It is not something of a different kind; rather, it is something of the same kind that excludes our own righteousness from attaining the same purpose. This is the obedience of Christ to the law, by which He "became righteousness for us" (1 Corinthians 1:30).

In Romans 5:10, the outcome of Christ's death is described as reconciliation—a removal of enmity and a restoration to a state of peace and friendship, similar to Adam's condition before the Fall. However, is there nothing more to be done? Although Adam was not subject to wrath, he still needed to obey in order to attain eternal life. Likewise, there is something more to be done in our case after the enmity has been removed and reconciliation achieved if we are to enjoy life. We are saved by the perfect obedience that Christ yielded to God's law throughout His life. Reconciliation is explicitly mentioned in various passages as the non-imputation of sin (Psalm 32:1, Luke 1:77, Romans 3:25, 2 Corinthians 5:19), while justification is mentioned as the imputation of righteousness (Jeremiah 23:6, Romans 4:5, 1 Corinthians 1:30). Although these aspects are not separated, they are reciprocally affirmed, indicating a close connection. This is the result of Christ's life.

This is clearly expressed in the typological representation of our justification before the Lord in Zechariah 3:3-5. Two things are mentioned regarding our acceptance before God: Firstly, the removal of the guilt of our sin—our filthy robes—which is accomplished through Christ's death. This leads to the proper fruit of forgiveness. Secondly, righteousness must be conferred to grant us the right to eternal life. This is referred to as a "change of raiment." Isaiah 61:10 refers to it as "garments of salvation" and "robe of righteousness." It

is only through Christ's obedience that we receive this, just as we receive the forgiveness of sins through His death.

Objection: "But if this is the case, then are we as righteous as Christ himself, being righteous with his righteousness." Answer: First, there is a significant difference. Even if it were simply that this righteousness belonged to Christ inherently and was properly his own, it is only reckoned or imputed to us. It is freely bestowed upon us, and we are made righteous with something that is not ours. Secondly, the truth is that Christ was not righteous with that righteousness for himself but for us. Therefore, no comparison can be made. What we can say is that we are righteous with the righteousness that Christ accomplished for us, and that righteousness is complete.

This is the essence of the purchased grace we are discussing—the obedience of Christ. And this is how it influences our acceptance with God. The guilt of sin and our liability to punishment, which shall be further explained, are removed and eliminated by the death of Christ. Furthermore, we require a perfect righteousness that enables us to be accepted by God. By the free grace of God, this obedience of Christ is imputed to us for that very purpose.

This is all I will address for now regarding this matter. I have yet to encounter the idea that only Christ's passive righteousness is imputed to us in the non-imputation of sin, and that our faith and new obedience are elevated to replace the righteousness of Christ. Any arguments in favor or against this position must be considered elsewhere.

The second source of our communion with Christ in purchased grace is His death and sacrifice. He lived for us, He died for us, and in all

He did and suffered, He was ours. I will be brief in discussing this aspect because I have already extensively dealt with it elsewhere.

In Scripture, the death of Christ is presented from three perspectives: [1] as a price, [2] as a sacrifice, and [3] as a penalty.

Firstly, as a price, its ultimate effect is redemption. We are bought with a price (1 Corinthians 6:20), not with silver, gold, or perishable things, but with the precious blood of Christ (1 Peter 1:18-19). In this way, it fulfills the purpose of a price in other contractual agreements. Christ came to give His life as a ransom for many (Matthew 20:28), a redemption price (1 Timothy 2:6). I have previously explained the proper use and significance of this expression in Scripture.

The proper result and outcome of Christ's death as a price or ransom is, as I mentioned, redemption. Redemption involves the deliverance of an individual from bondage or captivity and the accompanying miseries through the intervention of a price or ransom paid by the redeemer to the one who held the captive by authority.

First and foremost, it is a deliverance. Therefore, Christ is referred to as "The Deliverer" (Romans 11:26), who gave Himself to deliver us (Galatians 1:4). He is "Jesus, who delivers us from the wrath to come" (1 Thessalonians 1:10).

Secondly, it is the liberation from bondage or captivity. Without Christ, we are all prisoners and captives, bound in prison (Isaiah 61:1), sitting in darkness in the prison house (Isaiah 42:7, 49:9), prisoners in a pit without water (Zechariah 9:11), captives of the mighty and prey of the terrible (Isaiah 49:25). We are under a captivity that must be led captive (Psalm 68:18). This condition puts us in bondage (Hebrews 2:15).

Thirdly, the one who imprisons and subjects us to this bondage is God Himself. We owe Him our debts (Matthew 6:12, 18:23-27), and our offenses are against Him (Psalm 51:4). He is the judge and lawgiver (James 4:12), and sin is a rebellion against Him. He keeps people imprisoned under disobedience (Romans 11:32), and the impenitent will be cast into hell-fire by Him (Matthew 10:28). Men are liable to His wrath (John 3:36) and are under it by the judgment of the law, which is their prison.

Fourthly, the miseries associated with this condition are countless. Bondage to Satan, sin, and the world encompasses them all. Yet, through the death of Christ as a price or ransom, we are delivered from all these. "God has delivered us from the power of darkness and translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son. In Him, we have redemption through His blood" (Colossians 1:13-14). He redeems us from all iniquity (Titus 2:14) and from our vain conduct (1 Peter 1:18-19), both from the guilt and power of sin. He purchases us to be a peculiar people zealous for good works (Titus 2:14). Thus, He died for the redemption of transgressions (Hebrews 9:15) and also redeems us from the world (Galatians 4:5).

Lastly, all of this is accomplished by paying the mentioned price into the hand of God, who holds supreme authority and keeps us captive under the law's sentence. The debt is owed to the great householder (Matthew 18:23-24), and the penalty is His curse and wrath from which we are delivered (Revelation 1:5).

This is frequently emphasized by the Holy Spirit. Romans 3:24-25 states, "Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness." This theme is also found in 1 Corinthians 6:20, 1 Peter 1:18, Matthew 20:28, 1

Timothy 2:6, Ephesians 1:7, Colossians 1:13, and Galatians 3:13. This is the initial significance of Christ's death, as it pertains to the procurement of the grace in which we commune with Him.

Secondly, His death was a sacrifice. He had a body prepared for Him (Hebrews 10:5) in which He fulfilled the types of the law regarding offerings and burnt sacrifices. He offered this body (Hebrews 10:10), encompassing His entire human nature, as His soul was also made an offering for sin (Isaiah 53:10). That is why He is said to have offered Himself (Ephesians 5:2, Hebrews 1:3, 9:26). He willingly presented Himself as a sacrifice to God, in accordance with the law written in His heart (Psalm 40:8), demonstrating His readiness, willingness, and desire to fulfill this obedience.

The purpose of sacrifices, particularly those for sin, such as His, was atonement and reconciliation (Romans 5:10, Hebrews 2:17). The death of Christ, as a sacrifice, has the same effect—atonement and reconciliation with God. Sin had disrupted the friendship between God and us (Isaiah 63:10), resulting in His wrath upon us (John 3:36). By nature, we are subject to this wrath (Ephesians 2:3). However, through the death of Christ as a sacrifice, this is removed (Daniel 9:24). "When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son" (Romans 5:10). Thus, we "receive the atonement" (Romans 5:11), for "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them" (2 Corinthians 5:19-21). This aspect of Christ's death is extensively discussed elsewhere.

Thirdly, His death was a punishment—punishment in our place. "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him" (Isaiah 53:5). God made all our iniquities (that is, the punishment for them)

meet upon Him (Isaiah 53:6). He bore the sins of many (Isaiah 53:12) and carried our sins in His own body on the tree (1 Peter 2:24). In doing so, He, who knew no sin, was made sin for us (2 Corinthians 5:21). The concept of bearing sin can be found in Deuteronomy 19:15, 20:17, Numbers 14:33, and Ezekiel 18:20. The nature, type, matter, and manner of this punishment have been discussed elsewhere.

Bearing punishment directly satisfies the offended party, the one who imposed the punishment, as justice requires a proportional punishment for the offense. By voluntarily taking our place and mediating on our behalf, our dear Lord Jesus endured this punishment, which was accepted by the righteous Judge, resulting in proper satisfaction to Him.

These are the threefold aspects of Christ's death, serving as the principal source and fountain of the grace in which we commune with Him. As we will discover in our exploration, the individual and most prominent aspect of purchased grace is the natural outflow of the threefold effects of Christ's death, as indicated by the threefold consideration mentioned. This represents the second source of purchased grace that we need to focus on if we desire to commune with Christ in it—His death and shedding of blood, viewed in terms of a price, an offering, and a punishment.

However, this is not the end. The Lord Christ goes even further; He does not leave us there but continues the work to its fullest extent. "He died for our sins and rose again for our justification." He rose again to carry out the complete work of purchased grace through His intercession, which serves as the third source of it. In this regard, He is said to be "able to save to the uttermost those who come to God



through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them" (Hebrews 7:25).

The intercession of Christ, with respect to its influence on purchased grace, can be understood in two ways:

Firstly, it continues and advances His offering, ensuring that all its fruits and effects are fully extended to us. This is referred to as His "appearing in the presence of God for us" (Hebrews 9:24). Just as the high priest, after offering the great sin offering, would carry its blood into the most holy place where God's presence was symbolically represented, Christ, having offered Himself as a sweet-smelling sacrifice to God and having sprinkled His own blood, appears in the presence of God. This serves as a reminder to fulfill the commitment made for the redemption of sinners by His blood and to ensure the delivery of the promised blessings procured through it. Thus, His appearance influences purchased grace by advocating on our behalf.

Secondly, He secures the Holy Spirit for us, effectively bestowing all this purchased grace upon us. His commitment and fulfillment of this can be found in His promise of the Holy Spirit (John 14:16). This aspect of purchased grace, in terms of its source and origin, shall not be discussed further at present, as it will be extensively explored in the context of our communion with the Holy Spirit.

## **CHAPTER VII**

The nature of purchased grace; referred to three heads:—1. Of our acceptation with God; two parts of it. 2. Of the grace of sanctification; the several parts of it.

THE source of the grace that the saints share with Christ having been revealed, let us now consider the nature of this grace itself. As previously mentioned, it can be classified into three categories: 1. Grace of acceptance with God. 2. Grace of sanctification from God. 3. Grace of privileges with and before God.

1. Grace of acceptance with God. Without Christ, we are in a state of alienation from God, not accepted in our persons or our deeds. Sin creates a division between God and us. I will not delve into the details of this state and its consequences. The primary outcome of purchased grace is to restore us to a state of acceptance. This is achieved in two ways: (1) By removing the cause of enmity for which we are rejected. (2) By bestowing upon us that which makes us the objects of God's delight and pleasure, bridging the gap that separates us.

(1) It removes the cause for our rejection. This cause is the guilt of sin and all its accompanying effects. The initial result of purchased grace aims to remove the guilt of sin so that it no longer binds our souls to its wages, which is death.

The manner in which Christ accomplishes this and the way it is brought about was explained in the previous chapter. It is the fruit and effect of His death for us. Guilt is the sole reason for our separation and distance from God, as previously stated. It makes us liable to God's wrath, punishment, and displeasure. It imprisoned us under the curse of the law and handed us over to the power of Satan. This is the state of unacceptance. Through His death, Christ—bearing the curse, enduring the punishment due to us, paying the ransom on

our behalf—delivers us from this condition. Thus, the death of Christ is the sole cause of our acceptance with God, as it removes every cause for quarrel and rejection. His sufferings are imputed to us because by being "made sin for us" (2 Corinthians 5:21), He becomes "righteousness to us" (1 Corinthians 1:30).

However, this alone does not complete our acceptance with God. The old quarrel may be laid aside, but a new friendship must also commence. We may no longer be sinners, yet we may not possess the righteousness required to have a rightful claim to the kingdom of heaven. Adam had no claim to life simply because he was innocent; he needed to "do this" in order to "live." He not only required a negative righteousness—being innocent of any wrongdoing—but also a positive righteousness, needing to fulfill all things.

(2) Therefore, the second requirement for our complete acceptance is that we not only have the non-imputation of sin but also the imputation of righteousness. This is attained through the obedience of Christ's life. This was also discussed in the previous chapter. The obedience of Christ's life was for us, it is imputed to us, and it is our righteousness before God. By His obedience, we are "made righteous" (Romans 5:19). The basis on which faith's obedience takes effect will be explained later.

These two aspects, sin being removed and righteousness bestowed, grant us peace with God and continuous acceptance in His sight. There is nothing to accuse us of anymore. Through Christ, what was there has been taken away, nailed to His Cross, publicly and legally cancelled so that it can never be used as evidence again. Just as no human court would admit evidence that has been publicly cancelled and displayed for all to see, Christ has dealt with what was against us. Not only that, He grants us that which enables our acceptance.

He adorns us with His beauty, clothing us in white garments to stand before the Lord. This constitutes the first part of purchased grace in which the saints share with Jesus Christ. It consists of the remission of sin and the imputation of righteousness, arising from Christ's death as a price, sacrifice, and punishment, as well as His life spent in obedience to the law. It is the remarkable product of the Father's righteousness, wisdom, love, and grace—the astonishing fruit of the Son's love and condescension—and the great revelation of the Holy Spirit in unveiling the mystery of the gospel.

2. The second aspect is the grace of sanctification. Christ not only secures love for His saints but also makes them lovely. He came not only by blood but also by water and blood. He not only justifies His saints from the guilt of sin but also sanctifies and cleanses them from its defilement. The former is accomplished through His life and death as a propitiatory sacrifice, while the latter is achieved through His death as a purchase and His life as an example. The apostle speaks of this in Hebrews 9:14 and Ephesians 5:26-27. Two notable elements arise from this outcome of purchased grace: (1) The removal of defilement, and (2) The bestowal of purity in actual grace.

(1) Regarding the first aspect, it can also be understood in three parts:

[1.] The habitual cleansing of our nature. By nature, we are unclean and defiled. "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" (Job 14:4). "That which is born of the flesh is flesh" (John 3:6). We are born in the pollution of our blood, as described in Ezekiel 16—wholly depraved and polluted. The grace of sanctification, purchased by the blood of Christ, removes this inherent defilement of our nature. As stated in 1 Corinthians 6:11, "Such were some of you; but you were

washed, you were sanctified." Likewise, Titus 3:3-5 declares, "He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit." The extent to which this original, inherent pollution is removed need not be debated, but it is certain that the soul is made fair and beautiful in the sight of God. Although the sin that defiles remains, its habitual defilement is eradicated. However, the discussion of this topic is not my focus here.

[2.] The removal of the defilement caused by actual transgressions. Every actual sin carries its own defilement. Our own actions cause us to be abhorred (Job 9:31). Every sin leaves a mark, a stain, rust, wrinkle, filth, or blood. Yet, 1 John 1:7 assures us that "the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin." In addition to purging the pollution of our nature (Titus 3:5), Christ removes the defilement from our persons caused by our actual foolishness. "By one offering, he has perfected forever those who are being sanctified" (Hebrews 10:14). Through Himself, He purges our sins even before He sits at the right hand of the Majesty on high (Hebrews 1:3).

[3.] Even in our best deeds, there is defilement (Isaiah 64:6). Selfishness, unbelief, and formality infiltrate all that we do. We may feel ashamed of our most exceptional performances. God has promised that the good works of the saints shall follow them. Truly, if these works were to be evaluated as they come from us and weighed on the scales of holiness, it might be to our benefit if they were buried forever. However, the Lord Christ, as our high priest, bears the iniquity, guilt, and provocation that justly accompany them (Exodus 28:38). Not only that, but He also washes away all their filth and defilements. He acts as a refiner's fire, purging both the Levites and their offerings, while adding sweet incense to them to ensure their acceptance. Whatever is of the Spirit, of Himself, and of grace remains, while whatever is of self, flesh, and unbelief (like hay and

stubble) is consumed, removed, and wasted. Thus, the good works of the saints will one day appear in a transformed countenance that they will barely recognize. That which seemed black, deformed, and defiled to them will appear beautiful and glorious. They shall no longer fear their works but rejoice to see and follow them.

The cleansing of our nature, persons, and deeds finds its foundation entirely in the death of Christ. Therefore, our washing, purifying, cleansing, and purging are ascribed to His blood and its sprinkling. Meritoriously, this work is accomplished by the shedding of Christ's blood, while the sprinkling of His blood is its efficient cause. The sprinkling of Christ's blood is made possible through the communication of the Holy Spirit, which He promised to us as the result of His purchase. He is the pure water by which we are sprinkled from all our sins—the Spirit of judgment and burning who removes the filth and blood from the daughters of Zion. And this concludes the first aspect of the grace of sanctification. More on this topic will be discussed later.

(2.) By bestowing actual purity in the form of grace. In this purchased grace, the blood of Christ not only removes defilement but also imparts purity. This happens in a threefold progression:

[1.] It gives us the indwelling Spirit of holiness. As stated in 1 Corinthians 1:30, Christ becomes our sanctification by procuring the Spirit of sanctification for us. Our renewal comes from the Holy Spirit, who is poured out on us solely through Christ (Titus 3:6). The apostle Paul emphasizes this aspect, particularly in Romans 8, highlighting that the primary and principal gift of sanctification we receive from Christ is the presence of the Spirit and our obedience to His guidance. However, any discussion about the Spirit in any

capacity should be reserved for my upcoming discourse on our communion with Him.

[2.] Christ bestows habitual grace upon us—a principle of grace that opposes the principle of lust inherent within us by nature. This grace dwells in us and makes its home with us. Depending on the distinct faculties of our souls in which it operates or the specific objects it engages with, it receives various names. Nevertheless, it is truly one unified principle of new life. In the understanding, it is light; in the will, obedience; in the affections, love; and in all aspects, faith. It also differs in terms of its operations. When it directs the soul to rely on Christ, it is faith; when it leads to delight in Him, it is love. However, it remains one and the same habit of grace. This constitutes the second aspect.

[3.] It provides us with actual influence to carry out every spiritual duty. Even after receiving the previous two aspects, Christ reminds His saints that without Him, "they can do nothing" (John 15:5). They remain dependent on Him for fresh influences of grace and the supply of the Spirit. They cannot live and rely on the old reserves, for every new action requires new grace. He must "work in us both to will and to work for His good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13). In these three aspects, briefly mentioned, lies the essence of purchased grace in relation to sanctification—the bestowal of purity and cleanliness in which we commune with Christ.

3. This purchased grace also encompasses the privileges to stand before God, which can be classified as primary and consequential. Primary privileges include adoption—the Spirit of adoption. Consequential privileges encompass all the blessings of the gospel that only the saints have a rightful claim to.

However, I will delve into this topic in more detail when addressing the final aspect—communion with the Holy Spirit.

These are the aspects in which we commune with Christ regarding purchased grace in this present life. When fully realized, they culminate in what we refer to as everlasting glory: perfect acceptance, perfect holiness, and perfect adoption or inheritance as sons and daughters. That is the essence of glory.

Now, our focus, as I intended from the start, turns to the manner in which we hold communion with Christ in these aspects, following the order previously established. Specifically:

I. How we commune with Him in the obedience of His life and the merit of His death, concerning acceptance with God the Father. II. How we commune with Christ in His blood, regarding the Spirit of sanctification, the habits and acts of grace. III. How we commune with Him concerning the privileges we enjoy. This will be discussed in the upcoming chapters.

## **CHAPTER VIII**

How the saints hold communion with Christ as to their acceptation with God—What is required on the part of Christ hereunto; in his intention; in the declaration thereof—The sum of our acceptation with God, wherein it consists—What is required on the part of believers to this communion, and how they hold it, with Christ—Some objections proposed to consideration, why the elect are not



accepted immediately on the undertaking and the death of Christ—In what sense they are so—Christ a common or public person—How he came to be so—The way of our acceptation with God on that account —The second objection—The necessity of our obedience stated, Eph. 2:8–10—The grounds, causes, and ends of it manifested—Its proper place in the new covenant—How the saints, in particular, hold communion with Christ in this purchased grace—They approve of this righteousness; the grounds there of—Reject their own; the grounds thereof—The commutation of sin and righteousness between Christ and believers; some objections answered.

I. Communion with Christ in the grace of acceptance with God, obtained through the obedience of His life and the efficacy of His death, is the first aspect we shall explore. The purpose of this inquiry is to understand what is required on the part of Christ and on our part for this communion to take place. Our mutual engagement, both His and ours, is necessary for us to have fellowship and communion in this regard.

Firstly, on the part of Christ, only two things are required: (1) What He did, He did not do for Himself but for us. (2) What He suffered, He suffered not for Himself but for us. In other words, His eternal intention and His intention while in the world were that all He did and suffered was and should be for our benefit and for our acceptance with God. He continues to make use of what He did and suffered for that specific purpose alone. This is clearly evident.

(1) Everything He did, He did for us and not for Himself. As Galatians 4:4-5 states, "He was made under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." He willingly placed Himself under the law, subjecting Himself to its will and commands. And for what purpose? For Himself? No, but to redeem us—this was the aim of all

His obedience, and He accomplished it. His intention in all that He did is revealed in John 17:19: "For their sakes, I sanctify myself, that they may be sanctified through the truth." He sanctified Himself, dedicating and setting Himself apart for all the work He had to do. He came not to fulfill His own will but to save the lost, to serve rather than be served, and to give His life as a ransom. This was the testimony He bore in everything He did in the world. We must pay close attention to this underlying intention. He had thoughts of what He would do for us from eternity and took delight in it. When He was in the world, He constantly thought, "This is for them, and this is for them—my beloved." For example, when He went to be baptized, as recorded in Matthew 3:14-15, John expressed his astonishment, saying, "I have need to be baptized by You, and You are coming to me?" But Jesus replied, "Allow it now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." In other words, "I do it for those who lack righteousness and who are obligated to fulfill it."

(2) The same principle applies to what He suffered. It is made abundantly clear in Daniel 9:26: "Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself." The apostle Paul highlights this as a significant distinction between Jesus Christ and the Jewish high priests. When they made their solemn offerings, they first offered for themselves and then for the people. But Jesus Christ offered Himself solely for others. He had no sin and could not make a sacrifice for His own sin, which He did not possess, but only for others. He "tasted death for every man" (Hebrews 2:9) and gave His life as a ransom for many (Matthew 20:28). The iniquity of us all was laid upon Him (Isaiah 53:6), and He bore our sins in His own body on the cross (1 Peter 2:24). He loved the church and gave Himself for it (Ephesians 5:25). These passages, along with others like Galatians 2:20, Romans 4:25, Revelation 1:5-6, Titus 2:14, and 1 Timothy 2:6, clearly and openly confess that Christ, in His suffering and sacrifice, had the sole

intention of benefiting His chosen ones and securing their acceptance with God. He suffered for us, "the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God."

Secondly, to complete this communion on the part of Christ, two requirements must be met:

(1) What He has done must be coupled with the gospel offers of complete righteousness and acceptance with God, which arise from His perfect obedience and sufferings. These offers are twofold:

[1] Declaratory offers are found in the conditional promises of the gospel, such as Mark 16:15 and Matthew 11:28: "Whoever believes will be saved" and "Come to Me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." Other examples include the account of Moses lifting up the serpent and Christ being the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes (Romans 10:4). These declaratory offers are precious and demonstrate great kindness. However, if rejected, they become the "savor of death unto death." Nevertheless, the Lord Christ knows that the outward proclamation, no matter how effectively presented, will not enable anyone to receive His righteousness in a manner that grants them a share in it.

[2] In this offer of acceptance with God, based on what Christ has done and suffered, a law is established so that whoever receives it will be accepted. However, Christ knows the condition and state of His people in this world. Mere acceptance of the offer will not suffice; if He does not effectively invest them with it, everything will be lost. Therefore, He sends His Holy Spirit to them to revive them (John 6:63), to cause the spiritually dead to hear His voice (John 5:25), and to work in them everything that is required to make them partakers of His righteousness and accepted by God.

This is how Christ deals with His people. He lives and dies with the intention of working out and completing righteousness for them. Their full enjoyment of this righteousness and their perfect acceptance before God is the ultimate goal of His work. He offers it to them, declares its value and preciousness to their souls, stirs up their desire for it, and ultimately bestows it upon them, reckoning it as theirs so that they may be perfectly accepted by His Father.

In summary, two things are required for our acceptance with God:

First, satisfaction must be made for our disobedience and for anything we have done that may have compromised God's justice and honor. To accomplish this, God's wrath had to be appeased through the penalty of the law. This has been abundantly demonstrated through the death of Christ. God made Him to be sin for us (2 Corinthians 5:21) and a curse (Galatians 3:13). As a result, we are absolved and acquitted from the guilt of sin, the condemnation of the law, and the wrath of God (Romans 8:33-34). We are justified, acquitted, and freed from condemnation because Christ bore our sins in His own body on the cross (1 Peter 2:24).

Second, the righteousness required by the law must be fulfilled, and the obedience demanded from us must be performed. This is achieved through the life of Christ (Romans 5:18-19). Therefore, according to our state and the condition of our acceptance with God, two aspects are involved:

1. Our absolution from the guilt of sin, ensuring that our disobedience is not attributed to us. This is achieved through the death of Christ, as our sins are imputed to Him and will not be imputed to us (2 Corinthians 5:21; Romans 4:25; Isaiah 53:12).

2. The imputation of Christ's righteousness to us, resulting in our being regarded as perfectly righteous before God. This is accomplished through the life of Christ. His obedience to the law is imputed to us. In this way, our acceptance with God is complete. We are freed from the guilt of our disobedience by the death of Christ, and His righteousness is imputed to us. This grants us friendship and peace with God. This is what I refer to as our grace of acceptance with God, in which we have communion with Jesus Christ.

Now, the remaining task is to demonstrate how believers maintain distinct communion with Christ in this grace of acceptance and how they keep a continual sense of it. The comfort and vitality derived from it need to be renewed each day. Without this sense, life becomes hellish, devoid of peace, joy, and the participation in holiness. Our grounded conviction of being accepted by God and being at peace with Him determines the measure of our peace, comfort, joy, and even our holiness.

But before I delve into the specific details of our practical communion with the Lord Jesus in this matter, I must address two significant objections. One objection concerns the first part of our acceptance with God, while the other pertains to the latter.

Objection 1: Regarding our absolution through the death of Christ, one might argue that if the elect are absolved, reconciled, and set free by Christ's death, then why are they not all actually absolved at His death or at least immediately upon their birth? Why do many of them continue to live for a long time under God's wrath in this world as unbelievers, under the condemnation of the law (John 3:36)? Why are they not immediately freed once the price has been paid and reconciliation made for them?

Objection 2: If Christ's obedience in His life is imputed to us as our righteousness before God, then why do we need to yield any obedience ourselves? Are our prayers, labors, watchfulness, fasting, and acts of charity all in vain and serve no purpose? If Christ's obedience covers everything, then who would care or feel the need to pursue holiness, humility, righteousness, meekness, temperance, patience, goodness, peaceableness, or abound in good works in the world?

I will, with God's help, briefly address these two objections before continuing with the main topic of our communion with Christ.

