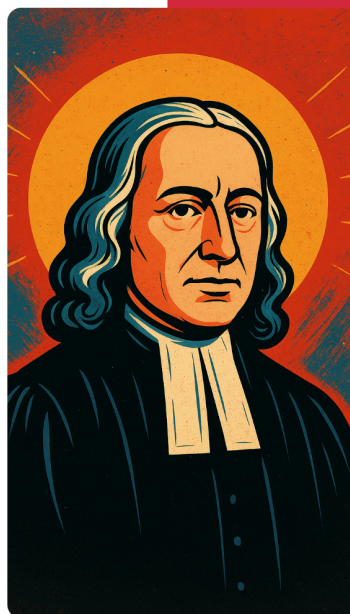


**PARAGOULD FIRST UNITED
METHODIST CHURCH**

**A STUDY
OF JOHN
WESLEY'S
SERMONS**



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1. Notes on the Church of England (Anglican Church) and the Wesley family

The Church of England was born out of both political challenges and religious reform in the 16th century. Its origins lie in the reign of King Henry VIII, who initially defended Roman Catholic orthodoxy against Protestant reformers. However, when Pope Clement VII refused to annul Henry's marriage to Catherine of Aragon, Henry broke with papal authority. In 1534, the Act of Supremacy declared the king the "Supreme Head on earth of the Church of England," establishing a national church independent of Rome.

While Henry's motives were largely political and personal, the break opened the way for theological reform. Under Edward VI (1547–1553), Protestant influences deepened, leading to the introduction of the *Book of Common Prayer* and a more reformed liturgy. Mary I (1553–1558) sought to restore Roman Catholicism, persecuting Protestants in the process, but her reign was short. Elizabeth I (1558–1603) established a lasting settlement: the monarch was the church's "Supreme Governor," the *Book of Common Prayer* was restored, and a balance was sought between Protestant doctrine and traditional practices.

In the 1600s, dissenters—also called Nonconformists—were Protestants who separated from the Church of England because they rejected its practices or governance. After the Elizabethan Settlement (1559), the Church of England defined itself as a middle way between Roman Catholicism and continental Protestantism. Yet many believers felt it retained too many Catholic elements, particularly in worship and hierarchy. These groups, influenced by Puritan and Reformed thought, sought simpler forms of church life centered on Scripture, preaching, and congregational autonomy.

James I and Charles I enforced conformity to the established church, leading to fines, imprisonment, and exile for dissenters. Some fled to the Netherlands or North America, where they could worship freely. The English Civil War (1642–1651) created a moment of opportunity: Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Baptists, and Quakers gained strength and visibility, envisioning new models of church and state.

With the Restoration of the monarchy in 1660, the Act of Uniformity (1662) reimposed Anglican worship and expelled hundreds of ministers, creating the "Great Ejection." Subsequent laws restricted Nonconformist worship and civil rights. Despite persecution, dissenters persisted, laying the groundwork for religious pluralism, eventual toleration, and the vibrant free church traditions that shaped modern Britain and America.

Samuel Wesley (1662–1735), the father of John and Charles Wesley, was not a dissenter—though he was born into a dissenting family.

His parents were Puritans, and Samuel was initially educated in dissenting academies outside the Church of England. However, as a young man he became dissatisfied with Nonconformity and decided to conform to the established church. He entered Exeter College, Oxford, was ordained in the Church of England in 1689, and spent the rest of his life as an Anglican clergyman.

Samuel was strongly committed to the Church of England, even when it brought hardship. He served as rector of Epworth in Lincolnshire, often facing financial struggles, conflict with parishioners, and even brief imprisonment for debt. His loyalty to the established church stood in sharp contrast to many of his relatives, who remained dissenters.

This family divide deeply shaped the Wesleys: John and Charles grew up firmly Anglican but sympathetic to dissenting zeal and piety. Samuel's choice to leave dissent and embrace Anglicanism set the stage for his sons' later work within (and eventually beyond) the Church of England.

2. The Life of John Wesley: Preaching, Sermons, and Legacy

John Wesley (1703–1791) was an English Anglican clergyman, theologian, evangelist, and the principal leader of the Methodist movement. His life was marked by a tireless devotion to preaching the gospel, nurturing Christian discipleship, and organizing communities of faith that would eventually spread across the globe. Though he remained a priest in the Church of England throughout his life, Wesley's preaching and published sermons became the backbone of Methodism, shaping its theology and mission for generations.

Early Life and Education: John Wesley was born on June 17, 1703, in Epworth, Lincolnshire, to Samuel and Susanna Wesley. His father was the rector of the parish church, and his mother was a deeply religious woman who profoundly influenced his spiritual formation. Wesley grew up in a large family—he was the fifteenth of nineteen children, though only ten survived into adulthood.

At age five, Wesley narrowly escaped death when the Epworth rectory caught fire. Being pulled through a window just before the roof collapsed, he later referred to himself as “a brand plucked from the burning” (Zechariah 3:2) a phrase that shaped his sense of divine calling.

Wesley was educated at Charterhouse School in London and then at Christ Church, Oxford. After completing his degree, he became a fellow of Lincoln College in 1726 and was ordained a deacon and later a priest in the Church of England. At Oxford, Wesley gathered a group of like-minded students who were disciplined in prayer, Bible study, and acts of charity. Derisively nicknamed the “Holy Club” and “Methodists” for their methodical devotion, this group laid the foundation for Wesley's lifelong emphasis on disciplined Christian living.

Missionary Efforts and Spiritual Awakening: In 1735, Wesley accepted an invitation to serve as a missionary in the British colony of Georgia. The experience was largely a failure—his strict

pastoral style alienated many settlers, and his romantic entanglement with Sophia Hopkey ended unceremoniously. Discouraged, he returned to England in 1738, questioning his faith and ministry.

That same year proved transformative. On May 24, 1738, at a meeting on Aldersgate Street in London, Wesley experienced what he called a “strangely warmed” heart as someone read from Martin Luther’s preface to the Epistle to the Romans. He wrote in his journal:

“I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation; and an assurance was given me that He had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death.”

This moment of assurance was pivotal. Wesley’s preaching would henceforth emphasize personal faith, assurance of salvation, and the transformative power of God’s grace.

Itinerant Preaching and Evangelism: Following his Aldersgate experience, Wesley joined forces with his brother Charles and fellow evangelist George Whitefield. Whitefield’s powerful open-air preaching drew large crowds, and though Wesley initially resisted the practice as “a vile thing,” he quickly adopted it. Preaching in fields, marketplaces, and town squares, Wesley reached people who rarely attended church.

Over the next fifty years, Wesley preached an estimated 40,000 sermons, often delivering multiple sermons a day and traveling on horseback thousands of miles each year. His preaching was plain, direct, and practical. He emphasized repentance, faith in Christ, the new birth, and holiness of heart and life. He believed that the gospel must not only be heard but also lived out through works of mercy and personal holiness.

Wesley’s style was not theatrical but earnest. He sought clarity, insisting that his sermons should be understood by ordinary people. This accessibility contributed to his effectiveness. His preaching was often accompanied by strong emotional responses from his hearers—tears, cries, or even fainting—signs to Wesley that God’s Spirit was at work.

Published Sermons and Theological Emphases: Wesley did not merely preach orally; he also published his sermons as theological guides for the Methodist movement. Between 1746 and 1760, he produced the four volumes of *Sermons on Several Occasions*, eventually totaling forty-four sermons. Later collections expanded this number. Wesley himself identified the “Standard Sermons” (together with his *Notes on the New Testament*) as the doctrinal standards for Methodism.

The sermons addressed core themes of Christian life and faith, such as justification by faith, the witness of the Spirit, Christian perfection, and practical holiness. Among the most famous are:

“Salvation by Faith” (1738): Emphasizing that salvation is a free gift of God received through faith, not earned by works.

“The Almost Christian” (1741): Contrasting outward religion with the true inward faith that transforms the heart.

“Christian Perfection” (1741): Teaching that believers could, by God’s grace, grow into a mature love of God and neighbor, though not sinless perfection.

“The Use of Money” (1744): Summarizing Wesley’s ethic of stewardship: “Gain all you can, save all you can, give all you can.”

Wesley’s sermons combined biblical exegesis, theological reflection, and practical exhortation. They were intended not only for clergy but also for laypeople, especially leaders in Methodist societies. By circulating these sermons widely, Wesley created a shared theological identity for the Methodist movement.

Organization of the Methodist Movement: Wesley’s preaching gathered large numbers of followers, but he knew that preaching alone was insufficient for lasting discipleship. He organized converts into “societies,” which were further divided into “classes” (small groups) and “bands” (accountability groups). These structures provided mutual support, encouragement, and accountability. Lay preachers—both men and women—assisted Wesley in spreading the message, though Wesley himself insisted that sacraments should be administered by ordained clergy.

Though he never intended to separate from the Church of England, Wesley eventually ordained preachers for service in America after the Revolutionary War, leading to the formation of the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1784. His organizational genius, combined with his relentless preaching, ensured that Methodism would endure beyond his lifetime.

Later Life and Death: Even into his eighties, Wesley maintained a rigorous preaching schedule. He rose at four or five in the morning, preached daily, and continued his pastoral oversight of Methodist societies. He was known for his simple lifestyle, charitable giving, and pastoral care for the poor.

Wesley died on March 2, 1791, at the age of 87. His final words were reported to be: “The best of all is, God is with us.” At his death, Methodism had grown into a movement of tens of thousands in Britain and America, and it would soon expand worldwide.

Legacy of Preaching and Sermons: John Wesley’s life was defined by his preaching—both spoken and written. His open-air sermons reached the masses who were often neglected by the established church, while his published sermons provided a theological anchor for a rapidly growing movement. Through them, Wesley communicated a vision of Christianity that was evangelical, practical, and transformative.

His insistence on salvation by grace through faith, the assurance of God’s love, and the pursuit of holiness shaped the ethos of Methodism and influenced broader Protestant Christianity. His sermons remain required reading for Methodist clergy today and continue to inspire Christians seeking a faith that is both deeply personal and socially engaged.

3. Sermon 1: Salvation By Faith, 1738

Preached at St. Mary's Oxford, before the university, on June 18, 1738

"By Grace are ye saved through faith." Ephesians 2.8

1.. All the blessings which God hath bestowed upon man are of his mere grace, bounty, or favour; his free, undeserved favour; favour altogether undeserved; man having no claim to the least of his mercies. It was free grace that "formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into him a living soul," and stamped on that soul the image of God, and "put all things under his feet." The same free grace continues to us, at this day, life, and breath, and all things. For there is nothing we are, or have, or do, which can deserve the least thing at God's hand. "All our works, Thou, O God, hast wrought in us." These, therefore, are so many more instances of free mercy: and whatever righteousness may be found in man, this is also the gift of God.

2. Wherewithal then shall a sinful man atone for any the least of his sins With his own works No. Were they ever so many or holy, they are not his own, but God's. But indeed they are all unholy and sinful themselves, so that every one of them needs a fresh atonement. Only corrupt fruit grows on a corrupt tree. And his heart is altogether corrupt and abominable; being "come short of the glory of God," the glorious righteousness at first impressed on his soul, after the image of his great Creator. Therefore, having nothing, neither righteousness nor works, to plead, his mouth is utterly stopped before God.

3. If then sinful men find favour with God, it is "grace upon grace!" If God vouchsafe still to pour fresh blessings upon us, yea, the greatest of all blessings, salvation; what can we say to these things, but, "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift!" And thus it is. herein "God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died" to save us "By grace" then "are ye saved through faith." Grace is the source, faith the condition, of salvation.

Now, that we fall not short of the grace of God, it concerns us carefully to inquire, --

I. What faith it is through which we are saved.

II. What is the salvation which is through faith.

III. How we may answer some objections.

I. What faith it is through which we are saved.

1. And, first, it is not barely the faith of a heathen.

Now, God requireth of a heathen to believe, "that God is; that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him;" and that he is to be sought by glorifying him as God, by giving him thanks for all things, and by a careful practice of moral virtue, of justice, mercy, and truth, toward their fellow creatures. A Greek or Roman, therefore, yea, a Scythian or Indian, was without excuse if he did not believe thus much: the being and attributes of God, a future state of reward and punishment, and the obligatory nature of moral virtue. For this is barely the faith of a heathen.

2. Nor, secondly, is it the faith of a devil, though this goes much farther than that of a heathen. For the devil believes, not only that there is a wise and powerful God, gracious to reward, and just to punish; but also, that Jesus is the Son of God, the Christ, the Saviour of the world. So we find him declaring, in express terms, "I know Thee who Thou art; the Holy One of God" (Luke 4:34). Nor can we doubt but that unhappy spirit believes all those words which came out of the mouth of the Holy One, yea, and whatsoever else was written by those holy men of old, of two of whom he was compelled to give that glorious testimony, "These men are the servants of the most high God, who show unto you the way of salvation." Thus much, then, the great enemy of God and man believes, and trembles in believing, --that God was made manifest in the flesh; that he will "tread all enemies under his feet;" and that "all Scripture was given by inspiration of God." Thus far goeth the faith of a devil.

3. Thirdly. The faith through which we are saved, in that sense of the word which will hereafter be explained, is not barely that which the Apostles themselves had while Christ was yet upon earth; though they so believed on him as to "leave all and follow him;" although they had then power to work miracles, to "heal all manner of sickness, and all manner of disease;" yea, they had then "power and authority over all devils;" and, which is beyond all this, were sent by their Master to "preach the kingdom of God."

4. What faith is it then through which we are saved It may be answered, first, in general, it is a faith in Christ: Christ, and God through Christ, are the proper objects of it. herein, therefore, it is sufficiently, absolutely distinguished from the faith either of ancient or modern heathens. And from the faith of a devil it is fully distinguished by this: it is not barely a speculative, rational thing, a cold, lifeless assent, a train of ideas in the head; but also a disposition of the heart. For thus saith the Scripture, "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness;" and, "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thy heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."

5. And herein does it differ from that faith which the Apostles themselves had while our Lord was on earth, that it acknowledges the necessity and merit of his death, and the power of his resurrection. It acknowledges his death as the only sufficient means of redeeming man from death eternal, and his resurrection as the restoration of us all to life and immortality; inasmuch as he "was delivered for our sins, and rose again for our justification." Christian faith is then, not only an assent to the whole gospel of Christ, but also a full reliance on the blood of Christ; a trust in the merits of his life, death, and resurrection; a recumbency upon him as our atonement and our life, as given for us, and living in us; and, in consequence hereof, a closing with him, and cleaving to him, as our "wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption," or, in one word, our salvation.

II. What salvation it is, which is through this faith, is the Second thing to be considered.

1. And, First, whatsoever else it imply, it is a present salvation. It is something attainable, yea, actually attained, on earth, by those who are partakers of this faith. For thus saith the Apostle to the believers at Ephesus, and in them to the believers of all ages, not, Ye shall be (though that also is true), but, "Ye are saved through faith."

2. Ye are saved (to comprise all in one word) from sin. This is the salvation which is through faith. This is that great salvation foretold by the angel, before God brought his First-begotten into

the world: "Thou shalt call his name Jesus; for he shall save his people from their sins." And neither here, nor in other parts of holy writ, is there any limitation or restriction. All his people, or, as it is elsewhere expressed, "all that believe in him," he will save from all their sins; from original and actual, past and present sin, "of the flesh and of the spirit." Through faith that is in him, they are saved both from the guilt and from the power of it.

3. First. From the guilt of all past sin: for, whereas all the world is guilty before God, insomuch that should he "be extreme to mark what is done amiss, there is none that could abide it;" and whereas, "by the law is" only "the knowledge of sin," but no deliverance from it, so that, "by" fulfilling "the deeds of the law, no flesh can be justified in his sight": now, "the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ, is manifested unto all that believe." Now, "they are justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ." "Him God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for (or by) the remission of the sins that are past." Now hath Christ taken away "the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." he hath "blotted out the handwriting that was against us, taking it out of the way, nailing it to his cross." "There is therefore no condemnation now to them which" believe "in Christ Jesus."

4. And being saved from guilt, they are saved from fear. Not indeed from a filial fear of offending; but from all servile fear; from that fear which hath torment; from fear of punishment; from fear of the wrath of God, whom they now no longer regard as a severe Master, but as an indulgent Father. "They have not received again the spirit of bondage, but the Spirit of adoption, whereby they cry, Abba, Father: the Spirit itself also bearing witness with their spirits, that they are the children of God." They are also saved from the fear, though not from the possibility, of falling away from the grace of God, and coming short of the great and precious promises. Thus have they "peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. They rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And the love of God is shed abroad in their hearts, through the Holy Ghost, which is given unto them." And hereby they are persuaded (though perhaps not at all times, nor with the same fullness of persuasion), that "neither death, nor life, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate them from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

5. Again: through this faith they are saved from the power of sin, as well as from the guilt of it. So the Apostle declares, "Ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin. Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not" (1 John 3:5ff.). Again, "Little children, let no man deceive you. he that committeth sin is of the devil. Whosoever believeth is born of God. And whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." Once more: "We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not" (1 John 5:18).

6. he that is, by faith, born of God sinneth not (1.) by any habitual sin; for all habitual sin is sin reigning: But sin cannot reign in any that believeth. Nor (2.) by any wilful sin: for his will, while he abideth in the faith, is utterly set against all sin, and abhorreth it as deadly poison. Nor (3.) By any sinful desire; for he continually desireth the holy and perfect will of God. and any tendency to an unholy desire, he by the grace of God, stiflenth in the birth. Nor (4.) Doth he sin by infirmities, whether in act, word, or thought; for his infirmities have no concurrence of his will;

and without this they are not properly sins. Thus, "he that is born of God doth not commit sin": and though he cannot say he hath not sinned, yet now "he sinneth not."

7. This then is the salvation which is through faith, even in the present world: a salvation from sin, and the consequences of sin, both often expressed in the word justification; which, taken in the largest sense, implies a deliverance from guilt and punishment, by the atonement of Christ actually applied to the soul of the sinner now believing on him, and a deliverance from the power of sin, through Christ formed in his heart. So that he who is thus justified, or saved by faith, is indeed born again. he is born again of the Spirit unto a new life, which "is hid with Christ in God." And as a new-born babe he gladly receives the adolon, "sincere milk of the word, and grows thereby;" going on in the might of the Lord his God, from faith to faith, from grace to grace, until at length, he come unto "a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."

III. The first usual objection to this is,

1. That to preach salvation or justification, by faith only, is to preach against holiness and good works. To which a short answer might be given: "It would be so, if we spake, as some do, of a faith which was separate from these; but we speak of a faith which is not so, but productive of all good works, and all holiness."

2. But it may be of use to consider it more at large; especially since it is no new objection, but as old as St. Paul's time. For even then it was asked, "Do we not make void the law through faith" We answer, First, all who preach not faith do manifestly make void the law; either directly and grossly, by limitations and comments that eat out all the spirit of the text; or indirectly, by not pointing out the only means whereby it is possible to perform it. Whereas, Secondly, "we establish the law," both by showing its full extent and spiritual meaning; and by calling all to that living way, whereby "the righteousness of the law may be fulfilled in them." These, while they trust in the blood of Christ alone, use all the ordinances which he hath appointed, do all the "good works which he had before prepared that they should walk therein," and enjoy and manifest all holy and heavenly tempers, even the same mind that was in Christ Jesus.

3. But does not preaching this faith lead men into pride We answer, Accidentally it may: therefore ought every believer to be earnestly cautioned, in the words of the great Apostle "Because of unbelief," the first branches "were broken off: and thou standest by faith. Be not high-minded, but fear. If God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he spare not thee. Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God! On them which fell, severity; but towards thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness; otherwise thou also shalt be cut off." And while he continues therein, he will remember those words of St. Paul, foreseeing and answering this very objection (Rom. 3:27), "Where is boasting then It is excluded. By what law of works Nay: but by the law of faith." If a man were justified by his works, he would have whereof to glory. But there is no glorying for him "that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly" (Rom. 4:5). To the same effect are the words both preceding and following the text (Eph. 2:4ff.): "God, who is rich in mercy, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ (by grace ye are saved), that he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves." Of yourselves cometh neither your faith nor your salvation: "it is the gift of God;" the free, undeserved gift; the faith through which ye are saved, as well as the

salvation which he of his own good pleasure, his mere favour, annexes thereto. That ye believe, is one instance of his grace; that believing ye are saved, another. "Not of works, lest any man should boast." For all our works, all our righteousness, which were before our believing, merited nothing of God but condemnation; so far were they from deserving faith, which therefore, whenever given, is not of works. Neither is salvation of the works we do when we believe, for it is then God that worketh in us: and, therefore, that he giveth us a reward for what he himself worketh, only commendeth the riches of his mercy, but leaveth us nothing whereof to glory.

4. "However, may not the speaking thus of the mercy of God, as saving or justifying freely by faith only, encourage men in sin" Indeed, it may and will: Many will "continue in sin that grace may abound." But their blood is upon their own head. The goodness of God ought to lead them to repentance; and so it will those who are sincere of heart. When they know there is yet forgiveness with him, they will cry aloud that he would blot out their sins also, through faith which is in Jesus. And if they earnestly cry, and faint not, it they seek him in all the means he hath appointed; if they refuse to be comforted till he come; "he will come, and will not tarry." And he can do much work in a short time. Many are the examples, in the Acts of the Apostles, of God's working this faith in men's hearts, even like lightning falling from heaven. So in the same hour that Paul and Silas began to preach, the jailer repented, believed, and was baptized; as were three thousand, by St. Peter, on the day of Pentecost, who all repented and believed at his first preaching And, blessed be God, there are now many living proofs that he is still "mighty to save."

5. Yet to the same truth, placed in another view, a quite contrary objection is made: "If a man cannot be saved by all that he can do, this will drive men to despair." True, to despair of being saved by their own works, their own merits, or righteousness. And so it ought; for none can trust in the merits of Christ, till he has utterly renounced his own. he that "goeth about to stablish his own righteousness" cannot receive the righteousness of God. The righteousness which is of faith cannot be given him while he trusteth in that which is of the law.

6. But this, it is said, is an uncomfortable doctrine. The devil spoke like himself, that is, without either truth or shame, when he dared to suggest to men that it is such. It is the only comfortable one, it is "very full of comfort," to all self-destroyed, self-condemned sinners. That "whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed that the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him": here is comfort, high as heaven, stronger than death! What! Mercy for all For Zacchaeus, a public robber For Mary Magdalene, a common harlot Methinks I hear one say "Then I, even I, may hope for mercy!" And so thou mayest, thou afflicted one, whom none hath comforted! God will not cast out thy prayer. Nay, perhaps he may say the next hour, "Be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee;" so forgiven, that they shall reign over thee no more; yea, and that "the Holy Spirit shall bear witness with thy spirit that thou art a child of God." O glad tidings! tidings of great joy, which are sent unto all people! "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters: Come ye, and buy, without money and without price." Whatsoever your sins be, "though red like crimson," though more than the hairs of your head, "return ye unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon you, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."

7. When no more objections occur, then we are simply told that salvation by faith only ought not to be preached as the first doctrine, or, at least, not to be preached at all. But what saith the Holy Ghost "Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, even Jesus Christ." So then, that "whosoever believeth on him shall be saved," is, and must be, the foundation of all our

preaching; that is, must be preached first. "Well, but not to all." To whom, then are we not to preach it Whom shall we except The poor Nay; they have a peculiar right to have the gospel preached unto them. The unlearned No. God hath revealed these things unto unlearned and ignorant men from the beginning. The young By no means. "Suffer these," in any wise, "to come unto Christ, and forbid them not." The sinners Least of all. "He came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Why then, if any, we are to except the rich, the learned, the reputable, the moral men. And, it is true, they too often except themselves from hearing; yet we must speak the words of our Lord. For thus the tenor of our commission runs, "Go and preach the gospel to every creature." If any man wrest it, or any part of it, to his destruction, he must bear his own burden. But still, "as the Lord liveth, whatsoever the Lord saith unto us, that we will speak."

8. At this time, more especially, will we speak, that "by grace are ye saved through faith": because, never was the maintaining this doctrine more seasonable than it is at this day. Nothing but this can effectually prevent the increase of the Romish delusion among us. It is endless to attack, one by one, all the errors of that Church. But salvation by faith strikes at the root, and all fall at once where this is established. It was this doctrine, which our Church justly calls the strong rock and foundation of the Christian religion, that first drove Popery out of these kingdoms; and it is this alone can keep it out. Nothing but this can give a check to that immorality which hath "overspread the land as a flood." Can you empty the great deep, drop by drop Then you may reform us by dissuasives from particular vices. But let the "righteousness which is of God by faith be brought in, and so shall its proud waves be stayed. Nothing but this can stop the mouths of those who "glory in their shame, and openly deny the Lord that bought them." They can talk as sublimely of the law, as he that hath it written by God in his heart To hear them speak on this head might incline one to think they were not far from the kingdom of God: but take them out of the law into the gospel; begin with the righteousness of faith; with Christ, "the end of the law to every one that believeth;" and those who but now appeared almost, if not altogether, Christians, stand confessed the sons of perdition; as far from life and salvation (God be merciful unto them!) as the depth of hell from the height of heaven.

9. For this reason the adversary so rages whenever "salvation by faith" is declared to the world: for this reason did he stir up earth and hell, to destroy those who first preached it. And for the same reason, knowing that faith alone could overturn the foundations of his kingdom, did he call forth all his forces, and employ all his arts of lies and calumny, to affright Martin Luther from reviving it. Nor can we wonder thereat; for, as that man of God observes, "How would it enrage a proud, strong man armed, to be stopped and set at nought by a little child coming against him with a reed in his hand!" especially when he knew that little child would surely overthrow him, and tread him under foot. Even so, Lord Jesus! Thus hath Thy strength been ever "made perfect in weakness!" Go forth then, thou little child that believest in him, and his "right hand shall teach thee terrible things!" Though thou art helpless and weak as an infant of days, the strong man shall not be able to stand before thee. Thou shalt prevail over him, and subdue him, and overthrow him and trample him under thy feet. Thou shalt march on, under the great Captain of thy salvation, "conquering and to conquer," until all thine enemies are destroyed, and "death is swallowed up in victory."

Now, thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ; to whom, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, for ever and ever. Amen

Edited anonymously at the Memorial University of Newfoundland with corrections and other modifications by Ryan Danker and George Lyons of Northwest Nazarene University.

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4. Sermon 2: The Almost Christian, 1741

Preached at St. Mary's, Oxford, before the university, on July 25, 1741.

"Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian." Acts 26.28.

AND many there are who go thus far: ever since the Christian religion was in the world, there have been many in every age and nation who were almost persuaded to be Christians. But seeing it avails nothing before God to go only thus far, it highly imports us to consider,

First. What is implied in being almost,

Secondly. What in being altogether, a Christian.

I. (I.) 1. Now, in the being almost a Christian is implied, First, heathen honesty. No one, I suppose, will make any question of this; especially, since by heathen honesty here, I mean, not that which is recommended in the writings of their philosophers only, but such as the common heathens expected one of another, and many of them actually practised. By the rules of this they were taught that they ought not to be unjust; not to take away their neighbour's goods, either by robbery or theft; not to oppress the poor, neither to use extortion toward any; not to cheat or overreach either the poor or rich, in whatsoever commerce they had with them; to defraud no man of his right; and, if it were possible, to owe no man anything.

2. Again: the common heathens allowed, that some regard was to be paid to truth, as well as to justice. And, accordingly, they not only held him in abomination who was forsworn, who called God to witness to a lie; but him also who was known to be a slanderer of his neighbour, who falsely accused any man. And indeed, little better did they esteem wilful liars of any sort, accounting them the disgrace of human kind, and the pests of society.

3. Yet again: there was a sort of love and assistance which they expected one from another. They expected whatever assistance any one could give another, without prejudice to himself. And this they extended not only to those little offices of humanity which are performed without any expense or labour, but likewise to the feeding the hungry, if they had food to spare; the clothing the naked with their own superfluous raiment; and, in general. the giving, to any that needed, such things as they needed not themselves. Thus far, in the lowest account of it, heathen honesty went; the first thing implied in the being almost a Christian.

(II.) 4. A second thing implied in the being almost a Christian, is, the having a form of godliness; of that godliness which is prescribed in the gospel of Christ; the having the outside of a real Christian. Accordingly, the almost Christian does nothing which the gospel forbids. he taketh not the name of God in vain; he blesseth, and curseth not; he sweareth not at all, but his communication is, yea, yea; nay, nay. he profanes not the day of the Lord, nor suffers it to be profaned, even by the stranger that is within his gates. he not only avoids all actual adultery, fornication, and uncleanness, but every word or look that either directly or indirectly tends thereto; nay, and all idle words, abstaining both from detraction, backbiting, talebearing, evil speaking, and from "all foolish talking and jesting"--eutrapelia, a kind of virtue in the heathen moralist's account; --briefly, from all conversation that is not "good to the use of edifying," and

that, consequently, "grieves the Holy Spirit of God, whereby we are sealed to the day of redemption.'

5. He abstains from "wine wherein is excess"; from revellings and gluttony. he avoids, as much as in him lies, all strife and contention, continually endeavouring to live peaceably with all men. And, if he suffer wrong, he avengeth not himself, neither returns evil for evil. he is no railer, no brawler, no scoffer, either at the faults or infirmities of his neighbour. he does not willingly wrong, hurt, or grieve any man; but in all things act and speaks by that plain rule, "Whatsoever thou wouldest not he should do unto thee, that do not thou to another."

6. And in doing good, he does not confine himself to cheap and easy offices of kindness, but labours and suffers for the profit of many, that by all means he may help some. In spite of toil or pain, "whatsoever his hand findeth to do, he doeth it with his might;" whether it be for his friends, or for his enemies; for the evil, or for the good. For being "not slothful" in this, or in any "business," as he "hath opportunity" he doeth "good," all manner of good, "to all men;" and to their souls as well as their bodies. he reproveth the wicked, instructs the ignorant, confirms the wavering, quickens the good, and comforts the afflicted. he labours to awaken those that sleep; to lead those whom God hath already awakened to the "Fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness," that they may wash therein and be clean; and to stir up those who are saved through faith, to adorn the gospel of Christ in all things.

7. He that hath the form of godliness uses also the means of grace; yea, all of them, and at all opportunities. he constantly frequents the house of God; and that, not as the manner of some is, who come into the presence of the Most High, either loaded with gold and costly apparel, or in all the gaudy vanity of dress, and either by their unseasonable civilities to each other, or the impertinent gaiety of their behaviour, disclaim all pretensions to the form as well as to the power of godliness. Would to God there were none even among ourselves who fall under the same condemnation! who come into this house, it may be, gazing about, or with all the signs of the most listless, careless indifference, though sometimes they may seem to use a prayer to God for his blessing on what they are entering upon; who, during that awful service, are either asleep, or reclined in the most convenient posture for it; or, as though they supposed God was asleep, talking with one another, or looking round, as utterly void of employment. Neither let these be accused of the form of godliness. No; he who has even this, behaves with seriousness and attention, in every part of that solemn service. More especially, when he approaches the table of the Lord, it is not with a light or careless behaviour, but with an air, gesture, and deportment which speaks nothing else but "God be merciful to me a sinner!"

8. To this, if we add the constant use of family prayer, by those who are masters of families, and the setting times apart for private addresses to God, with a daily seriousness of behaviour; he who uniformly practises this outward religion, has the form of godliness. There needs but one thing more in order to his being almost a Christian, and that is, sincerity.

(III.) 9. By sincerity I mean, a real, inward principle of religion, from whence these outward actions flow. And, indeed if we have not this, we have not heathen honesty; no, not so much of it as will answer the demand of a heathen Epicurean poet. Even this poor wretch, in his sober intervals, is able to testify,

Oderunt peccare boni, virtutis amore;

Oderunt peccare mali, formidine poenae.

[Good men avoid sin from the love of virtue; Wicked men avoid sin from a fear of punishment.]

So that, if a man only abstains from doing evil in order to avoid punishment, Non pasces in cruce corvos, [Thou shalt not be hanged.], saith the Pagan; there, "thou hast thy reward." But even he will not allow such a harmless man as this to be so much as a good heathen. If, then, any man, from the same motive, viz., to avoid punishment, to avoid the loss of his friends, or his gain, or his reputation, should not only abstain from doing evil, but also do ever so much good; yea, and use all the means of grace; yet we could not with any propriety say, this man is even almost a Christian. If he has no better principle in his heart, he is only a hypocrite altogether.

10. Sincerity, therefore, is necessarily implied in the being almost a Christian; a real design to serve God, a hearty desire to do his will. It is necessarily implied, that a man have a sincere view of pleasing God in all things; in all his conversation; in all his actions; in all he does or leaves undone. This design, if any man be almost a Christian, runs through the whole tenor of his life. This is the moving principle, both in his doing good, his abstaining from evil, and his using the ordinances of God.

11. But here it will probably be inquired, "Is it possible that any man living should go so far as this, and, nevertheless, be only almost a Christian? What more than this, can be implied in the being a Christian altogether? I answer, First, that it is possible to go thus far, and yet be but almost a Christian, I learn, not only from the oracles of God, but also from the sure testimony of experience.

12. Brethren, great is "my boldness towards you in this behalf." And "forgive me this wrong," if I declare my own folly upon the house-top, for yours and the gospel's sake. --Suffer me, then, to speak freely of myself, even as of another man. I am content to be abased, so ye may be exalted, and to be yet more vile for the glory of my Lord.

13. I did go thus far for many years, as many of this place can testify; using diligence to eschew all evil, and to have a conscience void of offence; redeeming the time; buying up every opportunity of doing all good to all men; constantly and carefully using all the public and all the private means of grace; endeavouring after a steady seriousness of behaviour, at all times, and in all places; and, God is my record, before whom I stand, doing all this in sincerity; having a real design to serve God; a hearty desire to do his will in all things; to please him who had called me to "fight the good fight," and to "lay hold of eternal life." Yet my own conscience beareth me witness in the Holy Ghost, that all this time I was but almost a Christian.

II. If it be inquired, "What more than this is implied in the being altogether a Christian?" I answer,

(I.) 1. First. The love of God. For thus saith his word, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength." Such a love is this, as engrosses the whole heart, as rakes up all the affections, as fills the entire capacity of the soul and employs the utmost extent of all its faculties. he that thus loves the Lord his God, his spirit continually "rejoiceth in God his Saviour." his delight is in the Lord, his Lord and his All, to whom "in everything he giveth thanks. All his desire is unto God, and to the remembrance of his name." his heart is ever crying out, "Whom have I in heaven but Thee and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee." Indeed, what can he desire beside God? Not the world, or

the things of the world: for he is "crucified to the world, and the world crucified to him." he is crucified to "the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eye, and the pride of life." Yea, he is dead to pride of every kind: for "love is not puffed up" but "he that dwelling in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him," is less than nothing in his own eyes.

(II.) 2. The Second thing implied in the being altogether a Christian is, the love of our neighbour. For thus said our Lord in the following words, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" If any man ask, "Who is my neighbour" we reply, Every man in the world; every child of his who is the Father of the spirits of all flesh. Nor may we in any wise except our enemies or the enemies of God and their own souls. But every Christian loveth these also as himself, yea, "as Christ loved us." he that would more fully understand what manner of love this is, may consider St. Paul's description of it. It is "long-suffering and kind." It "envieth not." It is not rash or hasty in judging. It "is not puffed up;" but maketh him that loves, the least, the servant of all. Love "doth not behave itself unseemly," but becometh "all things to all men." She "seeketh not her own;" but only the good of others, that they may be saved. "Love is not provoked." It casteth out wrath, which he who hath is wanting in love. "It thinketh no evil. It rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth. It covereth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things."

(III.) 3. There is yet one thing more that may be separately considered, though it cannot actually be separate from the preceding, which is implied in the being altogether a Christian; and that is the ground of all, even faith. Very excellent things are spoken of this throughout the oracles of God. "Every one, saith the beloved disciple, "that believeth is born of God." "To as many as received him, gave he power to become the sons of God. even to them that believe on his name." And "this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." Yea, our Lord himself declares, "He that believeth in the Son hath everlasting life; and cometh not into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life."

4. But here let no man deceive his own soul. "It is diligently to be noted, the faith which bringeth not forth repentance, and love, and all good works, is not that right living faith, but a dead and devilish one. For, even the devils believe that Christ was born of a virgin: that he wrought all kinds of miracles, declaring himself very God: that, for our sakes, he suffered a most painful death, to redeem us from death everlasting; that he rose again the third day: that he ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of the Father and at the end of the world shall come again to judge both the quick and dead. These articles of our faith the devils believe, and so they believe all that is written in the Old and New Testament. And yet for all this faith, they be but devils. They remain still in their damnable estate lacking the very true Christian faith."
[Homily on the Salvation of Man.]

5. "The right and true Christian faith is (to go on in the words of our own Church), "not only to believe that Holy Scripture and the Articles of our Faith are true, but also to have a sure trust and confidence to be saved from everlasting damnation by Christ. It is a sure trust and confidence which a man hath in God, that, by the merits of Christ, his sins are forgiven, and he reconciled to the favour of God; whereof doth follow a loving heart, to obey his commandments."

6. Now, whosoever has this faith, which "purifies the heart" (by the power of God, who dwelleth therein) from "pride, anger, desire, from all unrighteousness" from "all filthiness of flesh and spirit;" which fills it with love stronger than death, both to God and to all mankind; love that doeth the works of God, glorying to spend and to be spent for all men, and that endureth with joy, not

only the reproach of Christ, the being mocked, despised, and hated of all men, but whatsoever the wisdom of God permits the malice of men or devils to inflict, --whosoever has this faith thus working by love is not almost only, but altogether, a Christian.

7. But who are the living witnesses of these things I beseech you, brethren, as in the presence of that God before whom "hell and destruction are without a covering--how much more the hearts of the children of men" --that each of you would ask his own heart, "Am I of that number Do I so far practise justice, mercy, and truth, as even the rules of heathen honesty require If so, have I the very outside of a Christian the form of godliness Do I abstain from evil, --from whatsoever is forbidden in the written Word of God Do I, whatever good my hand findeth to do, do it with my might Do I seriously use all the ordinances of God at all opportunities And is all this done with a sincere design and desire to please God in all things"

8. Are not many of you conscious, that you never came thus far; that you have not been even almost a Christian; that you have not come up to the standard of heathen honesty; at least, not to the form of Christian godliness --much less hath God seen sincerity in you, a real design of pleasing him in all things. You never so much as intended to devote all your words and works. your business, studies, diversions, to his glory. You never even designed or desired, that whatsoever you did should be done "in the name of the Lord Jesus, and as such should be "a spiritual sacrifice, acceptable to God through Christ.

9. But, supposing you had, do good designs and good desires make a Christian By no means, unless they are brought to good effect. "Hell is paved," saith one, "with good intentions." The great question of all, then, still remains. Is the love of God shed abroad in your heart Can you cry out, "My God, and my All" Do you desire nothing but him Are you happy in God Is he your glory, your delight, your crown of rejoicing And is this commandment written in your heart, "That he who loveth God love his brother also" Do you then love your neighbour as yourself Do you love every man, even your enemies, even the enemies of God, as your own soul as Christ loved you Yea, dost thou believe that Christ loved thee, and gave himself for thee Hast thou faith in his blood Believest thou the Lamb of God hath taken away thy sins, and cast them as a stone into the depth of the sea that he hath blotted out the handwriting that was against thee, taking it out of the way, nailing it to his cross Hast thou indeed redemption through his blood, even the remission of thy sins And doth his Spirit bear witness with thy spirit, that thou art a child of God

10. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who now standeth in the midst of us, knoweth, that if any man die without this faith and this love, good it were for him that he had never been born. Awake, then, thou that sleepest, and call upon thy God: call in the day when he may be found. Let him not rest, till he make his "goodness to pass before thee;" till he proclaim unto thee the name of the Lord, "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin." Let no man persuade thee, by vain words, to rest short of this prize of thy high calling. But cry unto him day and night, who, "while we were without strength, died for the ungodly," until thou knowest in whom thou hast believed, and canst say, "My Lord, and my God!" Remember, "always to pray, and not to faint," till thou also canst lift up thy hand unto heaven, and declare to him that liveth for ever and ever, "Lord, Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest that I love Thee."

11. May we all thus experience what it is to be, not almost only; but altogether Christians; being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus; knowing we have peace with God through Jesus Christ; rejoicing in hope of the glory of God; and having the love of God shed abroad in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost given unto us!

Edited anonymously at the Memorial University of Newfoundland with corrections and other modifications by Ryan Danker and George Lyons of Northwest Nazarene University.

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5. Sermon 4: Scriptural Christianity, 1744

Preached at St. Mary's, Oxford, before the university, August 24, 1744.

[This Sermon was originally published in a separate pamphlet, accompanied by the following address "to the reader," to which was affixed the author's signature: "It was not my design, when I wrote, ever to print the latter part of the following Sermon: But the false and scurrilous accounts of it which have been published, almost in every corner of the nation, constrain me to publish the whole, just as it was preached; that men of reason may judge for themselves.--EDITOR]

Whosoever heareth the sound of the trumpet, and taketh not warning; if the sword come, and take him away, his blood shall be upon his own head. Ezek. 33:4. "And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost." Acts 4:31.

1. The same expression occurs in the second chapter, where we read, "When the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all" (the Apostles, with the women, and the mother of Jesus, and his brethren) "with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost:" one immediate effect whereof was, they "began to speak with other tongues;" insomuch that both the Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and the other strangers who "came together, when this was noised abroad, heard them speak, in their several tongues, the wonderful works of God" (Acts 2:1-6).

2. In this chapter we read, that when the Apostles and brethren had been praying, and praising God, "the place was shaken where they were assembled together, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost." Not that we find any visible appearance here, such as had been in the former instance: nor are we informed that the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost were then given to all or any of them; such as the gifts of "healing, of working" other "miracles, of prophecy, of discerning spirits, the speaking with divers kinds of tongues, and the interpretation of tongues (1 Cor. 12:9, 10).

3. Whether these gifts of the Holy Ghost were designed to remain in the church throughout all ages, and whether or no they will be restored at the nearer approach of the "restitution of all things," are questions which it is not needful to decide. But it is needful to observe this, that, even in the infancy of the church, God divided them with a sparing hand. Were all even then prophets Were all workers of miracles Had all the gifts of healing Did all speak with tongues No, in no wise. Perhaps not one in a thousand. Probably none but the teachers in the church, and only some of them (1 Cor. 12:28-30). It was therefore, for a more excellent purpose than this, that "they were all filled with the Holy Ghost."

4. It was, to give them (what none can deny to be essential to all Christians in all ages) the mind which was in Christ, those holy fruits of the Spirit, which whosoever hath not, is none of his; to fill them with "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness" (Gal. 5:22-24); to endue them with faith (perhaps it might be rendered, fidelity), with meekness and temperance; to enable them to crucify the flesh, with its affections and lusts, its passions and desires; and in

consequence of that inward change, to fulfil all outward righteousness; to "walk as Christ also walked," in "the work of faith, in the patience of hope, the labour of love" (1 Thess. 1:3).

5. Without busying ourselves, then, in curious, needless inquiries, touching those extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, let us take a nearer view of these his ordinary fruits, which we are assured will remain throughout all ages; --of that great work of God among the children of men, which we are used to express by one word, "Christianity;" not as it implies a set of opinions, a system of doctrines, but as it refers to men's hearts and lives. And this Christianity it may be useful to consider under three distinct views:

I. As beginning to exist in individuals:

II. As spreading from one to another:

III. As covering the earth.

I design to close these considerations with a plain, practical application.

I. 1. And, first, let us consider Christianity in its rise, as beginning to exist in individuals.

Suppose, then, one of those who heard the Apostle Peter preaching repentance and remission of sins, was pricked to the heart, was convinced of sin, repented, and then believed in Jesus. By this faith of the operation of God, which was the very substance, or subsistence, of things hoped for (Heb. 11:1,) the demonstrative evidence of invisible things, he instantly received the Spirit of adoption, whereby he now cried, "Abba, Father" (Rom. 8:15). Now first it was that he could call Jesus Lord, by the Holy Ghost (1 Cor. 12:3), the Spirit itself bearing witness with his spirit, that he was a child of God (Rom. 8:16). Now it was that he could truly say, "I live not, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Gal. 2:20).

2. This, then, was the very essence of his faith, a divine *elegchos* (evidence or conviction) of the love of God the Father, through the Son of his love, to him a sinner, now accepted in the Beloved. And, "being justified by faith, he had peace with God" (Rom. 5:1), yea, "the peace of God ruling in his heart;" a peace, which passing all understanding (*panta noun*, all barely rational conception), kept his heart and mind from all doubt and fear, through the knowledge of him in whom he had believed. he could not, therefore, "be afraid of any evil tidings;" for his "heart stood fast, believing in the Lord." he feared not what man could do unto him, knowing the very hairs of his head were all numbered. he feared not all the powers of darkness, whom God was daily bruising under his feet. Least of all was he afraid to die; nay, he desired to "depart, and to be with Christ" (Phil. 1:23); who, "through death, had destroyed him that had the power of death, even the devil; and delivered them who, through fear of death, were all their life-time," till then, "subject to bondage" (Heb. 2:15).