Firstly, Jesus Christ, in His mission to reconcile us with God, for which He came into the world, acted as a common representative in place of those for whom He suffered. He is the mediator between God and humanity (1 Timothy 2:5), who undertook the responsibility for us (verse 6) and served as the surety of the better covenant (Hebrews 7:22). He acted on behalf of those with whom that covenant was made. He is described as the "covenant of the people" (Isaiah 42:6) and a "leader" (Isaiah 55:4). He is the second Adam (1 Corinthians 15:45, 47) in terms of righteousness for His spiritual offspring, just as the first Adam represented sin for his natural offspring (Romans 5:15–19).

Secondly, His role as a common representative arose mainly from the following factors:

[1] The covenant that He entered into with the Father for this purpose. The terms of this covenant are detailed in Isaiah 53 and summarized in Psalm 40:7-8 and Hebrews 10:8-10. The Father became His God (Psalm 89:26; Hebrews 1:5; Psalm 22:1, 40:8, 45:7; Revelation 3:12; Micah 5:4), and He was designated for this work (Isaiah 42:1, 6, 49:9; Malachi 3:1; Zechariah 8:7; John 3:16; 1

Timothy 1:15). The "counsel of peace" was established between them both (Zechariah 6:13) – the Father and the Son. From eternity, the Son delighted in the thought of this undertaking (Proverbs 8:22–30). I have discussed the command given to Him, the promises made to Him, and the assistance provided to Him elsewhere.

[2] The sovereign grant, appointment, and dedication of the elect by the Father to Jesus Christ within this covenant for redemption and reconciliation. As stated in John 17:6, "They were yours; you gave them to me." They belonged to God through eternal designation and election, and He gave them to Christ for redemption. This is why He refers to them as His "sheep" (John 10:15-16), for whom He lays down His life. It is also why we are described as "chosen in Christ" (Ephesians 1:4), destined to receive all the blessings of God's love through Christ and entrusted into His care for that purpose.

[3] His undertaking to suffer what was due to them and to fulfill what was required of them, so that they could be delivered, reconciled, and accepted by God. He undertook to present to the Father, without any loss or failure, what He had received from the Father (John 17:2, 12, 6:37, 39), just as Jacob did with the cattle he received from Laban (Genesis 31:39-40). I have elaborated on both of these aspects elsewhere when discussing the covenant between the Father and the Son, so there is no need to repeat it here.

[4] Being given this responsibility, He received on behalf of His people all the promises of mercy, grace, goodness, and privileges that they would receive based on His work. Eternal life is promised by God "before the world began" (Titus 1:2) to the Son of God on our behalf. Grace is also said to be given to us "before the world began" (2 Timothy 1:9) in Christ, our appointed head, mediator, and representative.

[5] Christ, as a common representative, having been acquitted and absolved on the grounds of the efficacy and merit of His undertakings and being formally declared so, has completely satisfied every debt owed by us. This absolution is immediate upon His faithfulness in His initial engagement. He expressed confidence in this absolution (Isaiah 50:5–9) and was "justified" (1 Timothy 3:16). By absolution, I mean that as a public person, God made Him subject to the law on behalf of those who were under the law (Galatians 4:4), making Him liable to the punishment deserved for sin (2 Corinthians 5:21), thereby granting justice, law, and all the consequences of the curse the power to act against Him (Isaiah 53:6). When He fulfilled the requirements placed upon Him (Isaiah 53:12), God released Him from the pains and power of death, accepted Him, and was well pleased with His performance and discharge of His work (John 17:3–6). God declared Him free from any obligation (Acts 8) and gave Him the promise of all the desired and sought-after blessings. All the promises of God to Christ and their fulfillment, as well as all the encouragement given to Him to ask for and demand the things originally promised to Him (Psalm 2:8), are built on this absolution. This firm and sure foundation is what secures our absolution and acceptance with God. Christ, acting as our surety in our place, being acquitted, absolved, and solemnly declared to have fully paid the entire debt and made satisfaction for all the wrongs we have committed, results in a general pardon being sealed for all of us, which is to be individually obtained through the appointed means.

[6] Christ's absolution as a public person establishes the righteous principle that, according to the covenant, those for whom He acted should receive and be granted all the benefits of His death, leading to reconciliation with God (Romans 5:8–11). Just as Christ received the general acquittal on behalf of all, each individual should personally



enjoy it. This principle is evident in expressions that indicate a substitution ordained by God in this matter, such as 2 Corinthians 5:21, Galatians 3:13, and 1 Peter 2:21, 24.

[7] Until the appointed time of their actual deliverance, determined by God in different generations, they remain personally under the curse of the law and, as a result, legally subject to God's wrath. However, this is not with the original intention of executing that wrath upon them, but rather as a means appointed to lead them to know Christ and be accepted by God on His account. Once this purpose is fulfilled, the obligation ceases. It is continued as an act of love because without it they cannot partake in Christ and bring praise to the glorious grace of God.

[8] The goal of the dispensation of grace is to bring glory to the entire Trinity. The established order for achieving this is by ascending to the Father's love through the work of the Spirit and the blood of the Son. Divine love emanates from the Father, is carried out by the Son, and is communicated by the Spirit. Our participation begins with the work of the Spirit, granting us an actual interest in the blood of the Son, through which we find acceptance with the Father.

This, then, is the order by which we are brought to acceptance with the Father, for the glory of God through Christ:

1. In order to glorify the Spirit, He is given to us to revive us, convert us, and work faith within us (Romans 8:11; Ephesians 1:19-20), in accordance with the promises of the covenant (Isaiah 4:4, 5; Ezekiel 11:9, 36:26).
2. Once this work is accomplished in us, for the glory of the Son, we become actually interested, according to the covenant, in the benefits procured for us by the blood of Christ. Indeed, the work

of the Spirit itself is a fruit and part of Christ's redemption. However, in regards to our personal experience of this, the communication of the Spirit precedes it.

3. To glorify the Father, we are accepted by Him, justified, freed from guilt, pardoned, and have "peace with God" (Romans 5:1). Through Christ, we have access to the Father by the Spirit (Ephesians 2:17). In our justification and acceptance with God, both the Father and the Son, along with the Holy Spirit, are glorified. The Father is glorified through His free love, the Son through His complete redemption, and the Holy Spirit through His effective work.

[10.] All of this, in all its aspects, is fully obtained for us and freely bestowed upon us for the sake of Christ, as part of His purchase and merits. It is no less so than if we had been immediately transported to heaven upon His death. The only difference is that this way of deliverance and freedom is ordained to bring glory to the entire Trinity. This should suffice as an answer to the first objection. Although our reconciliation with God is fully procured by the death of Christ and all the means by which it is accomplished, we come to personally enjoy it in the prescribed order for the praise of God's glorious grace.

2. The second objection is that if the righteousness and obedience of Christ are imputed to us, then why do we need to yield obedience ourselves? I will address this objection as briefly as possible in the following observations:

- (1.) It is of great importance to properly understand and place our gospel obedience, so that it is neither elevated into a state, condition, use, or end that God has not assigned to it, nor have any reasons, causes, motives, or necessity for it taken away, weakened, or

impaired. There are various opinions regarding this matter, with some making our obedience the cause or condition of our justification, while others exclude the necessity of it altogether. Debating these differences is not my current concern. However, I emphasize that the proper understanding of our obedience is crucial for our walk with God.

(2.) We do not assign the same place, condition, state, or use to the imputed obedience of Christ and our obedience performed to God. If we did, they would be inconsistent. Those who assert that our obedience is the condition or cause of our justification actually deny the imputation of Christ's obedience to us. The righteousness of Christ is imputed to us as the basis on which we are accepted and regarded as righteous before God, even though we are not inherently righteous. We are truly righteous with the imputed obedience of Christ, just as Adam could have been through his own complete righteousness. Romans 5:18 states that we are made righteous by Christ's obedience, truly and accepted as such, just as we are truly made trespassers and accounted as such through Adam's disobedience. This is what the apostle desires to be found in, in opposition to his own righteousness (Philippians 3:9). On the other hand, our own obedience is not the righteousness on which we are accepted and justified before God, although it is pleasing to God and should abound in us. This distinction is clearly delivered and confirmed by the apostle, as nothing can be more explicitly revealed. Ephesians 2:8-10 states that we are saved by grace through faith, not of works, yet we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works that God has prepared for us to walk in. The apostle is addressing believers and their obedience, emphasizing that although we are not saved by works, good works have their place and necessity.

If you ask, "What are the true and proper gospel grounds, reasons, uses, and motives for our obedience? How can we demonstrate its necessity and be encouraged to abound and bear fruit?" I must say that there are numerous reasons that are deeply rooted in the mystery of the gospel and the dispensation of grace. They are spread throughout the entire revelation of God's will to us. To fully and distinctly address them and give them their due weight is beyond the scope of my current intention. However, I can provide some brief points that could be expanded upon:

1st. Our obedience and good works are indispensably necessary according to the sovereign appointment and will of God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

In general, it is the will of God that we be sanctified and holy (1 Thessalonians 4:3). God requires us to be obedient and to do His will, just as the angels do in heaven. The equity, necessity, profit, and advantage of this foundation for our obedience could be extensively discussed. But even if there were no other reasons, this alone suffices: if it is the will of God, it is our duty.

(1st) The Father has ordained and appointed it. It is the will of the Father (Ephesians 2:10), mentioned personally with Christ as mediator.

(2ndly) The Son has ordained and appointed it as mediator. In John 15:16, Jesus says, "I have ordained you to bring forth fruit" of obedience, and for it to remain.

(3rdly) The Holy Spirit appoints and ordains believers to works of obedience and holiness, and works holiness in others. Acts 13:2, for example, shows how the Holy Spirit appoints and designates people

to the great work of obedience in preaching the gospel. In sinning, people sin against Him.

2ndly. Our holiness, obedience, and righteous deeds are a prominent and specific purpose of the unique dispensation of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in the matter of exalting the glory of God in our salvation. It is the purpose of the Father's electing love (Ephesians 1:4) and the Son's redeeming love (Titus 2:14) to purify us and make us zealous for good works. The love of the Holy Spirit is focused on preparing us for obedience, enabling us to do it, and bearing its fruit in us.

Thus, we have two fundamental reasons for the necessity of our obedience and personal holiness: God has appointed it and requires it, and it is a significant immediate purpose of the distinct work of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in our salvation. If we acknowledge God's sovereignty over us, if we consider His love toward us, and if we recognize the importance of the work of the Trinity for us and in us, our obedience is necessary.

3rdly. It is necessary considering its end, whether you consider God, ourselves, or the world:

(1st) The end of our obedience in relation to God is His glory and honor (Malachi 1:6). Our obedience gives honor to God, and although He can receive honor even from the proudest rebel in the world, our obedience is what we willingly offer. By our obedience, we glorify God. It displays the fruits of His love, grace, and kindness upon us, bringing glory to Him. It glorifies the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

[1st] It glorifies the Father. In Matthew 5:16, Jesus instructs us to let our light shine before others so that they may see our good works

and glorify our Father in heaven. Our obedience and walking in the light of faith bring glory to the Father, revealing His love, grace, and kindness.

[2ndly] It glorifies the Son. It is the will of God that everyone honors the Son just as they honor the Father (John 5:23). We honor the Son by believing in Him and obeying Him. Jesus Himself affirms that He is glorified in believers (John 17:10), and He prays for increased grace and unity among them, desiring to be even more glorified and for all to know that He was sent by God as the mediator.

[3rdly] It also glorifies the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is grieved by our disobedience (Ephesians 4:30), but He is glorified when we bear fruit through obedience. He dwells in us as His temple, and holiness becomes His eternal habitation.

Now, if what has been said is not sufficient to demonstrate the necessity of our obedience, then we must assume that we are speaking to a group of people who do not value the sovereignty, love, or glory of God: Father, Son, or Holy Spirit. Regardless of what others may say, even if our obedience were disregarded and considered insignificant (which is impossible, for God is just and does not forget our acts of love), there is still a solid foundation and reason to yield more obedience to God than we ever will while living in this world. I am specifically referring to the gospel grounds of obedience and not those that are natural and legal, which are necessary for all human beings.

(2ndly) The immediate end for ourselves is threefold: [1st] Honor, [2dly] Peace, [3dly] Usefulness.

[1st] Honor: Through holiness, we are made like God, and His image is renewed within us. This was our honor at the time of our creation,

elevating us above all other creatures on earth, for we were made in the image of God. However, we lost this through sin and became like perishable beasts. Only through holiness can we be exalted again to the honor of being conformed to God and bearing His image. God commands us to be holy because He is holy (1 Peter 1:16), and He tells us to be perfect (meaning to do good) as our heavenly Father is perfect (Matthew 5:48). In this likeness and conformity to Him, the image of God is renewed. It is this image that was originally associated with power and dominion and remains the epitome of beauty and comeliness in the world. The honor and preciousness that holiness bestows upon individuals in the sight of God, angels, and humans, and the contempt and scorn that those without holiness face, along with their ways, can easily be demonstrated.

[2dly] Peace: Through holiness, we enter into communion with God, and it is in this communion that true peace is experienced. The wicked are like a restless sea, unable to find rest, and God declares that there is no peace for them (Isaiah 57:20-21). There is no peace, rest, or tranquility in being distant, separated, or estranged from God. He is the rest for our souls, and life and peace are found in the light of His countenance. If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and our fellowship is with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ (1 John 1:7, 3). Those who walk in the light of new obedience have communion with God, finding fullness of joy in His presence. Without holiness, there is only darkness, wandering, and confusion.

[3dly] Usefulness: A person without holiness is of no value. The prophet describes Ephraim as an empty vine that bears fruit only for itself. What good is such a vine? None. Another prophet says that one cannot even make a pin out of it to hang a vessel on. A barren tree is good for nothing except to be cut down for firewood. Despite the

apparent usefulness of individuals who serve God's providence in their generation, it can be shown that the world and the church could do without them, and indeed, they are of no real value. Only the holy person is a true good.

(3dly) The end in relation to others in the world is manifold:

[1st] It serves to convict and silence some of God's enemies, both in the present and in the future. 1. In the present, having a good conscience enables others to be ashamed of their false accusations when they speak evil of us as evildoers. Through the holiness and righteousness of the saints, their malice and hatred towards God's ways are exposed, and they are convinced and put to shame, acknowledging that God is among the righteous and that they themselves are wicked (John 17:23). 2. In the future, it is said that the saints will judge the world, and this includes their good works, righteousness, and holiness being presented and revealed to all. The righteousness of God's judgments against the wicked will be evident. Christ will say, "Look, these are the ones I acknowledge, whom you despised and abhorred, and see the works that follow them—what they have done while you wallowed in your abominations" (Matthew 25:42-43).

[2dly] The conversion of others: By maintaining an honest and upright conduct among unbelievers, their false accusations are discredited by witnessing our good works. They may even glorify God when the day of His visitation comes (1 Peter 2:12).

[3dly] The benefit to all: It helps to avert judgments from the rest of humanity, just as ten righteous people would have saved Sodom. Additionally, through their continual display of the fruits of the Spirit, holy individuals provide genuine good to those with whom they interact.



[4thly] It is necessary considering the state and condition of justified individuals, whether in terms of their accepted state or their state of sanctification:

Firstly, they have been accepted and received into friendship with a holy God—a God whose eyes are too pure to look upon iniquity and who hates all unclean things. It is necessary for them to be holy, for they have been admitted into His presence, walk before Him, and even lie in His bosom. Therefore, they should diligently cleanse themselves from all impurities of body and spirit, striving for perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord.

Secondly, in relation to sanctification, we have become new creatures in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17). This new creation is sustained, nurtured, and kept alive through the fruits of holiness. Why has God given us new hearts and new natures? Is it so that we might destroy them, suffocating the newborn creature within us? Shall we offer this new creation to the old man for consumption?

[5thly] It is necessary in relation to the rightful place of holiness within the new covenant, which serves two purposes:

Firstly, it is the means to the end. God has ordained that holiness shall be the means, the pathway to eternal life. While eternal life itself is a gift from God through Jesus Christ, holiness is the means by which we attain it. Thus, it becomes a reward in the context of God's requirement for our obedience as the means of obtaining salvation. Those who have hope in eternal life purify themselves as He is pure, and no one shall ever reach that end without walking in the way of holiness. For without holiness, it is impossible to see God.

Secondly, it is a testimony and pledge of adoption—a sign and evidence of grace, demonstrating our acceptance by God.

Lastly, it serves as the complete expression of our gratitude.

Now, each of these causes and reasons for the necessity, the indispensable necessity, of our obedience, good works, and personal righteousness would require a more extensive discussion to fully elucidate and explain than I have allocated for presenting them here. There are countless others of similar significance that I cannot even mention. If, upon considering these accounts, someone still does not believe that universal holiness and obedience are of indispensable necessity, unless they are elevated to the position of Christ's obedience and righteousness, then let them remain in their filth.

Having addressed these objections and having declared what has been accomplished by Christ in terms of our fellowship with Him and our acceptance with God at the beginning of this chapter, it is now necessary to demonstrate what is also required and accomplished on our part to complete this fellowship. This can be summed up in the following points:

1. The saints wholeheartedly affirm the righteousness of Christ as the only righteousness that is completely perfect and able to make them acceptable before God. This presupposes six things:

(1.) They are fully convinced of the necessity of righteousness to appear before God. They constantly think about this and consider it a fundamental truth. Many people live their lives stubbornly and without regard for their eternal condition, never considering what will happen to them when they face eternity. Others waste their time and souls, pursuing empty hopes and setting themselves up for future destruction. However, the saints' communion with Christ is rooted in a deep, unwavering conviction of the absolute and indispensable necessity of righteousness to stand before God. They are aware of the holiness of God's nature, the righteousness of His

rule, the severity of His law, and the terror of His wrath. They have all recognized their own sinfulness and viewed themselves as deserving the full weight of God's vengeance. They have all cried out, "What must we do to be saved?" and "How can we come before God?" They have all concluded that it is futile to delude themselves with false hopes of escaping judgment in their natural state. If God is holy and righteous, with eyes too pure to look upon iniquity, they must possess a righteousness to stand in His presence. They know what the cry of those who currently exalt themselves will be on that day (Isaiah 53:1-5; Micah 6:6-7).

(2.) They evaluate their own righteousness and find it lacking in two ways:

[1.] In general, when they first present themselves before God. When people recognize the necessity of righteousness, they grasp at anything that appears to offer relief. They are like individuals drowning in deep waters, reaching for the nearest object to save themselves from sinking, only to find that the object is a rotten stick that pulls them down. This was the case with the Jews who grasped the law, hoping it would save them, but it couldn't. The apostle Paul explains how they perished with the law because they sought to establish their own righteousness, which kept them busy and hopeful but prevented them from submitting to the righteousness of God (Romans 9:31-32; 10:1-4). Many perish in this way, never drawing nearer to God throughout their lives. The saints renounce this approach; they have no confidence in their own efforts. They understand that everything they do and everything the law can do, weakened by human nature, is insufficient. Paul clearly expresses his judgment on personal righteousness in Philippians 3:8-10. The saints carry this truth in their minds daily, filling their thoughts with the realization that they cannot be accepted or justified before God

based on their actions—past, present, or future. This keeps their souls humble, constantly aware of their own unworthiness.

[2.] In particular, they assess each of their individual actions and find them lacking in completeness to be accepted by God on their own merit. A saint might say, "If I had nothing to offer to God but this prayer, this duty, this victory over temptation, in which I see so many shortcomings and imperfections, how could I boldly present myself before Him? Should I then try to patch together a garment of righteousness from my best deeds? Ah! It is all like a filthy rag" (Isaiah 64:6). These thoughts accompany them in all their duties, even in their best and most cherished performances. They say to themselves, "Lord, what am I even at my best? How little do my best efforts align with Your holiness! Spare me, even in relation to the best thing I have ever done in my life" (Nehemiah 13:22). When a person who lives by convictions experiences growth in their duties or achieves victory over a particular sin or temptation, they may congratulate themselves, much like Micah did when he obtained a Levite as his priest. They may feel at ease, thinking that God will now bless them and that they have peace because of their accomplishments. However, those who have communion with Christ are keenly aware of their own unprofitability, rejecting any thought that might suggest finding peace or deriving their confidence from their works. They say to their souls, "Do these things seem significant to you? Alas! You have to deal with an infinitely righteous God who sees through and through all the vanity that you are not fully acquainted with. And if He were to judge you based on your best works, you would perish."

(3.) They wholeheartedly approve of and rejoice in the righteousness of Christ for their acceptance before God, which He has accomplished and provided for them. Once this righteousness is

revealed to them, they wholeheartedly embrace it and find rest in it. Isaiah 45:24 says, "Surely, shall one say, in the LORD have I righteousness and strength." This is their confession when the righteousness of God in Christ is made known to them: "This is true righteousness; in this I find rest for my soul. Like the merchant in the parable of the pearl of great price (Matthew 13:45-46), I had been searching everywhere, looking this way and that for help, but it was all in vain. I wasted my energy pursuing things that were not bread. But here, indeed, I have found something that makes me eternally rich!" When the righteousness of Christ, as the means of acceptance with God, is first revealed to a struggling soul that has sought rest and found none, that soul is astonished and overwhelmed, unable to contain their joy. Such a person wholeheartedly approves of this righteousness for two reasons:

[1.] They see in it infinite wisdom. The apostle Paul says, "To those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God" (1 Corinthians 1:24). They perceive infinite wisdom in this way of being accepted by God. Such a person exclaims, "I was in great darkness and distress, trapped in perplexity. I was unable to see through the clouds and complexities that surrounded me. When I looked within myself, all I saw was sin, horror, fear, and trembling. When I looked upward, all I saw was wrath, curses, and vengeance. I knew that God is holy and righteous, and no unclean thing can stand before Him. I knew that I, a wretched, unclean, and sinful creature, could not find peace between these two realities. But in the righteousness of Christ, a world of wisdom opens up, dispelling all difficulties and darkness, and revealing the reconciliation of all these things. Oh, the depth of the riches of God's wisdom and knowledge!" (Romans 11:33; Colossians 2:3). But I will discuss this further later.

[2.] They see in it abundant grace. They recognize that sin had closed off all avenues of grace toward them, and since God desires to manifest His grace above all else, they were left with nothing. Therefore, to have a complete righteousness provided while abundant grace is demonstrated greatly delights their souls. They find joy in the fact that God's dealings with their person are all characterized by grace, and His dealings with their righteousness are characterized by justice. They constantly think about this. God reassures us that this righteousness is of grace. It is "by grace, and not of works" (Romans 11:6), as the apostle describes in Ephesians 2:7-9. The provision of this righteousness flows from the riches of God's grace and kindness. It is bestowed upon us solely by grace, not at all by works. Although it is a righteousness of works in itself, to us it is entirely by grace. In Titus 3:4-7, it is described as follows: "But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life." Every word is used here to express the exceeding riches of God's grace, kindness, mercy, and goodness, all of which converge in this work. These include: 1. Χρηστότης (goodness) - His willingness to communicate Himself and His good things that are beneficial to us. 2. Φιλανθρωπία (mercy, love) - His inclination to help, support, and relieve those towards whom He feels affection. 3. Ἐλεος (mercy) - His forgiveness, compassion, and tenderness towards those who suffer. And Χάρις (grace) - His free, pardoning generosity and undeserved love. Throughout this passage, it is emphasized that this righteousness is an expression of grace. It is "the righteousness of Him who is such" (Titus 3:7). When communing with Christ, the saints greatly rejoice in the fact that

their acceptance before God is rooted in grace, kindness, and mercy. They do not boast in themselves, but in the Lord and His goodness, crying out, "How great is Your goodness! How abundant is Your generosity!"

(4.) They wholeheartedly approve and rejoice in this righteousness as a source of great peace and security for themselves and their souls. They remember the state they were in when they attempted to establish their own righteousness and were not subject to the righteousness of Christ. They recall how they were tossed about with constant fluctuating thoughts. They experienced moments of hope and moments filled with fear. Sometimes they thought they were in a good condition, and then suddenly they felt on the brink of hell. Their consciences were tormented and torn by sin and fear. But now, "having been justified by faith, they have peace with God" (Romans 5:1). Everything is calm and tranquil. Not only has the storm subsided, but they have reached the harbor where they longed to be. They have lasting peace with God. This is described in Isaiah 32:2 as follows: "And a man shall be as a hiding place from the wind, and a cover from the tempest, as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." Wind, tempest, drought, and weariness no longer trouble the soul that is in Christ. They have a hiding place, a cover, rivers of water, and the shadow of a great rock for their security. This is the remarkable mystery of faith in the matter of our acceptance with God through Christ. Although the soul of a believer finds more than enough in Christ and upon Him to rend their heart, filling them with fear, terror, and unrest throughout their days, through Christ they have perfect peace with God (Isaiah 26:3; Psalm 4:6-8). Therefore, the souls of believers greatly magnify Jesus Christ because they can behold the face of God with boldness, confidence, peace, joy, and assurance. They can call Him Father, rest in His love, walk in peace, and live without fear. How glorious is the

Son of God in this grace! They remember the bitterness and gall they have tasted, the vinegar and tears they have drunk, and the trembling of their souls like a leaf shaken by the wind. To be brought to settlement and security now must deeply affect them.

(5.) They wholeheartedly approve of this righteousness because it greatly exalts and honors the Lord Jesus, whom their souls love. Once they come to know Jesus Christ, their hearts desire nothing more than to honor and glorify Him to the utmost, giving Him preeminence in all things. What can contribute more to the advancement and honoring of Him in their hearts than to know that He is made by God "our wisdom and righteousness" (1 Corinthians 1:30)? He is not just a part of our acceptance with God; He is everything. They know that because of His work in accomplishing their acceptance with God, He is:

[1.] Honored by God the Father. Philippians 2:7-11 says, "He made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Whether the word "therefore" denotes a causal connection or merely a consequence, it is clear that because of His suffering and as the end result of it, He was honored and exalted by God to an indescribable preeminence, dignity, and authority. This is in accordance with the promise of God, as stated in Isaiah 53:11, 12 and Acts 2:36, 5:30, 31. It is also mentioned that "when He had by



Himself purged our sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Hebrews 1:3).

[2.] Honored by all the angels in heaven. They not only bow down and desire to understand the mystery of the cross (1 Peter 1:12), but they continually worship and praise Him for the work of bringing sinners to God. Revelation 5:11-14 states, "Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice: 'Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honor and glory and blessing!' And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying: 'Blessing and honor and glory and power be to Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, forever and ever!' Then the four living creatures said, 'Amen!' And the twenty-four elders fell down and worshiped Him who lives forever and ever." The reason for this glorious and wondrous doxology, the attribution of honor and glory to Jesus Christ by the entire host of heaven, is because He is the Lamb who was slain. This is due to the work of our redemption and our being brought to God. It is a great source of refreshment and joy for the souls of the saints to know that all the angels of God, the entire host of heaven who have never sinned, continually rejoice and offer praise and honor to the Lord Jesus for bringing them to peace and favor with God.

[3.] Honored by His saints worldwide. If His saints do not honor Him as they honor the Father, they are the most unworthy of all people. But look at what they do, as described in Revelation 1:5, 6: "To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to

Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen." Revelation 5:8-10 also declares, "Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sang a new song, saying: 'You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals; for You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth.'" The grand and solemn worship of the Christian church consists in giving honor and glory to the Lord Jesus. Therefore, they love Him, honor Him, and delight in Him, just as Paul did (Philippians 3:8) and as the bride in the Song of Solomon did (Song of Solomon 5:9-16). This is because of the following:

(6.) They wholeheartedly approve of this righteousness, this way of acceptance, because it brings glory to God. When they were burdened by the guilt of sin, what troubled their souls most of all was the belief that their safety was incompatible with the glory and honor of the great God, with His justice, faithfulness, and truth—all of which were committed to the destruction of sin. They saw no way to escape ruin without compromising the honor of these attributes. However, through the revelation of this righteousness from faith to faith, they clearly see that all the attributes of God are greatly glorified in the pardon, justification, and acceptance of poor sinners, as previously demonstrated.

And this is the first way in which the saints engage in daily communion with the Lord Jesus in this procured grace of acceptance with God: they consider, approve, and rejoice in the way, means, and the very essence of it.

2. They engage in an actual exchange with the Lord Jesus concerning their sins and his righteousness. This exchange consists of several parts:

(1.) They consistently keep a sense of the guilt and evil of sin alive in their hearts, even when they are comforted by the belief in their personal acceptance with God. The sense of forgiveness removes fear and horror, but not the recognition of sin's guilt. It is the daily practice of God's saints to contemplate the great offense that sin represents—their own sins, the sin of their nature and actions. They consider themselves as vile in their own hearts and thoughts because of it. They compare sin with the terror of the Lord and continually judge themselves. This is their general approach. As David said, "My sin is ever before me." They keep sin before them not to terrify their souls but to maintain a proper awareness of its evil.

(2.) They gather in their thoughts the sins for which they have not made a specific account with God in Christ. Even if they have begun the process, they have not fully and comfortably resolved it. There is nothing more dreadful than being able to dismiss convictions—to have sin confront them, perhaps speaking words of terror, and being able, through various distractions or delays, to avoid a thorough examination of their state and condition in relation to sin. The saints, however, gather their sins, place them on the scales of the law, and observe their weight and deserving punishment.

(3.) They engage in the mentioned exchange with Jesus Christ, which involves the following steps:

[1.] They seriously consider and, through faith, overcome any objections to the fact that Jesus Christ, by the will and appointment of the Father, has truly endured the punishment that was due to the sins that are now under their scrutiny and consideration. He has

answered the justice of God for those sins as certainly and genuinely as if the sinner himself were immediately cast into hell.

[2.] They listen to the voice of Christ calling them to Himself with their burdens, saying, "Come to Me, all you who are weary and burdened." They come with their burdens, with the guilt of sin. Why? What is the purpose? "Because this burden is Mine," says Christ. "This was the agreement I made with My Father—that I would come and take your sins upon Myself and bear them away. They were assigned to Me. Give Me your burden, give Me all your sins. You do not know what to do with them, but I know how to handle them in a way that brings glory to God and delivers your soul." In response to this call, they lay down their sins at the foot of the cross, upon Christ's shoulders. This is a bold act of faith in the grace, faithfulness, and truth of God—to stand by the cross and say, "Ah! He was crushed for my sins, wounded for my transgressions, and the punishment that brought me peace was upon Him. He was made sin for me. Here, I give up my sins to Him who is able to bear them, to endure them. He requires me to surrender them, to be content with Him taking charge of them, and I wholeheartedly agree." This is a daily practice, for I do not see how one can maintain peace with God without it. If receiving Christ as the One who became sin for us is the work of our souls, then we must also receive Him as the One who takes our sins upon Himself. It is not as if He dies or suffers again, but just as the faith of the saints of old made present what had not yet come to pass (Hebrews 11:1), so faith now makes present what was accomplished and finished many generations ago. This is what it means to know Christ crucified.

[4.] Having thus, by faith, surrendered their sins to Christ and seen God place them all on Him, they draw near and receive the righteousness that He has worked out for them. Thus, fulfilling the

words of the apostle, "He was made sin for us so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Corinthians 5:21). They consider Christ tendering Himself and His righteousness as their righteousness before God. They take it, accept it, and complete this blessed exchange and trade of faith. They leave behind anger, curse, wrath, death, and the guilt of sin, entrusting them to Christ. And from Him, they receive love, life, righteousness, and peace.

Objection: It may be argued, "Surely this manner of proceeding can never be acceptable to Jesus Christ. What! Shall we come to Him daily with our filth, guilt, and sins? Won't He bid us keep them to ourselves? They are our own. Shouldn't we give Him sins once and for all, instead of constantly giving sins and receiving righteousness?"

Answer: There is nothing that brings more delight to Jesus Christ than His saints engaging in this continual communion of giving and receiving. Why?

1. It greatly honors Him and gives Him the glory that is rightfully His. Many cry out, "Lord, Lord," and mention Him, but they do not honor Him at all. How so? They take His work out of His hands and attribute it to other things—repentance, duties—believing that these can bear their iniquities. They may not say it, but they do it. If they make any exchange, it is with themselves. All their bargaining with sin occurs within their own souls. However, the work that Christ came to do in the world was to bear our iniquities and lay down His life as a ransom for our sins. The cup He had to drink was filled with our sins and the punishment they deserved. What greater dishonor could be done to the Lord Jesus than to attribute this work to anything or anyone else—to think that we can rid ourselves of our sins

through any other means? Therefore, when we go to Him with our sins by faith and say, "Lord, this is Your work. This is why You came into the world. This is what You undertook to do. You call for my burden, which is too heavy for me to bear. Take it, blessed Redeemer. You offer Your righteousness; that is my portion." Then Christ is honored, then the glory of mediation is ascribed to Him when we walk with Him in this communion.

2. It greatly endears the souls of the saints to Him and compels them to place a proper value on Him, His love, righteousness, and grace. They do it when they experience and daily utilize it. Who would not love Him? The poor soul may say, "I have been with the Lord Jesus. I have left my sins, my burden with Him, and He has given me His righteousness, with which I confidently approach God. I was dead, but now I am alive because He died for me. I was cursed, but now I am blessed because He became a curse for me. I was troubled, but now I have peace because the punishment that brought me peace was upon Him. I did not know what to do or where to direct my sorrow, but through Him, I have received inexpressible and glorious joy. If I do not love Him, delight in Him, obey Him, live for Him, and even die for Him, I am worse than the devils in hell." This is how the saints of God are prepared to esteem Him, having committed themselves to this communion with Him.

Obj. Yes, but you may argue, "If that's the case, why do we need to repent or change our ways? Can't we just go to Christ by faith, make this exchange with Him, and continue sinning so that grace may abound?"

Ans. I do not judge any person's character, but I must say that I cannot comprehend how someone who raises this objection in a calm

and deliberate manner, not under temptation or temporary confusion, can truly know or understand Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, I am certain that this communion with Christ produces entirely different effects than what is supposed. For:

1. Regarding repentance, I assume that it refers to gospel repentance. As for a legalistic, fearful repentance filled with dread, terror, self-centeredness, and astonishment in the presence of God, I confess that this communion eliminates, prevents, and casts out such bondage and fear. However, for gospel repentance, which consists of godly sorrow for sin accompanied by forsaking sin, resulting from faith, love, and a hatred of sin for the sake of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, both in terms of the law and love, it is impossible for this communion to hinder it. I have mentioned that the foundation of this communion lies in a deep, serious, and daily contemplation of sin—its guilt, vileness, and abhorrence—and our own vileness on account of it. This awareness must be kept alive in the heart of anyone who desires to experience this communion with Christ. Without it, Christ holds no value or esteem. Now, can a person daily fill their heart with thoughts of the vileness of sin from all possible perspectives—law, love, grace, gospel, life, and death—and be filled with self-abhorrence on this account, and yet be a stranger to godly sorrow? Here lies the mistake—what they believe this communion overthrows is actually its foundation.
2. But what about obedience? "If Christ is glorified and honored by taking our sins, the more sins we bring to Him, the more He will be glorified." One would think that this objection was made on behalf of those whom the Holy Spirit, who knows what is in the heart of man, has already addressed in Romans 6:1-3. The same

doctrine that I have presented in Chapter 5:18-20 faces the same objection. For those who believe it may carry any weight, I refer them to the apostle's answer in that chapter, as well as to what was previously said about the necessity of our obedience despite the imputation of Christ's righteousness.

But you may ask, "How should we approach the fulfillment of this duty? What path should we follow?"

Faith engages in this duty primarily through three ways:

(1.) Through meditation. The heart contemplates the aspects mentioned above—sometimes individually, sometimes collectively. At times, the soul focuses primarily on its own sinfulness, filling itself with shame and self-aborrence for that reason. Other times, it is filled with thoughts of the righteousness of Christ and experiences unspeakable and glorious joy because of it. Especially on significant occasions, when burdened by negligence or the eruption of corruption, the soul reviews the entire work, ultimately seeking resolution with God and embracing the peace that Christ has obtained.

(2.) By considering and exploring the promises of the gospel, which present the excellence, fullness, and suitability of Christ's righteousness, the rejection of all false righteousness, and the exchange made out of God's love, as previously discussed.

(3.) Through prayer. Their souls go through this process day by day, and all the saints share in this communion with the Lord Jesus regarding their acceptance with God. This was the first aspect presented for consideration.



## CHAPTER IX

Of communion with Christ in holiness—The several acts ascribed unto the Lord Christ herein: 1. His intercession; 2. Sending of the Spirit; 3. Bestows habitual grace—What that is, and wherein it consists—This purchased by Christ; bestowed by him—Of actual grace—How the saints hold communion with Christ in these things; manifested in sundry particulars.

II. Let's now consider our communion with the Lord Jesus in relation to the grace of sanctification and purification, as we have discussed previously in its various aspects and degrees. In doing so, we need to show: 1. The specific actions of the Lord Christ in this communion, and 2. The duty of the saints in this regard. In summary, we explore how we commune with Christ in holiness, in addition to righteousness. Let's address this briefly:

1. There are several actions attributed to the Lord Jesus concerning this matter: (1.) He intercedes with the Father, based on His offering on behalf of His people, to bestow the Holy Spirit upon them. I choose to begin with this because I have already spoken about Christ's offering itself. However, everything ultimately leads back to that source and spring. The foundation of all spiritual blessings lies there, as we shall see later on. Now, the Spirit, as a Spirit of grace, holiness, and consolation to us, is obtained through the redemptive work of Christ. It is, in essence, the great promise of the new covenant, as stated in Ezekiel 11:19: "I will put a new spirit within you," and elsewhere in Ezekiel 36:27 and Jeremiah 32:39-40, among other places, which we will discuss later. Christ is the mediator and surety of

this new covenant, as mentioned in Hebrews 7:22: "Jesus was made surety of a better testament," or rather, covenant. A testament does not require a surety. Christ undertakes this role on behalf of both God and man. On man's part, He provides satisfaction, and on God's part, He bestows the fullness of the promised grace, as stated in Hebrews 9:15: "For this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance." He satisfied for sin and obtained the promise. He secures all the love and kindness that flow from the covenant, as He is its original promise, as seen in Genesis 3:15. Every aspect of the covenant is "ordered in all things and made sure" (2 Samuel 23:5) so that its effects are derived from Him, dependent on Him, and obtained through Him. He is to have preeminence in all things (Colossians 1:18) according to the covenant and agreement made with Him (Isaiah 53:12). All of these blessings are the result of His redeeming blood, including the Spirit, as promised in that covenant (1 Corinthians 1:30). Therefore, the fullness and accomplishment of His redemptive work is received from the Father through His intercession. He promised His disciples in John 14:16-18 that He would continue His work on their behalf and intercede with the Father for the Spirit as a fruit of His redemption. He declares that He will not pray to the Father for His love toward them since the eternal love of the Father is not a fruit but the source of His redemption. However, the Spirit is indeed a fruit, and He says, "That I will pray the Father for." Therefore, part of Christ's intercessory prayer to the Father, as the mediator, is for the bestowal of the Holy Spirit upon us as a fruit of His death and shed blood. This is the relationship between the Spirit of holiness, bestowed upon us, and the mediation of Christ. Christ is the firm foundation of

the covenant of grace, being eternally designated and freely given to secure all its blessings. He receives the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:33) and pours Him out on His own. This is what faith considers, focuses on, and dwells upon.

(2.) Once His prayer is granted, for the Father always hears Him, Christ actually sends His Spirit into the hearts of His saints to dwell in His place and accomplish all that He Himself has to do in and for them. This is the second aspect to be contemplated in the Lord Jesus by faith. It involves not only the initial endowment of our hearts with His Holy Spirit but also the continuous supply of His Spirit, drawing forth and stimulating more powerful operations and actions of the indwelling Spirit. Although in John 14:16, He says that the Father will give them the Comforter, since the primary and sovereign dispensation rests in His hands and is made possible through Him by the intercession of Christ, He affirms that, in terms of actual conferral or bestowal, He Himself sends the Spirit. In John 15:26, He states, "I will send the Comforter to you, from the Father." He receives the Spirit from the Father and actually sends Him to His saints. In John 16:7, He declares, "I will send him." In verses 14 and 15, He reveals how He will send Him. He will provide Him with that which is His to bestow upon them: "He shall take of mine (that which is truly and uniquely Mine as the mediator, the fruit of My life and death for holiness) and give it unto you." We will discuss these matters further later on. Therefore, the second action of the Lord Christ, to be observed and contemplated by faith, is that He sends His Holy Spirit into our hearts. The Spirit is the efficient cause of all holiness and sanctification, reviving, enlightening, and purifying the souls of His saints. I have previously discussed at length how our union with Him, along with all its dependent benefits, flows from this communication of the Spirit to us, to abide and dwell within us. Furthermore, I have expounded on this entire subject elsewhere. By

faith, we must consider and reflect upon these aspects concerning the Spirit itself.

(3.) Lastly, there is what we call habitual grace, which encompasses the fruits of the Spirit— the Spirit that is born of the Spirit, as mentioned in John 3:6. That which is produced by the Holy Spirit in the heart or soul of a person when they are regenerated—that which makes them spiritually alive—is the spirit, as opposed to the flesh or the inherent enmity against God that exists within us by nature. It manifests as faith, love, joy, hope, and the other graces of the gospel, all rooted in a common principle. We should note two things in this regard: [1.] Although many specific graces are mentioned, they do not represent different habits or qualities within us—there are not distinct and separate principles to account for them. Rather, there is a single spiritual principle that manifests itself in various operations and expressions, depending on the different objects it engages with. Thus, it is distinguished not so much by its inherent nature but by its exercise in relation to its objects. It is one root with many branches. [2.] This is what I mean by habitual grace—a new gracious and spiritual life or principle that is created and bestowed upon the soul, transforming all its faculties and affections, enabling it to engage in obedience to every divine object presented to it in accordance with God's will. For example, the mind can spiritually discern spiritual things, thus demonstrating enlightenment. The entire soul embraces Christ as revealed in the promises of the gospel for righteousness and salvation—this is faith, which often gives its name to the whole. When the soul finds rest, delight, desire, and complacency in God and Christ, it is known as love. In reality, it is a principle that equips all the faculties of our souls for spiritual and living operations, allowing them to function according to their intended purpose.

Now, habitual grace differs from the Spirit dwelling in the saints, as it is a created quality. The Spirit dwells in us as a free agent in a holy abode. Habitual grace, on the other hand, remains in us as its own proper subject, possessing no existence beyond that, and it can be experienced in various degrees. It is distinct from actual grace, which is transient and operates in and through the soul for specific spiritual acts or duties, without pre-existing or continuing beyond them. Actual grace is God working in us, both to will and to do. In contrast, habitual grace always resides in us, enabling the soul to be a suitable principle for all the holy and spiritual operations to be performed by actual grace. It is capable of increase and decrease, as previously mentioned. It may be more abundant and effective in some individuals than in others, and even vary within the same person at different times. Therefore, we see these fluctuations, declines, restorations, complaints, and joys frequently mentioned in Scripture.

With these points regarding its nature in mind, let us now consider what we are to focus on in the Lord Jesus concerning this grace of sanctification and purification, in order to enter into communion with Him in this aspect. These are the things performed by Him or on His behalf:

Just as I mentioned about the Spirit, I now say the same about this grace. It is a result of Christ's purchase, and we should view it as such. "It is given to us for His sake to believe in Him" (Philippians 1:29). The Lord, on behalf of Christ, bestows faith and, by the same principle, all grace upon us because it has been purchased and procured by Him for us. "We are blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Him" (Ephesians 1:3). And by "in Him," I mean in and through His mediation for us. His sacrifice and intercession form the foundation of this dispensation. If grace were not procured by them, no soul would ever enjoy it. All grace flows from this source.

When we receive it from Christ, we must always consider the cost to Him. Neglecting this weakens the proper workings of faith. His entire intercession is based on His sacrifice (1 John 2:1-2). He intercedes for what He purchased through His death, neither more nor less. He prays that all His saints may have this grace we speak of (John 17:17). If we continually consider all grace as the fruit of Christ's purchase, it will greatly endear us. According to the gospel, we cannot ask for or expect any grace without this consideration. Recognizing something as the Son's purchase does not detract from the free grace of the Father; in fact, it was by that grace that He made the purchase. When receiving grace from God, we do not have communion with Christ, who is the treasury and storehouse of grace, unless we acknowledge it as His purchase. He has obtained our sanctification, given us life, made us humble, holy, believing, and victorious over the works of the devil within us.

Secondly, the Lord Christ actually imparts this grace to His saints and bestows it upon them. "From His fullness we have all received, grace upon grace" (John 1:16). This occurs because: (1) The Father invests Him with all the grace that He has acquired through His covenant and agreement, as He has received the promise of the Spirit. This grace encompasses everything necessary to bring His many sons to glory. "It pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell" (Colossians 1:19), meaning He is vested with the fullness of grace needed for His people. He Himself calls it the "power to give eternal life to His elect" (John 17:2), which refers not only to His ability but also to His right to do so. Thus, He bases His invitation to sinners for refreshment on the fact that "all things have been delivered to Me by My Father" (Matthew 11:27). He says, "Come to Me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (verse 28). This covenant between the Father and Him, as promised in Isaiah 53:10, where His soul is offered for sin and He sees His seed

and prospers, forms the foundation and cause for these things. It is the basis for justification ("By His knowledge shall the righteous one, My servant, make many to be accounted righteous" - verse 11) and sanctification (in "destroying the works of the devil" - verses 11, 12). Therefore, our merciful high priest possesses all grace and dispenses it according to His own will, quickening whomever He chooses. As our head, He truly possesses it within Himself because He did not receive the Spirit by measure (John 3:34), which is the bond of union between Him and us (1 Corinthians 6:17). By holding onto Him, the head, we are filled with His fullness (Ephesians 1:22-23; Colossians 1:19). He is also a treasury of grace in a moral and legal sense, not only because "it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell" (Colossians 1:19), but also because the entire dispensation of grace is founded on His mediation.

(2) Once vested with this power, privilege, and fullness, He designates the Spirit to take from His fullness and actually bestow it upon us. "He will take what is mine and declare it to you" (John 16:15). The Spirit takes from the fullness that is in Christ and, in the name of the Lord Jesus, actually bestows it on those for whom He is sent to sanctify. More will be said later about the manner and almighty efficacy of the Spirit of grace in this actual conferring of grace upon His chosen ones.

(3) As for actual grace, which is the power or influence enabling the saints to perform specific duties according to God's will, there is no need for further elaboration. What concerns our communion with the Lord Christ in this aspect is in proportion to what was previously discussed.

There is one more thing to note about these matters that have been mentioned. I will now proceed to explain the way in which we carry

on communion with the Lord Jesus in all these aspects. They can be considered in two ways: (1) in terms of their initial bestowal upon the soul, and (2) in terms of their continuation and increase, regarding the degrees of grace.

In the first sense, as to the actual communication of the Spirit of grace to the soul, raising it from death to life, the saints have no communion with Christ in that regard except through passive reception of that life-giving, quickening Spirit and power. They are like the dead bones in the prophet's vision; the wind blows on them, and they live. They are like Lazarus in the grave; Christ calls, and they come forth, with the call accompanied by life and power. This is not the specific focus of my discussion. Instead, I will focus on the second sense, which pertains to the further efficacy of the Spirit and the increase of grace, both habitual and actual. It is through this that we become more holy, more empowered to walk with God, and bear more fruit in obedience and success against temptations. In this aspect,

(2) we have communion with the Lord Christ. I will now explain how and in what way we do this.

We continually view the Lord Jesus as the great Joseph, entrusted with the distribution of all the storehouses of the kingdom of heaven. He is the one in whom the Father has pleased to gather all things together, so that everything may be dispensed from Him. All treasures, all fullness, and the Spirit without measure are in Him. In relation to our condition, we focus on this fullness in three particular aspects:

(1) We consider the preparation for the mentioned dispensation and the expiating, purging, and purifying efficacy of His blood. His sacrifice was not only for atonement but also for purification. The



apostle highlights this in Hebrews 9:13-14: "For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctify for the purification of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" His blood surpasses all the ceremonial purifications of the Old Testament. It has a spiritually purifying, cleansing, and sanctifying virtue in itself, as offered and poured out. It is referred to as a "fountain for sin and uncleanness" (Zechariah 13:1), a fountain that is opened, prepared, virtuous, and efficacious in itself even before anyone approaches it, because it was poured out and appointed for that purpose. The saints recognize that they are still greatly defiled within themselves. Indeed, perceiving the defilements of sin is a more spiritual revelation than merely feeling its guilt. This follows every conviction and is commensurate with it. Such revelations reveal the purity and holiness of God and His ways. As a result, they cry out within themselves, "Unclean, unclean!" They are unclean in their nature, their person, and their conduct. They are covered in the filth of their defilements. By nature, their hearts are like a sink, and their lives resemble a dung heap. They also know that no unclean thing can enter the kingdom of God or find a place in the new Jerusalem. They realize that God's eyes are too pure to look upon iniquity. They cannot bear to look at themselves, so how can they dare to appear in His presence? What remedy can they use? In this situation, they turn their gaze to the purifying virtue of Christ's blood as the first remedy. It is able to cleanse them from all their sins (1 John 1:7) and is the source from which flows all the purifying virtue that will ultimately remove all their spots and stains, make them holy and blameless, and present them as glorious to Him (Ephesians 5:26-27). They meditate on this with faith, pondering it in their minds and spirits. Here, faith receives new life and vigor when a sense of their own unworthiness threatens to overwhelm it. A

fountain is opened—approach and behold its beauty, purity, and efficacy. This is the foundation of the work we long to see accomplished. A moment of communion with Christ by faith in this aspect is more effective in purging the soul and increasing grace than a thousand ages of self-effort.

(2) They view the blood of Christ as the blood of sprinkling. When they come to "Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant," they come to the "blood of sprinkling" (Hebrews 12:24). Merely considering the shedding of Christ's blood will not remove pollution. There is not only a shedding of blood (αἱματεκχυσία) necessary for forgiveness (Hebrews 9:22), but also a sprinkling of blood (αἵματος ῥαντισμός) required for actual purification. The apostle describes this in detail, explaining how Moses sprinkled the blood of calves and goats, mixed with water, scarlet wool, and hyssop, upon the book and the people as part of the law (Hebrews 9:19). He also sprinkled the tabernacle and its vessels. Under the law, almost all things were purified with blood. The earthly patterns had to be purified in this way, but the heavenly realities required better sacrifices (Hebrews 9:19-23). Previously, the apostle compared the blood of Christ to the blood of sacrifices in terms of its procurement and purchase, but now he focuses on the blood as sprinkled for application to purification and holiness. He explains that the sprinkling was done by dipping hyssop in the blood of the sacrifice and then sprinkling it on the objects and people to be purified. This method was also used for the paschal lamb (Exodus 12:7). Therefore, David, in a recognition of the pollution of sin, prays to be "purged with hyssop" (Psalm 51:7). The use of hyssop specifically related to the uncleanness and defilement of sin is evident because, apart from the lamb sacrifice, there is no mention of sprinkling blood with hyssop in other sacrificial rituals. It was specifically associated with purification from uncleanness, such as in the case of leprosy (Leviticus 14:6) and other defilements

(Numbers 19:18). Although the latter purification is not performed with blood but with the water of separation, it is also typologically connected to the blood of Christ, which is the fountain for separation from uncleanness (Zechariah 13:1). In our case, this bunch of hyssop, in which the blood of purification was prepared for sprinkling on the unclean, corresponds to the free promises of Christ. The cleansing power of Christ's blood resides in the promises, just as the blood of sacrifices resided in the hyssop, ready to be applied to those who draw near. Thus, the apostle argues that receiving the promises leads to universal holiness and purity: "Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God" (2 Corinthians 7:1). Therefore, the saints focus on the blood of Christ as it is in the promise, ready to be applied to purify their souls. It is through the blood of Christ that they are cleansed from all their sins (1 John 1:7). Until now, this purifying blood, prepared and ready, has been somewhat distant from the soul. Although it was shed for the purpose of purging, cleansing, and sanctifying, and it is associated with the promises like the bunch of hyssop, the soul may not partake of it. Therefore,

(3) they regard Him as the sole dispenser of the Spirit and all sanctifying and holy grace through His own Spirit. They recognize that He has been granted by His intercession the power to make effective all the fruits of His redemption for the sanctification, purification, and glorious holiness of His people. They know that this is actually accomplished through the Spirit, according to the countless promises given for that purpose. The Spirit is the one who sprinkles the blood of Christ on their souls, creates the holiness they long for, and becomes a well of water springing up to eternal life within them. In this state, they look to Jesus. Their faith is fixed on Him, expecting Him to give the Spirit for all these purposes. They

combine the promises with faith and thereby become actual partakers of all this grace. This is their way, their communion with Christ. This is the essence of a life of faith in relation to grace and holiness. Blessed is the soul that practices it. Such a soul will be like a tree planted by the waters, spreading out its roots by the river. It will not fear when heat comes, and its leaf will remain green. In a year of drought, it will not be anxious and will continue to bear fruit (Jeremiah 17:8). Convinced individuals who do not know Christ or the fellowship of His sufferings attempt to manufacture holiness from their own resources. They try to accomplish it through their own strength. They start with their own efforts and follow with vows, duties, resolutions, and engagements, toiling at it all day long. However, this usually ends in hypocrisy and apostasy. On the other hand, the saints of God, even at the beginning of their journey with Christ, acknowledge that they have three essential needs: (1) the Spirit of holiness to dwell in them, (2) a habit of holiness to be infused within them, and (3) actual assistance to perform all their works. They understand that without these, they cannot perform any act of holiness before the Lord, no matter how much might, power, and effort they exert. They recognize that they are insufficient on their own, that they can do nothing without Christ. Therefore, they look to Him, who is entrusted with a fullness of all these things on their behalf. By faith, they draw from Him an increase in what they lack. This is how the saints have communion with Christ in terms of their sanctification and holiness. They receive the Spirit from Him to dwell within them, the new principle of life that forms the foundation of all their obedience, and the actual assistance required for every duty they are called to fulfill. They spend their lives and time with Him in waiting, expectation, and reception of these blessings, based on the reasons mentioned earlier. To seek help from other sources is in vain. To exert strength in pursuing righteousness without these blessings is futile. Fix your soul here, and you will not be put to

shame. This is the way, the only way, to experience the full and effective manifestation of the Spirit dwelling within us, to have our hearts purified, our consciences cleansed, our sins mortified, our graces increased, our souls made humble, holy, zealous, and believing—like Him. It is the path to living fruitful lives and finding comfort in death. Let us remain in this state, fixing our eyes on Christ by faith, so that we may attain the level of conformity to Him that has been allotted to us in this world, and when we see Him as He is, we may be like Him.