3. His soul, therefore, magnified the Lord, and his spirit rejoiced in God his Saviour. "He rejoiced in him with joy unspeakable," who had reconciled him to God, even the Father; "in whom he had redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins." he rejoiced in that witness of God's Spirit with his spirit, that he was a child of God; and more abundantly, "in hope of the glory of God;" in hope of the glorious image of God, and full renewal of his soul in righteousness and true

holiness, and in hope of that crown of glory, that "inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away."

4. "The love of God was also shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost which was given unto him" (Rom. 5:5). "Because he was a son God had sent forth the Spirit of his Son into his heart, crying Abba, Father!" (Gal. 4:6). And that filial love of God was continually increased by the witness he had in himself (1 John 5:10) of God's pardoning love to him; by "beholding what manner of love it was which the Father had bestowed upon him, that he should be called a child of God" (1 John 3:1). So that God was the desire of his eyes, and the joy of his heart; his portion in time and in eternity.

5. He that thus loved God could not but love his brother also; and "not in word only, but in deed and in truth." "If God," said he, "so loved us, we ought also to love one another" (1 John 4:11); yea, every soul of man, as "the mercy of God is over all his works" (Ps. 145:9). Agreeably hereto, the affection of this lover of God embraced all mankind for his sake; not excepting those whom he had never seen in the flesh, or those of whom he knew nothing more than that they were "the offspring of God," for whose souls his Son had died; not excepting the "evil" and "unthankful," and least of all his enemies, those who hated, or persecuted, or despitefully used him for his Master's sake. These had a peculiar place, both in his heart and in his prayers. he loved them "even as Christ loved us."

6. And "love is not puffed up" (1 Cor. 13:4). It abases to the dust every soul wherein it dwells. Accordingly, he was lowly of heart, little, mean, and vile in his own eyes. he neither sought nor received the praise of men, but that which cometh of God only. he was meek and long-suffering, gentle to all, and easy to be entreated. Faithfulness and truth never forsook him: they were "bound about his neck, and wrote on the table of his heart." By the same spirit he was enabled to be temperate in all things, refraining his soul even as a weaned child. he was "crucified to the world, and the world crucified to him;" superior to "the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eye, and the pride of life." By the same almighty love was he saved, both from passion and pride; from lust and vanity; from ambition and covetousness; and from every temper which was not in Christ.

7. It may be easily believed, he who had this love in his heart would work no evil to his neighbour. It was impossible for him, knowingly and designedly, to do harm to any man. he was at the greatest distance from cruelty and wrong, from any unjust or unkind action. With the same care did he "set a watch before his mouth, and keep the door of his lips," lest he should offend in tongue, either against justice, or against mercy or truth. he put away all lying, falsehood; and fraud; neither was guile found in his mouth. he spake evil of no man; nor did an unkind word ever come out of his lips.

8. And as he was deeply sensible of the truth of that word "Without me ye can do nothing," and, consequently, of the need he had to be watered of God every moment; so he continued daily in all the ordinances of God, the stated channels of his grace to man: "in the Apostles' doctrine," or teaching, receiving that food of the soul with all readiness of heart; in "the breaking of bread," which he found to be the communion of the body of Christ; and "in the prayers" and praises offered up by the great congregation. And thus, he daily grew in grace, increasing in strength, in the knowledge and love of God.

9. But it did not satisfy him, barely to abstain from doing evil. his soul was athirst to do good. The language of his heart continually was, "'My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.' My Lord went about doing good; and shall not I tread in his steps" As he had opportunity therefore, if he could do no good of a higher kind, he fed the hungry, clothed the naked, helped the fatherless or stranger, visited and assisted them that were sick or in prison. he gave all his goods to feed the poor. he rejoiced to labour or to suffer for them; and whereinsoever he might profit another, there especially to "deny himself." he counted nothing too dear to part with for them, as well remembering the word of his Lord, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me" (Matt. 25:40).

10. Such was Christianity in its rise. Such was a Christian in ancient days. Such was every one of those who, when they heard the threatenings of the chief priests and elders, "lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and were all filled with the Holy Ghost. The multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul:" So did the love of him in whom they had believed constrain them to love one another! "Neither said any of them that aught of the things which he possessed was his own but they had all things common:" So fully were they crucified to the world, and the world crucified to them! "And they continued steadfastly with one accord in the Apostles' doctrine, and in the breaking of bread, and in prayers" (Acts 2:42). "And great grace was upon them all; neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, and laid them down at the Apostles' feet: And distribution was made unto every man according as he had need." (Acts 4:31-35.)

II. 1. Let us take a view, in the Second place, of this Christianity, as spreading from one to another, and so gradually making its way into the world: For such was the will of God concerning it, who did not "light a candle to put it under a bushel, but that it might give light to all that were in the house." And this our Lord had declared to his first disciples, "Ye are the salt of the earth," "the light of the world;" at the same time that he gave that general command, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." (Matt. 5:13-16).

2. And, indeed, supposing a few of these lovers of mankind to see "the whole world lying in wickedness," can we believe they would be unconcerned at the sight, at the misery of those for whom their Lord died Would not their bowels yearn over them, and their hearts melt away for very trouble Could they then stand idle all the day long, even were there no command from him whom they loved Rather, would they not labour by all possible means, to pluck some of these brands out of the burning Undoubtedly they would: they would spare no pains to bring back whomsoever they could of those poor "sheep that had gone astray, to the great Shepherd and Bishop of their souls" (1 Pet. 2:25).

3. So the Christians of old did. They laboured, having opportunity, "to do good unto all men" (Gal. 6:10), warning them to flee from the wrath to come; now, now to escape the damnation of hell. They declared, "The times of ignorance God winked at; but now he calleth all men everywhere to repent." (Acts 17:30) They cried aloud, Turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways: "so iniquity shall not be your ruin" (Ezek. 18:30). They "reasoned" with them of "temperance, and righteousness," or justice--of the virtues opposite to their reigning sins; "and of judgement to come,"--of the wrath of God which would surely be executed on evildoers in that day when he should judge the world (Acts 24:25).

4. They endeavoured herein to speak to every man severally as he had need. To the careless, to those who lay unconcerned in darkness and in the shadow of death, they thundered, "Awake thou that sleepest; arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." But to those who were already awakened out of sleep, and groaning under a sense of the wrath of God, their language was, "We have an Advocate with the Father; he is the propitiation for our sins." Meantime, those who had believed, they provoked to love and to good works; to patient continuance in well-doing; and to abound more and more in that holiness without which no man can see the Lord. (Heb 12:14)

5. And their labour was not in vain in the Lord. his word ran and was glorified. It grew mightily and prevailed. But so much the more did offences prevail also. The world in general were offended, "because they testified of it, that the works thereof were evil" (John 7:7). The men of pleasure were offended, not only because these men were made, as it were, to reprove their thoughts ("He professeth," said they, "to have the knowledge of God; he calleth himself the child of the Lord, his life is not like other men's; his ways are of another fashion; he abstaineth from our ways, as from filthiness; he maketh his boast, that God is his Father" Wis. 2:13-16;) but much more, because so many of their companions were taken away, and would no more run with them to "the same excess of riot." (1 Pet. 4:4.) The men of reputation were offended, because, as the gospel spread, they declined in the esteem of the people; and because many no longer dared to give them flattering titles, or to pay man the homage due to God only. The men of trade called one another together, and said, "Sirs, ye know that by this craft we have our wealth: but ye see and hear that these men have persuaded and turned away much people; so that this our craft is in danger to be set at nought" (Acts 19:25ff.). Above all, the men of religion, so called, the men of outside religion, "the saints of the world," were offended, and ready at every opportunity to cry out, "Men of Israel, help! We have found these men pestilent fellows, movers of sedition throughout the world" (Acts 24:5). "These are the men that teach all men everywhere against the people, and against this place" (Acts 21:28).

6. Thus it was that the heavens grew black with clouds, and the storm gathered amain. For the more Christianity spread, the more hurt was done, in the account of those who received it not; and the number increased of those who were more and more enraged at these "men who thus turned the world upside down;" (Acts 17:6;) insomuch that more and more cried out, "Away with such fellows from the earth; it is not fit that they should live;" yea, and sincerely believed, that whosoever should kill them would do God service.

7. Meanwhile they did not fail to cast out their name as evil; (Luke 6:22;) so that this "sect was everywhere spoken against." (Acts 27:22.) Men said all manner of evil of them, even as had been done of the prophets that were before them (Matt. 5:12). And whatsoever any would affirm, others would believe; so that offences grew as the stars of heaven for multitude. And hence arose, at the time fore-ordained of the Father, persecution in all its forms. Some, for a season, suffered only shame and reproach; some, "the spoiling of their goods;" "some had trial of mocking and scourging; some of bonds and imprisonment;" and others "resisted unto blood" (Heb. 10:34; 11:36ff.)

8. Now it was that the pillars of hell were shaken, and the kingdom of God spread more and more. Sinners were everywhere "turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God." he gave his children "such a mouth, and such wisdom, as all their adversaries could not resist;" and their lives were of equal force with their words. But above all, their sufferings

spake to all the world. They "approved themselves the servants of God, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours; in perils in the sea, in perils in the wilderness, in weariness and painfulness, in hunger and thirst, in cold and nakedness" (2 Cor. 6:4ff.). And when, having fought the good fight, they were led as sheep to the slaughter, and offered up on the sacrifice and service of their faith, then the blood of each found a voice, and the heathen owned, "He being dead, yet speaketh."

9. Thus did Christianity spread itself in the earth. But how soon did the tares appear with the wheat, and the mystery of iniquity work, as well as the mystery of godliness! How soon did Satan find a seat, even in the temple of God, "till the woman fled into the wilderness," and "the faithful were again minished from the children of men!" here we tread a beaten path: the still unceasing corruptions of the succeeding generations have been largely described, from time to time, by those witnesses God raised up, to show that he had "built his church upon a rock, and the gates of hell should not" wholly "prevail against her." (Matt. 16:18.)

III. 1. But shall we not see greater things than these Yea, greater than have been yet from the beginning of the world. Can Satan cause the truth of God to fail, or his promises to be of none effect If not, the time will come when Christianity will prevail over all, and cover the earth. Let us stand a little, and survey (the Third thing which was proposed) this strange sight, a Christian World. Of this the Prophets of old inquired and searched diligently (1 Pet. 1:10, 11ff.:) of this the Spirit which was in them testified: "It shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks. Nation shall not lift up sword against nation; neither shall they learn war any more." (Isa. 2:1-4.) "In that day there shall be a Root of Jesse, which shall stand for an Ensign of the people. To it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set his hand again to recover the remnant of his people; and he shall set up an Ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah, from the four corners of the earth." (Isa. 11:10-12.) "The wolf shall then dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. They shall not hurt nor destroy, saith the Lord, in all my holy mountain. For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea" (Isa. 11:6-9).

2. To the same effect are the words of the great Apostle, which it is evident have never yet been fulfilled. "Hath God cast away his people God forbid." "But through their fall salvation is come to the Gentiles." "And if the diminishing of them be the riches of the Gentiles, how much more their fullness" "For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in: And so all Israel shall be saved." (Rom. 11:1, 11, 25, 26.)

3. Suppose now the fullness of time to be come, and the prophecies to be accomplished. What a prospect is this! All is peace, "quietness, and assurance for ever." here is no din of arms, no "confused noise," no "garments rolled in blood." "Destructions are come to a perpetual end." Wars are ceased from the earth. Neither are there any intestine jars remaining; no brother rising up against brother; no country or city divided against itself, and tearing out its own bowels. Civil discord is at an end for evermore, and none is left either to destroy or hurt his neighbour. here is no oppression to "make" even "the wise man mad;" no extortion to "grind the face of the poor;"

no robbery or wrong; no rapine or injustice; for all are "content with such things as they possess." Thus "righteousness and peace have kissed each other;" (Ps. 85:10;) they have "taken root and filled the land;" "righteousness flourishing out of the earth;" and "peace looking down from heaven."

4. And with righteousness or justice, mercy is also found. The earth is no longer full of cruel habitations. The Lord hath destroyed both the blood-thirsty and malicious, the envious and revengeful man. Were there any provocation, there is none that now knoweth to return evil for evil; but indeed there is none that doeth evil, no, not one; for all are harmless as doves. And being filled with peace and joy in believing, and united in one body, by one Spirit, they all love as brethren, they are all of one heart and of one soul. "Neither saith any of them, that aught of the things which he possesseth is his own." There is none among them that lacketh: for every man loveth his neighbour as himself. And all walk by one rule: "Whatever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do unto them."

5. It follows, that no unkind word can ever be heard among them, no strife of tongues, no contention of any kind, no railing or evil-speaking, but every one "opens his mouth with wisdom, and in his tongue there is the law of kindness." Equally incapable are they of fraud or guile: their love is without dissimulation: Their words are always the just expression of their thoughts, opening a window into their breast, that whosoever desires may look into their hearts, and see that only love and God are there.

6. Thus, where the Lord Omnipotent taketh to himself his mighty power and reigneth, doth he "subdue all things to himself," cause every heart to overflow with love, and fill every mouth with praise. "Happy are the people that are in such a case: yea, blessed are the people who have the Lord for their God" (Psalm 144:15.) "Arise, shine;" (saith the Lord;) "for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee." "Thou hast known that I the Lord am thy Saviour and thy Redeemer, the mighty God of Jacob. I have made thy officers peace, and thy exactors righteousness. Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders; but thou shalt call thy walls Salvation and thy gates Praise." "Thy people are all righteous; they shall inherit the land for ever; the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified." "The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory" (Isa. 60:1, 16-19).

IV. Having thus briefly considered Christianity, as beginning, as going on, and as covering the earth, it remains only that I should close the whole with a plain, practical application.

1. And, first, I would ask, Where does this Christianity now exist Where, I pray, do the Christians live Which is the country, the inhabitants whereof are all thus filled with the Holy Ghost --are all of one heart and of one soul cannot suffer one among them to lack anything, but continually give to every man as he hath need; who, one and all, have the love of God filling their hearts, and constraining them to love their neighbour as themselves; who have all "put on bowels of mercy, humbleness of mind, gentleness, long-suffering" who offend not in any kind, either by word or deed, against justice, mercy, or truth; but in every point do unto all men; as they would these should do unto them With what propriety can we term any a Christian country, which does not answer this description Why then, let us confess we have never yet seen a Christian country upon earth.

2. I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, if ye do account me a madman or a fool, yet, as a fool bear with me. It is utterly needful that some one should use great plainness of speech towards you. It is more especially needful at this time; for who knoweth but it is the last Who knoweth how soon the righteous Judge may say, "I will no more be entreated for this people" "Though Noah, Daniel, and Job were in this land, they should but deliver their own souls." And who will use this plainness, if I do not Therefore I, even I, will speak. And I adjure you, by the living God, that ye steel not your breasts against receiving a blessing at my hands. Do not say in your hearts, Non persuadebis, etiamsi persuaseris;" [Your persuasions shall not prevail with us, even though they should really convince us.--EDIT.] or, in other words, "Lord, thou shalt not send by whom thou wilt send; let me rather perish in my blood, than be saved by this man!"

3. Brethren, "I am persuaded better things of you, though I thus speak." Let me ask you then, in tender love, and in the spirit of meekness, Is this city a Christian city Is Christianity, scriptural Christianity, found here Are we, considered as a community of men, so "filled with the Holy Ghost," as to enjoy in our hearts, and show forth in our lives, the genuine fruits of that Spirit Are all the Magistrates, all heads and Governors of Colleges and Halls, and their respective Societies (not to speak of the inhabitants of the town), "of one heart "and one soul" Is "the love of God shed abroad in our hearts" Are our tempers the same that were in him And are our lives agreeable thereto Are we "holy as he who hath called us is holy in all manner of conversation"

4. I entreat you to observe, that here are no peculiar notions now under consideration; that the question moved is not concerning doubtful opinions of one kind or another, but concerning the undoubted, fundamental branches (if there be any such) of our common Christianity. And for the decision thereof, I appeal to your own conscience, guided by the Word of God. he therefore that is not condemned by his own heart, let him go free.

5. In the fear, then, and in the presence of the great God, before whom both you and I shall shortly appear, I pray you that are in authority over us, whom I reverence for your office sake, to consider (and not after the manner of dissemblers with God), are you "filled with the Holy Ghost" Are you lively portraitures of him whom ye are appointed to represent among men "I have said, Ye are gods," ye magistrates and rulers; ye are by office so nearly allied to the God of heaven! In your several stations and degrees, ye are to show forth unto us "the Lord our Governor." Are all the thoughts of your hearts, all your tempers and desires, suitable to your high calling Are all your words like unto those which come out of the mouth of God Is there in all your actions dignity and love --a greatness which words cannot express, which can flow only from a heart "full of God;" and yet consistent with the character of "man that is a worm, and the son of man that is a worm"

6. Ye venerable men, who are more especially called to form the tender minds of youth, to dispel thence the shades of ignorance and error, and train them up to be wise unto salvation, are you "filled with the Holy Ghost" with all those "fruits of the Spirit," which your important office so indispensably requires Is your heart whole with God full of love and zeal to set up his kingdom on earth Do you continually remind those under your care, that the one rational end of all our studies, is to know, love and serve "the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent" Do you inculcate upon them day by day, that love alone never faileth (whereas, whether there be tongues, they shall fail, or philosophical knowledge, it shall vanish away); and that without love, all learning is but splendid ignorance, pompous folly, vexation of spirit Has all you teach an actual tendency to the love of God, and of all mankind for his sake Have you an eye to

this end in whatever you prescribe, touching the kind, the manner, and the measure of their studies; desiring and labouring that, wherever the lot of these young soldiers of Christ is cast, they may be so many burning and shining lights, adorning the gospel of Christ in all things And permit me to ask, Do you put forth all your strength in the vast work you have undertaken Do you labour herein with all your might exerting every faculty of your soul, using every talent which God hath lent you, and that to the uttermost of your power

7. Let it not be said, that I speak here, as if all under your care were intended to be clergymen. Not so: I only speak as if they were all intended to be Christians. But what example is set them by us who enjoy the beneficence of our forefathers --by Fellows, Students, Scholars; more especially those who are of some rank and eminence Do ye, brethren, abound in the fruits of the Spirit, in lowliness of mind, in self-denial and mortification, in seriousness and composure of spirit, in patience, meekness, sobriety, temperance; and in unwearied, restless endeavours to do good in every kind unto all men, to relieve their outward wants, and to bring their souls to the true knowledge and love of God Is this the general character of Fellows of Colleges I fear it is not. Rather, have not pride and haughtiness of spirit, impatience and peevishness, sloth and indolence, gluttony and sensuality, and even a proverbial uselessness, been objected to us, perhaps not always by our enemies, nor wholly without ground O that God would roll away this reproach from us, that the very memory of it might perish for ever!

8. Many of us are more immediately consecrated to God, called to minister in holy things. Are we then patterns to the rest, "in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity" (1 Tim. 4:12) Is there written on our forehead and on our heart, "Holiness to the Lord" From what motives did we enter upon this office Was it indeed with a single eye "to serve God, trusting that we were inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost to take upon us this ministration, for the promoting of his glory, and the edifying of his people" And have we "clearly determined, by God's grace, to give ourselves wholly to this office" Do we forsake and set aside, as much as in us lies, all worldly cares and studies Do we apply ourselves wholly to this one thing, and draw all our cares and studies this way Are we apt to teach Are we taught of God, that we may be able to teach others also Do we know God Do we know Jesus Christ Hath "God revealed his Son in us" And hath he "made us able ministers of the new covenant" Where then are the "seals of our apostleship" Who, that were dead in trespasses and sins, have been quickened by our word Have we a burning zeal to save souls from death, so that for their sake we often forget even to eat our bread Do we speak plain, "by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God" (2 Cor. 4:2) Are we dead to the world, and the things of the world, "laying up all our treasure in heaven" Do we lord over God's heritage Or are we the least, the servants of all When we bear the reproach of Christ, does it sit heavy upon us Or do we rejoice therein When we are smitten on the one cheek, do we resent it Are we impatient of affronts Or do we turn the other also; not resisting the evil, but overcoming evil with good Have we a bitter zeal, inciting us to strive sharply and passionately with them that are out of the way Or is our zeal the flame of love, so as to direct all our words with sweetness, lowliness, and meekness of wisdom

9. Once more: what shall we say concerning the youth of this place Have you either the form or the power of Christian godliness Are you humble, teachable, advisable; or stubborn, self-willed, heady, and highminded Are you obedient to your superiors as to parents Or do you despise those to whom you owe the tenderest reverence Are you diligent in your easy business,

pursuing your studies with all your strength Do you redeem the time, crowding as much work into every day as it can contain Rather, are ye not conscious to yourselves, that you waste away day after day, either in reading what has no tendency to Christianity, or in gaming, or in--you know not what Are you better managers of your fortune than of your time Do you, out of principle, take care to owe no man anything Do you "remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy;" to spend it in the more immediate worship of God When you are in his house, do you consider that God is there Do you behave "as seeing him that is invisible" Do you know how to possess your bodies in sanctification and honour" Are not drunkenness and uncleanness found among you Yea, are there not of you who "glory in their shame" Do not many of you "take the name of God in vain," perhaps habitually, without either remorse or fear Yea, are there not a multitude of you that are forsworn I fear, a swiftly-increasing multitude. Be not surprised, brethren. Before God and this congregation, I own myself to have been of the number, solemnly swearing to observe all those customs, which I then knew nothing of; and those statutes, which I did not so much as read over, either then, or for some years after. What is perjury, if this is not But if it be, O what a weight of sin, yea, sin of no common dye, lieth upon us! And doth not the Most High regard it

10. May it not be one of the consequences of this, that so many of you are a generation of triflers; triflers with God, with one another, and with your own souls For, how few of you spend, from one week to another, a single hour in private prayer! How few have any thought of God in the general tenor of your conversation! Who of you is in any degree acquainted with the work of his Spirit, his supernatural work in the souls of men Can you bear, unless now and then in a church, any talk of the Holy Ghost Would you not take it for granted, if one began such a conversation, that it was either hypocrisy or enthusiasm In the name of the Lord God Almighty, I ask, what religion are you of Even the talk of Christianity, ye cannot, will not bear. O my brethren, what a Christian city is this! "It is time for Thee, Lord, to lay to Thine hand!"