## **CHAPTER X**

Of communion with Christ in privileges—Of adoption; the nature of it, the consequences of it—Peculiar privileges attending it; liberty, title, boldness, affliction—Communion with Christ hereby.

III. The third aspect in which we have communion with Christ is the privilege of grace before God. This constitutes the third category of grace that has been obtained through Christ's purchase. The privileges we receive through Christ are vast and innumerable. To go into detail about each one would require a lifetime, not a brief summary. Instead, I will focus on the primary source and origin from which all these privileges arise—our adoption. "Beloved, now we are the children of God" (1 John 3:2). This is the fundamental and central privilege we enjoy. Why are we called children of God? It is because of the Father's love. As stated in verse 1, "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!" And who grants us this honor? All who

believe in Christ are given the power to become children of God (John 1:12). Christ himself was appointed as the firstborn among many brethren (Romans 8:29), and his acceptance of us as brethren (Hebrews 2:11) makes us children of God. Our status as God's children and Christ's brethren, with all the honor, privilege, rights, and titles associated with it, is the foundation of our adoption. Let us now consider the nature of this act by which we are invested with this state and title—our adoption.

Adoption is the official transfer of a believer, by Jesus Christ, from the family of the world and Satan into the family of God. It involves being granted all the privileges and advantages of that family. The complete adoption of an individual requires five elements:

1. The person must actually and inherently belong to a family other than the one into which they are adopted. Everyone is already a member of a family by their own right.
2. There must be a family into which the person has no inherent right or claim, but into which they are to be grafted. If someone enters a family based on their own personal right, regardless of how distant, they are not considered adopted. Even if a person of remote relation inherits a family's estate due to the death of closer heirs, they are still considered a natural-born member of that family and not an adoptee. Adoption cannot be based on the possibility of future succession.
3. An authoritative and legal transfer must occur, facilitated by those who have the power to effect such a transfer. It is not within the jurisdiction of individuals to adopt whenever and whomever they please. The authority of the sovereign power is necessary.

4. The adopted person must be freed from all obligations to the family from which they are transferred; otherwise, they cannot fully serve or benefit the family into which they are adopted. One cannot serve two masters, let alone two fathers.
5. By virtue of their adoption, the person is invested with all the rights, privileges, advantages, and claims to the entire inheritance of the family into which they are adopted. They possess these benefits in the same full and comprehensive manner as if they had been born into that family.

All these elements and circumstances are present in the adoption of believers:

1. By their own inherent right, they belong to a family other than the one into which they are adopted. They are "by nature the children of wrath" (Ephesians 2:3), sons of wrath belonging to the family characterized by wrath. They are associated with the "power of darkness" (Colossians 1:13). This is the family of the world and Satan to which believers naturally belong. They have a rightful claim to everything associated with that family—wrath, curse, death, and hell. On their own, they cannot free themselves from this family. They are held in subjection by a strong, armed captor. Their natural state is one of family, with all its attendant duties, services, rights, titles, relations, and observances. They belong to the dark family of sin and Satan.
2. There is another family into which they are to be transferred, a family to which they have no inherent right or claim. This is the heavenly and earthly family called by the name of Christ (Ephesians 3:15)—the great family of God. God has a household and family for His children. He provides for some through the riches of His grace and welcomes others into the fullness of His

glory. This is the household in which the Lord Christ is the great dispenser. The Father has chosen to "gather together in one all things in him, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even in him" (Ephesians 1:10). All the sons and daughters of God dwell in this family, abundantly benefiting from the riches of His grace. Believers have no inherent right or claim to this family; they are completely alienated from it (Ephesians 2:12) and cannot lay claim to anything within it. When God drove Adam out of the garden and barred his return with a flaming sword, He made it abundantly clear that Adam, along with all humanity, had lost any right to approach God within the context of family relations. Fallen, corrupted nature has no legitimate claim to anything belonging to God.

3. Believers experience an authoritative transfer from one family to another. This transfer is not conducted secretly or informally but is carried out with the authority vested in it. John 1:12 states, "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God," referring to the power or authority bestowed upon them. This investiture with the power, excellence, and rights of God's children is a legal act with a judicial proceeding. It is referred to as being made "meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light" (Colossians 1:12)—a judicial elevation to membership in the family where God is the Father, Christ is the elder brother, and all saints and angels are brethren and fellow children. The inheritance is an immortal and incorruptible crown that never fades away.

Now, this authoritative transfer of believers from one family to another consists of two main parts:



(1.) A proclamation and declaration of the person's freedom from all obligations to their former family, to which they were naturally related. This declaration has three intended recipients:

[1.] Angels. It is important for them to know who has been granted the rights of the family they belong to. Believers are freed from the family of sin and hell to become fellow sons and servants with the angels. This is made known to them in two ways:

First, through the preaching of the gospel. The church makes known to the angels the manifold wisdom of God (Ephesians 3:10). The wisdom revealed to them is that Gentiles are now fellow heirs and part of the same body (verse 6). This mystery of adopting sinners from the Gentiles and freeing them from the slavery of the world to become sons in the family of God is the wisdom made known to the angels. It was revealed to the prophets and apostles by the Spirit (verse 5).

Second, through immediate revelation. When a particular soul is freed from the family of this world, it is revealed to the angels. There is joy among the angels when a sinner repents (Luke 15:10). The angels themselves cannot know the true repentance of a sinner unless it is revealed to them by Jesus Christ, to whom the care and charge of that person is committed. These transactions occur before the angels (Luke 12:8, 9). Christ acknowledges the names of His brethren before the angels (Revelation 3:5). When He admits believers into the family, He declares to the angels that they are sons, so that they may fulfill their duty towards them (Hebrews 1:14).

[2.] Satan, the master of the family they were once subjected to, receives a judicial denouncement. When the Lord Christ delivers a soul from Satan's power, He restrains him from exercising the dominion he had over that person. This is how Satan knows that

someone has been delivered from his family, and any future attempts on that person are encroachments on the possession and inheritance of the Lord Christ.

[3.] The person's conscience is also informed of their adoption. The Spirit of Christ testifies to the heart and conscience of a believer that they are freed from all obligations to the family of Satan and have become children of God (Romans 8:14, 15). The Spirit enables them to cry out, "Abba, Father" (Galatians 4:6). I will discuss the details of this testimony and how it absolves the soul from its former alliance later. This encompasses the first aspect mentioned.

(2.) The believer is authoritatively grafted into the family of God and invested with all the rights of sonship. As for us, this involves several actions:

[1.] The believer is given a new name written on a white stone (Revelation 2:17). Those who are adopted take on new names, discarding the names they had in their previous families and adopting the names of the families they are translated into. The new name is "Child of God." Only those who receive it truly understand its significance. This new name is given and written on a white stone, which signifies judicial acquittal. Our adoption by the Spirit is based on our absolution in the blood of Jesus. The white stone signifies freedom from the claims of the old family, while the new name grants access to the new family.

[2.] The believer's name is enrolled in the catalogue of God's household, granting them fellowship within it. This is referred to as the "writing of the house of Israel" (Ezekiel 13:9), which is the roll where all the names of God's family, the Israelites, are recorded. God keeps a list of His household, and Christ knows His sheep by name. When God registers His people, He recognizes that "this person was

born in Zion" (Psalm 87:6). This is an extract from the Lamb's book of life.

[3.] The believer's conscience testifies to their acceptance by God, enabling them to live as His children (Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:5, 6).

The final two requirements of adoption are that the adopted person be freed from all obligations to their former family and invested with the rights and privileges of the new family. These two aspects encompass the entirety of adoption, in which the saints have communion with Christ. I will address them together, categorizing them under four heads: (1) Liberty, (2) Title or Right, (3) Boldness, and (4) Correction. These are the four things that believers receive through their adoption, establishing their communion with the Lord Jesus:

(1.) Liberty. The Spirit of the Lord anointed Jesus to proclaim liberty to the captives (Isaiah 61:1). "Where the Spirit of the Lord is" (referring to the Spirit of Christ given to us because we are sons), "there is liberty" (2 Corinthians 3:17). All spiritual freedom comes from the Spirit of adoption. Anything else claimed as freedom is merely licentiousness. As the apostle argues, "He has sent forth his Spirit into their hearts, crying, 'Abba, Father.' So you are no longer a slave" — no longer in bondage, but rather enjoying the freedom of sons (Galatians 4:6, 7). This liberty pertains to:

[1.] Firstly, freedom from the family from which the adopted person was translated. It entails liberation from all obligations to that family. In this sense, the liberty that saints experience through adoption is liberation from both real and pretended aspects:

Firstly, liberation from the real aspect encompasses two components: the law and sin. The moral, unchanging law of God, when combined with sin, has had two effects:

Firstly, it established a new law of ordinances that kept people in bondage (Colossians 2:14).

Secondly, it exerted its power and efficacy against sin, resulting in:

(1) The rigor and terror of its commands. (2) The impossibility of fulfilling it and its consequent insufficiency for its original purpose. (3) The consequences of its transgression, which include curse and death. I will briefly touch upon these because they are commonly discussed and acknowledged by all.

Secondly, liberation from the pretended aspect pertains to the power of anyone over the conscience once it has been set free by Christ:

Believers are liberated from the instituted law of ordinances, which the apostles themselves testified to be a yoke that neither they nor their fathers could bear (Acts 15:10). Christ "blotted out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross" (Colossians 2:14). Consequently, the apostle concludes his lengthy discussion on the liberty we have from that law by urging, "Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery" (Galatians 5:1).

Regarding the moral law:

Firstly, believers are liberated from the rigor and terror of its commands. In Hebrews 12:18–22, it is stated that we have not approached the mountain that could be touched and burned with

fire, the mountain of dread, darkness, tempest, the sound of the trumpet, and the voice of words that made the people beg not to hear it again. Instead, we have come to Mount Zion, etc. This signifies that we are freed from that administration of the law which was accompanied by fear and terror and which demanded strict obedience. We are not called to live under that regime.

Secondly, believers are freed from the impossibility of fulfilling the law and its consequent insufficiency for its original purpose due to sin. They are liberated from the law as an instrument of righteousness since, given its impossibility to fulfill as far as we are concerned, it is no longer sufficient for such a purpose (Romans 8:2, 3; Galatians 3:21–23). As it is impossible to obtain life through the law, we are exempted from its requirements for that purpose, thanks to the righteousness of Christ (Romans 8:3).

Thirdly, believers are liberated from the consequences of transgressing the law:

Firstly, from the curse. Through Christ being made a curse for us, we are redeemed from the curse of the law (Galatians 3:13).

Secondly, believers are liberated from death (Hebrews 2:15), Satan (Hebrews 2:14, Colossians 1:13), sin (Romans 4:14, 1 Peter 1:18), and the world (Galatians 1:4), along with all their associated burdens, advantages, and claims (Galatians 4:3–5, Colossians 2:20). Without this liberation, they could not live a single day.

There is a pretended claim by some that we were never in bondage to, but are now set free from, the power of binding the conscience through any laws and constitutions not from God (Colossians 2:20–22).

Secondly, in the family of God, there is a liberty alongside the freedom from the family of Satan. Sons are free, and their obedience is a voluntary obedience. They have the Spirit of the Lord, and where He is, there is liberty (2 Corinthians 3:17). As a Spirit of adoption, He opposes the spirit of bondage (Romans 8:15). This liberty in our Father's family, which we have as sons and children adopted by Christ through the Spirit, is a spiritual freedom of heart. It enables the children of God to freely, willingly, genuinely, without fear, terror, bondage, or constraint, engage in all holy obedience in Christ.

This is the liberty we experience in our Father's family, and we have already discussed what we are liberated from.

There are Gibeonites who outwardly serve in God's house as the drudgery of their lives. They operate on a principle of fear and bondage (Romans 8:15) and adhere to the law with its dread and severity, demanding strict obedience without mercy or leniency. They do this to escape the wrath to come, appease their conscience, and seek righteousness through works of the law. They servilely, laboriously, and fruitlessly seek to serve their own convictions throughout their lives.

On the other hand, the saints by adoption possess a freedom of heart in all holy obedience. As David says, "I will walk at liberty, for I seek your precepts" (Psalm 119:45). This freedom is characterized by son-like freedom of the Spirit in obedience. It encompasses several aspects:

Firstly, it is based on the principles of life and love. Life empowers them for obedience, while love brings them joy and sweetness in their obedience. The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus sets them free from the law of sin and death (Romans 8:2). They walk after the Spirit, which is the principle of their actions. They live their lives in

the flesh from a principle of life, with Christ living in them. They have power to live unto God from Christ within them, the Spirit of life. Acts performed by a dead root are lifeless, but living acts stem from a principle of life.

This highlights the difference between the liberty that slaves assume and the liberty due to children:

Firstly, slaves take liberty from duty, while children have liberty in duty. It is a grave misconception that the liberty of sons in the house of God allows them to perform or neglect duties as they please. True liberty is not stolen by slaves but given by the Spirit to sons. The liberty of sons lies in the inward spiritual freedom of their hearts, naturally and willingly engaging in all the ways and worship of God. If they feel confined or limited, they wrestle with God for enlargement. They are not satisfied with merely performing a duty; they desire to do it with a free, genuine, and expanded heart. Servants find liberty from duty, while sons find liberty in duty.

Secondly, the liberty of slaves or servants arises from mistaken conclusions, while the liberty of sons comes from the indwelling Spirit of grace. Servants find liberty from external, lifeless conclusions, while sons find liberty from an internal, living principle.

Secondly, love gives them delight and joy in the manner of their obedience. Christ says, "If you love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15). Love underpins all their duties. Our Saviour summarizes all obedience in love for God and our neighbor, and Paul declares that love fulfills the law (Romans 13:10). Love completes any duty when it is present in it. David often expresses his admiration for this principle of walking with God, saying, "Oh, how I love your commandments!" This love brings delight to the saints, making the commandments of Christ a source of joy. Just as Jacob's

hard service was not burdensome to him because of his love for Rachel, no duty is burdensome to a saint because of their love for Christ. They do everything with delight and pleasure. Love expels the fear that bondage produces, and when love and life are combined, there is freedom, liberty, and a vastness of heart far removed from the narrow and constricted frame experienced by those who are unaware of the adoption of sons.

Secondly, the object of their obedience is presented to them as desirable, while to others it is terrifying. When approaching God, they view Him as a Father and address Him as such, not just in words but in the spirit of sons. God in Christ is continually before them, not only as one deserving honor and obedience, but also as one to be greatly delighted in. He is sufficient to satisfy and fulfill all the desires of the soul. While others approach God as a harsh master, the sons draw out their strength to the utmost, knowing they are drawing near to a gracious rewarder. They approach God from the principles of life and love, returning the strength they receive to the source, to the abundant supply.

Thirdly, their motivation for obedience is love (2 Corinthians 5:14). They are effectually moved by love to give themselves up to Him who is love. What freedom this is! What expansiveness of spirit is experienced by those who walk according to this principle! While darkness, fear, bondage, conviction, and hopes of righteousness accompany others in their journey, the sons, through the Spirit of adoption, possess light, love, and complacency in all their walks with God. The world remains a stranger to the disposition of children in their Father's house.

Fourthly, their obedience is characterized by willingness. They willingly, cheerfully, and freely yield themselves to God as those who



are alive from the dead (Romans 6:13). They offer themselves as a living and willing sacrifice (Romans 12:1).

Fifthly, the rule that governs their walk with God is the law of liberty. This law has been stripped of its terrifying, threatening, killing, condemning, and cursing power. Through the blood of Jesus, it has become sweet, tender, useful, and guiding. It assists them in walking according to the life they have received, rather than striving to work for the life they do not yet possess. These examples should suffice to demonstrate the liberty of obedience experienced by the sons and daughters of God, a liberty unknown to the poor convicted Gibeonites.

(2.) The second thing that adopted children of God possess is a rightful claim. They have the title and privilege to all the benefits and advantages of the family they have been brought into. This is the superiority of true sons in any family. Sarah argued for the removal of Ishmael based on the fact that he was the son of the bondwoman and not a genuine child of the family, so he had no inheritance rights with Isaac (Genesis 21:10). The apostle's argument is that "We are no longer slaves, but sons; and since we are sons, we are also heirs" (Romans 8:14-17). This means that we have the rightful claim and title. Since we were not born into this position (for by nature we were children of wrath), we have obtained this right through adoption.

Now, the saints have a double claim and title: firstly, a direct and proper claim to spiritual blessings, and secondly, a consequential claim to temporal blessings:

Firstly, their claim as adopted children to spiritual blessings has a twofold aspect in terms of the object: (1) They have a present position, name, and role in the house of God, along with all the privileges and responsibilities that come with it. (2) They have a

future inheritance of the glorious kingdom purchased by Jesus Christ for the entire family.

1. They have a rightful claim and interest in the entire administration of the house of God here and now. The supreme administration of the house of God, which involves the institution of ordinances and the dispensation of the Spirit to bring those ordinances to life and effectiveness, is the primary focus of this administration. And the adopted children are the primary recipients; all of this is for them and exercised on their behalf. God has appointed Jesus Christ to be the "head over all things to the church, which is his body" (Ephesians 1:22-23). Christ has been given authority over all spiritual matters and entrusted with the administration of them for the benefit of the church, which is the family of God. It is all for the benefit and advantage of the many sons whom He will bring to glory (Hebrews 2:10; Ephesians 4:8-13). The aim of the Lord Jesus in establishing gospel ordinances and appointing administrators is for the perfection of the saints and the work of ministry. Everything is for them, for the family. Christ's faithfulness is demonstrated in His administration of the entire house of God (Hebrews 3:2). Therefore, the apostle tells the Corinthians that all these gospel ordinances and institutions are for them, belonging to them (1 Corinthians 3:22-23). Whatever benefit the world may derive from the gospel, it is ultimately intended for the children of this family. This is the purpose and intention of the Lord Christ in the institution of all gospel ordinances and administrations—to serve the house and family of God and all His children and servants within it.

It is true that the word is preached to the whole world, gathering the children of God scattered throughout, and leaving the rest without

excuse. But the primary goal and intention of the Lord Christ in doing so is to gather those who are heirs of salvation and bring them into the enjoyment of the feast of rich blessings prepared for them in His house.

Furthermore, only the adopted children have the rightful claim and title to gospel ordinances and the privileges of the family of God as they are presented in His church according to His will. The church is the "house of God" (1 Timothy 3:15; Hebrews 3:6) where He keeps and sustains His entire family, ordering them according to His will. And who, other than His children, should have any right in the house of God? We don't grant rights to anyone other than our own children in our homes, so would God allow anyone other than His children to have rights in His house? Is it appropriate to "take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs"? We can see that only children have the right and title to the privileges and advantages of the house of God if we consider:

Firstly, the nature of that house. It is made up of individuals who can only be adopted children and have a rightful place in it. It consists of "living stones" (1 Peter 2:5), a "chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession" (verse 9), "saints and faithful in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 1:1), "saints and faithful brothers" (Colossians 1:2), a people who are "all righteous" (Isaiah 60:21), and the entire structure is glorious (Isaiah 54:11-14). The way of the house is a "way of holiness" that the unclean cannot pass through (Isaiah 35:8). Specifically, they are called the "sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty," and only they have this designation (2 Corinthians 6:17-18). All others are excluded (Revelation 21:27). It is true that at times, others may unintentionally enter the great house of God, but they do not have any rightful claim or title to it, as Jude explains (Jude 1:4).

Secondly, the privileges of the house are not suited or beneficial to anyone else. What purpose would it serve to give food to a dead person? Will they grow stronger or increase in it? The things in the family and house of God are nourishment for living souls. Only children are alive, while all others are dead in their trespasses and sins. External signs are of no avail if there is no life and power within. Whatever specific blessings the saints enjoy in the family of God, they are all suited to believers. If they were given to the world, they would be like pearls cast before swine.

Therefore, it is only the sons of the family who have this rightful claim. They have fellowship with one another and with the Father and the Son Jesus Christ. They proclaim the Lord's death until He comes again. They are entrusted with all the ordinances of the house and their administration. Who can deny them the enjoyment of this right or keep them from what Christ has purchased for them? In the end, the Lord will give them hearts everywhere to exercise this rightful claim and not wander on the mountains, forgetting their place of rest.

Secondly, they have a rightful claim to the future fullness of the inheritance that has been purchased for the entire family by Jesus Christ. As the apostle argues, "If children, then heirs" (Romans 8:17). All of God's children are "firstborn" (Hebrews 12:23) and therefore heirs. The weight of glory that has been prepared for them is called the inheritance (Colossians 1:12) or the "inheritance of the saints in light." If they belong to Christ, they are Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise (Galatians 3:29). They are heirs of the promise, which includes all the things promised to Abraham in and through Christ.

There are three things that the children of God are heirs to in this regard:

Firstly, they are heirs of the promise, as mentioned in Galatians 3:29 and Hebrews 6:17. God demonstrates to "the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose." Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are said to be "heirs of the same promise" (Hebrews 11:9). From the beginning, God made a remarkable promise in Christ, which includes deliverance from all evil and the bestowal of all good things. It encompasses deliverance from the guilt of sin and the dominion of Satan, as well as the granting of all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. That is why it is called the "promise of the eternal inheritance" (Hebrews 9:15). The adopted children of God are heirs of this promise. Whatever is contained in the promise that God made to fallen humanity and subsequently renewed and confirmed with an oath, they have a rightful claim to it and are recognized as heirs in the heavenly courts.

Secondly, they are heirs of righteousness (Hebrews 11:7). Noah was an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith, which Peter describes as being an heir of the grace of life (1 Peter 3:7). James combines both righteousness and the kingdom in James 2:5, referring to the "heirs of the kingdom that God has promised." This includes the kingdom of grace and the righteousness associated with it. The apostle also tells us in Ephesians 1:11 that "we have obtained an inheritance," which he places alongside the righteousness of faith (Acts 26:18). This inheritance includes not only the righteousness that we currently partake in but also its ultimate fulfillment and accomplishment in glory.

Thirdly, they are "heirs of salvation" (Hebrews 1:14) and "heirs according to the hope of eternal life" (Titus 3:7). Peter refers to it as

an "inheritance that is imperishable" (1 Peter 1:4), and Paul describes it as the "reward of the inheritance" (Colossians 3:24). It is the culmination of the inheritance of light and holiness that they already enjoy. Therefore, the children of God have a rightful claim and title to all these things as co-heirs with Christ.

And this is the main aspect of the saints' title and right that they possess through adoption. In summary, it means that the Lord is their portion and inheritance, and they are the inheritance of the Lord. They have a generous portion indeed, as they have been blessed with a goodly place to dwell in.

Furthermore, in addition to this primary right, the adopted children of God have a secondary consequential right—a right to the things of this world. This includes all the portions of the world that God chooses to entrust to them during their time here. Christ is the "heir of all things" (Hebrews 1:2), and all rights and titles to the things of creation were lost and forfeited through sin. By His sovereignty, the Lord had originally granted all things on earth for the use of mankind. Each aspect of His creation was appointed to serve their needs. However, sin overturned this grant and establishment, releasing all things from their subjection to humanity. Yet, this liberation, which removed them from their original purpose, is a part of their vanity and curse. It is detrimental for anything to be set aside from its intended purpose. As a result, the entire creation is now without a subordinate ruler. Since humanity lost their title and dominion over the creatures, they have no legitimate claim or ownership over them. However, the Lord, desiring to reserve a portion for Himself from fallen mankind, whom He appointed as heirs of salvation, does not immediately destroy His works of creation but preserves them for their use during their pilgrimage. For this purpose, He invests the entire right and title to creation in the

second Adam, which the first Adam had lost. He appoints Him as the "heir of all things." Consequently, His adopted ones, being "fellow heirs with Christ," also acquire a right and title to the things of creation. To clarify this right, I must make a few observations:

Firstly, the right they possess is not the same as the right Christ has. His right is sovereign and supreme, allowing Him to do as He pleases with His possessions. In contrast, their right is subordinate, and they are accountable for the use of the things to which they have a right and title. The right of Christ is the right of the Lord of the house, while the right of the saints is the right of servants.

Secondly, the entire number of God's children have a right to the whole earth, which belongs to the Lord, and all its abundance, for two reasons. Firstly, the sovereign Lord preserves it solely for their use and benefit, while all others who possess it act in bad faith by invading the Lord's territory without His permission or grant. Secondly, Christ has promised to give them the kingdom and dominion of the earth, according to His providential disposition. This means that the governance of the earth will work in their favor.

Thirdly, this right is a spiritual right that does not confer a civil interest but sanctifies the right and interest bestowed. God, in His providence, has determined the civil boundaries of human inheritance (Acts 17:26), allowing worldly individuals to enjoy their allotted portions, often in abundance. He does this for the sake of His children, so that those destructive forces, likened to beasts of the forest, do not overrun the entire possession.

Fourthly, no individual adopted person has a right solely based on their adoption to any earthly possessions that they do not have a civil interest in, granted by the providence of God.

Fifthly, the saints' right to earthly possessions is derived from their adoption, meaning that they have a right to whatever portion God is pleased to give them. However, they possess this right because it is re-invested in Christ, not because it remains under the curse and vanity that has befallen creation due to sin. Therefore, they can never be held accountable for seizing that which they have no rightful claim to, unlike the sons of men who forcefully grasp those things that God has liberated from their dominion because of sin.

And this is another aspect of our adoption: we are led to a sanctified use of the things we enjoy. These things themselves serve as pledges of the Father's love, washed in the blood of Christ. They become reminders and encouragements for us to live in a manner that brings praise to Him who generously provides us with all things to enjoy.

I dare say of unbelievers that they have no true right to anything, regardless of its nature, that they possess. They lack a genuine and unquestionable right, even to the temporal possessions they hold. It is true that they have a civil right in relation to others, but they lack a sanctified right in regards to their own souls. When they come to give an account of their enjoyments, it will be a sorrowful day for them. They will not only be held accountable for the misuse of what they possessed, for not using it for the glory of the rightful owner, but also for withholding those things from the rightful heirs for whose sake they are preserved from destruction. When the God of glory confronts them, whether in their conscience or in the judgment to come, and speaks with the terrifying voice of a vengeful judge, saying, "I allowed you to enjoy corn, wine, and oil—a great portion of my creation. You reveled in wealth and prosperity while the rightful heirs of these things lived in poverty, lowliness, and insignificance nearby. Now, give an account of how you have used these things. What have you contributed to the service and advancement of the



gospel? What have you given to those for whom nothing was provided? What offerings have you made for the poor saints? Did you have a generous and willing heart to sacrifice all for my sake?" When they are compelled to answer truthfully, they will say, "Lord, indeed we had a substantial portion in the world, and we considered it our own, believing we could do as we pleased with our possessions. We indulged in abundance and left the remainder for our children. We spent some on our desires and some on our friends. But the truth is, we cannot claim that we used this unrighteous wealth to make friends for ourselves, to advance the gospel or to minister to your poor saints. And now, behold, we must face death," and so on. Then, the Lord will proceed to question not only their use of these things but also their right to them. He will declare, "The earth is mine, and everything in it. I did make an original grant of these things to humanity, but that was lost due to sin. I have restored it only for my saints. So why did you lay your greedy hands on that which was not yours? Why did you force my creatures to serve you and your desires when I had released them from your dominion? Give me back my flax, my wine, and my wool. I will strip you naked as you were on the day of your birth and exact revenge for your plundering and unjust possession of that which was not yours." At such a time, what will men do?

Another privilege of our adoption is boldness with God through Christ. However, I have already discussed this at length when addressing the excellence of Christ in our approach to God, so I will not delve into it again.

Affliction, as it proceeds from love, leads to spiritual benefits, conforms us to Christ, and is sweetened by His presence, is also a privilege of children (Hebrews 12:3–6). But I will not dwell on these specific aspects here.

This, I say, is the source and origin of all the privileges that Christ has purchased for us, in which we also have fellowship with Him. We share in His name; we are sons of God just as He is. We share in His title and right; we are heirs, co-heirs with Christ. We share in His likeness and conformity; we are predestined to be like the firstborn of the family. We share in His honour; He is not ashamed to call us His brothers. We share in His sufferings; He learned obedience through what He suffered, and every child is disciplined when received into the family. We share in His kingdom; we shall reign with Him. I will address each of these aspects separately in another place, so I will not extend the discussion further here.

# PART III

## CHAPTER I

### OF COMMUNION WITH THE HOLY GHOST

The foundation of our communion with the Holy Ghost (John 16:1–7) opened at large—Παράκλητος, a Comforter; who he is—The Holy Ghost; his own will in his coming to us; sent also by Christ—The Spirit sent as a sanctifier and as a comforter—The adjuncts of his mission considered—The foundation of his mission, John 15:26—His procession from the Father twofold; as to personality, or to office—Things considerable in his procession as to office—The manner of his collation—He is given freely; sent authoritatively—The sin against the Holy Ghost, whence unpardonable—How we ask the Spirit of the Father—To grieve the Spirit, what—Poured out—How the Holy Ghost is received; by faith—Faith's actings in receiving the Holy Ghost—His abode with us, how declared—How we may lose our comfort whilst the Comforter abides with us.

The foundation of our communion with the Holy Spirit lies in His mission, sent to be our Comforter by Jesus Christ. To understand this truth, we must first examine the whole matter of this divine plan and its purpose. The main promise and key considerations of this plan, along with the benefits received and evils prevented through it, are presented and explained in the beginning of the 16th chapter of John. Let us explore the state of this plan as proposed there.

As our blessed Saviour prepared to depart from the world, He revealed to His disciples the reception and experiences they were

likely to encounter in it. He explained the reason behind sharing this disheartening news with them, considering their sadness and discouragement upon hearing about His imminent departure. In verse 1, He says, "I have spoken to you about these things so that you will not be offended." He assures them that He has forewarned them about the trials and sufferings they will face, so that they will not be caught off guard or stumble in their faith. They are now aware of what awaits them. Furthermore, in verse 2, after informing them in general terms about the persecution they will endure, He openly declares that all people will conspire against them, using all means at their disposal to bring about their downfall. "They will excommunicate you from the synagogues, and the time is coming when killing you will be seen as an act of service to God." He explains that the religious authorities will excommunicate them and expel them from the synagogues. Moreover, they will not find protection from the civil authorities against their adversaries' wickedness, as they will be killed. These persecutors will genuinely believe that they are doing God's righteous work, which will drive them to act harshly and without restraint.

The disciples might respond to this with great distress, wondering how their condition could be such that people would believe they are serving God by killing them. Our Saviour confirms their concerns, saying, "Indeed, they will think so, but do not be mistaken or troubled by their misguided convictions. Their violent fury and deluded persuasion stem from their profound ignorance of the Father and of Me," as stated in verse 3. This would be the disciples' reality. However, why did Jesus choose to inform them of this at such a time, adding fear and confusion to their grief and sorrow? What benefit would they gain from this knowledge? Their blessed Master explains in verse 4, "I have important reasons for sharing these things with you, mainly so that when these events occur, you

will remember that I foretold them to you." He wants them to be prepared and supported by the knowledge that He, with His divine nature and omniscience, had revealed these events before they came to pass. He adds, "But if this knowledge is so crucial, why did you not inform us earlier? Why not at the beginning, when we were first called?" Jesus replies, "Because there was no need for such knowledge back then. While I was with you, I provided you with protection and guidance." He explains, "I did not speak of these things at the beginning because I was physically present with you. But now the circumstances have changed; I must leave you," as stated in verse 4. He further acknowledges their deep sorrow and astonishment, which hinders them from asking Him about His destination, as this knowledge would surely provide them comfort. He states in verses 5 and 6, "Yet because I have said these things, sorrow has filled your hearts, and you have not even asked me where I am going." Consequently, He makes a remarkable declaration in verse 7, saying, "Nevertheless, I am telling you the truth: It is to your advantage that I go away. For if I do not go away, the Comforter will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you."

The verse that follows serves as the specific foundation for what will be further discussed. It requires careful consideration of its words and interpretation, including the preface, the asseveration, and the reason provided.

1. The preface: (1.) The first word, "ἀλλά" (but), is adversative, not objecting to anything previously stated, but rather addressing their apprehensions. "I understand that you have troubling thoughts, but nevertheless..." (2.) "Ἐγὼ τὴν ἀλήθειαν λέγω ὑμῖν"

(I tell you the truth). These words carry great emphasis and indicate the introduction of something significant. First, "Εγώ" (I) emphasizes the speaker, Jesus, who loves and cares for them, and who is about to lay down His life for them. His words are spoken in the face of His impending death, so they may believe Him. "Εγὼ τὴν ἀλήθειαν λέγω" (I tell you the truth) assures them that what He is about to say is absolute truth and should bring peace to their hearts. In times of distress, when disciples feel downhearted and disconsolate due to Christ's absence, the evidence of truth is needed to comfort their souls, regardless of the accuracy of their apprehensions. This concludes the preface, which aims to disentangle the disciples' thoughts from prejudice and prepare them to receive the weighty and convincing truth that will follow.

2. The assertion itself is as follows: "Συμφέρει ὑμῖν, ἵνα ἐγὼ ἀπέλθω" (It is expedient for you that I go away). There are two elements in these words: Christ's departure and its usefulness to His disciples. Regarding His departure, it is understood as the withdrawal of His physical presence from the earth after His resurrection, as He ascends to heaven until the time of the restoration of all things (Acts 3:21). However, in terms of His divinity and His care for them, He promises to be with them until the end of the world (Matthew 28:20). He affirms, "Συμφέρει ὑμῖν" (It is expedient for you), meaning it is advantageous and beneficial for them. This emphasizes that His departure, which they fear and find troubling, will ultimately work to their profit and advantage.
3. Although it might be expected that the disciples would trust this solemn declaration of truth itself, Jesus also explains the grounds for its truth, as they are deeply involved. He informs

them, affirming both negatively and positively: "If I go not away, he will not come; but if I depart, I will send him." While I have previously discussed Christ's departure, I will now address the coming and sending of the Comforter, as that is the intended focus. The word "παράκλητος" (Comforter) has diverse meanings. Many translations have chosen not to restrict its meaning, retaining the original word "paracletus." The Syriac translation does the same. Some believe it was a term already in use among the Jews (hence the Chaldee paraphrast's use of it in Job 16:20), signifying one who teaches and delights others with his teaching—i.e., a comforter. In Scripture, it holds two prominent meanings: an "advocate" and a "comforter." In the former sense, Jesus is referred to as "παράκλητος" (1 John 2:1). Whether it is better translated as "advocate" or "comforter" in this context is debatable. Considering the preceding cause for these words, which is the disciples' sorrow and distress, it seems to require a "Comforter": "Sorrow has filled your hearts, but I will send you the Comforter." Considering the following words that outline the specific role for which He is promised, it requires an "Advocate" to plead the cause of Christ against the world (verse 8). I would choose to interpret the promise in light of the occasion, which is the disciples' sorrow, and retain the term "Comforter." Our Lord had previously explained who this Comforter is in John 15:26. He is the "Πνεῦμα τῆς ἀληθείας" (Spirit of truth), i.e., the Holy Spirit, who reveals all truth to humanity. Regarding this Comforter, two things are affirmed: (1) He will come, and (2) Christ will send Him. (1) His coming is affirmed when the condition of Christ's departure is fulfilled, as indicated by the negation of His coming without its accomplishment: "If I go not away, He will not come; if I depart, I will send Him." Therefore, not only is there the mission of Christ, but the will of the Spirit is involved in His coming. "He

will come"—His own will is evident in His work. (2) "πέμψω αὐτόν" (I will send Him). Jesus gradually instructs His disciples regarding the mystery of sending the Spirit. In John 14:16, He says, "I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter." As His discourse progresses, He reveals more about their faith, stating in verse 26, "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My name." Later, in John 15:26, He says, "I will send Him from the Father." Finally, here, He simply declares, "I will send Him." The profound mystery of sending the Holy Spirit by Christ, which also signifies His personal procession from the Son, is gradually revealed to them, as they were not yet ready to comprehend it in its entirety. In summary, the presence of the Holy Spirit as a Comforter sent by Christ, to fulfill the purposes for which He is promised, is more beneficial and advantageous for believers than any physical presence of Christ could be, now that He has completed the sacrifice for sin that He was destined to offer.

Now, the Holy Spirit is promised and understood in two ways: [1] as a Spirit of sanctification for the elect, to convert and make them believers, and [2] as a Spirit of consolation for believers, granting them the privileges obtained through Christ's death. It is only in the latter sense that he is referred to here. In regards to his presence and the purpose for which he is sent, we should take note of the following: [1] the source and origin of his coming, [2] the manner in which he is given, [3] how we receive him, [4] his abiding presence with us, [5] his actions within us, and [6] the effects of his work in us. By examining the Scripture, we can briefly consider what it says about these aspects.

First, concerning the source of his coming, John 15:26 states, "He proceeds from the Father." This is the origin of this dispensation; he



proceeds from the Father. There are two types of procession attributed to the Spirit:

(1) A natural or substantial procession, pertaining to his essence and personality. (2) An economic or dispensational procession, pertaining to the work of grace. I will not delve into the first type, as it falls beyond the scope of this discussion. It is a matter of a different nature. While it serves as the ultimate foundation for our distinct communion with him and our worship of him, focusing solely on this aspect would lead us no further than accepting the revealed mystery through faith and fulfilling the due reverence owed to the person based solely on his participation in the divine essence. Therefore, I will not dwell on it at this time.

The procession mentioned in the aforementioned passage refers to the economic or dispensational procession of the Spirit, for the purpose of advancing the work of grace. It pertains to his being sent by Christ after his ascension. "I will send him who proceeds"—that is, "when I send him." Just as God is said to "come out of his place" in Isaiah 26:21, not implying any change in him but rather a new work that he will accomplish, the Lord comes out of his place "to punish the inhabitants of the earth." The mention of the Spirit's procession is in reference to a specific work—to testify of Christ—which cannot be attributed to his eternal procession but rather to his actual dispensation, as it is said of Christ, "He came forth from God." The mention of the Father alone in this passage, without reference to the Son, is part of the progressive revelation through which Jesus unveils this mystery to his disciples. He speaks similarly of himself in John 16:7. This external relation of the Spirit to the Father and the Son, in terms of operation, confirms his internal relation in terms of personal procession, as mentioned earlier.

The foundation of our communion with the Holy Spirit involves three significant aspects: [1] The will of the Spirit is at work. He proceeds—comes forth himself. Although we will later see that he is sent, given, and poured out, to prevent the misunderstanding that this Spirit is merely an inferior created spirit or a mere servant, as some have blasphemed, or that he is primarily the virtue of God as some have imagined, he possesses personal properties that establish his personality and freedom. He proceeds—voluntarily and of his own accord.

[2] The condescension of the Holy Spirit is evident in this order of operation, this dispensation, as he proceeds from the Father and the Son for this purpose. He assumes the role of a Comforter, just as the Son took on the role of a Redeemer. We will discuss this further later.

[3] The ultimate source of this dispensation is revealed to be the Father, emphasizing his works in accordance with electing love, a theme attributed to the Father throughout the Scriptures. The implied order is as follows: First, there is the purpose of the Father, the fountainhead of all; then comes the request of the Son, as in John 14:16, which includes his merit and redemption; followed by the procession or willing proceeding of the Holy Spirit. This also testifies to the foundation of this discourse—our unique communion with the Father in love, the Son in grace, and the Holy Spirit in consolation. This forms the gateway and entrance to the fellowship of the Holy Spirit to which we are called. By faith, we focus on his gracious and blessed will, his infinite and ineffable condescension, as the foundation of all the effects he works in us and the privileges of which we partake through him. Consequently, our souls are particularly engaged with him, directing our desires, affections, and gratitude towards him. We will explore this further later. This is the first significant aspect of our communion with the Holy Spirit.

Secondly, we should consider the manner in which the Holy Spirit is bestowed upon us from this source. This is expressed in various ways to convey three points:

(1) The freeness of his bestowal. He is said to be GIVEN, as stated in John 14:16: "He shall give you another Comforter." Numerous passages emphasize that the Spirit is given and received as a gift. "He will give his Holy Spirit to those who ask him." That which is given is freely given. The Spirit of grace is given by grace itself. Not only is the Spirit of sanctification, who converts and sanctifies us, a gift of free grace, but even in the sense we are discussing—consolation—he is also a gift. He is promised to be given to believers. Hence, the Spirit is said to be received through the gospel, not through the law (Gal. 3:2). This means that he is received purely by grace, not by our own efforts. All his workings are referred to as "free donations." He is freely given and works freely. The different measures in which believers receive him, for the purposes of consolation that we will discuss, are significant, varied, and indescribable precisely because we possess him as a gift. This is how we view him, ask for him, and receive him. Faith embraces and joins together the will of the Comforter with the gift of the Father and the Son—the former relating to the distinct operation of the Deity in the person of the Holy Spirit, and the latter pertaining to the economy of the entire Trinity in the work of our salvation through Jesus Christ. In our communion with the Comforter, the soul finds joy in his willingness to come to us and be given to us. Since everything is an act of will and gift, grace is magnified in this regard.

(2) The authority behind it. Thus, he is said to be SENT. In John 14:26, it is stated, "The Father will send him in my name," and in John 15:26, "I will send him to you from the Father," and "I will send him to you" in John 16:7. The sending of the Holy Spirit by the

Father and the Son corresponds to the order of their subsistence within the blessed Trinity and his procession from both of them. It also signifies the voluntary agreement between them to accomplish the work of our salvation, as previously mentioned. The authoritative delegation of the Father and the Son in this matter reveals the remarkable condescension of the Holy Spirit's love towards us. This does not imply any disparity, dissimilarity, or inequality of essence but rather of function within this work. It is the office of the Holy Spirit to be our advocate and comforter. Hence, he is sent authoritatively by the Father and the Son, although not absolutely. It is a well-known principle that "inequality of office does not negate equality of nature." This subordination, or inequality in terms of office, does not in any way undermine the equality of his nature with the Father and the Son, just as the mission of the Son by the Father does not negate their equality. The right understanding of various mysteries in the gospel and the proper disposition of our hearts in communion with the Holy Spirit depend on this authoritative mission.

[1st.] Therefore, the sin against the Holy Spirit, which I won't debate here, is unforgivable and carries the distinctive mark of rebellion that no other sin possesses. This is because the Holy Spirit does not act solely in his own name, although he does act in his own name as well, but in the name and authority of the Father and Son, from whom he is sent. Therefore, to sin against him is to sin against the entire authority of God, the love of the Trinity, and the utmost condescension of each person in the work of our salvation. From the authoritative mission of the Spirit stems the peculiarly unforgivable nature of sin against him—it is a sin against the embodiment of the love of the Father, Son, and Spirit. If that were our current topic, we could delve into the true nature of the sin against the Holy Spirit. Surely it must consist of contempt for some operation of his, as he

acts in the name and authority of the entire Trinity, with their ineffable condescension to the work of grace. However, that is a separate matter.

[2ndly.] For this reason, we are to pray to the Father and the Son to give us the Spirit. Luke 11:13 says, "Your heavenly Father will give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him." Now, since the Holy Spirit is God, we must invoke, pray to, and call upon him just as we do the Father and Son, as I have previously shown. So, how do we ask the Father for him, as we do in all our supplications, when we also pray for the Holy Spirit himself to come to us, visit us, and abide with us? In our prayers directed to him, we regard him as God over all, blessed forevermore. We pray for him from the Father and the Son, acknowledging his mission and delegation from them. And indeed, as God has abundantly revealed himself in the order of this dispensation, we, as Christians generally do, abound in corresponding prayers. This means that we not only pray to the person of the Holy Spirit himself but also properly pray to the Father and Son for him, which pertains to this dispensation.

[3rdly.] Consequently, great emphasis is placed on not grieving the Spirit, as stated in Ephesians 4:30. This is because he comes to us in the name, with the love, and through the condescension of the entire blessed Trinity. To engage in actions that would grieve him, sent in such a manner and for the purpose that will be mentioned later, greatly aggravates sin. He expects to be warmly received by us, and rightfully so, based on his own merit and the work he is carrying out. However, when we consider that he is sent by the Father and the Son, commissioned with their love and grace to communicate them to our souls, this should be held in unspeakable esteem by believers. This constitutes the second aspect expressed in the manner of his communication—he is sent with authority.

(3rdly.) He is said to be poured out or shed upon us, as mentioned in Titus 3:6, "whom he poured out on us richly." This was the primary expression of his communication in the Old Testament when the mystery of the Father and the Son and the matter of commission and delegation were not as clearly revealed. Isaiah 32:15 states, "until the Spirit is poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness becomes a fruitful field, and the fruitful field is deemed a forest," signifying the calling of the Gentiles and the rejection of the Jews. And in Isaiah 44:3, "I will pour my Spirit upon your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants." We also always have in mind the notable passage in Zechariah 12:10. This expression, as known, draws on the analogy of the Spirit to water and encompasses all the uses of water, both natural and symbolic. I cannot delve into a detailed account of each particular use at present, but efficacy and abundance are perhaps the primary intentions.

Now, this threefold expression of giving, sending, and pouring out the Spirit reveals three significant properties of the covenant of grace: First, it is freely given. Second, it is ordered and secure, stemming from the love of the Father and procured by the Son. Hence, the varied expressions of the Father sending him and the Son sending him from the Father, as he is the gift of the Father's love and the purchase of the Son's blood. Third, it is efficacious, as previously noted. This concludes the second significant aspect.

3rdly. The third aspect, which is our reception of the Spirit, will be discussed briefly. We should keep in mind the Spirit's roles as a Spirit of sanctification and a Spirit of consolation. Our reception of him as a Spirit of sanctification is purely passive, like a vessel receiving water. He comes upon dead hearts and, through his almighty power, revives them, just as the wind revived Ezekiel's dead bones. However, when he acts as the Spirit of consolation, the

reception is different. In this sense, our Saviour tells us that "the world cannot receive him" (John 14:17). "The world does not receive him because it does not see him or know him, but you know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you." It is clear from the latter part of the verse that the promised Spirit, who is to be in them, is the Spirit of consolation. Initially, he was in them as a Spirit of quickening and sanctification when promised to them as a Spirit of comfort and consolation, to abide with them for that purpose. While the Spirit of sanctification enters with his almighty power to bring dead hearts to life, the Spirit of consolation requires an active power for reception, which is faith. Galatians 3:2 states that they received the Spirit through the hearing of faith. Believers are the ones who receive the Spirit in this way, and they receive him through faith. Thus, there are three significant acts of faith involved in receiving the Spirit, and I will briefly mention them:

(1st.) Faith considers the Spirit, within the aforementioned economy, as promised. It is only through faith that we can benefit from the promises (Hebrews 4:2). The Spirit is referred to as the Spirit of that promise in Ephesians 1:13—the Spirit promised in the covenant. When we receive the Spirit through faith, we are receiving him as promised. Faith looks to the promise of God and Jesus Christ, the promise of sending the Spirit for all the intended purposes, and depends on it until it receives him.

(2ndly.) Faith employs prayer. The Spirit is given as a Spirit of supplication so that we may ask for him as a Spirit of consolation (Luke 11:13). Indeed, asking for the Spirit of God, either directly or indirectly, or by praying for some fruit or effect of his presence, is the primary work of faith in this world.

(3rdly.) Faith nurtures the Spirit by attending to his promptings, responding according to his will, and making the most of his workings. This concludes my brief discussion on the third aspect, our reception of the Spirit, who is sent by Jesus Christ. We receive him through faith, considering him as purchased by Jesus Christ and promised by the Father. We seek him from God and receive him.

4thly. The next significant aspect is his abode with us, which is expressed in two ways in Scripture:

(1st.) In general terms, he is said to abide with us.

(2ndly.) In specific terms, his abiding is described as indwelling or inhabitation. I have previously discussed the concept of the Spirit's indwelling at length, so I will not dwell on it now. It is worth noting, however, that when the Spirit, as a sanctifier, dwells in us, it is primarily or perhaps exclusively in the context of sanctification. This is evident from his work of quickening and sanctifying (Romans 8:11) and the manner in which he dwells in us as in a temple, thereby sanctifying it (1 Corinthians 6:19). His permanence in this regard pertains specifically to sanctification. Nevertheless, the general notion of abiding is ascribed to him as a comforter (John 14:16), with the added assurance that he will remain with us forever. Although the promise presents some difficulty—how can the Spirit abide with us forever, yet we may completely lose our comfort?—we can address it briefly in our passage:

[1st.] He is promised to abide with the disciples forever, in contrast to the temporary presence of Christ. Christ, in the flesh, had been with them for a brief period and was now leaving them to return to the Father. He had been their immediate comforter for a time, but now that he was departing, they may have feared that the promised comforter would also visit them briefly, leaving them in a worse



condition than before. However, Jesus reassures them, saying, "Do not fear. This is the final dispensation; there will be no further changes. When I am gone, the Comforter will complete all that remains. No other comforter is to be expected, and I promise you his abiding presence. He will not depart from you but will always remain with you."

[2ndly.] The Comforter can always abide with us, even if he does not always provide comfort. The Comforter can remain present, while the act of comforting may not always be present. There are other purposes for which he is always with us, such as sanctifying and making us holy. This was the case with David when he pleaded, "Do not take your Holy Spirit from me" (Psalm 51:11). The Holy Spirit of sanctification was still with David, but he desired the restoration of the joy of salvation, which signifies the lost comfort that was fulfilled by the abiding of the Spirit.

[3rdly.] The Comforter may abide as a comforter, even when he does not actively comfort the soul. In truth, his acts of comforting are subject to his sovereign will, whereas holiness is essential to his indwelling. Therefore, he can remain present without providing immediate comfort.

[4thly.] The Spirit often works for and offers consolation to us, even when we do not receive it. The well is nearby, but we may fail to see it or refuse to be comforted. I previously mentioned that the Spirit, as a sanctifier, comes with power to conquer an unbelieving heart, while the Spirit, as a comforter, comes with tenderness to be received by a believing heart. He speaks, yet we fail to recognize his voice. He offers consolatory things, yet we reject them. David lamented, "My soul refused to be comforted" despite his afflictions.

[5thly.] I deny that the Holy Spirit ever completely and universally departs from a believing soul, leaving it without consolation. A person may experience darkness, clouds, and a rejection of comfort, feeling none of it. However, fundamentally, there remains a source of consolation that will be manifested in due time. Thus, when God promises to heal sinners and restore comfort to them, as stated in Isaiah 57:18, it is not because they were without any comfort but because they lacked the amount they needed. Exploring the various ways in which individuals refuse comfort and fall short of the strong consolation that God desires us to receive is not my intention at this time. Therefore, the Spirit, once sent and given, abides with the souls of believers, never leaving them, even though he manifests himself in various ways, as we shall discuss next.

## **CHAPTER II**

**The Actions of the Holy Spirit in Us, Given and Bestowed—He Works Effectively, Distributes, Gives**

Having explained how the Holy Spirit is given to us as a Comforter, I will now proceed to discuss the actions of the Spirit in us and towards us, once he is bestowed upon us and received by us. There are two main aspects to consider: (1st) the manner and nature of his actions in us, which are expressed in various ways, and (2nd) the specific outcomes of his actions in our souls, through which we commune with him. Let us briefly explore the first aspect:

(1st) He is described as "working effectually" in 1 Corinthians 12:11, where it speaks of his distribution of gifts, but the same principle applies to the communication of graces and privileges. The Spirit works in us, demonstrating his personality, especially when coupled with the following words: "Dividing to every man according to his will." Working according to one's will is an attribute of a person, and it is explicitly attributed to God in Ephesians 1:11. Thus, what the Spirit bestows upon us, he does so by working effectively himself, rather than simply presenting arguments or persuading us with moral motives. He actively works to communicate grace and consolation to us.

[2ndly] In the same verse, his manner of operation is described as "dividing" or "distributing" to each person as he wills. This notion of distribution implies choice, judgment, and freedom. The Spirit, in his dispensations, distributes gifts, granting one person one thing and another person another thing, and varying the degree of what is given. This sovereign distribution keeps the saints in a constant state of dependence on him. He distributes as he wills, and we should be content with our portion. After all, who can claim entitlement to what he distributes as he pleases? This is further evident in the fact that he is said to "give" when he bestows his gifts. Acts 2:4 states, "They spoke with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." His giving is an act of free grace. It is important to note that in the economy of our salvation, the actions of one person do not diminish the freedom and liberty of any other person. The Father's love in sending the Son does not impede the Son's freedom to lay down his life willingly. The Son's satisfaction and redemption do not diminish the Father's freedom to pardon and accept us. Similarly, the Father's and Son's sending of the Spirit does not restrict the Spirit's freedom in his workings. He freely gives what he gives because the will of the

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is essentially the same. Thus, the actions of one reflect the counsel and free will of all.

This, in general, describes the manner and nature of the Spirit's working in us and towards us once he is bestowed upon us. Power, choice, and freedom are clearly evident in the expressions used. It is not the specific works of the Spirit towards us that are being explained here, but rather the manner in which he produces the effects that will be discussed.

(2ndly) Finally, in order to explain the foundation of our communion with the Holy Spirit, I will discuss the effects that he produces as he is sent and works. I will present these effects without following a strict organizational structure, but rather address them as they appear throughout the Scripture, focusing on those that are most obvious. However, please note that I will primarily (if not exclusively) discuss the Spirit as a Comforter, rather than a sanctifier. Therefore, the ongoing work of the Spirit in constantly supplying us with new light, power, and vitality for our reception of grace falls under the category of sanctification and will not be covered. Additionally, I will not dwell on the Spirit's actions through believers towards others, such as testifying and convicting the world, which are promised in John 15:26 and 16:8 and pertain to his role as an advocate. Instead, I will focus solely on the actions that he, as a Comforter, works in and towards those upon whom he is bestowed.