11. For, indeed, what probability, what possibility, rather (speaking after the manner of men), is there that Christianity, scriptural Christianity, should be again the religion of this place that all orders of men among us should speak and live as men "filled with the Holy Ghost" By whom should this Christianity be restored By those of you that are in authority Are you convinced then that this is scriptural Christianity Are you desirous it should be restored And do ye not count your fortune, liberty, life, dear unto yourselves, so ye may be instrumental in the restoring of it But suppose ye have this desire, who hath any power proportioned to the effect Perhaps some of you have made a few faint attempts, but with how small success! Shall Christianity then be restored by young, unknown, inconsiderable men I know not whether ye yourselves could suffer it. Would not some of you cry out, "Young man, in so doing thou reproachest us" But there is no danger of your being put to the proof; so hath iniquity overspread us like a flood. Whom then shall God send --the famine, the pestilence (the last messengers of God to a guilty land), or the sword, "the armies of the" Romish "aliens," to reform us into our first love Nay, "rather let us fall into thy hand, O Lord, and let us not fall into the hand of man." Lord, save, or we perish! Take us out of the mire, that we sink not! O help us against these enemies! for vain is the help of man. Unto thee all things are possible. According to the greatness of thy power, preserve thou those that are appointed to die; and preserve us in the manner that seemeth to thee good; not as we will, but as thou wilt!

Edited anonymously at the Memorial University of Newfoundland with corrections and other modifications by Ryan Danker and George Lyons of Northwest Nazarene University.

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6. Sermon 5: Justification By Faith, 1742

Published in 1746, though he began preaching it earlier, with a significant occurrence at Gloucester on October 6, 1739, and a famous open-air sermon on his father's tomb at Epworth on June 8, 1742.

"To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." Romans 4:5.

1. How a sinner may be justified before God, the Lord and Judge of all, is a question of no common importance to every child of man. It contains the foundation of all our hope, inasmuch as while we are at enmity with God, there can be no true peace, no solid joy, either in time or in eternity. What peace can there be, while our own heart condemns us; and much more, He that is "greater than our heart, and knoweth all things" What solid joy, either in this world or that to come, while "the wrath of God abideth on us"

2. And yet how little hath this important question been understood! What confused notions have many had concerning it! Indeed, not only confused, but often utterly false; contrary to the truth, as light to darkness; notions absolutely inconsistent with the oracles of God, and with the whole analogy of faith. And hence, erring concerning the very foundation, they could not possibly build thereon; at least, not "gold, silver, or precious stones," which would endure when tried as by fire; but only "hay and stubble," neither acceptable to God, nor profitable to man.

3. In order to justice, in far as in me lies, to the vast importance of the subject, to save those that seek the truth in sincerity from "vain jangling and strife of words," to clear the confusedness of thought into which so many have already been led thereby, and to give them true and just conceptions of this great mystery of godliness, I shall endeavour to show,

First. What is the general ground of this whole doctrine of justification.

Secondly. What justification is.

Thirdly. Who they are that are justified. And,

Fourthly. On what terms they are justified. I. I am, First, to show, what is the general ground of this whole doctrine of justification.

1. In the image of God was man made, holy as he that created him is holy; merciful as the Author of all is merciful; perfect as his Father in heaven is perfect. As God is love, so man, dwelling in love, dwelt in God, and God in him. God made him to be an "image of his own eternity," an incorruptible picture of the God of glory. He was accordingly pure, as God is pure, from every spot of sin. He knew not evil in any kind or degree, but was inwardly and outwardly sinless and undefiled. He "loved the Lord his God with all his heart, and with all his mind, and soul, and strength."

2. To man thus upright and perfect, God gave a perfect law, to which he required full and perfect obedience. He required full obedience in every point, and this to be performed without any

intermission, from the moment man became a living soul, till the time of his trial should be ended. No allowance was made for any falling short: As, indeed, there was no need of any; man being altogether equal to the task assigned, and thoroughly furnished for every good word and work.

3. To the entire law of love which was written in his heart, (against which, perhaps, he could not sin directly,) it seemed good to the sovereign wisdom of God to superadd one positive law: "Thou shalt not eat of the fruit of the tree that groweth in the midst of the garden;" annexing that penalty thereto, "In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die."

4. Such, then, was the state of man in Paradise. By the free, unmerited love of God, he was holy and happy: He knew, loved, enjoyed God, which is, in substance, life everlasting. And in this life of love, he was to continue for ever, if he continued to obey God in all things; but, if he disobeyed him in any, he was to forfeit all. "In that day," said God, "thou shalt surely die."

5. Man did disobey God. He "ate of the tree, of which God commanded him, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it." And in that day he was condemned by the righteous judgment of God. Then also the sentence whereof he was warned before, began to take place upon him. For the moment he tasted that fruit, he died. His soul died, was separated from God; separate from whom the soul has no more life than the body has when separate from the soul. His body, likewise, became corruptible and mortal; so that death then took hold on this also. And being already dead in spirit, dead to God, dead in sin, he hastened on to death everlasting; to the destruction both of body and soul, in the fire never to be quenched

6. Thus "by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin. And so death passed upon all men," as being contained in him who was the common father and representative of us all. Thus, "through the offence of one," all are dead, dead to God, dead in sin, dwelling in a corruptible, mortal body, shortly to be dissolved, and under the sentence of death eternal. For as, "by one man's disobedience," all "were made sinners;" so, by that offence of one, "judgment came upon all men to condemnation." (Romans v. 12, &c.)

7. In this state we were, even all mankind, when "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, to the end we might not perish, but have everlasting life." In the fullness of time he was made Man, another common Head of mankind, a second general Parent and Representative of the whole human race. And as such it was that "he bore our griefs," "the Lord laying upon him the iniquities of us all." Then was he "wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities." "He made his soul an offering for sin:" He poured out his blood for the transgressors: He "bare our sins in his own body on the tree," that by his stripes we might be healed: And by that one oblation of himself, once offered, he hath redeemed me and all mankind; having thereby "made a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world."

8. In consideration of this, that the Son of God hath "tasted death for every man," God hath now "reconciled the world to himself, not imputing to them their" former "trespasses." And thus, "as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation, even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification." So that, for the sake of his well-beloved Son, of what he hath done and suffered for us, God now vouchsafes, on one only condition, (which himself also enables us to perform,) both to remit the punishment due to

our sins, to reinstate us in his favour, and to restore our dead souls to spiritual life, as the earnest of life eternal.

9. This, therefore, is the general ground of the whole doctrine of justification. By the sin of the first Adam, who was not only the father, but likewise the representative, of us all, we all fell short of the favour of God; we all became children of wrath; or, as the Apostle expresses it, "judgment came upon all men to condemnation." Even so, by the sacrifice for sin made by the Second Adam, as the Representative of us all, God is so far reconciled to all the world, that he hath given them a new covenant; the plain condition whereof being once fulfilled, "there is no more condemnation" for us, but "we are justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ."

II. 1. But what is it to be "justified" What is "justification" This was the Second thing which I proposed to show. And it is evident, from what has been already observed, that it is not the being made actually just and righteous. This is "sanctification;" which is, indeed, in some degree, the immediate fruit of justification, but, nevertheless, is a distinct gift of God, and of a totally different nature. The one implies what God does for us through his Son; the other, what he works in us by his Spirit. So that, although some rare instances may be found, wherein the term "justified" or "justification" is used in so wide a sense as to include "sanctification" also; yet, in general use, they are sufficiently distinguished from each other, both by St. Paul and the other inspired writers.

2. Neither is that far-fetched conceit, that justification is the clearing us from accusation, particularly that of Satan, easily provable from any clear text of holy writ. In the whole scriptural account of this matter, as above laid down, neither that accuser nor his accusation appears to be at all taken in. It can not indeed be denied, that he is the "accuser" of men, emphatically so called. But it does in nowise appear, that the great Apostle hath any reference to this, more or less, in all he hath written touching justification, either to the Romans or the Galatians.

3. It is also far easier to take for granted, than to prove from any clear scripture testimony, that justification is the clearing us from the accusation brought against us by the law: At least if this forced, unnatural way of speaking mean either more or less than this, that, whereas we have transgressed the law of God, and thereby deserved the damnation of hell, God does not inflict on those who are justified the punishment which they had deserved.

4. Least of all does justification imply, that God is deceived in those whom he justifies; that he thinks them to be what, in fact, they are not; that he accounts them to be otherwise than they are. It does by no means imply, that God judges concerning us contrary to the real nature of things; that he esteems us better than we really are, or believes us righteous when we are unrighteous. Surely no. The judgment of the all-wise God is always according to truth. Neither can it ever consist with his unerring wisdom, to think that I am innocent, to judge that I am righteous or holy, because another is so. He can no more, in this manner, confound me with Christ, than with David or Abraham. Let any man to whom God hath given understanding, weigh this without prejudice; and he cannot but perceive, that such a notion of justification is neither reconcilable to reason nor Scripture.

5. The plain scriptural notion of justification is pardon, the forgiveness of sins. It is that act of God the Father, hereby, for the sake of the propitiation made by the blood of his Son, he

"showeth forth his righteousness (or mercy) by the remission of the sins that are past." This is the easy, natural account of it given by St. Paul, throughout this whole epistle. So he explains it himself, more particularly in this and in the following chapter. Thus, in the next verses but one to the text, "Blessed are they," saith he, "whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered: Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin." To him that is justified or forgiven, God "will not impute sin" to his condemnation. He will not condemn him on that account, either in this world or in that which is to come. His sins, all his past sins, in thought, word, and deed, are covered, are blotted out, shall not be remembered or mentioned against him, any more than if they had not been. God will not inflict on that sinner what he deserved to suffer, because the Son of his love hath suffered for him. And from the time we are "accepted through the Beloved," "reconciled to God through his blood," he loves, and blesses, and watches over us for good, even as if we had never sinned.

Indeed the Apostle in one place seems to extend the meaning of the word much farther, where he says, "Not the hearers of the law, but the doers of the law, shall be justified." Here he appears to refer our justification to the sentence of the great day. And so our Lord himself unquestionably doth, when he says, "By thy words thou shalt be justified;" proving hereby, that "for every idle word men shall speak, they shall give an account in the day of judgment." But perhaps we can hardly produce another instance of St. Paul's using the word in that distant sense. In the general tenor of his writings, it is evident he doth not; and least of all in the text before us, which undeniably speaks, not of those who have already "finished their course," but of those who are now just "setting out," just beginning to "run the race which is set before them."

III. 1. But this is the third thing which was to be considered, namely, Who are they that are justified And the Apostle tells us expressly, the ungodly: "He (that is, God) justifieth the ungodly;" the ungodly of every kind and degree; and none but the ungodly. As "they that are righteous need no repentance," so they need no forgiveness. It is only sinners that have any occasion for pardon: It is sin alone which admits of being forgiven. Forgiveness, therefore, has an immediate reference to sin, and, in this respect, to nothing else. It is our "unrighteousness" to which the pardoning God is "merciful:" It is our "iniquity" which he "remembereth no more."

2. This seems not to be at all considered by those who so vehemently contend that a man must be sanctified, that is, holy, before he can be justified; especially by such of them as affirm, that universal holiness or obedience must precede justification. (Unless they mean that justification at the last day, which is wholly out of the present question.) So far from it, that the very supposition is not only flatly impossible, (for where there is no love of God, there is no holiness, and there is no love of God but from a sense of his loving us,) but also grossly, intrinsically absurd, contradictory to itself. For it is not a saint but a sinner that is forgiven, and under the notion of a sinner. God justifieth not the godly, but the ungodly; not those that are holy already, but the unholy. Upon what condition he doeth this, will be considered quickly: but whatever it is, it cannot be holiness. To assert this, is to say the Lamb of God takes away only those sins which were taken away before.

3. Does then the good Shepherd seek and save only those that are found already No: He seeks and saves that which is lost. He pardons those who need his pardoning mercy. He saves from the guilt of sin, (and, at the same time, from the power,) sinners of every kind, of every degree: men who, till then, were altogether ungodly; in whom the love of the Father was not; and, consequently, in whom dwelt no good thing, no good or truly Christian temper, --but all such as

were evil and abominable, --pride, anger, love of the world, --the genuine fruits of that "carnal mind" which is "enmity against God."

4. These who are sick, the burden of whose sins is intolerable, are they that need a Physician; these who are guilty, who groan under the wrath of God, are they that need a pardon. These who are "condemned already," not only by God, but also by their own conscience, as by a thousand witnesses, of all their ungodliness, both in thought, and word, and work, cry aloud for Him that "justifieth the ungodly," through the redemption that is in Jesus; --the ungodly, and "him that worketh not;" that worketh not, before he is justified, anything that is good, that is truly virtuous or holy, but only evil continually. For his heart is necessarily, essentially evil, till the love of God is shed abroad therein. And while the tree is corrupt, so are the fruits; "for an evil tree cannot bring forth good fruit."

5. If it be objected, "Nay, but a man, before he is justified, may feed the hungry, or clothe the naked; and these are good works;" the answer is easy: He may do these, even before he is justified; and these are, in one sense, "good works;" they are "good and profitable to men." But it does not follow, that they are, strictly speaking, good in themselves, or good in the sight of God. All truly "good works" (to use the words of our Church) "follow after justification;" and they are therefore good and "acceptable to God in Christ," because they "spring out of a true and living faith." By a parity of reason, all "works done before justification are not good," in the Christian sense, "forasmuch as they spring not of faith in Jesus Christ;" (though from some kind of faith in God they may spring;) "yea, rather, for that they are not done as God hath willed and commanded them to be done, we doubt not" (how strange soever it may appear to some) "but they have the nature of sin."

6. Perhaps those who doubt of this have not duly considered the weighty reason which is here assigned, why no works done before justification can be truly and properly good. The argument plainly runs thus: --

No works are good, which are not done as God hath willed and commanded them to be done.

But no works done before justification are done as God hath willed and commanded them to be done:

Therefore, no works done before justification are good.

The first proposition is self-evident; and the second, that no works done before justification are done as God hath willed and commanded them to be done, will appear equally plain and undeniable, if we only consider, God hath willed and commanded that "all our works" should "be done in charity;" (en agape) in love, in that love to God which produces love to all mankind. But none of our works can be done in this love, while the love of the Father (of God as our Father) is not in us; and this love can not be in us till we receive the "Spirit of Adoption, crying in , our hearts, Abba, Father." If, therefore, God doth not "justify the ungodly," and him that (in this sense) "worketh not," then hath Christ died in vain; then, notwithstanding his death, can no flesh living be justified.

IV. 1. But on what terms, then, is he justified who is altogether "ungodly," and till that time "worketh not" On one alone; which is faith: He "believeth is Him that justifieth the ungodly." And "he that believeth is not condemned;" yea, he is "passed from death unto life." "For the

righteousness (or mercy) of God is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: --Whom God hath set forth for a propitiation, through faith in his blood; that he might be just, and" (consistently with his justice) "the Justifier of him which believeth in Jesus:" "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law;" without previous obedience to the moral law, which, indeed, he could not, till now, perform. That it is the moral law, and that alone, which is here intended, appears evidently from the words that follow: "Do we then make void the law through faith God forbid: Yea, we establish the law. What law do we establish by faith Not the ritual law: Not the ceremonial law of Moses. In nowise; but the great, unchangeable law of love, the holy love of God and of our neighbour."

2. Faith in general is a divine, supernatural "elegchos," "evidence" or "conviction," "of things not seen," not discoverable by our bodily senses, as being either past, future, or spiritual. Justifying faith implies, not only a divine evidence or conviction that "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself;" but a sure trust and confidence that Christ died for "my" sins, that he loved "me," and gave himself for "me." And at what time soever a sinner thus believes, be it in early childhood, in the strength of his years, or when he is old and hoary-haired, God justifieth that ungodly one: God, for the sake of his Son, pardoneth and absolveth him, who had in him, till then, no good thing. Repentance, indeed, God had given him before; but that repentance was neither more nor less than a deep sense of the want of all good, and the presence of all evil. And whatever good he hath, or doeth, from that hour when he first believes in God through Christ, faith does not "find," but "bring." This is the fruit of faith. First the tree is good, and then the fruit is good also.

3. I cannot describe the nature of this faith better than in the words of our own Church: "The only instrument of salvation" (whereof justification is one branch) "is faith; that is, a sure trust and confidence that God both hath and will forgive our sins, that he hath accepted us again into His favour, for the merits of Christ's death and passion. --But here we must take heed that we do not halt with God, through an inconstant, wavering faith: Peter, coming to Christ upon the water, because he fainted in faith, was in danger of drowning; so we, if we begin to waver or doubt, it is to be feared that we shall sink as Peter did, not into the water, but into the bottomless pit of hell fire." ("Second Sermon on the Passion")

"Therefore, have a sure and constant faith, not only that the death of Christ is available for all the world, but that he hath made a full and sufficient sacrifice for "thee," a perfect cleansing of "thy" sins, so that thou mayest say, with the Apostle, he loved "thee," and gave himself for "thee." For this is to make Christ "thine own," and to apply his merits unto "thyself." ("Sermon on the Sacrament, First Part")

4. By affirming that this faith is the term or "condition of justification," I mean, First, that there is no justification without it. "He that believeth not is condemned already;" and so long as he believeth not, that condemnation cannot be removed, but "the wrath of God abideth on him." As "there is no other name given under heaven," than that of Jesus of Nazareth, no other merit whereby a condemned sinner can ever be saved from the guilt of sin; so there is no other way of obtaining a share in his merit, than "by faith in his name." So that as long as we are without this faith, we are "strangers to the covenant of promise," we are "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and without God in the world." Whatsoever virtues (so called) a man may have, --I speak of those unto whom the gospel is preached; for "what have I to do to judge them that are

without" --whatsoever good works (so accounted) he may do, it profiteth not; he is still a "child of wrath," still under the curse, till he believes in Jesus.

5. Faith, therefore, is the "necessary" condition of justification; yea, and the "only necessary" condition thereof. This is the Second point carefully to be observed; that, the very moment God giveth faith (for "it is the gift of God") to the "ungodly" that "worketh not," that "faith is counted to him for righteousness." He hath no righteousness at all, antecedent to this, not so much as negative righteousness, or innocence. But "faith is imputed to him for righteousness," the very moment that he believeth. Not that God (as was observed before) thinketh him to be what he is not. But as "he made Christ to be sin for us," that is, treated him as a sinner, punishing him for our sins; so he counteth us righteous, from the time we believe in him: That is, he doth not punish us for our sins; yea, treats us as though we are guiltless and righteous.

6. Surely the difficulty of assenting to this proposition, that "faith is the "only condition" of justification," must arise from not understanding it. We mean thereby thus much, that it is the only thing without which none is justified; the only thing that is immediately, indispensably, absolutely requisite in order to pardon. As, on the one hand, though a man should have every thing else without faith, yet he cannot be justified; so, on the other, though he be supposed to want everything else, yet if he hath faith, he cannot but be justified. For suppose a sinner of any kind or degree, in a full sense of his total ungodliness, of his utter inability to think, speak, or do good, and his absolute meetness for hell-fire; suppose, I say, this sinner, helpless and hopeless, casts himself wholly on the mercy of God in Christ, (which indeed he cannot do but by the grace of God,) who can doubt but he is forgiven in that moment Who will affirm that any more is "indispensably required" before that sinner can be justified

Now, if there ever was one such instance from the beginning of the world, (and have there not been, and are there not, ten thousand times ten thousand) it plainly follows, that faith is, in the above sense, the sole condition of justification.

7. It does not become poor, guilty, sinful worms, who receive whatsoever blessings they enjoy, (from the least drop of water that cools our tongue, to the immense riches of glory in eternity,) of grace, of mere favour, and not of debt, to ask of God the reasons of his conduct. It is not meet for us to call Him in question "who giveth account to none of his ways;" to demand, "Why didst thou make faith the condition, the only condition, of justification Wherefore didst thou decree, "He that believeth," and he only, "shall be saved" This is the very point on which St. Paul so strongly insists in the ninth chapter of this Epistle, viz., That the terms of pardon and acceptance must depend, not on us, but "on him that calleth us;" that there is no "unrighteousness with God," in fixing his own terms, not according to ours, but his own good pleasure; who may justly say, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy;" namely, on him who believeth in Jesus. "So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth," to choose the condition on which he shall find acceptance; "but of God that showeth mercy;" that accepteth none at all, but of his own free love, his unmerited goodness. "Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy," viz., on those who believe on the Son of his love; "and whom he will," that is, those who believe not, "he hardeneth," leaves at last to the hardness of their hearts.

8. One reason, however, we may humbly conceive, of God's fixing this condition of justification, "If thou believest in the Lord Jesus Christ, thou shalt be saved," was to "hide pride from man." Pride had already destroyed the very angels of God, had cast down "a third part of the stars of

heaven." It was likewise in great measure owing to this, when the tempter said, "Ye shall be as gods," that Adam fell from his own steadfastness, and brought sin and death into the world. It was therefore an instance of wisdom worthy of God, to appoint such a condition of reconciliation for him and all his posterity as might effectually humble, might abase them to the dust. And such is faith. It is peculiarly fitted for this end: For he that cometh unto God by this faith, must fix his eye singly on his own wickedness, on his guilt and helplessness, without having the least regard to any supposed good in himself, to any virtue or righteousness whatsoever. He must come as a "mere sinner," inwardly and outwardly, self-destroyed and self-condemned, bringing nothing to God but ungodliness only, pleading nothing of his own but sin and misery. Thus it is, and thus alone, when his "mouth is stopped," and he stands utterly "guilty before" God, that he can "look unto Jesus," as the whole and sole "Propitiation for his sins." Thus only can he be "found in him," and receive the "righteousness which is of God by faith."

9. Thou ungodly one, who hearest or readest these words! thou vile, helpless, miserable sinner! I charge thee before God, the Judge of all, go straight unto him, with all thy ungodliness. Take heed thou destroy not thy own soul by pleading thy righteousness, more or less. Go as altogether ungodly, guilty, lost, destroyed, deserving and dropping into hell; and thou shalt then find favour in his sight, and know that he justifieth the ungodly. As such thou shalt be brought unto the "blood of sprinkling," as an undone, helpless, damned sinner. Thus "look unto Jesus!" There is "the Lamb of God," who "taketh away thy sins!" Plead thou no works, no righteousness of thine own! no humility, contrition, sincerity! In nowise. That were, in very deed, to deny the Lord that bought thee. No: Plead thou, singly, the blood of the covenant, the ransom paid for thy proud, stubborn, sinful soul. Who art thou, that now seest and feelest both thine inward and outward ungodliness Thou art the man! I want thee for my Lord! I challenge "thee" for a child of God by faith! The Lord hath need of thee. Thou who feelest thou art just fit for hell, art just fit to advance his glory; the glory of his free grace, justifying the ungodly and him that worketh not. O come quickly! Believe in the Lord Jesus; and thou, even thou, art reconciled to God.