## **CHAPTER III**

Of the things wherein we have communion with the Holy Ghost—He brings to remembrance the things spoken by Christ, John 14:26—The manner how he doth it—The Spirit glorifies Christ in the hearts of believers, John 16:14, sheds abroad the love of God in them—The witness of the Spirit, what it is, Rom. 8:16—The sealing of the Spirit, Eph. 1:13—The Spirit, how an earnest; on the part of God, on the part of the saints—Difference between the earnest of the Spirit and tasting of the powers of the world to come—Unction by the Spirit, Isa. 11:2, 3—The various teachings of the Holy Ghost—How the Spirit of adoption and of supplication.

THE things that I previously referred to as the effects of the Holy Spirit in us or towards us are the basis of our communion with Him, or the aspects in which we have a special fellowship with Him as our Comforter. These are now presented for consideration:

1. The first and most general aspect is found in John 14:26, where it states, "He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." This promise has two parts: (1) teaching and (2) bringing to remembrance. I will address His teaching later when I discuss His anointing of us.

Regarding His role in bringing to remembrance the things spoken by Christ, this is the initial promise of the Comforter: "He shall make you mind all these things." There are two ways to consider this:

[1.] Primarily, in relation to the spoken words themselves. Here, Jesus promises His apostles that the Holy Spirit will bring to their minds, through His immediate influence, the things He had spoken. By this inspiration, they would be enabled to write and preach these words for the benefit of the Church. Peter tells us in 2 Peter 1:21 that "holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost"

when they wrote the Scriptures. They were carried beyond themselves, speaking His words and what He dictated to them. The apostles might have forgotten much of what Christ had said to them, and even what they did remember through natural means would not suffice as a foundation for writing it down as a rule of faith for the Church. Prophecy does not originate from human impulse or private understanding and remembrance. Thus, Christ promises that the Holy Spirit will fulfill this task, ensuring that the apostles infallibly convey what He had entrusted to them. This sheds light on the expression in Luke 1:3, "Having obtained perfect knowledge of things from above," which refers to the apostle's complete understanding of things as a result of being able to infallibly communicate them as a rule of faith for the Church.

[2.] Additionally, this promise concerns the comfort derived from what Christ had spoken, which appears to be a significant part of its intent. He had spoken to them words of consolation, offering precious promises of the provisions they would receive from Him in this life: the love of the Father, the glory He was preparing for them. The sense and comfort derived from these promises are indescribable, and the resulting joy is full of glory. However, Jesus acknowledges their inability to fully embrace and find solace in these promises. Therefore, He assures them that the Spirit will bring them to mind with their full strength and vigor, specifically for the purpose of finding comfort in them. This is one reason why it was expedient for believers that Christ's physical absence should be replaced by the presence of the Spirit. While Christ was with them, the heavenly promises He gave them had little effect on their hearts. But when the Spirit came, He brought abundant joy to their lives. This particular work, which is peculiar to the Spirit and part of His office, is intended for His glorification. His ongoing work until the end of the world is to bring Christ's promises to our minds and hearts,

providing us with comfort, joy, and sweetness far surpassing what the disciples experienced when Christ personally spoke those words to them. At that time, the gracious influence of the promises was restricted so that the dispensation of the Spirit could be glorified. The subsequent words in verse 27, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you," affirm the result of the Comforter's role in bringing Christ's words to remembrance. Peace and freedom from troubled hearts follow this work. Every peace, relief, comfort, joy, and support we receive from any work, promise, or action of Christ is a part of this dispensation of the Comforter. Our natural abilities to remember, recollect, and consider the promises of Christ would be in vain and ineffective. However, when the Comforter takes on this task, it is accomplished effectively. Our unique communion with Him in faith and obedience, as well as the consolation we receive through the promises that He brings to mind, will be further explained later. In general, it is important to understand that Jesus Christ, by entrusting even the efficacy of the promises He personally gave to His apostles in times of great distress for their consolation, placed it in the hands of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, we can perceive the immediate source of all the spiritual comfort we have in this world and the fellowship we experience with the Holy Spirit through it.

Only in all the subsequent details, the manner in which the Spirit accomplishes this work must always be kept in mind, along with the significance of His power, will, and goodness in His actions. He does this—first, powerfully or effectively; second, voluntarily; and third, freely.

First, powerfully: Hence, comfort from the words and promises of Christ sometimes breaks through all opposition, even in the saddest and darkest circumstances imaginable. It enters and makes people sing in dungeons, rejoice in flames, and glory in tribulations. It

permeates prisons, racks, temptations, and the most severe distresses one can fathom. How is this possible? Τὸ Πνεῦμα ἐνεργεῖ—the Spirit works effectively; His power is in it. He will work, and nothing can hinder Him. If He brings to our remembrance the promises of Christ for our consolation, neither Satan nor man, sin nor the world, nor even death, can interrupt our comfort. Those who have communion with the Holy Spirit are well aware of this. At times, when the heavens seem dark and the earth trembles beneath them, when public and personal calamities and distresses loom with horror and darkness, causing them to feel faint with fear— it is precisely in such moments that they find great relief and a revival of their spirits. Their consolation or distress does not depend on their external circumstances or the inward state of their own hearts, but on the powerful and effective workings of the Holy Spirit, to which they surrender themselves through faith.

Second, voluntarily: the Spirit distributes to each person as He wills. Therefore, this work is characterized by great variety, both within the same person and among different individuals. In the case of the same person, they may experience full joy in times of great distress and find complete consolation—every promise brings sweetness when they face great pressures. But at other times, even in minor trials, they seek comfort and search for promises, only to find them distant. The reason for this is that Πνεῦμα διαρεῖ καθὼς βούλεται—the Spirit distributes as He wills. The same applies to different individuals: for some, each promise is full of life and comfort, while others taste little comfort throughout their lives. All of this is due to the same reason. In this regard, faith particularly recognizes the sovereign will of the Holy Spirit and therefore does not cling to any specific rules or patterns of operation. Instead, faith exercises itself in patiently waiting for the timely fulfillment of His good pleasure.



Third, freely: The freedom of the Spirit's operation contributes significantly to the variety in the dispensation of comfort through promises. Consequently, comfort is often given unexpectedly when the heart has every reason to expect distress and sorrow. At times, it serves as the initial means of restoring a backsliding soul, which would rightfully expect to be utterly rejected. These considerations apply to all the other effects and fruits of the Comforter, which will be discussed later. In this first general effect or work of the Holy Spirit toward us, we have communion and fellowship with Him. The life and essence of all our comforts lie in the promises of Christ. They are the source of all our consolation. It is well known that in their bare written form, even when pondered upon and meditated on extensively, they lack power. But there are also moments when they unexpectedly break upon the soul with conquering, endearing life and vigour. It is in this area that faith engages specifically with the Holy Spirit. It contemplates the promises themselves, looks up to Him, waits for Him, considers His manifestations in the word that is relied upon, and acknowledges His work and efficacy. As soon as the soul begins to feel the life of a promise warming its heart, bringing relief, comfort, support, and deliverance from fear, entanglements, or troubles, it may and should recognize that the Holy Spirit is present, which will enhance its joy and lead it into fellowship with Him.

2. The next general work appears to be that described in John 16:14: "The Comforter shall glorify me, for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you." The work of the Spirit is to glorify Christ. By the way, we can clearly see that any spirit that seeks to exalt itself in place of Christ is far from being the Comforter. Such a spirit claims to be everything, dismissing the need to concern oneself with the suffering Christ in Jerusalem. This spirit is not the Comforter. His task is to glorify Christ—He

who sends Him. This serves as a clear sign of a false spirit, regardless of its pretense, if it does not glorify the Christ who was presently speaking to His apostles. Many spirits that have emerged in the world fall into this category. Now, what will this Spirit do to glorify Christ? He will "take of mine" —ἐκ τοῦ ἐμοῦ λήψεται. The meaning of these words is explained in the following verse: "All things that the Father hath are mine; therefore I said he shall take of mine." Jesus is not speaking about the essence and essential properties of the Father and the Son, but rather about the grace communicated to us by them. Christ refers to these as "my things," as they are the result of His redemptive work and mediation. For this reason, He says that all things belonging to the Father also belong to Him, signifying the things that the Father, in His eternal love, has provided to be dispensed through the blood of His Son—all the fruits of election. "These," He says, "the Comforter shall receive"; in other words, they will be entrusted to Him to distribute for our good and benefit, as previously mentioned. Thus, it follows, ἀναγγελεῖ—"He shall show or declare and make them known to you." In this way, He acts as a comforter. He reveals to sinners' souls the good things found in the covenant of grace that the Father has provided and the Son has purchased. He shows us mercy, grace, forgiveness, righteousness, and acceptance with God. He makes us aware that these are Christ's possessions, procured for us. He shows them to us for our comfort and establishment. Effectively, He declares these things to the souls of believers and enables them to perceive and understand them for their own good. They recognize them as originally belonging to the Father, prepared from eternity in His love and goodwill, and as being purchased for them by Christ and stored up in the covenant of grace for their benefit. At that moment, Christ is magnified and glorified in their hearts, and they come to know

what a Saviour and Redeemer He is. The glorification of the Holy Ghost, who performs this work, brings them joy, and they find fellowship with Christ Himself in His love. This is also true regarding the Son, in His taking and showing what belongs to Him, as previously explained. Our experience of heaven in this world is rooted in this aspect, and the manner of our fellowship with the Holy Spirit in this regard aligns with what was mentioned earlier.

3. Another effect of the Spirit is found in Romans 8:16: "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God." We are well aware of whose children we are by nature—children of Satan, subjected to the curse and wrath. However, through the Spirit, we are placed in a new position and adopted as children of God, for by receiving the Spirit of the Father, we become the children of our Father. Hence, the Spirit is referred to as "the Spirit of adoption" in verse 15. Sometimes, due to the remnants of our former nature, the soul begins to question whether it truly is a child of God. In such a crucial matter, it presents its claim along with all the evidence it has to substantiate its rightful status. It is in this context that the Spirit comes and bears witness. This alludes to judicial proceedings involving titles and evidence. In a courtroom, the judge presides while the claimant presents their case, producing evidence and defending their position. Meanwhile, their adversaries strive to undermine and nullify their claims, seeking to defeat their plea. Amidst the trial, a person of known integrity enters the court and testifies fully and unequivocally in favor of the claimant, silencing all opponents and filling the petitioner with joy and satisfaction. This is analogous to the situation at hand. When the soul, compelled by the power of its own conscience, appears before the law of God, it presents its plea—that it is a child of

God, belonging to His family—and supports its case with all the evidence derived from faith, establishing its connection to God. In the meantime, Satan, with all his might, opposes the claim, and sin and the law assist him. Many flaws are found in the presented evidence, and doubts arise concerning their validity. The soul is left in suspense regarding the outcome. In the midst of the plea and the ensuing contest, the Comforter arrives and, through a promise or some other means, overwhelms the heart with a comforting persuasion that conclusively affirms the validity of the plea and confirms the person as a child of God. The Comforter, in this case, is said to "bear witness with our spirit." At the same time, He enables us to manifest acts of filial obedience that are sincere and childlike, expressed through the cry of "Abba, Father" (Galatians 4:6). It is crucial to remember the manner in which the Spirit works, as previously mentioned: effectively, voluntarily, and freely. Consequently, the dispute may endure for an extended period—the case may be argued for many years. At times, it appears as though the law, sin, and Satan will triumph, and the poor soul is filled with dread concerning its inheritance. Perhaps the testimony provided by its own faith, sanctification, and past experiences upholds the plea to some extent, providing some measure of comfort. However, the work is not complete, the victory is not fully obtained, until the Spirit, who operates freely and effectively, at His own discretion, arrives with His testimony. Clothed in the power of a promise, He commands the attention of all parties involved, bringing the dispute to a close.

Through this work, we enter into holy communion with the Spirit. The soul recognizes His voice when He speaks, knowing that it does not belong to a mere mortal. There is something too majestic about it to be the result of created power. When the Lord Jesus Christ, with a

single word, calmed the raging sea and wind, all those with Him recognized the presence of divine power (Matthew 8:25-27). In a similar manner, when the Holy Spirit, with a single word, stills the tumults and storms that arise in the soul, granting it immediate calm and security, the soul perceives His divine power and rejoices in His presence.

5. He seals us. We are sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise (Ephesians 1:13), and we are exhorted not to grieve the Holy Spirit, by whom we are sealed until the day of redemption (Ephesians 4:30). While I am not entirely certain of the precise metaphorical intent behind this concept, I will briefly share my understanding of God's intention. Sealing involves two aspects: (1) the nature of sealing, and (2) the purpose of sealing. (1) The nature of sealing consists of imprinting the image or character of the seal onto the object being sealed. To seal something is to leave the mark or impression of the seal upon it. In this sense, our sealing should involve the Spirit genuinely imparting the image of God, particularly righteousness and true holiness, to our souls. The Spirit, by truly communicating the image of God to believers, seals us. To bear the stamp of the Holy Spirit in a manner that provides assurance to the soul of acceptance with God is to be sealed by the Spirit, drawing upon the metaphor of sealing. This concept can also be observed in reference to Jesus being sealed by God (John 4:27), indicating the impression of God's power, wisdom, and majesty upon Him during His ministry. (2) The purpose of sealing has two aspects: [1] To confirm or ratify any written grant or conveyance. When individuals set their seals on such documents, they validate and confirm their grants, making them irrevocable. Similarly, sealing can serve to confirm the testimony given by someone regarding the truth of a matter. This was the practice among the Jews—

when someone provided truthful witness, and their testimony was accepted by the judges, they would immediately set their seals to confirm it in the legal proceedings. Thus, the one who receives the testimony of Christ "sets his seal to this, that God is true" (John 3:33). The promise is the significant grant and conveyance of life and salvation in Christ to the souls of believers. To ensure that we have full assurance of the truth and unchangeable nature of the promise, God gives us the Spirit to satisfy our hearts concerning it. Hence, the Spirit is said to seal us by providing assurance regarding the promises and their steadfastness. Although many interpreters adopt this understanding, I fail to see how it aligns with the precise meaning of the term. It is not stated that the promise is sealed, but rather that we are sealed. When we seal a document or grant, we do not say that the person is sealed, but rather that the deed or grant is sealed. [2] To appropriate, distinguish, or safeguard. This is the purpose of sealing. Individuals set their seals on items they wish to claim and keep secure for themselves. Therefore, the servants of God are said to be sealed in this sense, as mentioned in Revelation 7:4, signifying that they are marked with God's mark as His special possession. This sealing corresponds to the act of marking described in Ezekiel 9:4. Believers are sealed when they are designated by God as heirs of the purchased inheritance and are preserved until the day of redemption. If this is the intended meaning of sealing, it does not denote a sensory experience in the heart but rather security for the individual. The Father entrusts the elect to Christ for redemption, and having redeemed them, they are called by the Spirit and marked for God, willingly surrendering themselves into the hands of the Father.

Now, if you ask, "Which of these meanings is primarily intended in the expression 'being sealed by the Holy Spirit'?" I would answer that the first meaning is primarily intended, although it does not exclude the other. We are sealed until the day of redemption when, through the stamp, image, and character of the Spirit upon our souls, we experience a fresh sense of God's love bestowed upon us, along with a comforting assurance of our acceptance with Him. However, I have extensively addressed this entire matter elsewhere.

In this manner, the Holy Spirit imparts to us His own likeness, which is also the image of the Father and the Son. "We are transformed into this image by the Lord the Spirit" (2 Corinthians 3:18), and through this, we enter into fellowship with Him. Our likeness to Him grants us boldness in approaching Him. We anticipate His work and pray for His fruits, and when any manifestation of grace or revelation of Christ's image within us provides us with the assurance of being set apart for God's purposes, we commune with Him in that experience.

6. He is an earnest unto us. In 2 Corinthians 1:22, it is stated that God has "given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee." Similarly, in 2 Corinthians 5:5, it is mentioned that God has given us the Spirit as a guarantee. Additionally, Ephesians 1:13-14 declares that believers are sealed with the Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance. In the first two instances, we are said to possess the guarantee of the Spirit, while in the latter, the Spirit is described as our guarantee. Therefore, in the first case, the phrase "of the Spirit" can be understood as "genitive of material," indicating not the cause but the essence of the guarantee itself, not the author of the guarantee but the substance of it. The Spirit is our guarantee, as explicitly stated in the last instance. Reflecting on the meaning of "Spirit" in this

context and the concept of an "earnest," we can gain insight into this privilege received through the Comforter.

(1) Some have sought to determine which specific grace or gift of the Spirit is referred to as the earnest, but I believe their inquiry is in vain. It is the Spirit Himself, considered personally, who is described as the earnest in 2 Corinthians 1:22. It is God who has given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts, and this phrase corresponds directly to Galatians 4:6, where it is stated that "God has sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts." The reference is to the person of the Spirit, as nothing else can be referred to as the Spirit of God's Son. Likewise, Ephesians 1:14 speaks of God giving the Spirit (using the Greek word ὅς meaning "who"), who is the earnest. The Spirit of promise Himself serves as the earnest. By giving us this Spirit, God provides us with this earnest.

(2) An earnest is ἀρράβων, for which neither Greek nor Latin has an equivalent term. The Latin language created the words "arrha" and "arrabo" based on the Greek expression used here. The Greek word itself is derived from the Hebrew word "herabon" [עֲרָבוֹן], which, as some suggest, entered the Greek language through Tyrian merchants as a commercial term. In Latin, it is translated as "pignus," meaning a "pledge," but this term does not accurately convey the intended meaning in this context. A pledge is something given or left in someone's custody as security for the fulfillment of a future promise or payment, similar to what we refer to as a "pawn." However, what is being described here is a partial payment or grant given in advance to assure the recipient that they will receive the fullness of what has been promised to them at the appointed time.

It is necessary for something to be an earnest that: [1.] It is a part of the whole, of the same kind and nature as the whole. For example,



we give a certain amount of money as an earnest to pay a larger sum. [2.] It serves as confirmation of a promise or agreement. First, the entire thing is promised, and then the earnest is given to ensure the faithful and true fulfillment of that promise.

Thus, the Spirit serves as this earnest. God promises us eternal life, and to confirm this promise, He gives us His Spirit, which serves as the initial part of the promise, assuring us of the entirety. That is why the Spirit is referred to as the earnest of the promised and purchased inheritance.

Now, let us consider how it can be said that the Spirit is an earnest both on God's part, who gives Him, and on the part of believers, who receive Him:

Firstly, on God's part, He is an earnest because God gives Him as a valuable portion of the inheritance itself, of the same kind as the whole, as an earnest should be. The complete inheritance that is promised is the fullness of the Spirit in the enjoyment of God. When the Spirit, given to us in this world, completely removes all sin and sorrow and enables us to experience the glory of God in His presence, that is the fulfillment of the promised inheritance. Therefore, the Spirit given to prepare us for the enjoyment of God to some extent while we are here serves as the earnest of the entire inheritance.

God does this to assure and secure us of the inheritance. He has already given us many external securities—His word, promises, covenant, oath, and the revelation of His faithfulness and unchangeability in all these. Additionally, He graciously gives us an internal assurance, the Spirit, so that we may have all the security we are capable of. What more could be done? He has given us the Holy

Spirit, who is the first installment of glory, the ultimate pledge of His love, and the earnest of everything.

Secondly, on the part of believers, the Spirit is an earnest because He acquaints them with:

(1st) The love of God. The Spirit reveals to them their acceptance with God and their favor in His sight. They come to know that God is their Father and that He will treat them as His children. Consequently, they realize that the inheritance belongs to them. The Spirit sent into our hearts causes us to cry out, "Abba, Father" (Galatians 4:6). And what is the conclusion that believers draw from this? In verse 7, it is stated, "So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God." The same apostle further explains in Romans 8:17, "And if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ." Based on the assurance provided by the Spirit that we are children, the logical inference is that we are heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ. We have the right to the inheritance and its assurance. Therefore, the use we make of the Spirit is that He convinces us of our sonship and acceptance with God the Father. And what does this inheritance of glory entail? "If we suffer with him, we will also be glorified with him." The Spirit is given for this purpose, as stated in 1 John 3:24, "And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us." The apostle is referring to our union with God, which he expresses in the preceding verses: "Whoever keeps his commandments abides in God, and God in him" (verse 24a). From this we know, by means of the Spirit whom He has given us, that He abides in us. It is not that we possess this knowledge ourselves, but the argument is sound and conclusive: "We have received the Spirit; therefore, He dwells in us and we in Him." This is because His dwelling in us is through the

Spirit, and our union with Him is from there. The Spirit imparts this knowledge as He sees fit.

(2nd) The Spirit, being given as an earnest, acquaints believers with their inheritance, as mentioned in 1 Corinthians 2:9-10. Just as an earnest, being a part of the whole, provides knowledge of it, so does the Spirit. Many specific examples could be provided to demonstrate this.

Therefore, the Spirit is a complete earnest in every aspect. He is given by God and received by us as the beginning of our inheritance and the assurance of it. The more we possess the Spirit, the more we experience heavenly bliss in perfect enjoyment, and the more evidence we have of its future fullness. In the realm of grace, believers perceive Him in this manner and rejoice in Him. They rejoice in every gracious and self-evidencing work of the Spirit in their hearts, considering it as a taste of heaven and longing for its fullness. To neglect to ascribe every effect of grace to this outcome is to disregard the work of the Holy Spirit within us and towards us.

Lastly, we need to briefly differentiate between believers receiving the Spirit as an earnest of the entire inheritance and hypocrites who merely "taste the powers of the age to come" (Hebrews 6:5). The taste of the powers of the age to come appears to be synonymous with the earnest of the inheritance. However:

Firstly, there is no foundation for the notion that the joys of heaven are referred to as "the powers of the age to come" in that particular passage. They are never called by that name, nor does it accurately depict the glory that will be revealed and in which we will share. Undoubtedly, it refers to the powerful ministry of the ordinances and dispensations of the gospel era (referred to as "to the Hebrews"

according to their own idiom), the great and effective things of the age to come.

Secondly, even if we assume that "the powers of the age to come" does indeed refer to the glory of heaven, there is a significant difference between having a temporary taste of it ourselves and receiving a lasting earnest from God. A hypocrite may temporarily experience great joy and satisfaction while contemplating the blessings of God's kingdom, but the Spirit, as an earnest, provides us with a guarantee of those blessings as they have been prepared for us in God's love and through the redemption accomplished by His Son, Jesus Christ. This is an important distinction to be made.

7. The Spirit anoints believers. We are "anointed" by the Spirit (2 Corinthians 1:21). We have received an anointing from the Holy One, and we know all things (1 John 2:20, 27). I do not intend to delve into the historical origins and original meaning of this expression, as I have already addressed this elsewhere. However, it is rooted in the use of anointing in the Old Testament, the significance of the types associated with it, and the consecration of individuals to specific offices. It also corresponds to the anointing of Jesus Christ (from which He is called the Messiah and the Christ, with the entire fulfillment of His mediatorial office referred to as His anointing in Daniel 9:24, in terms of His qualification for it). Christ is described as being "anointed with the oil of gladness above his companions" (Hebrews 1:9), which is equivalent to John 3:34: "For he whom God has sent utters the words of God, for he gives the Spirit without measure." As we, who receive the Spirit in measure, are anointed with the "oil of gladness," Christ possesses the fullness of the Spirit from whom our measure is derived. Therefore, He is anointed above us "so that in everything he might have the

supremacy." The way in which Christ was anointed with the Spirit for His threefold office as King, Priest, and Prophet, and how, by virtue of the same indwelling Spirit, we become participants in His office and are also made kings, priests, and prophets to God, is a well-known subject that would require a lengthy discourse to fully address. However, my intention here is to convey the ideas being discussed.

Therefore, I will focus on one passage where the works of the Spirit in this anointing of Christ are listed. These works, to some extent, we also partake in through our measure of the Spirit received from and with Him through this anointing. The passage is Isaiah 11:2-3: "The Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge, and of the fear of the LORD," and so on. This passage enumerates many of the endowments of Christ, resulting from the Spirit with which He was abundantly anointed. Among these, wisdom, counsel, and understanding are emphasized, as all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are said to be found in Him (Colossians 2:3). Although this is only a part of Christ's preparation for His office, when our anointing is mentioned for the same purpose, it specifically relates to the acquisition of such qualifications. In 1 John 2:20 and 27, the work of the anointing is described as teaching us, with the Spirit being a Spirit of wisdom, understanding, counsel, knowledge, and quick understanding in the fear of the Lord. The great promise of the Comforter is that He will "teach us" (John 14:26) and "guide us into all truth" (John 16:13). Therefore, being taught by the Spirit, our Comforter, the mind and will of God is an outstanding aspect of our anointing. I will now briefly mention the threefold teaching by the Spirit:

(1) The Spirit teaches through conviction and illumination. This teaching is directed towards the world, meaning many individuals in it, through the preaching of the Word. This is as the Spirit is promised to do in John 16:8.

(2) The Spirit teaches through sanctification, opening blind eyes, giving a new understanding, illuminating our hearts to comprehend the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, enabling us to perceive spiritual truths in a spiritual light (1 Corinthians 2:13). The Spirit imparts a saving knowledge of the mystery of the Gospel, and this knowledge, to varying degrees, is common to all believers.

(3) The Spirit teaches through consolation, making known to the soul the mind and will of God in the light of the Spirit of sanctification, which brings sweetness, utility, and joy. In this regard, the oil of the Spirit is referred to as the "oil of gladness," bringing joy and gladness. The name of Christ, thus revealed, is like a sweet ointment poured forth that draws souls to run after Him with joy and delight (Song of Solomon 1:3). Through daily experience, we see that many believers have little taste and enjoyment of the truths they know and believe, but when we are taught by this anointing, everything we know about God becomes incredibly sweet. We can observe this in the passage in John that specifically mentions the teaching of this anointing, which primarily concerns the Spirit teaching us about the love of God in Christ, the shining of His countenance. As David says, this puts gladness in our hearts (Psalm 4:6-7).

So, by the Spirit, we are taught the love of God in Christ. Every truth of the Gospel becomes like refined wine to our souls, and its blessings become a feast of rich provisions. We experience joy and gladness in our hearts with all that we know about God. This brings great security to our souls, keeping us steadfast in the truth. The

apostle speaks of our teaching by this anointing as the means by which we are preserved from deception. Indeed, to know a truth in its power, sweetness, joy, and gladness is the surest guarantee of the soul's constancy in embracing and retaining it. Those who find no more delight in truth than in error will readily exchange one for the other. I apologize for the brevity with which I have touched upon these profound aspects of the Gospel. My current intention is merely to enumerate them, not to fully expound upon them. Pursuing a thorough examination of this one work of the Holy Spirit would require a more extensive discussion than I can allocate to the entire subject at hand. All the privileges we enjoy, the dignity and honor bestowed upon us, our complete devotion to God, our nobility and royalty, our participation in all the advantages of the Church and our approach to God in worship, our separation from the world, the name by which we are called, and the liberty we enjoy—all flow from this source, all are branches of this effect of the Holy Spirit. I have only mentioned our teaching by this anointing—a teaching that brings joy and gladness by granting the heart a deep sense of the truth being taught. When we find that the profound truths of the Gospel resonate in our souls with life, vitality, and power, filling us with gladness and transforming us into their likeness—the Holy Spirit is then at work, pouring out His oil.