Edited by Rev. Weldon Shuman with minor corrections and other modifications by Ryan Danker and George Lyons of Northwest Nazarene University.

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7. Sermon 16: The Means of Grace, 1746

"Ye are gone away from mine ordinances, and have not kept them." Mal. 3:7.

I. 1. But are there any ordinances now, since life and immortality were brought to light by the gospel Are there, under the Christian dispensation, any means ordained of God, as the usual channels of his grace This question could never have been proposed in the apostolical church, unless by one who openly avowed himself to be a Heathen; the whole body of Christians being agreed, that Christ had ordained certain outward means, for conveying his grace into the souls of men. Their constant practice set this beyond all dispute; for so long as "all that believed were together, and had all things common," (Acts 2:44,) "they continued steadfastly in the teaching of the Apostles, and in the breaking of bread, and in prayers." (Acts 2:42.)

2. But in process of time, when "the love of many waxed cold," some began to mistake the means for the end, and to place religion rather in doing those outward works, than in a heart renewed after the image of God. They forgot that "the end of" every "commandment is love, out of a pure heart," with "faith unfeigned;" the loving the Lord their God with all their heart, and their neighbour as themselves; and the being purified from pride, anger, and evil desire, by a "faith of the operation of God." Others seemed to imagine, that though religion did not principally consist in these outward means, yet there was something in them wherewith God was well pleased: something that would still make them acceptable in his sight, though they were not exact in the weightier matters of the law, in justice, mercy, and the love of God.

3. It is evident, in those who abused them thus, they did not conduce to the end for which they were ordained: Rather, the things which should have been for their health, were to them an occasion of falling. They were so far from receiving any blessing therein, that they only drew down a curse upon their head; so far from growing more heavenly in heart and life, that they were two-fold more the children of hell than before. Others, clearly perceiving that these means did not convey the grace of God to those children of the devil, began, from this particular case, to draw a general conclusion, -- that they were not means of conveying the grace of God.

4. Yet the number of those who abused the ordinances of God, was far greater than of those who despised them, till certain men arose, not only of great understanding, (sometimes joined with considerable learning,) but who likewise appeared to be men of love, experimentally acquainted with true, inward religion. Some of these were burning and shining lights, persons famous in their generations, and such as had well deserved of the church of Christ, for standing in the gap against the overflowings of ungodliness.

It cannot be supposed, that these holy and venerable men intended any more, at first, than to show that outward religion is nothing worth, without the religion of the heart; that "God is a Spirit, and they who worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth;" that, therefore, external worship is lost labour, without a heart devoted to God; that the outward ordinances of God then profit much, when they advance inward holiness, but, when they advance it not, are unprofitable and void, are lighter than vanity; yea, that when they are used, as it were in the place of this, they are an utter abomination to the Lord.

5. Yet is it not strange, if some of these, being strongly convinced of that horrid profanation of the ordinances of God, which had spread itself over the whole church, and well nigh driven true religion out of the world, -- in their fervent zeal for the glory of God, and the recovery of souls from that fatal delusion, -- spake as if outward religion were absolutely nothing, as if it had no place in the religion of Christ. It is not surprising at all, if they should not always have expressed themselves with sufficient caution; so that unwary hearers might believe they condemned all outward means, as altogether unprofitable, and as not designed of God to be the ordinary channels of conveying his grace into the souls of men.

Nay, it is not impossible, some of these holy men did, at length, themselves fall into this opinion; in particular those who, not by choice, but by the providence of God, were cut off from all these ordinances; perhaps wandering up and down, having no certain abiding-place, or dwelling in dens and caves of the earth. These, experiencing the grace of God in themselves, though they were deprived of all outward means, might infer that the same grace would be given to them who of set purpose abstained from them.

6. And experience shows how easily this notion spreads, and insinuates itself into the minds of men; especially of those who are throughly awakened out of the sleep of death, and begin to feel the weight of their sins a burden too heavy to be borne. These are usually impatient of their present state; and, trying every way to escape from it, they are always ready to catch at any new thing, any new proposal of ease or happiness. They have probably tried most outward means, and found no ease in them; it may be, more and more of remorse, and fear, and sorrow, and condemnation. It is easy, therefore, to persuade these, that it is better for them to abstain from all those means. They are already weary of striving (as it seems) in vain, of labouring in the fire; and are therefore glad of any pretence to cast aside that wherein their soul has no pleasure, to give over the painful strife, and sink down into an indolent inactivity.

II. 1. In the following discourse, I propose to examine at large, whether there are any means of grace.

By "means of grace" I understand outward signs, words, or actions, ordained of God, and appointed for this end, to be the ordinary channels whereby he might convey to men, preventing, justifying, or sanctifying grace.

I use this expression, means of grace, because I know none better; and because it has been generally used in the Christian church for many ages; -- in particular by our own Church, which directs us to bless God both for the means of grace, and hope of glory; and teaches us, that a sacrament is "an outward sign of inward grace, and a means whereby we receive the same."

The chief of these means are prayer, whether in secret or with the great congregation; searching the Scriptures; (which implies reading, hearing, and meditating thereon;) and receiving the Lord's Supper, eating bread and drinking wine in remembrance of Him: And these we believe to be ordained of God, as the ordinary channels of conveying his grace to the souls of men.

2. But we allow, that the whole value of the means depends on their actual subservience to the end of religion; that, consequently, all these means, when separate from the end, are less than nothing and vanity; that if they do not actually conduce to the knowledge and love of God, they

are not acceptable in his sight; yea, rather, they are an abomination before him, a stink in his nostrils; he is weary to bear them. Above all, if they are used as a kind of commutation for the religion they were designed to subserve, it is not easy to find words for the enormous folly and wickedness of thus turning God's arms against himself; of keeping Christianity out of the heart by those very means which were ordained for the bringing it in.

3. We allow, likewise, that all outward means whatever, if separate from the Spirit of God, cannot profit at all, cannot conduce, in any degree, either to the knowledge or love of God. Without controversy, the help that is done upon earth, He doeth it himself. It is He alone who, by his own almighty power, worketh in us what is pleasing in his sight; and all outward things, unless He work in them and by them, are mere weak and beggarly elements. Whosoever, therefore, imagines there is any intrinsic power in any means whatsoever, does greatly err, not knowing the Scriptures, neither the power of God. We know that there is no inherent power in the words that are spoken in prayer, in the letter of Scripture read, the sound thereof heard, or the bread and wine received in the Lord's Supper; but that it is God alone who is the Giver of every good gift, the Author of all grace; that the whole power is of him, whereby, through any of these, there is any blessing conveyed to our soul. We know, likewise, that he is able to give the same grace, though there were no means on the face of the earth. In this sense, we may affirm, that, with regard to God, there is no such thing as means; seeing he is equally able to work whatsoever pleaseth him, by any, or by none at all.

4. We allow farther, that the use of all means whatever will never atone for one sin; that it is the blood of Christ alone, whereby any sinner can be reconciled to God; there being no other propitiation for our sins, no other fountain for sin and uncleanness. Every believer in Christ is deeply convinced that there is no merit but in Him; that there is no merit in any of his own works; not in uttering the prayer, or searching the Scripture, or hearing the word of God, or eating of that bread and drinking of that cup. So that if no more be intended by the expression some have used, "Christ is the only means of grace," than this, -- that He is the only meritorious cause of it, it cannot be gainsayed by any who know the grace of God.

5. Yet once more: We allow, though it is a melancholy truth, that a large proportion of those who are called Christians, do to this day abuse the means of grace to the destruction of their souls. This is doubtless the case with all those who rest content in the form of godliness, without the power. Either they fondly presume they are Christians already, because they do thus and thus, - although Christ was never yet revealed in their hearts, nor the love of God shed abroad therein: -- Or else they suppose they shall infallibly be so barely because they use these means; idly dreaming, (though perhaps hardly conscious thereof,) either that there is some kind of power therein, whereby, sooner or later, (they know not when,) they shall certainly be made holy; or that there is a sort of merit in using them, which will surely move God to give them holiness, or accept them without it.

6. So little do they understand that great foundation of the whole Christian building, "By grace are ye saved:" Ye are saved from your sins, from the guilt and power thereof, ye are restored to the favour and image of God, not for any works, merits, or deservings of yours, but by the free grace, the mere mercy of God, through the merits of his well-beloved Son: Ye are thus saved, not by any power, wisdom, or strength, which is in you, or in any other creature; but merely through the grace or power of the Holy Ghost, which worketh all in all.

7. But the main question remains: "We know this salvation is the gift and the work of God; but how (may one say who is convinced he hath it not) may I attain thereto" If you say, "Believe, and thou shalt be saved!" he answers, "True; but how shall I believe" You reply, "Wait upon God." "Well; but how am I to wait In the means of grace, or out of them Am I to wait for the grace of God which bringeth salvation, by using these means, or by laying them aside"

8. It cannot possibly be conceived, that the word of God should give no direction in so important a point; or, that the Son of God, who came down from heaven for us men and for our salvation, should have left us undetermined with regard to a question wherein our salvation is so nearly concerned.

And, in fact, he hath not left us undetermined; he hath shown us the way wherein we should go. We have only to consult the oracles of God; to inquire what is written there; and, if we simply abide by their decision, there can no possible doubt remain.

III. 1. According to this, according to the decision of holy writ all who desire the grace of God are to wait for it in the means which he hath ordained; in using, not in laying them aside.

And, First, all who desire the grace of God are to wait for it in the way of prayer. This is the express direction of our Lord himself. In his Sermon upon the Mount, after explaining at large wherein religion consists, and describing the main branches of it, he adds, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For everyone that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened." (Matt. 7:7, 8.) Here we are in the plainest manner directed to ask, in order to, or as a means of, receiving; to seek, in order to find, the grace of God, the pearl of great price; and to knock, to continue asking and seeking, if we would enter into his kingdom.

2. That no doubt might remain, our Lord labours this point in a more peculiar manner. He appeals to every man's own heart: "What man is there of you, who, if his son ask bread, will give him a stone Or, if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven," the Father of angels and men, the Father of the spirits of all flesh, "give good things to them that ask him" (Matt. 7:9-11.) Or, as he expresses himself on another occasion, including all good things in one, "How much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him" (Luke 11:13.) It should be particularly observed here, that the persons directed to ask had not then received the Holy Spirit: Nevertheless our Lord directs them to use this means, and promises that it should be effectual; that upon asking they should receive the Holy Spirit, from him whose mercy is over all his works.

3. The absolute necessity of using this means, if we would receive any gift from God, yet farther appears from that remarkable passage which immediately precedes these words: "And he said unto them," whom he had just been teaching how to pray, "Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and shall say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves: And he from within shall answer, Trouble me not; I cannot rise and give thee. I say unto you, though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity, he will rise, and give him as many as he needeth. And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you." (Luke 11:5, 7-9.) "Though he will not give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth." How could our blessed Lord more plainly

declare, that we may receive of God, by this means, by importunately asking, what otherwise we should not receive at all

4. "He spake also another parable, to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint," till through this means they should receive of God whatsoever petition they asked of him: "There was in a city a judge which feared not God, neither regarded man. And there was a widow in that city, and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of my adversary. And he would not for a while; but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man, yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest, by her continual coming, she weary me." (Luke 18:1-5.) The application of this our Lord himself hath made: "Hear what the unjust judge saith!" Because she continues to ask, because she will take no denial, therefore I will avenge her. "And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him I tell you he will avenge them speedily," if they pray and faint not.

5. A direction, equally full and express, to wait for the blessings of God in private prayer, together with a positive promise, that, by this means, we shall obtain the request of our lips, he hath given us in those well-known words: "Enter into thy closet, and, when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly." (Matt. 6:6.)

6. If it be possible for any direction to be more clear, it is that which God hath given us by the Apostle, with regard to prayer of every kind, public or private, and the blessing annexed thereto: "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally," (if they ask; otherwise "ye have not, because ye ask not," (James 4:2,) "and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him." (James 1:5).

If it be objected, "But this is no direction to unbelievers; to them who know not the pardoning grace of God: For the Apostle adds, 'But let him ask in faith;' otherwise, 'let him not think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord:'" I answer, The meaning of the word faith, in this place, is fixed by the Apostle himself, as if it were on purpose to obviate this objection, in the following: "Let him ask in faith, nothing wavering," nothing doubting, μηδεν διακρινομενος. Not doubting but God heareth his prayer, and will fulfil the desire of his heart.

The gross, blasphemous absurdity of supposing faith, in this place, to be taken in the full Christian meaning, appears hence: It is supposing the Holy Ghost to direct a man who knows he has not faith, (which is here termed wisdom,) to ask it of God, with a positive promise that "it shall be given him;" and then immediately to subjoin, that it shall not be given him, unless he have it before he asks for it! But who can bear such a supposition From this scripture, therefore, as well as those cited above, we must infer, that all who desire the grace of God are to wait for it in the way of prayer.

7. Secondly. All who desire the grace of God are to wait for it in searching the Scriptures.

Our Lord's direction, with regard to the use of this means, is likewise plain and clear. "Search the Scriptures," saith he to the unbelieving Jews, "for they testify of me." (John 5:39.) And for this very end did he direct them to search the Scriptures, that they might believe in him.

The objection, that "this is not a command, but only an assertion, that they did search the Scriptures," is shamelessly false. I desire those who urge it, to let us know how a command can

be more clearly expressed, than in those terms, Ereunate tas grajas. It is as peremptory as so many words can make it.

And what a blessing from God attends the use of this means, appears from what is recorded concerning the Bereans; who, after hearing St. Paul, "searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so. Therefore many of them believed;" -- found the grace of God, in the way which he had ordained. (Acts 17:11, 12.)

It is probable, indeed, that in some of those who had "received the word with all readiness of mind," "faith came," as the same Apostle speaks, "by hearing," and was only confirmed by reading the Scriptures: But it was observed above, that under the general term of searching the Scriptures, both hearing, reading, and meditating are contained.

8. And that this is a means whereby God not only gives, but also confirms and increases, true wisdom, we learn from the words of St. Paul to Timothy: "From a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." (2 Tim. 3:15.) The same truth (namely, that this is the great means God has ordained for conveying his manifold grace to man) is delivered, in the fullest manner that can be conceived, in the words which immediately follow: "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God;" consequently, all Scripture is infallibly true; "and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness;" to the end "that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works." (2 Tim. 3:16, 17.)

9. It should be observed, that this is spoken primarily and directly of the Scriptures which Timothy had known from a child; which must have been those of the Old Testament, for the New was not then wrote. How far then was St. Paul (though he was "not a whit behind the very chief of the Apostles," nor, therefore, I presume, behind any man now upon earth) from making light of the Old Testament! Behold this, lest ye one day "wonder and perish," ye who make so small account of one half of the oracles of God! Yea, and that half of which the Holy Ghost expressly declares, that it is "profitable," as a means ordained of God, for this very thing, "for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness;" to the end, "the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works."

10. Nor is this profitable only for the men of God, for those who walk already in the light of his countenance; but also for those who are yet in darkness, seeking him whom they know not. Thus St. Peter, "We have also a more sure word of prophecy:" Literally, "And we have the prophetic word more sure;" kai ecomen bebaioteron ton projhtikon logon, confirmed by our being "eye-witnesses of his Majesty," and "hearing the voice which came from the excellent glory;" unto which -- prophetic word; so he styles the Holy Scriptures -- "ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the Day-star arise in your hearts." (2 Peter 1:19.) Let all, therefore, who desire that day to dawn upon their hearts, wait for it in searching the Scriptures.

11. Thirdly. All who desire an increase of the grace of God are to wait for it in partaking of the Lord's Supper: For this also is a direction himself hath given. "The same night in which he was betrayed, he took bread, and brake it, and said, Take, eat; this is my body;" that is, the sacred sign of my body: "This do in remembrance of me." Likewise, "he took the cup, saying, This cup is the new testament," or covenant, "in my blood;" the sacred sign of that covenant; "this do ye

in remembrance of me." "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show forth the Lord's death till he come:" (1 Cor. 11:23, &c. :) Ye openly exhibit the same by, these visible signs, before God, and angels, and men; ye manifest your solemn remembrance of his death, till he cometh in the clouds of heaven.

Only "let a man" first "examine himself," whether he understand the nature and design of this holy institution, and whether he really desire to be himself made conformable to the death of Christ; and so, nothing doubting, "let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup." (1 Cor. 11:28.)

Here, then, the direction first given by our Lord is expressly repeated by the Apostle: "Let him eat; let him drink;" *esqietv, pinetv*, both in the imperative mood;) words not implying a bare permission only, but a clear, explicit command; a command to all those either who already are filled with peace and joy in believing, or who can truly say, "The remembrance of our sins is grievous unto us, the burden of them is intolerable."

12. And that this is also an ordinary, stated means of receiving the grace of God, is evident from those words of the Apostle, which occur in the preceding chapter: "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion," or communication, "of the blood of Christ The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ" (1 Cor. 10:16.) Is not the eating of that bread, and the drinking of that cup, the outward, visible means, whereby God conveys into our souls all that spiritual grace, that righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, which were purchased by the body of Christ once broken and the blood of Christ once shed for us Let all, therefore, who truly desire the grace of God, eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.

IV. 1. But as plainly as God hath pointed out the way wherein he will be inquired after, innumerable are the objections which men, wise in their own eyes, have, from time to time, raised against it. It may be needful to consider a few of these; not because they are of weight in themselves, but because they have so often been used, especially of late years, to turn the lame out of the way; yea, to trouble and subvert those who did run well, till Satan appeared as an angel of light.

The first and chief of these is, "You cannot use these means (as you call them) without trusting in them." I pray, where is this written I expect you should show me plain Scripture for your assertion: Otherwise I dare not receive it; because I am not convinced that you are wiser than God.

If it really had been as you assert, it is certain Christ must have known it. And if he had known it, he would surely have warned us; he would have revealed it long ago. Therefore, because he has not, because there is no tittle of this in the whole revelation of Jesus Christ, I am as fully assured your assertion is false, as that this revelation is of God.

"However, leave them off for a short time, to see whether you trusted in them or no." So I am to disobey God, in order to know whether I trust in obeying him! And do you avow this advice Do you deliberately teach to "do evil, that good may come" O tremble at the sentence of God against such teachers! Their "damnation is just."

"Nay, if you are troubled when you leave them off, it is plain you trusted in them." By no means. If I am troubled when I wilfully disobey God, it is plain his Spirit is still striving with me; but if I am not troubled at wilful sin, it is plain I am given up to a reprobate mind.

But what do you mean by "trusting in them" -- looking for the blessing of God therein believing, that if I wait in this way, I shall attain what otherwise I should not So I do. And so I will, God being my helper, even to my life's end. By the grace of God I will thus trust in them, till the day of my death; that is, I will believe, that whatever God hath promised, he is faithful also to perform. And seeing he hath promised to bless me in this way, I trust it shall be according to his word.

2. It has been, Secondly, objected, "This is seeking salvation by works." Do you know the meaning of the expression you use What is seeking salvation by works In the writings of St. Paul, it means, either seeking to be saved by observing the ritual works of the Mosaic law; or expecting salvation for the sake of our own works, by the merit of our own righteousness. But how is either of these implied in my waiting in the way God has ordained, and expecting that he will meet me there, because he has promised so to do

I do expect that he will fulfil his word, that he will meet and bless me in this way. Yet not for the sake of any works which I have done, nor for the merit of my righteousness; but merely through the merits, and sufferings, and love of his Son, in whom he is always well pleased.

3. It has been vehemently objected, Thirdly, "that Christ is the only means of grace." I answer, this is mere playing upon words. Explain your term, and the objection vanishes away. When we say, "Prayer is a means of grace," we understand a channel through which the grace of God is conveyed. When you say, "Christ is the means of grace," you understand the sole price and purchaser of it; or, that "no man cometh unto the Father, but through him." And who denies it But this is utterly wide of the question.

4. "But does not the Scripture" (it has been objected, Fourthly) "direct us to wait for salvation Does not David say, `My soul waiteth upon God, for of him cometh my salvation' And does not Isaiah teach us the same thing, saying, `O Lord, we have waited for thee'" All this cannot be denied. Seeing it is the gift of God, we are undoubtedly to wait on him for salvation. But how shall we wait If God himself has appointed a way, can you find a better way of waiting for him But that he hath appointed a way hath been shown at large, and also what that way is. The very words of the Prophet, which you cite, put this out of the question. For the whole sentence runs thus: -- "In the way of thy judgments," or ordinances, "O Lord, have we waited for thee." (Isaiah 26:8.) And in the very same way did David wait, as his own words abundantly testify: "I have waited for thy saving health, O Lord, and have kept thy law. Teach me, O Lord, the way of thy statutes, and I shall to keep it unto the end."

5. "Yea," say some, "but God has appointed another way. -- `Stand still, and see the salvation of God."

Let us examine the Scriptures to which you refer. The first of them, with the context, runs thus: --

"And when Pharaoh drew nigh, the children of Israel lifted up their eyes; and they were sore afraid. And they said unto Moses, Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not; stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord. And the Lord said unto Moses, Speak unto the children of Israel that they go forward. But lift thou up thy rod, and stretch out thine hand over the sea, and divide it. And the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea." (Exod. 14:10, &c.)

This was the salvation of God, which they stood still to see, by marching forward with all their might!

The other passage, wherein this expression occurs stands thus: "There came some that told Jehoshaphat, saying, There cometh a great multitude against thee, from beyond the sea. And Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek the Lord, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah. And Judah gathered themselves together to ask help of the Lord: Even out of all the cities they came to seek the Lord. And Jehoshaphat stood in the congregation, in the house of the Lord. -- Then upon Jahaziel came the Spirit of the Lord. And he said, Be not dismayed by reason of this great multitude. To-morrow go ye down against them: Ye shall not need to fight in this battle. Set yourselves: Stand ye still, and see the salvation of the Lord. And they rose early in the morning, and went forth. And when they began to sing and to praise, the Lord set ambushments against the children of Moab, Ammon, and mount Seir: -- and everyone helped to destroy another." (2 Chron. 20:2, &c.)

Such was the salvation which the children of Judah saw. But how does all this prove, that we ought not to wait for the grace of God in the means which he hath ordained

6. I shall mention but one objection more, which, indeed, does not properly belong to this head: Nevertheless, because it has been so frequently urged, I may not wholly pass it by.

"Does not St. Paul say, 'If ye be dead with Christ, why are ye subject to ordinances' (Col. 2:20.) Therefore a Christian, one that is dead with Christ, need not use the ordinances any more."

So you say, "If I am a Christian, I am not subject to the ordinances of Christ!" Surely, by the absurdity of this, you must see at the first glance, that the ordinances here mentioned cannot be the ordinances of Christ: That they must needs be the Jewish ordinances, to which it is certain a Christian is no longer subject.

And the same undeniably appears from the words immediately following, "Touch not, taste not, handle not;" all evidently referring to the ancient ordinances of the Jewish law.

So that this objection is the weakest of all. And, in spite of all, that great truth must stand unshaken; -- that all who desire the grace of God, are to wait for it in the means which he hath ordained.

V. 1. But this being allowed, that all who desire the grace of God are to wait for it in the means he hath ordained; it may still be inquired, how those means should be used, both as to the order and the manner of using them.

With regard to the former, we may observe, there is a kind of order, wherein God himself is generally pleased to use these means in bringing a sinner to salvation. A stupid, senseless wretch is going on in his own way, not having God in all his thoughts, when God comes upon him unawares, perhaps by an awakening sermon or conversation, perhaps by some awful providence, or, it may be, an immediate stroke of his convincing Spirit, without any outward means at all. Having now a desire to flee from the wrath to come, he purposely goes to hear how it may be done. If he finds a preacher who speaks to the heart, he is amazed, and begins searching the Scriptures, whether these things are so The more he hears and reads, the more convinced he is; and the more he meditates thereon day and night. Perhaps he finds some

other book which explains and enforces what he has heard and read in Scripture. And by all these means, the arrows of conviction sink deeper into his soul. He begins also to talk of the things of God, which are ever uppermost in his thoughts; yea, and to talk with God; to pray to him; although, through fear and shame, he scarce knows what to say. But whether he can speak or no, he cannot but pray, were it only in "groans which cannot be uttered." Yet, being in doubt, whether "the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity" will regard such a sinner as him, he wants to pray with those who know God, with the faithful, in the great congregation. But here he observes others go up to the table of the Lord. He considers, "Christ has said, 'Do this!' How is it that I do not I am too great a sinner. I am not fit. I am not worthy." After struggling with these scruples a while, he breaks through. And thus he continues in God's way, in hearing, reading, meditating, praying, and partaking of the Lord's Supper, till God, in the manner that pleases him, speaks to his heart, "Thy faith hath saved thee. Go in peace."

2. By observing this order of God, we may learn what means to recommend to any particular soul. If any of these will reach a stupid, careless sinner, it is probably hearing, or conversation. To such, therefore, we might recommend these, if he has ever any thought about salvation. To one who begins to feel the weight of his sins, not only hearing the Word of God, but reading it too, and perhaps other serious books, may be a means of deeper conviction. May you not advise him also, to meditate on what he reads, that it may have its full force upon his heart Yea, and to speak thereof, and not be ashamed, particularly among those who walk in the same path. When trouble and heaviness take hold upon him, should you not then earnestly exhort him to pour out his soul before God; "always to pray and not to faint;" and when he feels the worthlessness of his own prayers, are you not to work together with God, and remind him of going up into the house of the Lord, and praying with all that fear him But if he does this, the dying word of his Lord will soon be brought to his remembrance; a plain intimation that this is the time when we should second the motions of the blessed Spirit. And thus may we lead him, step by step, through all the means which God has ordained; not according to our own will, but just as the Providence and the Spirit of God go before and open the way.

3. Yet, as we find no command in holy writ for any particular order to be observed herein, so neither do the providence and the Spirit of god adhere to any without variation; but the means into which different men are led, and in which they find the blessing of God, are varied, transposed, and combined together, a thousand different ways. Yet still our wisdom is to follow the leadings of his providence and his Spirit; to be guided herein, (more especially as to the means wherein we ourselves seek the grace of God,) partly by his outward providence, giving us the opportunity of using sometimes one means, sometimes another, partly by our experience, which it is whereby his free Spirit is pleased most to work in our heart. And in the mean time, the sure and general rule for all who groan for the salvation of God is this, -- whenever opportunity serves, use all the means which God has ordained; for who knows in which God will meet thee with the grace that bringeth salvation

4. As to the manner of using them, whereon indeed it wholly depends whether they should convey any grace at all to the user; it behoves us, First, always to retain a lively sense, that God is above all means. Have a care, therefore, of limiting the Almighty. He doeth whatsoever and whensoever it pleaseth him. He can convey his grace, either in or out of any of the means which he hath appointed. Perhaps he will. "Who hath known the mind of the Lord or who hath been his counsellor" Look then every moment for his appearing! Be it at the hour you are employed in his

ordinances; or before, or after that hour; or when you are hindered therefrom: He is not hindered. He is always ready, always able, always willing to save. "It is the Lord: Let him do what seemeth him good!"

Secondly. Before you use any means, let it be deeply impressed on your soul; -- there is no power in this. It is, in itself, a poor, dead, empty thing: Separate from God, it is a dry leaf, a shadow. Neither is there any merit in my using this; nothing intrinsically pleasing to God; nothing whereby I deserve any favour at his hands, no, not a drop of water to cool my tongue. But, because God bids, therefore I do; because he directs me to wait in this way, therefore here I wait for his free mercy, whereof cometh my salvation.

Settle this in your heart, that the opus operatum, the mere work done, profiteth nothing; that there is no power to save, but in the Spirit of God, no merit, but in the blood of Christ; that, consequently, even what God ordains, conveys no grace to the soul, if you trust not in Him alone. On the other hand, he that does truly trust in Him, cannot fall short of the grace of God, even though he were cut off from every outward ordinance, though he were shut up in the centre of the earth.

Thirdly. In using all means, seek God alone. In and through every outward thing, look singly to the power of his Spirit; and the merits of his Son. Beware you do not stick in the work itself; if you do, it is all lost labour. Nothing short of God can satisfy your soul. Therefore, eye him in all, through all, and above all.

Remember also, to use all means, as means; as ordained, not for their own sake, but in order to the renewal of your soul in righteousness and true holiness. If, therefore, they actually tend to this, well; but if not, they are dung and dross.

Lastly. After you have used any of these, take care how you value yourself thereon: How you congratulate yourself as having done some great thing. This is turning all into poison. Think, "If God was not there, what does this avail? Have I not been adding sin to sin? How long O Lord! save, or I perish! O lay not this sin to my charge!" If God was there, if his love flowed into your heart, you have forgot, as it were, the outward work. You see, you know, you feel, God is all in all. Be abased. Sink down before him. Give him all the praise. "Let God in all things be glorified through Christ Jesus". Let all your bones cry out, "My song shall be always of the loving-kindness of the Lord: With my mouth will I ever be telling of thy truth, from one generation to another!"

Edited by Darin Million with corrections by Ryan Danker and George Lyons for the Wesley Center for Applied Theology.

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8. Sermon 39: Catholic Spirit, 1750

"And when he was departed thence, he lighted on Jehonadab the son of Rechab coming to meet him, and he saluted him, and said to him, Is thine heart right, as my heart is with thy heart
And Jehonadab answered: It is. If it be, give me thine hand." 2 Kings 10:15.

1. It is allowed even by those who do not pay this great debt, that love is due to all mankind, the royal law, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," carrying its own evidence to all that hear it: and that, not according to the miserable construction put upon it by the zealots of old times, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour," thy relation, acquaintance, friend, "and hate thine enemy;" not so; "I say unto you," said our Lord, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children," may appear so to all mankind, "of your Father which is in heaven; who maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.

2. But it is sure, there is a peculiar love which we owe to those that love God. So David: "All my delight is upon the saints that are in the earth, and upon such as excel in virtue." And so a greater than he: "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another: as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:34, 35). This is that love on which the Apostle John so frequently and strongly insists: "This," saith he, "is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another" (1 John 3:11). "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought," if love should call us thereto, "to lay down our lives for the brethren" (verse 16). And again: "Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God. He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love" (4:7, 8). "Not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another (verses 10, 11).

3. All men approve of this; but do all men practise it Daily experience shows the contrary. Where are even the Christians who "love one another as he hath given us commandment" how many hindrances lie in the way! The two grand, general hindrances are, first, that they cannot all think alike and, in consequence of this, secondly, they cannot all walk alike; but in several smaller points their practice must differ in proportion to the difference of their sentiments.

4. But although a difference in opinions or modes of worship may prevent an entire external union, yet need it prevent our union in affection Though we cannot think alike, may we not love alike May we not be of one heart, though we are not of one opinion Without all doubt, we may. Herein all the children of God may unite, notwithstanding these smaller differences. These remaining as they are, they may forward one another in love and in good works.

5. Surely in this respect the example of Jehu himself, as mixed a character as he was of, is well worthy both the attention and imitation of every serious Christian. "And when he was departed thence, he lighted on Jehonadab the son of Rechab coming to meet him; and he saluted him, and said to him, Is thine heart right, as my heart is with thy heart And Jehonadab answered, It is. If it be, give me thine hand."

The text naturally divides itself into two parts: --First, a question proposed by Jehu to Jehonadab: "Is thine heart right, as my heart is with thy heart" Secondly, an offer made on Jehonadab's answering, "It is:" "If it be, give me thine hand."

I. 1. And, first, let us consider the question proposed by Jehu to Jehonadab, "Is thine heart right, as my heart is with thy heart"

The very first thing we may observe in these words, is, that here is no inquiry concerning Jehonadab's opinions. And yet it is certain, he held some which were very uncommon, indeed quite peculiar to himself; and some which had a close influence upon his practice; on which, likewise, he laid so great a stress, as to entail them upon his children's children, to their latest posterity. This is evident from the account given by Jeremiah many years after his death: "I took Jaazaniah and his brethren and all his sons, and the whole house of the Rechabites, . . . and set before them pots full of wine, and cups, and said unto them, Drink ye wine. But they said, We will drink no wine: for Jonadab," or Jehonadab, "the son of Rechab, our father" (it would be less ambiguous, if the words were placed thus: "Jehonadab our father, the son of Rechab," out of love and reverence to whom, he probably desired his descendants might be called by his name), "commanded us, saying, ye shall drink no wine, neither ye, nor your sons for ever. Neither shall ye build house, nor sow seed; nor plant vineyard, nor have any: but all your days ye shall dwell in tents.... And we have obeyed, and done according to all that Jonadab our father commanded us" (Jer. 35:3-10).

2. And yet Jehu (although it seems to have been his manner both in things secular and religious, to drive furiously) does not concern himself at all with any of these things, but lets Jehonadab abound in his own sense. And neither of them appears to have given the other the least disturbance touching the opinions which he maintained.

3. It is very possible, that many good men now also may entertain peculiar opinions; and some of them may be as singular herein as even Jehonadab was. And it is certain, so long as we know but in part, that all men will not see all things alike. It is an unavoidable consequence of the present weakness and shortness of human understanding, that several men will be of several minds in religion as well as in common life. So it has been from the beginning of the world, and so it will be "till the restitution of all things."

4. Nay, farther: although every man necessarily believes that every particular opinion which he holds is true (for to believe any opinion is not true, is the same thing as not to hold it); yet can no man be assured that all his own opinions, taken together, are true. Nay, every thinking man is assured they are not, seeing *humanum est errare et nescire*: "To be ignorant of many things, and to mistake in some, is the necessary condition of humanity." This, therefore, he is sensible, is his own case. He knows, in the general, that he himself is mistaken; although in what particulars he mistakes, he does not, perhaps he cannot, know.

5. I say "perhaps he cannot know;" for who can tell how far invincible ignorance may extend or (that comes to the same thing) invincible prejudice --which is often so fixed in tender minds, that it is afterwards impossible to tear up what has taken so deep a root. And who can say, unless he knew every circumstance attending it, how far any mistake is culpable seeing all guilt must suppose some concurrence of the will; of which he only can judge who searcheth the heart.

6. Every wise man, therefore, will allow others the same liberty of thinking which he desires they should allow him; and will no more insist on their embracing his opinions, than he would have them to insist on his embracing theirs. He bears with those who differ from him, and only asks him with whom he desires to unite in love that single question, "Is thy heart right, as my heart is with thy heart"

7. We may, secondly, observe, that here is no inquiry made concerning Jehonadab's mode of worship; although it is highly probable there was, in this respect also, a very wide difference between them. For we may well believe Jehonadab, as well as all his posterity, worshipped God at Jerusalem! whereas Jehu did not: he had more regard to state-policy than religion. And, therefore, although he slew the worshippers of Baal, and "destroyed Baal out of Israel," yet from the convenient sin of Jeroboam, the worship of the "golden calves," he "departed not" (2 Kings 10:29).

8. But even among men of an upright heart, men who desire to "have a conscience void of offence," it must needs be, that, as long as there are various opinions, there will be various ways of worshipping God; seeing a variety of opinion necessarily implies a variety of practice. And as, in all ages, men have differed in nothing more than in their opinions concerning the Supreme Being, so in nothing have they more differed from each other, than in the manner of worshipping him. Had this been only in the heathen world, it would not have been at all surprising: for we know, these "by" their "wisdom knew not God;" nor, therefore, could they know how to worship him. But is it not strange, that even in the Christian world, although they all agree in the general, "God is a Spirit; and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth;" yet the particular modes of worshipping God are almost as various as among the heathens

9. And how shall we choose among so much variety No man can choose for, or prescribe to, another. But every one must follow the dictates of his own conscience, in simplicity and godly sincerity. He must be fully persuaded in his own mind and then act according to the best light he has. Nor has any creature power to constrain another to walk by his own rule. God has given no right to any of the children of men thus to lord it over the conscience of his brethren; but every man must judge for himself, as every man must give an account of himself to God.

10. Although, therefore, every follower of Christ is obliged, by the very nature of the Christian institution, to be a member of some particular congregation or other, some Church, as it is usually termed (which implies a particular manner of worshipping God; for "two cannot walk together unless they be agreed"); yet none can be obliged by any power on earth but that of his own conscience, to prefer this or that congregation to another, this or that particular manner of worship. I know it is commonly supposed, that the place of our birth fixes the Church to which we ought to belong; that one, for instance, who is born in England, ought to be a member of that which is styled the Church of England, and consequently, to worship God in the particular manner which is prescribed by that Church. I was once a zealous maintainer of this; but I find many reasons to abate of this zeal. I fear it is attended with such difficulties as no reasonable man can get over. Not the least of which is, that if this rule had took place, there could have been no Reformation from Popery; seeing it entirely destroys the right of private judgement, on which that whole Reformation stands.

11. I dare not, therefore, presume to impose my mode of worship on any other. I believe it is truly primitive and apostolical: but my belief is no rule for another. I ask not, therefore, of him with whom I would unite in love, Are you of my church, of my congregation Do you receive the same form of church government, and allow the same church officers, with me Do you join in the same form of prayer wherein I worship God I inquire not, Do you receive the supper of the Lord in the same posture and manner that I do nor whether, in the administration of baptism, you agree with me in admitting sureties for the baptized, in the manner of administering it; or the age of those to whom it should be administered. Nay, I ask not of you (as clear as I am in my own mind), whether you allow baptism and the Lord's supper at all. Let all these things stand by: we will talk of them, if need be, at a more convenient season, my only question at present is this, "Is thine heart right, as my heart is with thy heart"

12. But what is properly implied in the question I do not mean, What did Jehu imply therein But, What should a follower of Christ understand thereby, when he proposes it to any of his brethren

The first thing implied is this: Is thy heart right with God Dost thou believe his being and his perfections his eternity, immensity, wisdom, power his justice, mercy, and truth Dost thou believe that he now "upholdeth all things by the word of his power" and that he governs even the most minute, even the most noxious, to his own glory, and the good of them that love him hast thou a divine evidence, a supernatural conviction, of the things of God Dost thou "walk by faith not by sight" looking not at temporal things, but things eternal

13. Dost thou believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, "God over all, blessed for ever" Is he revealed in thy soul Dost thou know Jesus Christ and him crucified Does he dwell in thee, and thou in him Is he formed in thy heart by faith having absolutely disclaimed all thy own works, thy own righteousness, hast thou "submitted thyself unto the righteousness of God, which is by faith in Christ Jesus Art thou "found in him, not having thy own righteousness, but the righteousness which is by faith" And art thou, through him, "fighting the good fight of faith, and laying hold of eternal life"

14. Is thy faith energoumenh di agaphs, --filled with the energy of love Dost thou love God (I do not say "above all things," for it is both an unscriptural and an ambiguous expression, but) "with all thy heart, and with all thy mind, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength" Dost thou seek all thy happiness in him alone And dost thou find what thou seekest Does thy soul continually "magnify the Lord, and thy spirit rejoice in God thy Saviour" having learned "in everything to give thanks, dost thou find "it is a joyful and a pleasant thing to be thankful" Is God the centre of thy soul, the sum of all thy desires Art thou accordingly laying up thy treasure in heaven, and counting all things else dung and dross hath the love of God cast the love of the world out of thy soul Then thou art "crucified to the world;" thou art dead to all below; and thy "life is hid with Christ in God."

15. Art thou employed in doing, "not thy own will, but the will of him that sent thee" --of him that sent thee down to sojourn here awhile, to spend a few days in a strange land, till, having finished the work he hath given thee to do, thou return to thy Father's house Is it thy meat and drink "to do the will of thy Father which is in heaven" Is thine eye single in all things always fixed on him always looking unto Jesus Dost thou point at him in whatsoever thou doest in all thy labour, thy business, thy conversation aiming only at the glory of God in all, "whatsoever thou

doest, either in word or deed, doing it all in the name of the Lord Jesus; giving thanks unto God, even the Father, through him"

16. Does the love of God constrain thee to serve him with fear, to "rejoice unto him with reverence" Art thou more afraid of displeasing God, than either of death or hell Is nothing so terrible to thee as the thought of offending the eyes of his glory Upon this ground, dost thou "hate all evil ways," every transgression of his holy and perfect law; and herein "exercise thyself, to have a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward man"

17. Is thy heart right toward thy neighbour Dost thou love as thyself, all mankind, without exception "If you love those only that love you, what thank have ye" Do you "love your enemies" Is your soul full of good-will, of tender affection, toward them Do you love even the enemies of God, the unthankful and unholy Do your bowels yearn over them Could you "wish yourself" temporally "accursed" for their sake And do you show this by "blessing them that curse you, and praying for those that despitefully use you, and persecute you"

18. Do you show your love by your works While you have time as you have opportunity, do you in fact "do good to all men," neighbours or strangers, friends or enemies, good or bad Do you do them all the good you can; endeavouring to supply all their wants; assisting them both in body and soul, to the uttermost of your power --If thou art thus minded, may every Christian say, yea, if thou art but sincerely desirous of it, and following on till thou attain, then "thy heart is right, as my heart is with thy heart."

II. 1. "If it be, give me thy hand." I do not mean, "Be of my opinion." You need not: I do not expect or desire it. Neither do I mean, "I will be of your opinion." I cannot, it does not depend on my choice: I can no more think, than I can see or hear, as I will. Keep you your opinion; I mine; and that as steadily as ever. You need not even endeavour to come over to me, or bring me over to you. I do not desire you to dispute those points, or to hear or speak one word concerning them. Let all opinions alone on one side and the other: only "give me thine hand."

2. I do not mean, "Embrace my modes of worship," or, "I will embrace yours." This also is a thing which does not depend either on your choice or mine. We must both act as each is fully persuaded in his own mind. Hold you fast that which you believe is most acceptable to God, and I will do the same. I believe the Episcopal form of church government to be scriptural and apostolical. If you think the Presbyterian or Independent is better, think so still, and act accordingly. I believe infants ought to be baptized; and that this may be done either by dipping or sprinkling. If you are otherwise persuaded, be so still, and follow your own persuasion. It appears to me, that forms of prayer are of excellent use, particularly in the great congregation. If you judge extemporary prayer to be of more use, act suitable to your own judgement. My sentiment is, that I ought not to forbid water, wherein persons may be baptized; and that I ought to eat bread and drink wine, as a memorial of my dying Master: however, if you are not convinced of this act according to the light you have. I have no desire to dispute with you one moment upon any of the preceding heads. Let all these smaller points stand aside. Let them never come into sight "If thine heart is as my heart," if thou lovest God and all mankind, I ask no more: "give me thine hand."

3. I mean, first, love me: and that not only as thou lovest all mankind; not only as thou lovest thine enemies, or the enemies of God, those that hate thee, that "despitefully use thee, and

persecute thee;" not only as a stranger, as one of whom thou knowest neither good nor evil, --I am not satisfied with this, --no; "if thine heart be right, as mine with thy heart," then love me with a very tender affection, as a friend that is closer than a brother; as a brother in Christ, a fellow citizen of the New Jerusalem, a fellow soldier engaged in the same warfare, under the same Captain of our salvation. Love me as a companion in the kingdom and patience of Jesus, and a joint heir of his glory.

4. Love me (but in a higher degree than thou dost the bulk of mankind) with the love that is long-suffering and kind; that is patient, --if I am ignorant or out of the way, bearing and not increasing my burden; and is tender, soft, and compassionate still; that envieth not, if at any time it please God to prosper me in his work even more than thee. Love me with the love that is not provoked, either at my follies or infirmities; or even at my acting (if it should sometimes so appear to thee) not according to the will of God. Love me so as to think no evil of me; to put away all jealousy and evil-surmising. Love me with the love that covereth all things; that never reveals either my faults or infirmities, --that believeth all things; is always willing to think the best, to put the fairest construction on all my words and actions, --that hopeth all things; either that the thing related was never done; or not done with such circumstances as are related; or, at least, that it was done with a good-intention, or in a sudden stress of temptation. And hope to the end, that whatever is amiss will, by the grace of God, be corrected; and whatever is wanting, supplied, through the riches of his mercy in Christ Jesus.

5 I mean, Secondly, commend me to God in all thy prayers; wrestle with him in my behalf, that he would speedily correct what he sees amiss, and supply what is wanting in me. In thy nearest access to the throne of grace, beg of him who is then very present with thee, that my heart may be more as thy heart, more right both toward God and toward man; that I may have a fuller conviction of things not seen, and a stronger view of the love of God in Christ Jesus; may more steadily walk by faith, not by sight; and more earnestly grasp eternal life. Pray that the love of God and of all mankind may be more largely poured into my heart; that I may be more fervent and active in doing the will of my Father which is in heaven, more zealous of good works, and more careful to abstain from all appearance of evil.

6. I mean, Thirdly, provoke me to love and to good works. Second thy prayer, as thou hast opportunity, by speaking to me, in love, whatsoever thou believest to be for my soul's health. Quicken me in the work which God has given me to do, and instruct me how to do it more perfectly. Yea, "smite me friendly, and reprove me," whereinsoever I appear to thee to be doing rather my own will, than the will of him that sent me. O speak and spare not, whatever thou believest may conduce, either to the amending my faults, the strengthening my weakness, the building me up in love, or the making me more fit, in any kind, for the Master's use.