Additionally, we experience adoption through the Spirit, which is why He is called the "Spirit of adoption." This can either mean that the Spirit is given to adopted individuals to assure them of their adoption, and to implant in their hearts a sense and conviction of the Father's adopting love, or it can refer to the Spirit bestowing the privilege of adoption itself, as implied in John 1:12. This is not contradictory to what we read in Galatians 4:6, as God may send the Spirit of supplication into our hearts because we are sons and also

adopted by His Spirit. However, that discussion is better suited for another occasion.

Furthermore, the Spirit is referred to as the "Spirit of supplication." This aspect of the Spirit is promised in Zechariah 12:10, and its effects are explained in Romans 8:26-27 and Galatians 4:6. This is why we are said to "pray in the Holy Ghost." Our prayers can be understood in two ways:

(1) Firstly, as a spiritual duty required of us by God. The Spirit of sanctification works within us, enabling us to fulfill all our duties by elevating every faculty of the soul to discharge its respective responsibilities in a spiritual manner.

(2) Secondly, as a means of maintaining communion with God, allowing us to pour out our hearts in the bosom of the Father and receive refreshing tastes of His love. The love of God raises the soul like nothing else when, through the Spirit, we intimately commune with Him in the act of prayer. This aspect belongs to the Spirit of consolation, the Spirit promised as our Comforter. This leads us to the next point to consider in our communion with the Holy Spirit—namely, the specific effects He works in us and toward us when bestowed upon us, as previously discussed and emphasized. These effects include bringing the promises of Christ to remembrance, glorifying Him in our hearts, shedding abroad the love of God within us, testifying with us concerning our spiritual condition and standing, sealing us for the day of redemption as the earnest of our inheritance, anointing us with consoling privileges, confirming our adoption, and being present with us in our supplications. The wisdom of faith lies in recognizing and encountering the Comforter in all these aspects, not losing their sweetness by remaining unaware



of their author, nor falling short in offering the appropriate responses they require.

## CHAPTER IV

The general consequences in the hearts of believers of the effects of the Holy Ghost before mentioned—Consolation; its adjuncts, peace, joy—How it is wrought immediately, mediately.

HAVING come this far in exploring the manner of our communion with the Holy Spirit and discussing his most notable and well-known effects, it is now necessary to elucidate the general consequences of these effects in the hearts of believers. Thus, we will have at least mentioned the key aspects of his dispensation and work in the realm of divine grace. However, I will do little more than mention these consequences, as it is not my intention to delve into their nature, but merely to demonstrate their relevance to the matter at hand. The following are the general consequences of the Holy Spirit's work, much like the previously mentioned effects:

1. Consolation is the first of these consequences. Acts 9:31 states, "Then had the churches rest throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied." The Holy Spirit is the Paraclete, the Comforter, and He provides us with comfort and consolation through His work in and towards us. Whenever the Scriptures refer to comfort or consolation granted to the saints, which is quite frequent, it is

the direct result of the Holy Spirit's work on their behalf. Comfort or consolation, in its essence, entails the settling and contentment of the soul amidst or despite troubles, through the consideration or presence of some good that outweighs the evil or perplexity one is contending with. When comfort and consolation are mentioned, it implies a relationship with trouble or perplexity. For example, in 2 Corinthians 1:5-6, the apostle Paul speaks of the abundant consolation that accompanies the sufferings of Christ. Suffering and consolation are presented as opposing forces, with the latter providing relief against the former. Consequently, all promises and expressions of comfort in the Old and New Testaments are presented as remedies for trouble.

All our consolation stems from the effects and acts of the Holy Spirit previously mentioned. There is no comfort apart from them, and there is no trouble from which we cannot find comfort through them. Suppose a person finds themselves in the gravest calamity that could befall a child of God, facing a convergence of all the afflictions listed by Paul in Romans 8:35 and beyond. If that person has the Holy Spirit working in the ways mentioned earlier, their consolations will abound despite all their troubles. Imagine that individual having a keen sense of God's love, a clear witness within themselves that they are accepted and sealed as children of God, an assurance of being heirs to God's promises, and so on. It would be impossible for that person not to triumph in all their tribulations.

The descriptions of consolation found in Scripture arise from its properties and attributes. For instance:

- Consolation is everlasting. It is referred to as "everlasting consolation" in 2 Thessalonians 2:16: "Now our Lord Jesus

Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace." This means it is a comfort that does not fade away because it stems from eternal things—everlasting love, eternal redemption, and an everlasting inheritance.

- Consolation is strong. Hebrews 6:18 speaks of "strong consolation" given to the heirs of the promise. Just as strong opposition and formidable troubles can arise, our consolation is also strong. It abounds and is unconquerable, serving as a reinforcement against all adversity. It strengthens and fortifies the heart, enabling it to joyfully endure whatever it is called to face, for it comes from the One who is mighty.
- Consolation is precious. This is why the apostle exhorts the Philippians in Philippians 2:1, saying, "If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies..." If they hold any esteem or value for the precious mercy of consolation in Christ, then they should live accordingly.

This is the primary consequence in the hearts of believers resulting from the great effects of the Holy Spirit previously mentioned. It encompasses various aspects of our walk with God and is so extensive that the Holy Spirit is often referred to as the Comforter, just as Jesus Christ is called the Redeemer and Savior of His Church due to His work of redemption and salvation. We have no consolation apart from the Holy Spirit, and all His effects towards us undoubtedly have this consequence to a greater or lesser degree. I dare say that anything we possess among the things previously mentioned, which does not bring consolation with it at least in its root, if not in its full fruition, is not of the Holy Spirit. The way in which comfort arises from these works pertains to specific situations. The fellowship we have with the Holy Spirit includes a significant

portion of the consolation we receive from Him. It helps us appreciate His love and directs us on where to seek solace in our distress—to whom we should pray, whom we should wait upon in times of perplexity.

2. Peace is also an outcome of the Holy Spirit's work. Romans 15:13 says, "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost." The power of the Holy Spirit extends not only to hope but also to our peace in believing. Similarly, in John 14:26-27, Jesus promises to give us the Comforter, and with that grant, He says, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you." Christ imparts His peace to us by bestowing the Comforter upon us. The peace of Christ involves a deep sense within the soul of being accepted by God in friendship. Christ is described as "our peace" in Ephesians 2:14, as He reconciles us to God and removes the enmity between us, eradicating the debt of sin. Romans 5:1 states, "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." This peace is rooted in a comforting assurance of our acceptance by God in Christ. It encompasses deliverance from eternal wrath, hatred, curse, and condemnation, and it profoundly impacts the soul and conscience.

This peace is another branch that springs from the same root as the previous consequence—a result of the effects of the Holy Spirit mentioned earlier. Suppose a person is chosen in the eternal love of the Father, redeemed by the blood of the Son, and justified by the grace of God, thereby having a rightful claim to all the promises of the Gospel. However, this person cannot find true and lasting peace through their own reasoning, considerations of the promises themselves, or contemplation of God's love or Christ's grace found in

those promises, until peace is produced within them as a fruit and consequence of the Holy Spirit's work in and towards them. "Peace" is a fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22). The aroma of the Spirit is "life and peace" (Romans 8:6). All that we possess comes from Him and through Him.

3. Joy is also included in this list. As mentioned before, the Holy Spirit is called "the oil of gladness" (Hebrews 1:9). His anointing brings joy, as stated in Isaiah 61:3: "To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning." Romans 14:17 describes the kingdom of God as "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." Believers are said to have received the word "with joy of the Holy Ghost" (1 Thessalonians 1:6), and Peter speaks of believers experiencing "joy unspeakable and full of glory" (1 Peter 1:8). Bringing joy to the hearts of believers is a prominent aspect of the Comforter's work, which He accomplishes through the aforementioned means. The rejoicing in hope of the glory of God mentioned in Romans 5:2, which enables the soul to triumph even in the midst of tribulation, is rooted in the Spirit's "shedding abroad the love of God in our hearts" (Romans 5:5). The Holy Spirit produces joy within believers through two main avenues:

(1) The Holy Spirit directly and immediately infuses joy into the soul without the need for any further considerations, reasonings, deductions, or conclusions. Just as the Holy Spirit is a wellspring of water that springs up within the soul for sanctification, He also directly imparts His refreshing and joyous influence. It is not a result of our introspection on the love of God, but rather it gives rise to such introspection. When the Holy Spirit sheds abroad the love of God in our hearts and fills them with gladness through His immediate and operative act (similar to how John the Baptist leaped

for joy in the womb upon Mary's arrival), the soul is prompted to contemplate the love of God, from which joy and rejoicing flow. This joy is beyond explanation and is often accompanied by indescribable rapture of the mind.

(2) The Holy Spirit mediates joy indirectly through His other works towards us. He grants us a sense of God's love, our adoption and acceptance, and enables us to receive and apprehend them. When we consider the Holy Spirit's operations towards us—how He assures us of God's love, grants us life, power, and security, and provides a pledge of our eternal well-being—it becomes evident that He lays a firm foundation for joy and gladness. Yet, we cannot, by our own rational considerations, deductions, or conclusions drawn from these things, affect our hearts with the intended joy and gladness. It is no less the specific work of the Holy Spirit to produce joy and gladness from these considerations, as well as to produce them directly without such considerations. This process of producing joy in the heart is depicted in Psalm 23:5-6: "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever."

Hope is also among the effects of the Holy Spirit's work in and towards us, as mentioned in Romans 15:13. These are the general consequences of the Holy Spirit's effects on the hearts of believers. If we were to consider their various manifestations, including exultation, assurance, boldness, confidence, expectation, and glorying, it would become evident how deeply our entire communion with God is influenced by them. However, I have only mentioned the main points and will now move on. The next topic should have been the general and specific manner of our communion with the Holy

Spirit, but certain other considerations necessitate their inclusion at this point.

## **CHAPTER V**

Some observations and inferences from discourses foregoing concerning the Spirit—The contempt of the whole administration of the Spirit by some—The vain pretence of the Spirit by others—The false spirit discovered.

Having established the preceding points, I will now immediately show how we engage in the communion proposed with the Holy Spirit through the things that encompass His unique work towards us. However, there are some misinterpretations in the world concerning this dispensation of the Holy Spirit that I cannot ignore. These misinterpretations involve both the contempt of His true work and the pretense of that which is not His. Addressing these issues will be the focus of this chapter.

Let us first consider the state and condition of those who profess to believe in the gospel of Jesus Christ but hold contempt and disdain for His Spirit, including all its operations, gifts, graces, and dispensations to His churches and saints. When Christ was in the world with His disciples, He made no greater promise to them, both for their own benefit and for the advancement of the work entrusted to them, than the promise of giving them the Holy Spirit. He instructed them to pray to the Father for the Holy Spirit, considering it as necessary for them as bread is for children (Luke 11:13). He

assured them that the Holy Spirit would be like a wellspring of water springing up within them for their refreshment, strength, and eternal consolation (John 7:37-39). He also affirmed that the Holy Spirit would continue and fulfill the entire work of the ministry entrusted to them (John 16:8-11), along with all the remarkable works and privileges mentioned earlier. After His ascension, the abundant outpouring of gifts and graces mentioned in Ephesians 4:8, 11, 12 is founded on the fact that Christ had received the promise of the Holy Spirit from the Father (Acts 2:33). This outpouring of the Holy Spirit marks the most glorious distinction between the administration of the new covenant and the old. The entire work of the ministry is closely connected to the Holy Spirit, although that is not my current objective to demonstrate. He calls individuals to this work and sets them apart for it (Acts 13:2), and He equips them with gifts and abilities for the task (1 Corinthians 12:7-10). Therefore, without this administration of the Spirit, the religion we profess is empty, and there can be no fruit of the resurrection of Christ from the dead.

Given this reality, that the Spirit is the principle, life, soul, and everything in our worship of and obedience to God, in our personal consolation, sanctification, and ministerial duties, it is astonishing how Satan's malice and human wickedness have strived to completely exclude the Holy Spirit from all gospel administrations.

Firstly, the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit were not only disparaged but also nearly excluded from public worship by imposing a burdensome form of service for ministers to read. However, reading a prescribed form is neither a special gift of the Holy Spirit nor an essential function of the ministry. It is remarkable to consider the arguments and justifications invented and employed by learned men to defend and maintain this practice, citing its antiquity, composition, approval by martyrs, the beauty of



uniformity in the worship of God, and so on. But their main argument, on which they lavished their eloquence, centered around ridiculing and condemning the supposed babbling and foolishness of praying by the Spirit. Once they attacked this aspect, they believed they had won the argument, and their opponents were rendered utterly ridiculous. Such is the cunning of Satan, and the depths of human folly are unfathomable. In essence, their reasoning boiled down to this: "Although the Lord Jesus Christ promised to be with His church to the end of the world, providing men with the gifts and abilities necessary for the worship He requires and accepts from us, the work is not effectively accomplished. The gifts He bestows are insufficient for the purpose of invocation and doctrine. Therefore, we will not only guide men through our prescribed directions but also exclude them from exercising their own gifts." This, as I can undeniably demonstrate if it were my current task, was the essence of their arguments. The numerous evils that follow from this principle are evident: the formal ordination of men to the ministry who have never experienced the powers of the world to come or received any gifts from the Holy Spirit for that purpose, the promotion and growth of an externally pompous worship that deviates entirely from the power and simplicity of the gospel, and the silencing, destroying, and banishing of men whose ministry is accompanied by the evidence and demonstration of the Spirit. I do not need to elaborate further on these matters. My intention is to highlight the public contempt for the Holy Spirit, His gifts, graces, and their administration in the Church of God, even in places where the gospel has been professed.

Furthermore, it is deeply distressing to reflect on how this attitude of contempt for the Spirit has infiltrated private individuals and their practices. The very name of the Spirit has become a term of reproach. To advocate for or claim to pray by the Spirit was sufficient to subject

a person to mockery and reproach from all quarters, from the pulpit to the stage. "What! You are full of the Spirit? You will pray by the Spirit? You possess that gift? Let us hear your nonsensical babbling," they would say. Yet, these same individuals would consider it an offense not to be regarded as Christians. Christians! However, have not some who claim to be leaders of the flock—having elevated themselves a few levels above their brethren and asserted authority and governance over them—made it their mission to scoff at and reproach the gifts of the Spirit of God? If such was the disposition of these leaders, what could be expected from those steeped in blatant profanity? The extent of blasphemy resulting from this mindset is unimaginable. May the Lord grant that none of this accursed leaven still lingers among us! Occasionally, we hear murmurs of similar disdain. Is this the fellowship of the Holy Spirit that believers are called to? Is this the proper reception of Him whom our Savior promised to send to compensate for His physical absence, ensuring that we are not deprived? Is it not enough that people content themselves with a stupefying blindness, being called Christians, and yet looking no further for comfort and consolation than what moral considerations shared with heathens would provide? One infinitely holy and blessed person of the Trinity has assumed the role of our Comforter, yet they oppose and despise Him as well. This reveals how few there truly are in the world who have a genuine interest in that blessed name by which we are all called. However, this is not the place to delve deeper into this discourse. The purpose of this discussion is to expose the folly and madness of people in general who claim to embrace the gospel of Christ, and yet condemn and despise His Spirit whenever and wherever He is revealed. Let us eagerly desire the gifts of the Spirit, rather than being envious of them.

From what has been discussed, we can also evaluate the spirits that have emerged in the world and have been active since the ascension of Christ. The wickedness of the past and present generations is characterized by their blatant opposition to the Holy Spirit. They have behaved presumptuously, challenging the authority of God who is above them. Satan, as the god of this world, whose desire is to be in a position of power and not remain wholly cast down by the providence of God, has now disguised himself as an angel of light. He will even pretend to be the Spirit. However, there are "deceiving spirits" (1 Timothy 4:1), and we are commanded "not to believe every spirit, but to test the spirits" (1 John 4:1). The reason given for this command is that "many false prophets have gone out into the world." These are individuals who claim to have received new doctrines through the Spirit. Paul hints at their deceit in the early church (2 Thessalonians 2:2), urging people not to be "shaken in mind by a spirit." The truth is that the spirits of these times are so obvious that even someone with discernment can recognize them, yet their deception is strong enough to mislead many. One thing is clear to all—Satan, with his delusions, has taken his previous actions to an extreme.

Not long ago, as I explained, his primary objective was to exalt ordinances without the Spirit, casting aspersions on the Spirit. Now, however, he seeks to exalt a spirit without and against ordinances, subjecting them to reproach and contempt. He no longer desires a ministry with the Spirit but a Spirit without a ministry. Previously, reading the Word without preaching or praying by the Spirit was considered sufficient. Now, the Spirit is deemed enough without any reading or study of the Word at all. Before, a literal acceptance of what Christ had done in the flesh was permitted. Now, there is talk only of Christ in the Spirit, denying that He has come in the flesh—the distinguishing mark of the false spirit warned against in 1 John

4:1. It is certain that the Spirit we are to listen to and embrace is the Spirit promised by Christ. This is so evident that even the Montanists' Paraclete, as well as Mohammed, claimed to be the Spirit, and some in our own time make the same claim. Let us briefly evaluate them based on some of the mentioned effects that Christ promised the Holy Spirit would bring:

The first general effect, as previously noted, is that the Spirit would bring to remembrance the things that Christ spoke for our guidance and consolation. This was the work of the Holy Spirit towards the apostles, who were to be the writers of Scripture. This is also the ongoing work of the Spirit towards believers until the end of the world. The things that Christ spoke and did are written down so that we may believe and have life through His name (John 20:31). They are written in the Scriptures. Therefore, the work of the promised Spirit is to bring to our remembrance and grant us understanding of the words of Christ in the Scriptures for our guidance and consolation. Is this the work of the spirit that is prevalent in the world and leads many astray? Not at all. Its purpose is to denounce the things that Christ spoke and are written in the Word. It claims to receive new revelations of its own and directs people away from the written Word, where the entire work of God and all the promises of Christ are recorded.

Furthermore, the work of the Spirit promised by Christ is to glorify Him. Jesus said, "He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you" (John 16:14). The Spirit's task is to make Christ glorious, honorable, and highly esteemed in the hearts of believers by revealing His love, kindness, grace, and redemptive work to them. This is the work of the Spirit. However, the spirit that is prevalent seeks to glorify itself and belittles and discredits Christ, who entered on our behalf. It does so under the guise of a Christ within, which it

disregards and despises openly. Its sole aim is its own glory and honor, completely distorting the divine order of things. The Father's love is the source of all existence, and the Son came to glorify the Father. Jesus Himself said, "I do not seek my own glory, but the glory of him who sent me." After completing the work of redemption, the Son was to be glorified with the Father. He prayed for this, saying, "Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son" (John 17:1), with the glory they shared before the world existed, when their joint purpose was to carry out the Father's love. Therefore, the Holy Spirit is sent, and His work is to glorify the Son. However, as I mentioned, we now have a spirit that has emerged, whose entire focus is on glorifying itself. From this, we can easily discern its origin.

Furthermore, the Holy Spirit pours out the love of God into our hearts, as previously mentioned, and fills them with joy, peace, and hope. He brings quietness and refreshment to those in whom He dwells, granting them freedom, rest, confidence, and the boldness of children. On the other hand, the spirit that people now boast about is a spirit of bondage. Its main purpose is to make individuals quake and tremble, plunging them into a state of un-sonlike fear and driving them with horror and enslavement. It drains their very life force and causes their whole being to wither away. There is hardly anything that more clearly reveals that the spirit by which some are now driven is not the Comforter promised by Christ than this: it is a spirit of bondage and slavery within them and a spirit of cruelty and reproach towards others. It stands in direct opposition to the Holy Spirit in believers and to all the purposes for which the Spirit of adoption and consolation is given to them.

To provide one more example: the Holy Spirit bestowed upon believers is a Spirit of prayer and supplication, as was demonstrated. On the contrary, the spirit with which we are dealing pretends to

elevate people above such humble and seemingly insignificant means of communing with God. In short, it would be very easy to go through all the remarkable effects of the Holy Spirit in and towards believers and demonstrate that the so-called spirit of our time directly opposes and contradicts each one of them. Satan has transitioned from one extreme to another—from a bitter and miserable opposition to the Spirit of Christ to a cursed pretense of possessing the Spirit—yet always with the same ultimate goal and purpose.

I could provide several more instances of the contempt or misuse of the dispensation of the Spirit. The ones mentioned above represent the extremes to which all others can be attributed or classified. I will not deviate further from the matter at hand, which is directly aligned with my purpose.

## **CHAPTER VI**

Of particular communion with the Holy Ghost—Of preparation thereunto—Valuation of the benefits we receive by him—What it is he comforts, us in and against; wherewith; how.

Now that the way has been made clear, I will proceed to explain how we have particular communion with the Holy Spirit, as promised by Christ to be our comforter, and how He works out our consolation through the means previously discussed. The first thing I will do is present something that may serve as preparation for the duty at hand, by leading the souls of believers to a proper appreciation of

this work of the Holy Spirit towards us, for which He is called our Comforter.

To elevate our hearts to this mindset and prepare us for the intended duty, let us consider these three things:

FIRST, What the Holy Spirit comforts us against. SECONDLY, With what He comforts us. THIRDLY, The underlying principle behind all His actions and operations in us for our consolation.

FIRST. There are only three things throughout our journey that require the consolations of the Holy Spirit:

1. Afflictions. Affliction is part of God's provision for His children in His household (Hebrews 12:5-6). The various causes, means, uses, and effects of affliction are generally known. Each person has a designated measure of affliction. To be completely without afflictions is a temptation and, to some extent, an affliction in itself. What I am about to address is the fact that we need the consolations of the Holy Spirit in all our afflictions. It is in the nature of humans to seek relief when they are entangled, employing every possible means. People handle their troubles differently depending on their natural disposition. "The spirit of a man will bear his infirmity," or at least, he will struggle with it.

Under afflictions, there are two great evils that typically befall people, preventing them from managing their situations properly. The apostle mentions both of them in Hebrews 12:5: "Do not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him." Individuals usually fall into one of these two extremes: either they despise the correction of the Lord or they succumb to it.

(1.) Some despise it. They consider what befalls them to be a trivial or common occurrence, failing to recognize God's hand in it. They shift the blame onto instruments and secondary causes, defending and justifying themselves without much regard for God or His involvement in their affliction. The reason for this is that they seek help in their troubles from sources with which God will not mix His grace. They rely on remedies other than those appointed by God, thus missing out on all the benefits and advantages their affliction could bring. And anyone who seeks relief from anything other than the consolations of the Holy Spirit will find themselves in the same predicament.

(2.) Others become discouraged and overwhelmed by their trials and afflictions, which the apostle further admonishes in verse 12. The former group despises the assistance of the Holy Spirit due to pride, while the latter rejects it due to despondency, sinking under the weight of their troubles. There is hardly anyone who does not stumble in one of these two directions. If we had not learned to belittle the chastisements of the Lord and to disregard His dealings with us, we would find that our afflictions make up a significant portion of our journey.

Properly managing our souls under any affliction, so that God may be glorified and we may receive spiritual benefits and growth from it, can only be achieved through the consolations of the Holy Spirit. When Jesus forewarned His disciples of the great trials and tribulations they would face, all He promised them was, "I will send you the Spirit, the Comforter; He will give you peace in Me, even in the midst of trouble in the world. He will guide, direct, and preserve you through all your trials." And the apostle tells us that this is indeed what happened (2 Corinthians 1:4-6). Even in the face of the greatest afflictions, the Holy Spirit can lead the soul to the highest



levels of joy, peace, rest, and contentment. As the same apostle declares, "We boast in tribulations" (Romans 5:3). It is a significant statement. He had previously stated, "We rejoice in hope of the glory of God" (verse 2). But what if we encounter manifold afflictions and tribulations? Well, even in those circumstances, we glory, he says; "we glory in our tribulations." And why is it that our spirits are so uplifted in a manner that we can glorify the Lord in the midst of afflictions? He tells us in verse 5 that it is because "the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit." Thus, believers are said to "receive the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit" (1 Thessalonians 1:6), and to "joyfully accept the plundering of their goods." This is the point I aim to make: there can be no proper management or improvement of any affliction except through the consolations of the Holy Spirit. If you value not losing all the trials, temptations, and afflictions you face, then learn to value that which alone makes them useful.

2. Sin is the second burden we bear in our lives, and it is by far the greatest. It is to this burden that these consolations are particularly suited. In Hebrews 6:17-18, an analogy is drawn from the manslayer under the law who, having unintentionally killed someone and brought guilt upon himself, would flee with haste to the city of refuge for deliverance. Our great and only refuge from the guilt of sin is the Lord Jesus Christ, and it is in fleeing to Him that the Spirit administers consolation to us. A sense of sin fills the heart with troubles and unrest, but it is the Holy Spirit who grants us peace in Christ. The Spirit provides an apprehension of wrath, while at the same time shedding abroad the love of God in our hearts. When Satan and the law accuse us, labeling us as objects of God's hatred, it is the Spirit who bears witness with our spirits that we are children of God. Sin employs various instruments or strategies to disturb our peace, but the

Holy Spirit counters each one with an appropriate effect to overthrow them.

3. The consolations of the Holy Spirit are also necessary throughout our entire journey of obedience, so that we may persevere cheerfully, willingly, and patiently until the end. I will delve into this matter more thoroughly, specifying particular instructions for our communion with this blessed Comforter, at a later point. In summary, we need His consolations in every aspect of this life and in our anticipation of the next. Without them, we would either despise afflictions or falter under their weight, neglecting God's intended purpose in allowing them. Without His consolations, sin would either harden us, leading to contempt for it, or cast us down, causing us to overlook the remedies graciously provided to combat it. Without His consolations, our duties would either inflate us with pride or leave us devoid of the sweetness found in new obedience. Without His consolations, prosperity would make us worldly, sensual, and content solely with earthly things, rendering us utterly unprepared for the trials of adversity. Without His consolations, the comforts of our relationships would distance us from God, and the loss of those relationships would leave our hearts as desolate as Nabal's. Without His consolations, the calamities of the Church would overwhelm us, and the prosperity of the Church would not stir us. Without His consolations, we would lack wisdom for every task, peace in every circumstance, strength for every duty, success in every trial, joy in every state, comfort in life, and light in death.

Now, our afflictions, sins, and obedience, along with their respective consequences, are the major aspects of our lives. Our relationship with God is intertwined with them, and the proper management of

these matters, along with their opposites, falls under the same rule. Throughout all of these, the Holy Spirit provides a continuous stream of consolation that leads us to a joyful outcome. It is truly a sad state for poor souls who lack these consolations. They are forced to resort to feeble measures and find themselves battling formidable foes in their own strength. Regardless of whether they are conquered or seem to conquer, they are left with nothing but the misery of their trials.