7. I mean, Lastly, love me not in word only, but in deed and in truth. So far as in conscience thou canst (retaining still thy own opinions, and thy own manner of worshipping God), join with me in the work of God; and let us go on hand in hand. And thus far, it is certain, thou mayest go. Speak honourably wherever thou art, of the work of God, by whomsoever he works, and kindly of his messengers. And, if it be in thy power, not only sympathize with them when they are in any difficulty or distress, but give them a cheerful and effectual assistance, that they may glorify God on thy behalf.

8. Two things should be observed with regard to what has been spoken under this last head: the one, that whatsoever love, whatsoever offices of love, whatsoever spiritual or temporal assistance, I claim from him whose heart is right, as my heart is with his, the same I am ready, by the grace of God, according to my measure, to give him: the other, that I have not made this claim in behalf of myself only, but of all whose heart is right toward God and man, that we may all love one another as Christ hath loved us.

III. 1. One inference we may make from what has been said. We may learn from hence, what is a catholic spirit.

There is scarce any expression which has been more grossly misunderstood, and more dangerously misapplied, than this: but it will be easy for any who calmly consider the preceding observations, to correct any such misapprehensions of it, and to prevent any such misapplication.

For, from hence we may learn, first, that a catholic spirit is not speculative latitudinarianism. It is not an indifference to all opinions: this is the spawn of hell, not the offspring of heaven. This unsettledness of thought, this being "driven to and fro, and tossed about with every wind of doctrine," is a great curse, not a blessing, an irreconcilable enemy, not a friend, to true catholicism. A man of a truly catholic spirit has not now his religion to seek. He is fixed as the sun in his judgement concerning the main branches of Christian doctrine. It is true, he is always ready to hear and weigh whatsoever can be offered against his principles; but as this does not show any wavering in his own mind, so neither does it occasion any. He does not halt between two opinions, nor vainly endeavour to blend them into one. Observe this, you who know not what spirit ye are of: who call yourselves men of a catholic spirit, only because you are of a muddy understanding; because your mind is all in a mist; because you have no settled, consistent principles, but are for jumbling all opinions together. Be convinced, that you have quite missed your way; you know not where you are. You think you are got into the very spirit of Christ; when, in truth, you are nearer the spirit of Antichrist. Go, first, and learn the first elements of the gospel of Christ, and then shall you learn to be of a truly catholic spirit.

2. From what has been said, we may learn, secondly, that a catholic spirit is not any kind of practical latitudinarianism. It is not indifference as to public worship, or as to the outward manner of performing it. This, likewise, would not be a blessing but a curse. Far from being an help thereto, it would, so long as it remained, be an unspeakable hindrance to the worshipping of God in spirit and in truth. But the man of a truly catholic spirit, having weighed all things in the balance of the sanctuary, has no doubt, no scruple at all, concerning that particular mode of worship wherein he joins. He is clearly convinced, that this manner of worshipping God is both scriptural and rational. He knows none in the world which is more scriptural, none which is more rational. Therefore, without rambling hither and thither, he cleaves close thereto, and praises God for the opportunity of so doing.

3. Hence we may, thirdly, learn, that a catholic spirit is not indifference to all congregations. This is another sort of latitudinarianism, no less absurd and unscriptural than the former. But it is far from a man of a truly catholic spirit. He is fixed in his congregation as well as his principles. He is united to one, not only in spirit, but by all the outward ties of Christian fellowship. There he partakes of all the ordinances of God. There he receives the supper of the Lord. There he pours out his soul in public prayer, and joins in public praise and thanksgiving. There he rejoices to

hear the word of reconciliation, the gospel of the grace of God. With these his nearest, his best-beloved brethren, on solemn occasions, he seeks God by fasting. These particularly he watches over in love, as they do over his soul; admonishing, exhorting, comforting, reproof, and every way building up each other in the faith. These he regards as his own household; and therefore, according to the ability God has given him, naturally cares for them, and provides that they may have all the things that are needful for life and godliness.

4. But while he is steadily fixed in his religious principles in what he believes to be the truth as it is in Jesus; while he firmly adheres to that worship of God which he judges to be most acceptable in his sight; and while he is united by the tenderest and closest ties to one particular congregation, --his heart is enlarged toward all mankind, those he knows and those he does not; he embraces with strong and cordial affection neighbours and strangers, friends and enemies. This is catholic or universal love. And he that has this is of a catholic spirit. For love alone gives the title to this character: catholic love is a catholic spirit.

5. If, then, we take this word in the strictest sense, a man of a catholic spirit is one who, in the manner above-mentioned, gives his hand to all whose hearts are right with his heart: one who knows how to value, and praise God for, all the advantages he enjoys, with regard to the knowledge of the things of God, the true scriptural manner of worshipping him, and, above all, his union with a congregation fearing God and working righteousness: one who, retaining these blessings with the strictest care, keeping them as the apple of his eye, at the same time loves--as friends, as brethren in the Lord, as members of Christ and children of God, as joint partakers now of the present kingdom of God, and fellow heirs of his eternal kingdom--all, of whatever opinion or worship, or congregation, who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ; who love God and man; who, rejoicing to please, and fearing to offend God, are careful to abstain from evil, and zealous of good works. He is the man of a truly catholic spirit, who bears all these continually upon his heart; who having an unspeakable tenderness for their persons, and longing for their welfare, does not cease to commend them to God in prayer, as well as to plead their cause before men; who speaks comfortably to them, and labours, by all his words, to strengthen their hands in God. He assists them to the uttermost of his power in all things, spiritual and temporal. He is ready "to spend and be spent for them;" yea, to lay down his life for their sake.

6. Thou, O man of God, think on these things! If thou art already in this way, go on. If thou hast heretofore mistook the path, bless God who hath brought thee back! And now run the race which is set before thee, in the royal way of universal love. Take heed, lest thou be either wavering in thy judgement, or straitened in thy bowels: but keep an even pace, rooted in the faith once delivered to the saints, and grounded in love, in true catholic love, till thou art swallowed up in love for ever and ever!

Edited anonymously at the Memorial University of Newfoundland with minor corrections by George Lyons of Northwest Nazarene University (Nampa, Idaho) for the Wesley Center for Applied Theology.

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9. Sermon 40: Christian Perfection, 1741

"Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect." Phil. 3:12.

1. There is scarce any expression in Holy Writ which has given more offence than this. The word perfect is what many cannot bear. The very sound of it is an abomination to them. And whosoever preaches perfection (as the phrase is,) that is, asserts that it is attainable in this life, runs great hazard of being accounted by them worse than a heathen man or a publican.

2. And hence some have advised, wholly to lay aside the use of those expressions, "because they have given so great offence." But are they not found in the oracles of God? If so, by what authority can any Messenger of God lay them aside, even though all men should be offended? We have not so learned Christ; neither may we thus give place to the devil. Whatsoever God hath Spoken that will we speak, whether men will hear or whether they will forbear; knowing that then alone can any Minister of Christ be "pure from the blood of all men," when he hath "not shunned to declare unto them all the counsel of God." [Acts 20:26, 27]

3. We may not, therefore, lay these expressions aside, seeing they are the words of God, and not of man. But we may and ought to explain the meaning of them, that those who are sincere of heart may not err to the right hand or to the left, from the mark of the prize of their high calling. And this is the more needful to be done because in the verse already repeated the Apostle speaks of himself as not perfect: "Not," saith he, "as though I were already perfect." And yet immediately after, in the fifteenth verse, he speaks of himself, yea and many others, as perfect. "Let us," saith he, "as many as be perfect, be thus minded." [Phil. 3:15]

4. In order, therefore, to remove the difficulty arising from this seeming contradiction, as well as to give light to them who are pressing forward to the mark, and that those who are lame be not turned out of the way, I shall endeavor to show,

First, in what sense Christians are not; and,

Secondly, in what sense they are, perfect.

I. 1. In the first place I shall endeavor to show in what sense Christians are not perfect. And both from experience and Scripture it appears, First, that they are not perfect in knowledge: they are not so perfect in this life as to be free from ignorance. They know, it may be, in common with other men, many things relating to the present world; and they know, with regard to the world to come, the general truths which God hath revealed. They know, likewise, (what the natural man receiveth not, for these things are spiritually discerned,) "what manner of love" it is wherewith "the Father" hath loved them, "that they should be called the sons of God." [1 John 3:1] They know the mighty working of his Spirit in their hearts; [Eph. 3:16] and the wisdom of his providence, directing all their paths, [Prov. 3:6] and causing all things to work together for their good. [Rom. 8:28] Yea, they know in every circumstance of life what the Lord requireth of them, and how to keep a conscience void of offence both toward God and toward man. [Acts 24:16]

2. But innumerable are the things which they know not. Touching the Almighty himself, they cannot search him out to perfection. "Lo, these are but a part of his ways; but the thunder of his

power who can understand" [Job 26:14] They cannot understand, I will not say, how "there are Three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and these three are one;" [1 John 5:7] or how the eternal Son of God "took upon himself the form of a servant;" [Phil. 2:7] -- but not any one attribute, not any one circumstance of the divine nature. [2 Pet. 1:4] Neither is it for them to know the times and seasons [Acts 1:7] when God will work his great works upon the earth; no, not even those which he hath in part revealed by his servants and Prophets since the world began. [see Amos 3:7] Much less do they know when God, having "accomplished the number of his elect, will hasten his kingdom;" when "the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat." [2 Pet. 3:10]

3. They know not the reasons even of many of his present dispensations with the sons of men; but are constrained to rest here, -- Though "clouds and darkness are round about him, righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his seat." [Ps. 97:2] Yea, often with regard to his dealings with themselves, doth their Lord say unto them, "What I do, thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter." [John 13:7] And how little do they know of what is ever before them, of even the visible works of his hands! -- How "he spreadeth the north over the empty place, and hangeth the earth upon nothing" [Job 26:7] how he unites all the parts of this vast machine by a secret chain which cannot be broken So great is the ignorance, so very little the knowledge, of even the best of men!

4. No one, then, is so perfect in this life, as to be free from ignorance. Nor, Secondly, from mistake; which indeed is almost an unavoidable consequence of it; seeing those who "know but in part" [1 Cor. 13:12] are ever liable to err touching the things which they know not. It is true, the children of God do not mistake as to the things essential to salvation: They do not "put darkness for light, or light for darkness;" [Isa. 5:20] neither "seek death in the error of their life." [Wisdom 1:12] For they are "taught of God," and the way which he teaches them, the way of holiness, is so plain, that "the wayfaring man, though a fool, need not err therein." [Isa. 35:8] But in things unessential to salvation they do err, and that frequently. The best and wisest of men are frequently mistaken even with regard to facts; believing those things not to have been which really were, or those to have been done which were not. Or, suppose they are not mistaken as to the fact itself, they may be with regard to its circumstances; believing them, or many of them, to have been quite different from what in truth, they were. And hence cannot but arise many farther mistakes. Hence they may believe either past or present actions which were or are evil, to be good; and such as were or are good, to be evil. Hence also they may judge not according to truth with regard to the characters of men; and that, not only by supposing good men to be better, or wicked men to be worse, than they are, but by believing them to have been or to be good men who were or are very wicked; or perhaps those to have been or to be wicked men, who were or are holy and unreprouvable.

5. Nay, with regard to the Holy Scriptures themselves, as careful as they are to avoid it, the best of men are liable to mistake, and do mistake day by day; especially with respect to those parts thereof which less immediately relate to practice. Hence even the children of God are not agreed as to the interpretation of many places in holy writ: Nor is their difference of opinion any proof that they are not the children of God on either side; but it is a proof that we are no more to expect any living man to be infallible than to be omniscient.

6. If it be objected to what has been observed under this and the preceding head, that St. John, speaking to his brethren in the faith says, "Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know

all things:" (1 John 2:20:) The answer is plain: "Ye know all things that are needful for your souls' health." [cf. 3 John 2] That the Apostle never designed to extend this farther, that he could not speak it in an absolute sense, is clear, First from hence; -- that otherwise he would describe the disciple as "above his Master;" seeing Christ himself, as man, knew not all things: "Of that hour," saith he, "knoweth no man; no, not the Son, but the Father only." [Mark 13:32] It is clear, Secondly, from the Apostle's own words that follow: "These things have I written unto you concerning them that deceive you;" [cf. 1 John 3:7] as well as from his frequently repeated caution, "Let no man deceive you;" [see Mark 13:5; Eph. 5:6; 2 Thess. 2:3] which had been altogether needless, had not those very persons who had that unction from the Holy One [1 John 2:20] been liable, not to ignorance only, but to mistake also.

7. Even Christians, therefore, are not so perfect as to be free either from ignorance or error: We may, Thirdly, add, nor from infirmities. -- Only let us take care to understand this word aright: Only let us not give that soft title to known sins, as the manner of some is. So, one man tells us, "Every man has his infirmity, and mine is drunkenness;" Another has the infirmity of uncleanness; another of taking God's holy name in vain; and yet another has the infirmity of calling his brother, "Thou fool," [Matt. 5:22] or returning "railing for railing." [1 Pet. 3:9] It is plain that all you who thus speak, if ye repent not, shall, with your infirmities, go quick into hell! But I mean hereby, not only those which are properly termed bodily infirmities, but all those inward or outward imperfections which are not of a moral nature. Such are the weakness or slowness of understanding, dulness or confusedness of apprehension, incoherency of thought, irregular quickness or heaviness of imagination. Such (to mention no more of this kind) is the want of a ready or of a retentive memory. Such in another kind, are those which are commonly, in some measure, consequent upon these; namely, slowness of speech, impropriety of language, ungracefulness of pronunciation; to which one might add a thousand nameless defects, either in conversation or behaviour. These are the infirmities which are found in the best of men, in a larger or smaller proportion. And from these none can hope to be perfectly freed till the spirit returns to God that gave it. [Eccles. 12:7]

8. Nor can we expect, till then, to be wholly free from temptation. Such perfection belongeth not to this life. It is true, there are those who, being given up to work all uncleanness with greediness, [Eph. 4:19] scarce perceive the temptations which they resist not, and so seem to be without temptation. There are also many whom the wise enemy of souls, seeing to be fast asleep in the dead form of godliness, will not tempt to gross sin, lest they should awake before they drop into everlasting burnings. I know there are also children of God who, being now justified freely, [Rom. 5:1] having found redemption in the blood of Christ, [Eph. 1:7] for the present feel no temptation. God hath said to their enemies, "Touch not mine anointed, and do my children no harm." [see 1 Chron. 16:22] And for this season, it may be for weeks or months, he causeth them to "ride on high places;" [Deut. 32:13] he beareth them as on eagles' wings, [Exod. 19:4] above all the fiery darts of the wicked one. [Eph. 6:16] But this state will not last always; as we may learn from that single consideration, -- that the Son of God himself, in the days of his flesh, was tempted even to the end of his life. [Heb. 2:18; 4:15; 6:7] Therefore, so let his servant expect to be; for "it is enough that he be as his Master." [Luke 6:40]

9. Christian perfection, therefore, does not imply (as some men seem to have imagined) an exemption either from ignorance or mistake, or infirmities or temptations. Indeed, it is only another term for holiness. They are two names for the same thing. Thus every one that is

perfect is holy, and every one that is holy is, in the Scripture sense, perfect. Yet we may, lastly, observe, that neither in this respect is there any absolute perfection on earth. There is no perfection of degrees, as it is termed; none which does not admit of a continual increase. So that how much soever any man hath attained, or in how high a degree soever he is perfect, he hath still need to "grow in grace," [2 Pet. 3:18] and daily to advance in the knowledge and love of God his Saviour. [see Phil. 1:9]

II. 1. In what sense, then, are Christians perfect This is what I shall endeavor, in the Second place, to show. But it should be premised, that there are several stages in Christian life, as in natural; some of the children of God being but new-born babes; others having attained to more maturity. And accordingly St. John, in his first Epistle, (1 John 2:12, &c.,) applies himself severally to those he terms little children, those he styles young men, and those whom he entitles fathers. "I write unto you, little children," saith the Apostle, "because your sins are forgiven you:" Because thus far you have attained, -- being "justified freely," you "have peace with God, through Jesus Christ." [Rom. 5:1] "I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one;" or (as he afterwards addeth,) "because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you." [1 John 2:13, 14] Ye have quenched the fiery darts of the wicked one, [Eph. 6:16] the doubts and fears wherewith he disturbed your first peace; and the witness of God, that your sins are forgiven, now abideth in your heart. "I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning." [1 John 2:13] Ye have known both the Father and the Son and the Spirit of Christ, in your inmost soul. Ye are "perfect men, being grown up to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." [Eph. 4:13]

2. It is of these chiefly I speak in the latter part of this discourse: For these only are properly Christians. But even babes in Christ are in such a sense perfect, or born of God, (an expression taken also in divers senses,) as, First, not to commit sin. If any doubt of this privilege of the sons of God, the question is not to be decided by abstract reasonings, which may be drawn out into an endless length, and leave the point just as it was before. Neither is it to be determined by the experience of this or that particular person. Many may suppose they do not commit sin, when they do; but this proves nothing either way. To the law and to the testimony we appeal. "Let God be true, and every man a liar." [Rom. 3:4] By his Word will we abide, and that alone. Hereby we ought to be judged.

3. Now the Word of God plainly declares, that even those who are justified, who are born again in the lowest sense, "do not continue in sin;" that they cannot "live any longer therein;" (Rom. 6:1, 2;) that they are "planted together in the likeness of the death" of Christ; (Rom. 6:5;) that their "old man is crucified with him," the body of sin being destroyed, so that henceforth they do not serve sin; that being dead with Christ, they are free from sin; (Rom. 6:6, 7;) that they are "dead unto sin, and alive unto God;" (Rom. 6:11;) that "sin hath no more dominion over them," who are "not under the law, but under grace;" but that these, "being free from sin, are become the servants of righteousness." (Rom. 6:14, 18)

4. The very least which can be implied in these words, is, that the persons spoken of therein, namely, all real Christians, or believers in Christ, are made free from outward sin. And the same freedom, which St. Paul here expresses in such variety of phrases, St. Peter expresses in that one: (1 Pet. 4:1, 2:) "He that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin, -- that he no longer should live to the desires of men, but to the will of God." For this ceasing from sin, if it be

interpreted in the lowest sense, as regarding only the outward behaviour, must denote the ceasing from the outward act, from any outward transgression of the law.

5 . But most express are the well-known words of St. John, in the third chapter of his First Epistle, verse 8, &c.: "He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: And he cannot sin because he is born of God." [1 John 3:8, 9] And those in the fifth: (1 John 5:18:) "We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not."

6. Indeed it is said this means only, He sinneth not wilfully; or he doth not commit sin habitually; or, not as other men do; or, not as he did before. But by whom is this said By St. John No. There is no such word in the text; nor in the whole chapter; nor in all his Epistle; nor in any part of his writings whatsoever. Why then, the best way to answer a bold assertion is simply to deny it. And if any man can prove it from the Word of God, let him bring forth his strong reasons.

7. And a sort of reason there is, which has been frequently brought to support these strange assertions, drawn from the examples recorded in the Word of God: "What!" say they, "did not Abraham himself commit sin, -- prevaricating, and denying his wife Did not Moses commit sin, when he provoked God at the waters of strife Nay, to produce one for all, did not even David, 'the man after God's own heart,' commit sin, in the matter of Uriah the Hittite; even murder and adultery" It is most sure he did. All this is true. But what is it you would infer from hence It may be granted, First, that David, in the general course of his life, was one of the holiest men among the Jews; and, Secondly, that the holiest men among the Jews did sometimes commit sin. But if you would hence infer, that all Christians do and must commit sin as long as they live; this consequence we utterly deny: It will never follow from those premises.

8. Those who argue thus, seem never to have considered that declaration of our Lord: (Matt. 11:11:) "Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: Notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he." I fear, indeed, there are some who have imagined "the kingdom of heaven," here, to mean the kingdom of glory; as if the Son of God had just discovered to us, that the least glorified saint in heaven is greater than any man upon earth! To mention this is sufficiently to refute it. There can, therefore, no doubt be made, but "the kingdom of heaven," here, (as in the following verse, where it is said to be taken by force.) [Matt. 11:12] or, "the kingdom of God," as St. Luke expresses it, -- is that kingdom of God on earth whereunto all true believers in Christ, all real Christians, belong. In these words, then, our Lord declares two things: First, that before his coming in the flesh, among all the children of men there had not been one greater than John the Baptist; whence it evidently follows, that neither Abraham, David, nor any Jew was greater than John. Our Lord, Secondly, declares that he which is least in the kingdom of God (in that kingdom which he came to set up on earth, and which the violent now began to take by force) is greater than he: -- Not a greater Prophet as some have interpreted the word; for this is palpably false in fact; but greater in the grace of God, and the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, we cannot measure the privileges of real Christians by those formerly given to the Jews. Their "ministration," (or dispensation,) we allow "was glorious;" but ours "exceeds in glory." [2 Cor. 3:7-9] So that whosoever would bring down the Christian dispensation to the Jewish standard, whosoever gleans up the examples of weakness, recorded in the Law and the

Prophets, and thence infers that they who have "put on Christ" [Gal. 3:27] are endued with no greater strength, doth greatly err, neither "knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God." [Matt. 22:29]

9. "But are there not assertions in Scripture which prove the same thing, if it cannot be inferred from those examples Does not the Scripture say expressly, "Even a just man sinneth seven times a day" I answer, No. The Scripture says no such thing. There is no such text in all the Bible. That which seems to be intended is the sixteenth verse of the twenty-fourth chapter of the Proverbs the words of which are these: "A just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again." [Prov. 24:16] But this is quite another thing. For, First, the words "a day" are not in the text. So that if a just man falls seven times in his life, it is as much as is affirmed here. Secondly, here is no mention of falling into sin at all; what is here mentioned is falling into temporal affliction. This plainly appears from the verse before, the words of which are these: "Lay not wait, O wicked man, against the dwelling of the righteous; spoil not his resting place." [Prov. 24:15] It follows, "For a just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again; but the wicked shall fall into mischief." As if he had said, "God will deliver him out of his trouble; but when thou fallest, there shall be none to deliver thee."