The SECOND aspect to consider, in order to truly appreciate the consolations of the Holy Spirit, is the content of these consolations—the very things that bring us comfort. This can be linked to the two themes I discussed earlier: the love of the Father and the grace of the Son. All the consolations of the Holy Spirit revolve around acquainting us with and imparting to us the love of the Father and the grace of the Son. There is nothing in either the love of the Father or the grace of the Son that the Holy Spirit does not make a source of comfort for us. Thus, we have communion with the Father through His love, and with the Son through His grace, by the operation of the Holy Spirit.

1. The Holy Spirit imparts and acquaints us with the love of the Father. After providing His disciples with the foundation of their consolation that they would receive through the Comforter, our blessed Savior (John 16:27) encapsulates it all by stating, "The Father himself loves you." This is precisely what the Comforter is given to acquaint us with—that God is our Father and that He loves us. More specifically, the Comforter reveals that the Father, the first person of the Trinity, loves us individually. For this reason, the Comforter is repeatedly said to come forth from the Father, as He comes to make known the Father's love and to comfort and establish the hearts of believers. By convincing us

of the eternal and unchanging love of the Father, the Holy Spirit fills us with consolation. In fact, all the aforementioned effects of the Holy Spirit are directed towards this end. You have already heard a thorough explanation of this love and its surpassing excellence. Whatever is desirable in this love is communicated to us by the Holy Spirit. A sense of this love not only relieves us but also enables us to rejoice with indescribable and glorious joy in every situation. It is not an abundance of material possessions, such as corn, wine, or oil, that brings comfort to our souls, but rather the shining of God's countenance upon us (Psalm 4:6-7). A soul that is indwelt by the Holy Spirit may declare, "The world may hate me, but my Father loves me. People may despise me as a hypocrite, but my Father loves me as a child. I may be poor in this world, but I have a rich inheritance in my Father's love. I may feel constricted in all things, but my Father's house has an abundance of bread. I may mourn secretly under the power of my lusts and sin, where no eyes can see me, but my Father sees me and is full of compassion. With a sense of His kindness, which is better than life itself, I rejoice in tribulation, I glory in affliction, and I triumph as a conqueror. Though I may be slain all day long, all my sorrows have limits that can be fathomed. The breadth, depth, and height of my Father's love—who can fully express it?" I could further demonstrate the glorious way in which the Spirit comforts us through the love of the Father by comparing it to all other causes and means of joy and consolation, revealing their emptiness in contrast to its fullness and their insignificance in contrast to its totality. I could also expound upon the previously mentioned attributes of this love.

2. Furthermore, the Holy Spirit comforts us by imparting to us and acquainting us with the grace of Christ—the fruits of His redemptive work and the attractiveness of His person, in which

we have a personal stake. As I extensively discussed before, the grace of Christ can be categorized under two headings: the grace of His person and the grace of His office and work. The Holy Spirit administers consolation to us through both of these aspects (John 16:14). He glorifies Christ by revealing His excellencies and desirability to believers—as the "chief of ten thousand" and the one who is "altogether lovely." Additionally, the Spirit shows us the things of Christ—His love, grace, and all the fruits of His death, suffering, resurrection, and intercession—and supports our hearts and souls with them. Thus, every aspect of refreshment that comes from the forgiveness of sins, deliverance from the curse and wrath to come, justification, adoption, and the countless privileges that accompany them, as well as the hope of glory given to us, all fall within this realm.

THIRDLY. Now let us turn our attention to the main principle and source of all the Holy Spirit's actions for our consolation. This brings us closer to the intended communion. His own great love and boundless condescension serve as the driving force. He willingly proceeds and comes forth from the Father to be our comforter. Despite knowing our flaws, weaknesses, and how we would grieve, provoke, and reject Him, He still chooses to be our comforter. Failure to fully consider this great love of the Holy Spirit weakens the foundations of our obedience. If we truly grasped this and held it in our hearts, we would value and appreciate all His works and interactions with us. Indeed, nothing is truly valuable unless it originates from love and goodwill. This is the approach the Scriptures take to elevate our hearts and grant us a proper estimation of our redemption through Jesus Christ. It informs us that He did it freely, that He willingly laid down His life, that it was an act of love. "In this, the love of God was manifested, that He laid down His life for us." "He loved us and gave Himself for us." "He loved us and

cleansed us from our sins with His own blood." Can we not also derive a valuation of the dispensation of the Spirit for our consolation from this? He proceeds from the Father for that very purpose. He distributes and works according to His own will. And what are we, the recipients of this work? We are stubborn, perverse, ungrateful, constantly causing Him grief, vexation, and provocation. Yet, He continues to shower us with His love and tenderness. Let us, by faith, contemplate this love of the Holy Spirit. It is the foundation and origin of all the communion we have with Him in this life. This discussion serves only to prepare our hearts for the proposed communion, and it barely scratches the surface of what could be said! These considerations could be further amplified, and countless more could be added. However, it is enough to show that the task at hand is one of the greatest duties and most extraordinary privileges of the gospel.

## **CHAPTER VII**

The general ways of the saints' acting in communion with the Holy  
Ghost

As we have discussed the general aspects of the Holy Spirit's actions within us, we shall now address the return of our souls to Him. First, I will present the general actings of faith in relation to the work of the Holy Spirit, followed by specific details. There are three general ways in which the soul behaves in this communion, expressed negatively in Scripture but encompassing positive duties. These are: First, not

to grieve Him. Second, not to quench His motions. Third, not to resist Him.

There are three aspects to consider regarding the Holy Spirit: 1. His person, as indwelling in us. 2. His workings through grace, or His motions. 3. His operation in the ordinances of the Word and the sacraments—all serving the same purpose.

The three cautions mentioned earlier are suited to these three aspects: 1. Not to grieve Him in relation to His indwelling person. 2. Not to quench Him in relation to His workings and motions of grace. 3. Not to resist Him in relation to the ordinances of Christ and His gifts for their administration. Since the entire general duty of believers in their communion with the Holy Spirit can be encompassed in these three things, I shall address them individually:

1. The first caution pertains directly to His person, dwelling within us. It is given in Ephesians 4:30: "And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God." There is a complaint in Isaiah 63:10 about those who vexed or grieved the Spirit of God, which seems to have inspired this caution. It is evident that the Holy Spirit's person is the intended focus here: (1.) This is clear from the phrase used, "That Holy Spirit," which is preceded by a double article, Τὸ Πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον. (2.) It is also evident from the assigned work mentioned in the following words, that of "sealing to the day of redemption," which, as we have discussed, is the work of the Holy Spirit. While this could be understood as the Spirit in others or in ourselves, it is clear that the apostle is referring to the latter by including the significant and outstanding privilege we personally experience through Him: He seals us to the day of redemption.

Now, let us consider the significance of this expression, as it encompasses the first general rule of our communion with the Holy Spirit: "Grieve not the Spirit." The term "grieving" or causing sorrow can be viewed from an active perspective, in terms of the individuals causing the grief, or from a passive perspective, in terms of the person experiencing grief. In the latter sense, the expression is metaphorical. The Spirit cannot be grieved or affected by sorrow, as that would imply change, disappointment, and weakness—all incompatible with His infinite perfections. However, individuals can actively engage in actions that are fitting and capable of causing grief to someone who cares for them, just as the Holy Spirit does. If He is not grieved, it is not due to our efforts, but rather to His unchangeable nature. Therefore, this expression signifies two things:

First, it highlights that the Holy Spirit is inclined towards us with love, care, tenderness, and a genuine concern for our well-being. Therefore, when we err, He is said to be grieved, similar to how a good friend with a kind and loving nature would react to the mistakes of someone they care about. This is the primary aspect to consider in this caution—the foundation of it—the love, kindness, and tenderness of the Holy Spirit towards us. Therefore, the instruction is to "Grieve Him not."

Second, we are capable of performing actions that would cause Him grief, even if He is not passively affected by it. In doing so, we commit sin, which is no less significant than if He were to experience grief as we do. The apostle explains how this is done in the context of his discourse (verses 21-24). He encourages progression in sanctification and all the fruits of regeneration (verses 25-29). He warns against various specific evils that oppose these goals and provides a general motivation for pursuing both holiness and the avoidance of grieving the Holy Spirit. This occurs by falling short of



the universal sanctification that our incorporation into Christ requires. The positive duty implied in this caution, to not grieve the Holy Spirit, is to earnestly pursue universal holiness out of consideration and acknowledgment of the Holy Spirit's love, kindness, and tenderness. This serves as the foundation of our communion with Him in general. When the soul contemplates the love, kindness, and tenderness of the Holy Spirit towards us, and when it reflects upon all the manifestations of His love and goodwill, it will abstain from evil and walk in the path of holiness. This is true communion with Him. Considering that the Holy Spirit, our comforter, finds delight in our obedience and is saddened by our wrongdoings, becomes a continual motive and reason for us to walk closely with God in all holiness. This reflection, I assert, is the first general way in which we commune with Him.

Let us now focus on this matter. We lose both the power and joy of our obedience due to a lack of consideration. We should recognize why the Holy Spirit undertakes to be our comforter and how He fulfills that role. It is unworthy of us to grieve Him, for He comes to provide us with consolation. In the entire course of our obedience, let our souls exercise faith by reflecting on this truth and giving it due weight. We should say to ourselves, "The Holy Spirit, in His infinite love and kindness towards me, has condescended to be my comforter willingly, freely, and powerfully. Consider what I have received from Him! In the multitude of my perplexities, He has refreshed my soul. Can I live a single day without His consolations? And shall I be careless in the matter that concerns Him? Shall I grieve Him through negligence, sin, and folly? Should not His love compel me to walk before Him in all that pleases Him?" This is how we have general fellowship with Him.

2. The second caution is found in 1 Thessalonians 5:19: "Quench not the Spirit." Various interpretations exist for these words. Some say it refers to "the Spirit in others," meaning their spiritual gifts. However, this aligns with what follows in verse 20, "Despise not prophesyings." Others suggest it refers to "the light that God has set up in our hearts." Yet, where is it explicitly referred to as  $\tau\omicron\ \Pi\nu\epsilon\tilde{\upsilon}\mu\alpha$ , "the Spirit"? It is evident that the Holy Spirit Himself is intended here, not in terms of His person (in which case He is said to be grieved, which is a personal affection), but in terms of His motions, actions, and operations. The Holy Spirit is symbolized by the perpetual fire on the altar and is also referred to as a "Spirit of burning." The reasons behind this allusion are multifaceted, but we will not delve into them now. Opposition to fire occurs through quenching. Hence, the opposition to the actions of the Holy Spirit is termed "quenching the Spirit," just as wet wood would do when thrown into a fire. Therefore, we are said, using the same metaphor, to "stir up with new fire" the gifts within us. The Holy Spirit strives with us, acts within us, and moves us in various ways to grow in grace and produce fruit befitting the principle He has endowed us with. The apostle cautions us to be careful lest, through the power of our lusts and temptations, we neglect to pay attention to His workings and hinder Him in His goodwill towards us—to the extent that lies within our ability.

This, then, is the second general rule for our communion with the Holy Spirit. It pertains to His gracious operations within us and through us. The Holy Spirit is said to act, exert His power, and manifest Himself in several ways. This includes moving upon and stirring up the grace we have received, supplying us with new grace from Jesus Christ, and prompting good thoughts within us either directly or indirectly. All of these contribute to our advancement in

obedience and our walk with God. We should diligently observe and take note of all these workings, considering their source and the purpose they lead us towards. In doing so, we have communion with the Holy Spirit when we can view Him by faith as the immediate source of all supplies, assistance, and relief we receive through grace. He is the author of all virtuous actions, upward impulses, and motions in our hearts. He contends and strives against sin. When we consider all these actions and workings and recognize how they tend towards our consolation, we become vigilant and eager to utilize them all for the intended purpose, knowing that they come from a loving, kind, and tender Spirit. This is communion with Him.

3. The third caution pertains to Him and His work in the administration of the great ordinance of the Word. Stephen accuses the Jews in Acts 7:51 of "resisting the Holy Ghost." How did they do this? They did it in the same manner as their forefathers: "As your fathers did, so do ye." Their forefathers resisted the Holy Spirit by persecuting and killing the prophets. Their opposition to the prophets who preached the gospel or foretold the coming of the Righteous One constituted resistance against the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is said to be resisted when the preaching of the Word is disregarded because the gift of preaching comes from Him. "The manifestation of the Spirit is given to profit." Hence, when Jesus promises the Spirit to His disciples for convicting the world, He tells them that He will give them a mouth and wisdom which their adversaries will not be able to refute (Luke 21:15). Regarding the fulfillment of this promise in the case of Stephen, it is stated that his opponents "were not able to resist the Spirit by which he spoke" (Acts 6:10). When the Holy Spirit establishes a ministry in the Church, selects individuals for it, and equips them with gifts and abilities to dispense the Word, the disobedience and opposition to that

Word constitute resistance against the Holy Spirit. We are warned against such behavior through the examples of others. This encompasses the third general rule of our communion with the Holy Spirit: In the administration of the gospel, we are to acknowledge and focus on the authority, wisdom, and goodness of the Holy Spirit in granting men gifts for this purpose. We should recognize His presence with them and submit to His virtue. Thus, our obedience to the Word in its ministerial dispensation is based on this ground—that the Holy Spirit alone provides the necessary gifts. When this consideration humbles us before the Word, we have communion with the Holy Spirit in that ordinance. However, this has already been extensively discussed.

## **CHAPTER VIII**

### **Particular directions for communion with the Holy Ghost**

Before I provide specific directions for our communion with the Holy Spirit, I must present some cautions regarding His worship.

First, the reason and cause of all worship lies in the divine nature. It is impossible to worship any one person without worshipping the entire Trinity. The schoolmen have rightly argued that the formal reason and object of divine worship resides in the persons precisely considered. This pertains to their relationship to one another within the divine nature and essence. Praying to the Trinity by repetitively addressing the same petition to each person (as in the Litany) is

groundless and possibly impious. It assumes that one person is worshipped to the exclusion of another, when in reality, each person is worshipped as God—they are all God. It is as if we were to first desire something from the Father, and if heard and granted by Him, then ask the same thing from the Son, and so on with the Holy Spirit. It suggests that we engage in three separate acts of worship for the same thing, expecting to be heard and granted the same thing three times, but the works of the Trinity, *ad extra*, are indivisible.

The proper and specific object of divine worship and invocation is the essence of God in its infinite excellence, dignity, majesty, and causal power as the supreme first cause of all things. This is common to all three persons and is proper to each of them. It is not the formal reason of worship based on their personhood, but rather their divine nature that is blessed forever. All adoration is directed towards that which is common to all three persons, so in each act of adoration and worship, all three persons are adored and worshipped. Creatures worship their Creator, and human beings worship the One in whose image they were created—namely, the One from whom every good and perfect gift descends. This describes God as God.

Secondly, when we commence our prayers to God the Father and conclude them in the name of Jesus Christ, the Son is no less invoked and worshipped at the beginning than the Father, even though He is specifically mentioned as the mediator in the closing of the prayer. However, He is invoked in the Father's invocation because all three persons are God, and we invoke the Father as God, recognizing that each person is God.

Thirdly, the heavenly instruction provided in Ephesians 2:18 clarifies this matter. Our access in worship is stated to be "to the Father," which is achieved "through Christ" and "by the Spirit." This

distinguishes the persons in terms of their operations but not in terms of their object of worship. The Son and the Holy Spirit are no less worshipped in our approach to God than the Father Himself. However, it is the grace of the Father, obtained through the mediation of the Son and the assistance of the Spirit, for which we draw near to God. Therefore, when we are led to worship (that is, to exercise faith and invoke) any person through the distinct dispensation of the Trinity, we thereby worship the entire Trinity. Regardless of whether we invoke the Father, Son, or Holy Spirit, we worship the whole Godhead. Thus, this must be observed throughout this entire matter: when any work of the Holy Spirit (or any other person) that is specifically attributed to Him draws us to worship Him, we do not exclude the involvement of other persons. While the work directs us to Him, we worship the whole Godhead.

Fourthly, with these cautions in mind, I affirm that we are to worship the Holy Spirit distinctly. Just as faith encompasses belief in the Father and the Son, as Jesus stated in John 14:1, "Believe in God; believe also in me," it equally extends to the Holy Spirit. Christ called His disciples to exercise faith in Him as He was about to accomplish His great work of mediation, and now, as the Holy Spirit carries on the work of His delegation, the same is required. This is reinforced by the mention of their distinct operations: "My Father is working until now, and I am working." The formal reason for worshipping the Son is not His mediation but His being God (although His mediation serves as a powerful motive for worship). Similarly, the formal reason for worshipping the Holy Spirit is not solely His role as our comforter, but rather His being God. However, His role as our comforter serves as a powerful motive for worship.

In summary, the first direction is as follows: the grace, actions, love, and effects of the Holy Spirit as our comforter should stir us up and

motivate us to love, worship, believe in, and invoke Him. However, all of this, directed towards Him as God, is equally directed towards the other persons of the Trinity. It is through the fruits of His love towards us that we are spurred on to worship Him.

With these points established, let the saints learn to exercise faith specifically in the Holy Spirit as the immediate efficient cause of all the mentioned blessings. By faith, I mean that they should believe in Him, believe His words in all matters, and obey Him. This faith should not be based on imagination but on belief. The distinction of persons in the Trinity is not something to be imagined but to be believed. Therefore, when the Scriptures fully, frequently, clearly, and distinctly attribute the mentioned blessings to the immediate efficacy of the Holy Spirit, faith embraces Him in the revealed truth and particularly regards Him. In faith, we worship Him, serve Him, wait for Him, pray to Him, and praise Him. All these things are done by the saints in faith. The person of the Holy Spirit, who reveals Himself through these operations and effects, is the specific object of our worship. Hence, when He ought to be specially honored but is not, He is being peculiarly sinned against. In Acts 5:3, Ananias is said to have lied to the Holy Spirit, not to God. Although the term "God" essentially denotes the whole Trinity, in this context, it specifically refers to the Holy Spirit. Ananias was supposed to honor the Holy Spirit specifically in the special gift that he professed to possess. By failing to do so, he sinned specifically against Him. However, this must be further elaborated upon in more detail.

Therefore, let us give due consideration to every effect of the Holy Spirit in any of the aforementioned aspects, recognizing that they are acts of His love and power towards us. Faith, which takes note of His kindness in all things, accomplishes this. Often, He performs the role of a comforter towards us in various ways, yet we fail to find

complete comfort because we pay no attention to what He does. This, in turn, grieves Him. Among those who do receive and acknowledge the consolation He offers and administers, how few truly consider Him as the Comforter and rejoice in Him as they should! In response to every work of consolation that believers experience, their faith should resolve, "This is from the Holy Spirit. He is the Comforter, the God of all consolation. I know that there is no joy, peace, hope, or comfort except that which He works, gives, and bestows. He willingly condescends to the office of a comforter out of love, and for this reason, He continues in it. Moreover, He is sent by the Father and the Son for this purpose. Through Him, I partake in my joy—it is in the Holy Spirit. I receive consolation, and He is the Comforter. How can I adequately value His love? How shall I appreciate the mercy I have received!"

This, I must say, applies to every specific work of the Holy Spirit towards us. In this, we have communion and fellowship with Him, as I partially revealed when discussing the specific aspects. Does He pour out the love of God in our hearts? Does He bear witness to our adoption? The soul considers His presence, reflects on His love, condescension, goodness, and kindness; it is filled with reverence for Him and takes care not to grieve Him, striving to keep His temple, His dwelling place, pure and holy.

Furthermore, our communion with Him leads us to offer returning praise, thanks, honour, glory, and blessing to Him for the mercies and privileges we receive from Him, which are numerous. This is where our next direction lies. Just as we do with the Son of God in light of our redemption, as in Revelation 1:5-6: "To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever." Shouldn't similar praises and blessings be due to the One



who makes the work of redemption effective for us? The One who undertook our consolation with no less infinite love than the Son undertook our redemption. When our hearts are filled with joy, supported in peace, and established in obedience, let us ascribe to Him the praise that He deserves, bless His name, and rejoice in Him.

Offering thanksgiving to the Holy Spirit, glorifying Him for His consolations, is a significant part of our communion with Him. Considering His voluntary engagement in this work, His coming forth from the Father for this purpose, His mission by the Son, and His love and kindness, the soul of a believer pours out grateful praises to Him and is deeply moved by this duty. There is no duty that leaves a more heavenly impression on the soul than this.

Additionally, our communion with Him is expressed in our prayers to Him, as we seek the continuation of the work of our consolation that He has undertaken. John prays for grace and peace from the seven Spirits before the throne, which refers to the Holy Spirit whose operations are perfect and complete. This aspect of worship is frequently mentioned in Scripture, and all other aspects of worship naturally accompany it. Let the saints consider the great need they have for the aforementioned effects of the Holy Spirit, along with many others that could be mentioned. Let them weigh all the privileges they partake in, remembering that He distributes them according to His will and has sovereign control over them. This will prepare them for this duty.

The manner and sense in which this duty is to be performed have already been explained. The formal reason for this worship and its ultimate object have also been revealed. No small measure of the life, efficacy, and vitality of faith is put forth in this duty. If we fail to meet God with His worship in every way He is pleased to communicate

Himself to us, we fall short of the expansiveness of spirit required to walk in His ways. In these matters, He reveals Himself in the person of the Holy Spirit. It is through our prayers and supplications that we encounter Him, His love, grace, and authority.

Furthermore, consider Him as He condescends to this delegation by the Father and the Son to be our comforter, and daily ask Him of the Father in the name of Jesus Christ. This is the daily practice of believers. They look upon Him and, by faith, consider the Holy Spirit as promised to be sent. They know that all their grace, peace, mercy, joy, and hope lie in this promise. For it is through Him, the promised Spirit, and Him alone that these things are communicated to them. Therefore, if our life unto God or the joy of that life is of significance, we are to abound in this practice—asking Him of the Father, just as children daily ask their parents for bread. And as we ask for and receive the Holy Spirit, we have communion with the Father in His love (from whom the Spirit is sent) and with the Son in His grace (through which the Spirit is obtained for us), as well as with the Spirit Himself on account of His voluntary condescension to this dispensation. Every request for the Holy Spirit implies our embrace of all these realities. Oh, the richness of God's grace!

Humbling ourselves for our failures in relation to Him is another part of our communion with Him. We are to mourn if we have grieved Him in His person, quenched His grace, or resisted Him in His ordinances, as has been explained. Let our souls humble themselves before Him for these reasons. This reflection on our failures is a significant element of godly sorrow and is fitting to affect our hearts with humility and indignation against sin, perhaps more so than any other consideration. I could continue with similar reflections and apply them to the specific effects of the Holy Spirit

listed, but my intention is merely to outline the main points and leave their application to others.

I shall conclude this entire discourse with some reflections on the sad state and condition of those who are not partakers of this promise of the Spirit and do not experience His consolation:

1. They have no true consolation or comfort, regardless of their circumstances and condition. Are they in affliction or trouble? They must bear the burden themselves, and it becomes evident how inadequate they are when God's hand weighs heavily upon them. People may appear resolute and put on a brave face to contend with their troubles, but when this courage is solely derived from human spirit— (1.) It is usually just a façade. It is done for the sake of others, so as not to appear dispirited or dejected. Their hearts are consumed and devoured by troubles and mental anxieties. Their thoughts are perplexed, and though they strive constantly, they never achieve victory. Every new trouble, every slight change in their trials, leads to fresh vexation. It is an unsubstantiated resolution that sustains them, and they are easily shaken. (2.) What value does their best resolve and endurance hold? It is nothing more than contending with God, who has entangled them—like a flea struggling beneath a mountain. Even if, on account of external considerations and principles, they strive for patience and endurance, it is still a contest with God—a futile effort to remain calm under that which God has sent to disturb them. God does not afflict people without the Spirit to test their patience, but to disturb their peace and security. All their attempts to arm themselves with patience and resolution are futile attempts to hold on to what God will cast them out of or to bring them closer to ruin. This is the extent of their consolation in times of trouble.

(3.) If they do expect any care from God or find relief in it—which they often do, for various reasons, especially when driven from other sources of comfort—all their relief is akin to the dream of a hungry person who believes they are eating and drinking, feeling refreshed. But upon awakening, they find themselves empty and disappointed. Similarly, they will find that all the relief and support they expected to receive from God, and all the security they seemed to have from Him, were illusions. When they awaken on the day of judgment and see everything clearly, they will realize that God was their enemy, laughing at their calamity and mocking them in their fear.

This is their experience in times of trouble. Is it any better for them in times of prosperity? True, their prosperity is often great and may be wonderfully described in Scripture, especially in terms of their lives and peaceful, tranquil ends. But do they truly experience consolation throughout their days? They eat, drink, sleep, make merry, and perhaps accumulate wealth, but how little do these things distinguish them from perishing beasts! It is well-known that Solomon, surpassing all the sons of men of our generation in terms of experiencing and understanding the utmost of these things, acknowledged this fact. His account of them is familiar: "Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher, vanity of vanities! All is vanity" (Ecclesiastes 1:2). This is their consolation: crackling thorns under a pot, a momentary flash and blaze that quickly perishes. Therefore, both adversity and prosperity bring about their destruction, and whether they are laughing or crying, they are still dying.

2. They have no peace—no peace with God or within their own souls. I understand that many of them manage to maintain a semblance of tranquillity based on false foundations, grounds, and expectations. However, that is their state. True and lasting

peace, being an effect of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of believers (as previously explained), is not present in those who do not partake in Him. They may cry out "Peace, peace," even when sudden destruction is imminent. The principles of their peace (as can be easily demonstrated) include darkness or ignorance, a deceitful conscience, self-righteousness, and vain hope. All their principles of peace can be traced back to these sources, and what will they avail them on the day when the Lord deals with them?

3. I could make the same observation about their joy and hope—they are false and fleeting. Let those who have satisfied themselves with a belief in their interest in the blessings of the gospel, yet have scorned the Spirit of Christ, consider this. I am aware that many may pretend to have Him, yet remain strangers to His grace. But if those who treat Him kindly and honour Him in profession perish unless He dwells in them with power, then what fate awaits those who oppose and insult Him? Scripture tells us that if the Spirit of Christ is not in us, we are dead, we are reprobates—we do not belong to Christ. Without Him, you cannot experience any of the glorious effects mentioned earlier that He bestows upon believers. Yet, instead of earnestly examining whether He dwells within you, you are ready to mock those in whom He does reside. Are there none among those who profess the gospel who have never sincerely questioned whether they have partaken of the Holy Spirit? You, who find such inquiries laughable and regard anyone speaking of the Spirit as empty pretenders, may the Lord awaken you to see your condition before it is too late! If the Spirit does not reside in you, if He is not your Comforter, then God is not your Father, the Son is not your Advocate, and you have no share in the gospel. Oh, that God would rouse some poor soul to consider this matter before neglecting and despising the Holy Spirit leads to a point

of no return! May the Lord lay bare the foolishness of their hearts before them, so that they may be ashamed and confounded, and never act presumptuously again!

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