10. "But, however, in other places," continue the objectors, "Solomon does assert plainly, 'There is no man that sinneth not;' (1 Kings 8:46; 2 Chron. 6:36;) yea, "There is not a just man upon earth that doeth good, and sinneth not.' (Eccles. 7:20.)" I answer, Without doubt, thus it was in the days of Solomon. Yea, thus it was from Adam to Moses, from Moses to Solomon, and from Solomon to Christ. There was then no man that sinned not. Even from the day that sin entered into the world, there was not a just man upon earth that did good and sinned not, until the Son of God was manifested to take away our sins. It is unquestionably true, that "the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant." [Gal. 4:1] And that even so they (all the holy men of old, who were under the Jewish dispensation) were, during that infant state of the Church, "in bondage under the elements of the world." [Gal. 4:3] "But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that they might receive the adoption of sons;" [Gal. 4:4] -- that they might receive that "grace which is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour, Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel." (2 Tim. 1:10.) Now, therefore, they "are no more servants, but sons." [see Gal. 4:7] So that, whatsoever was the case of those under the law, we may safely affirm with St. John, that, since the gospel was given, "he that is born of God sinneth not." [1 John 5:18]

11. It is of great importance to observe, and that more carefully than is commonly done, the wide difference there is between the Jewish and the Christian dispensation; and that ground of it which the same Apostle assigns in the seventh chapter of his Gospel. (John 7:38, &c) After he had there related, those words of our blessed Lord, "He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water," he immediately subjoins, "This spake he of the Spirit," ou emellon lambanein oi pisteuontes eis auton, -- which they who should believe on him were afterwards to receive. For the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified." [John 7:39] Now, the Apostle cannot mean here, (as some have taught,) that the miracle-working power of the Holy Ghost was not yet given. For this was given; our Lord had given it to all the Apostles, when he first sent them forth to preach the gospel. He then gave them power over unclean spirits to cast them out; power to heal the sick; yea, to raise

the dead. [Mark 10:8] But the Holy Ghost was not yet given in his sanctifying graces, as he was after Jesus was glorified. It was then when "he ascended up on high, and led captivity captive," that he "received" those "gifts for men, yea, even for the rebellious, that the Lord God might dwell among them." [Ps. 68:18; cf. Eph. 4:8] And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, [Acts 2:1] then first it was, that they who "waited for the promise of the Father" [Acts 1:4] were made more than conquerors [Rom. 8:37] over sin by the Holy Ghost given unto them.

12. That this great salvation from sin was not given till Jesus was glorified, St. Peter also plainly testifies; where, speaking of his brethren in the flesh, as now "receiving the end of their faith, the salvation of their souls," he adds, (1 Peter 1:9, 10, &c.,) "Of which salvation the Prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace" that is, the gracious dispensation, "that should come unto you: Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ. and the glory," the glorious salvation, "that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven;" [1 Pet. 1:12] viz., at the day of Pentecost, and so unto all generations, into the hearts of all true believers. On this ground, even "the grace which was brought unto them by the revelation of Jesus Christ," [1 Pet. 1:13] the Apostle might well build that strong exhortation, "Wherefore girding up the loins of your mind, -- as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation." [1 Pet. 1:13]

13. Those who have duly considered these things must allow, that the privileges of Christians are in no wise to be measured by what the Old Testament records concerning those who were under the Jewish dispensation; seeing the fulness of times is now come; the Holy Ghost is now given; the great salvation of God is brought unto men, by the revelation of Jesus Christ. The kingdom of heaven is now set up on earth; concerning which the Spirit of God declared of old, (so far is David from being the pattern or standard of Christian perfection,) "He that is feeble among them at that day, shall be as David; and the house of David shall be as God, as the angel of the Lord before them." (Zech. 12:8.)

14. If, therefore, you would prove that the Apostle's words, "He that is born of God sinneth not," [1 John 5:18] are not to be understood according to their plain, natural, obvious meaning, it is from the New Testament you are to bring your proofs, else you will fight as one that beateth the air. [1 Cor. 9:26] And the first of these which is usually brought is taken from the examples recorded in the New Testament. "The Apostles themselves," it is said, "committed sin; nay, the greatest of them, Peter and Paul: St. Paul, by his sharp contention with Barnabas; [Acts 15:39] and St. Peter, by his dissimulation at Antioch." [Gal. 2:11] Well: Suppose both Peter and Paul did then commit sin; what is it you would infer from hence That all the other Apostles committed sin sometimes There is no shadow of proof in this. Or would you thence infer, that all the other Christians of the apostolic age committed sin Worse and worse: This is such an inference as, one would imagine, a man in his senses could never have thought of. Or will you argue thus: "If two of the Apostles did once commit sin, then all other Christians, in all ages, do and will commit sin as long as they live" Alas, my brother! a child of common understanding would be ashamed of such reasoning as this. Least of all can you with any colour of argument infer, that any man must commit sin at all. No: God forbid we should thus speak! No necessity of sinning was laid upon them. The grace of God was surely sufficient for them. And it is sufficient for us at this day.

With the temptation which fell on them, there was a way to escape; as there is to every soul of man in every temptation. So that whosoever is tempted to any sin, need not yield; for no man is tempted above that he is able to bear. [1 Cor. 10:13]

15. "But St. Paul besought the Lord thrice, and yet he could not escape from his temptation." Let us consider his own words literally translated: "There was given to me a thorn to the flesh, an angel" (or messenger) "of Satan, to buffet me. Touching this, I besought the Lord thrice, that it" (or he) "might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: For my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly, therefore, will I rather glory in" these "my weaknesses, that the strength of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in weaknesses; -- for when I am weak, then am I strong." [2 Cor. 12:7-10]

16. As this scripture is one of the strong-holds of the patrons of sin, it may be proper to weigh it thoroughly. Let it be observed then, First, it does by no means appear that this thorn, whatsoever it was, occasioned St. Paul to commit sin; much less laid him under any necessity of doing so. Therefore, from hence it can never be proved that any Christian must commit sin. Secondly, the ancient Fathers inform us, it was bodily pain: "a violent headache, saith Tertullian; (De Pudic. ;) to which both Chrysostom and St. Jerome agree. St. Cyprian [De Mortalitate] expresses it, a little more generally, in those terms: "Many and grievous torments of the flesh and of the body." [Carnis et corporis multa ac gravia tormenta.] Thirdly, to this exactly agree the Apostle's own words, "A thorn to the flesh to smite, beat, or buffet me." "My strength is made perfect in weakness." -- Which same word occurs no less than four times in these two verses only. But, Fourthly, whatsoever it was, it could not be either inward or outward sin. It could no more be inward stirrings, than outward expressions, of pride, anger, or lust. This is manifest, beyond all possible exception from the words that immediately follow: "Most gladly will I glory in" these "my weaknesses, that the strength of Christ may rest upon me." [2 Cor. 12:9] What! Did he glory in pride, in anger, in lust Was it through these weaknesses, that the strength of Christ rested upon him He goes on: "Therefore I take pleasure in weaknesses; for when I am weak, then am I strong;" [2 Cor. 12:10] that is, when I am weak in body, then am I strong in spirit. But will any man dare to say, "When I am weak by pride or lust, then am I strong in spirit" I call you all to record this day, who find the strength of Christ resting upon you, can you glory in anger, or pride, or lust Can you take pleasure in these infirmities Do these weaknesses make you strong Would you not leap into hell, were it possible, to escape them Even by yourselves, then, judge, whether the Apostle could glory and take pleasure in them! Let it be, Lastly, observed, that this thorn was given to St. Paul above fourteen years before he wrote this Epistle; [2 Cor. 12:2] which itself was wrote several years before he finished his course. [see Acts 20:24; 2 Tim. 4:7] So that he had after this, a long course to run, many battles to fight, many victories to gain, and great increase to receive in all the gifts of God, and the knowledge of Jesus Christ. Therefore from any spiritual weakness (if such it had been) which he at that time felt, we could by no means infer that he was never made strong; that Paul the aged, the father in Christ, still laboured under the same weaknesses; that he was in no higher state till the day of his death. From all which it appears that this instance of St. Paul is quite foreign to the question, and does in no wise clash with the assertion of St. John, "He that is born of God sinneth not." [1 John 5:18]

17. "But does not St. James directly contradict this His words are, 'In many things we offend all,' (Jas. 3:2:) And is not offending the same as committing sin" In this place, I allow it is: I allow the

persons here spoken of did commit sin; yea, that they all committed many sins. But who are the persons here spoken of Why, those many masters or teachers whom God had not sent; (probably the same vain men who taught that faith without works, which is so sharply reproved in the preceding chapter;) [Jas. 2] not the Apostle himself, nor any real Christian. That in the word we (used by a figure of speech common in all other, as well as the inspired, writings) the Apostle could not possibly include himself or any other true believer, appears evidently, First, from the same word in the ninth verse: -- "Therewith," saith he, "bless we God and therewith curse we men. Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing." [Jas. 3:9] True; but not out of the mouth of the Apostle, nor of anyone who is in Christ a new creature. [2 Cor. 5:17] Secondly, from the verse immediately preceding the text, and manifestly connected with it: "My brethren, be not many masters," (or teachers,) "knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation." "For in many things we offend all." [Jas. 3:1] We! Who Not the Apostles, not true believers; but they who know they should receive the greater condemnation, because of those many offences. But this could not be spoke of the Apostle himself, or of any who trod in his steps, seeing "there is no condemnation to them who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." [Rom. 8:2] Nay, Thirdly, the very verse itself proves, that "we offend all," cannot be spoken either of all men, or of all Christians: For in it there immediately follows the mention of a man who offends not, as the we first mentioned did; from whom, therefore, he is professedly contradistinguished, and pronounced a perfect man.

18. So clearly does St. James explain himself, and fix the meaning of his own words. Yet, lest any one should still remain in doubt, St. John, writing many years after St. James, puts the matter entirely out of dispute, by the express declarations above recited. But here a fresh difficulty may arise: How shall we reconcile St. John with himself In one place he declares, "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin;" [1 John 3:9] and again, -- "We know that he which is born of God sinneth not:" [1 John 5:18] And yet in another he saith, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us;" [1 John 1:8] and again, -- "If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us." [1 John 1:10]

19. As great a difficulty as this may at first appear, it vanishes away, if we observe, First, that the tenth verse fixes the sense of the eighth: "If we say we have no sin," in the former, being explained by, "If we say we have not sinned," in the latter verse. [1 John 1:10, 8] Secondly, that the point under present consideration is not whether we have or have not sinned heretofore; and neither of these verses asserts that we do sin, or commit sin now. Thirdly, that the ninth verse explains both the eighth and tenth. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness:" As if he had said, "I have before affirmed, 'The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin; but let no man say, I need it not; I have no sin to be cleansed from. If we say that we have no sin, that we have not sinned, we deceive ourselves, and make God a liar: But if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just,' not only 'to forgive our sins,' but also 'to cleanse us from all unrighteousness:' [1 John 1:8-10] that we may 'go and sin no more.'" [John 8:11]

20. St. John, therefore, is well consistent with himself, as well as with the other holy writers; as will yet more evidently appear if we place all his assertions touching this matter in one view: He declares, First, the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin. Secondly, no man can say, I have not sinned, I have no sin to be cleansed from. Thirdly, but God is ready both to forgive our past sins and to save us from them for the time to come. [1 John 1:7-10] Fourthly, "These things

I write unto you," saith the Apostle, "that ye may not sin. But if any man" should "sin," or have sinned, (as the word might be rendered,) he need not continue in sin; seeing "we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." [1 John 2:1-2] Thus far all is clear. But lest any doubt should remain in a point of so vast importance, the Apostle resumes this subject in the third chapter, and largely explains his own meaning. "Little children," saith he, "let no man deceive you:" (As though I had given any encouragement to those that continue in sin:) "He that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin: For his seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil." (1 John 3:7-10.) Here the point, which till then might possibly have admitted of some doubt in weak minds, is purposely settled by the last of the inspired writers, and decided in the clearest manner. In conformity, therefore, both to the doctrine of St. John, and to the whole tenor of the New Testament, we fix this conclusion -- A Christian is so far perfect, as not to commit sin.

21. This is the glorious privilege of every Christian; yea, though he be but a babe in Christ. But it is only of those who are strong in the Lord, "and "have overcome the wicked one," or rather of those who "have known him that is from the beginning," [1 John 2:13, 14] that it can be affirmed they are in such a sense perfect, as, Secondly, to be freed from evil thoughts and evil tempers. First, from evil or sinful thoughts. But here let it be observed, that thoughts concerning evil are not always evil thoughts; that a thought concerning sin, and a sinful thought, are widely different. A man, for instance, may think of a murder which another has committed; and yet this is no evil or sinful thought. So our blessed Lord himself doubtless thought of, or understood the thing spoken by the devil, when he said, "All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me." [Matt. 4:9] Yet had he no evil or sinful thought; nor indeed was capable of having any. And even hence it follows, that neither have real Christians: for "every one that is perfect is as his Master." (Luke 6:40) Therefore, if He was free from evil or sinful thoughts, so are they likewise.

22. And, indeed, whence should evil thoughts proceed, in the servant who is as his Master "Out of the heart of man" (if at all) "proceed evil thoughts." (Mark 7:21) If, therefore, his heart be no longer evil, then evil thoughts can no longer proceed out of it. If the tree were corrupt, so would be the fruit: But the tree is good; The fruit, therefore is good also; (Matt. 22:33) our Lord himself bearing witness, "Every good tree bringeth forth good fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit," as "a corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit." (Matt 7:17, 18)

23. The same happy privilege of real Christians, St. Paul asserts from his own experience. "The weapons of our warfare," saith he, "are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds; casting down imaginations" (or reasonings rather, for so the word logismous signifies; all the reasonings of pride and unbelief against the declarations, promises, or gifts of God) "and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." (2 Cor. 10:4, &c.)

24. And as Christians indeed are freed from evil thoughts, so are they, Secondly, from evil tempers. This is evident from the above-mentioned declaration of our Lord himself: "The disciple is not above his Master; but every one that is perfect shall be as his Master." [Luke 6:40] He had been delivering, just before, some of the sublimest doctrines of Christianity, and some of the

most grievous to flesh and blood. "I say unto you, love your enemies, do good to them which hate you; -- and unto him that smiteth thee on the one cheek, offer also the other." [Luke 6:29] Now these he well knew the world would not receive; and, therefore, immediately adds, "Can the blind lead the blind Will they not both fall into the ditch" [Luke 6:39] As if he had said, "Do not confer with flesh and blood touching these things, -- with men void of spiritual discernment, the eyes of whose understanding God hath not opened, -- lest they and you perish together." In the next verse he removes the two grand objections with which these wise fools meet us at every turn: "These things are too grievous to be borne," or, "They are too high to be attained," [Matt. 23:4] saying, "'The disciple is not above his Master;' therefore, if I have suffered, be content to tread in my steps. And doubt ye not then, but I will fulfill my word: 'For every one that is perfect shall be as his Master.'" [Luke 6:40] But his Master was free from all sinful tempers. So, therefore, is his disciple, even every real Christian.

25. Every one of these can say, with St. Paul, "I am crucified with Christ: Nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me:" [Gal 2:20] -- Words that manifestly describe a deliverance from inward as well as from outward sin. This is expressed both negatively, I live not; (my evil nature, the body of sin, is destroyed;) and positively, Christ liveth in me; and, therefore, all that is holy, and just, and good. Indeed, both these, Christ liveth in me, and I live not, are inseparably connected; for "what communion hath light with darkness, or Christ with Belial" [2 Cor. 6:15]

26. He, therefore, who liveth in true believers, hath "purified their hearts by faith;" [Acts 15:9] insomuch that every one that hath Christ in him the hope of glory, [Col. 1:27] "purifieth himself, even as he is pure" (1 John 3:3.) He is purified from pride; for Christ was lowly of heart. [Matt. 11:29] He is pure from self-will or desire; for Christ desired only to do the will of his Father, and to finish his work. [John 4:34; 5:30] And he is pure from anger, in the common sense of the word; for Christ was meek and gentle, patient and long-suffering. I say, in the common sense of the word; for all anger is not evil. We read of our Lord himself, (Mark 3:5,) that he once "looked round with anger." But with what kind of anger The next word shows, *sullupoumenos*, being, at the same time "grieved for the hardness of their hearts." [Mark 3:6] So then he was angry at the sin, and in the same moment grieved for the sinners; angry or displeased at the offence, but sorry for the offenders. With anger, yea, hatred, he looked upon the thing; with grief and love upon the persons. Go, thou that art perfect, and do likewise. Be thus angry, and thou sinnest not; [see Eph. 4:26] feeling a displacency at every offence against God, but only love and tender compassion to the offender.

27. Thus doth Jesus "save his people from their sins:" [Matt. 1:21] And not only from outward sins, but also from the sins of their hearts; from evil thoughts and from evil tempers. -- "True," say some, "we shall thus be saved from our sins; but not till death; not in this world." But how are we to reconcile this with the express words of St. John -- "Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment. Because as he is, so are we in this world." The Apostle here, beyond all contradiction, speaks of himself and other living Christians, of whom (as though he had foreseen this very evasion, and set himself to overturn it from the foundation) he flatly affirms, that not only at or after death but in this world they are as their Master. (1 John 4:17.)

28. Exactly agreeable to this are his words in the first chapter of this Epistle, (1 John 1:5, &c.) "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we walk in the light, -- we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." And again, "If we

confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." [1 John 1:9] Now it is evident, the Apostle here also speaks of a deliverance wrought in this world. For he saith not, the blood of Christ will cleanse at the hour of death, or in the day of judgment, but, it "cleanseth," at the time present, "us," living Christians, "from all sin." And it is equally evident, that if any sin remain, we are not cleansed from all sin: If any unrighteousness remain in the soul, it is not cleansed from all unrighteousness. Neither let any sinner against his own soul say, that this relates to justification only, or the cleansing us from the guilt of sin. First, because this is confounding together what the Apostle clearly distinguishes, who mentions first, to forgive us our sins, and then to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. "Secondly, because this is asserting justification by works, in the strongest sense possible; it is making all inward as well as outward holiness necessarily previous to justification. For if the cleansing here spoken of is no other than the cleansing us from the guilt of sin, then we are not cleansed from guilt; that is, are not justified, unless on condition of "walking in the light, as he is in the light." [1 John 1:7] It remains, then, that Christians are saved in this world from all sin, from all unrighteousness; that they are now in such a sense perfect, as not to commit sin, and to be freed from evil thoughts and evil tempers."

29. Thus hath the Lord fulfilled the things he spake by his holy prophets, which have been since the world began; -- by Moses in particular, saying, (Deut. 30:6.) I "will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul;" by David, crying out, "Create in me a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within me;" [Ps. 51:10] -- and most remarkably by Ezekiel, in those words: "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; From all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; -- and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them. -- Ye shall be my people, and I will be your God. I will also save you from all your uncleannesses. -- Thus saith the Lord your God, In the day that I shall have cleansed you from all your iniquities, -- the Heathen shall know that I the Lord build the ruined places; -- I the Lord have spoken it, and I will do it." (Ezek. 36:25, &c.)

30. "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved," both in the Law and in the Prophets, and having the prophetic word confirmed unto us in the Gospel, by our blessed Lord and his Apostles; "let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." [2 Cor. 7:1] "Let us fear, lest" so many "promises being made us of entering into his rest," which he that hath entered into, has ceased from his own works, "any of us should come short of it." [Heb. 4:1] "This one thing let us do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, let us press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus;" [Phil. 3:13, 14] crying unto him day and night, till we also are "delivered from the bondage of corruption, into the glorious liberty of the sons of God!" [Rom. 8:21]

Edited by Dave Sparks (Pastor), with corrections by Ryan Danker and George Lyons. Scriptural references added by George Lyons for the Wesley Center for Applied Theology of Northwest Nazarene University (Nampa, ID).

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10. Sermon 45: The New Birth, 1760

(text from the 1872 edition - Thomas Jackson, editor)

"Ye must *be born again*." John 3:7

1. If any doctrines within the whole compass of Christianity may be properly termed fundamental, they are doubtless these two, -- the doctrine of justification, and that of the new birth: The former relating to that great work which God does for us, in forgiving our sins; the latter, to the great work which God does *in us*, in renewing our fallen nature. In order of *time*, neither of these is before the other: in the moment we are justified by the grace of God, through the redemption that is in Jesus, we are also "born of the Spirit;" but in order of *thinking*, as it is termed, justification precedes the new birth. We first conceive his wrath to be turned away, and then his Spirit to work in our hearts.

2. How great importance then must it be of, to every child of man, throughly to understand these fundamental doctrines! From a full conviction of this, many excellent men have wrote very largely concerning justification, explaining every point relating thereto, and opening the Scriptures which treat upon it. Many likewise have wrote on the new birth: And some of them largely enough; but yet not so clearly as might have been desired, nor so deeply and accurately; having either given a dark, abstruse account of it, or a slight and superficial one. Therefore a full, and at the same time a clear, account of the new birth, seems to be wanting still; such as may enable us to give a satisfactory answer to these three questions:

I. First, Why must we be born again? What is the foundation of this doctrine of the new birth?

II. Secondly, How must we be born again? What is the nature of the new birth? And,

III. Thirdly, Wherefore must we be born again? To what end is it necessary?

IV. These questions, by the assistance of God, I shall briefly and plainly answer; and then subjoin a few inferences which will naturally follow.

I.

1. And, First, Why must we be born again? What is the foundation of this doctrine? The foundation of it lies near as deep as the creation of the world; in the scriptural account whereof we read, "And God," the three-one God, "said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him:" (Gen. 1:26, 27) -- Not barely in his *natural image*, a picture of his own immortality; a spiritual being, endued with understanding, freedom of will, and various affections; -- nor merely in his *political image*, the governor of this lower world, having "dominion over the fishes of the sea, and over all the earth;" -- but chiefly in his *moral image*; which, according to the Apostle, is "righteousness and true holiness." (Eph. 4:24) in this image of God was man made. "God is love:" Accordingly,

man at his creation was full of love; which was the sole principle of all his tempers, thoughts, words, and actions. God is full of justice, mercy, and truth; so was man as he came from the hands of his Creator. God is spotless purity; and so man was in the beginning pure from every sinful blot; otherwise God could not have pronounced him, as well as all the other work of his hands, "very good." (Gen. 1:31) This he could not have been, had he not been pure from sin, and filled with righteousness and true holiness. For there is no medium: If we suppose an intelligent creature not to love God, not to be righteous and holy, we necessarily suppose him not to be good at all; much less to be "very good."

2. But, although man was made in the image of God, yet he was not made immutable. This would have been inconsistent with the state of trial in which God was pleased to place him. He was therefore created able to stand, and yet liable to fall. And this God himself apprized him of, and gave him a solemn warning against it. Nevertheless, man did not abide in honour: He fell from his high estate. He "ate of the tree whereof the Lord had commanded him, Thou shalt not eat thereof." By this wilful act of disobedience to his Creator, this flat rebellion against his Sovereign, he openly declared that he would no longer have God to rule over him; That he would be governed by his own will, and not the will of Him that created him; and that he would not seek his happiness in God, but in the world, in the works of his hands. Now, God had told him before, "In the day that thou eatest" of that fruit, "thou shalt surely die." And the word of the Lord cannot be broken. Accordingly, in that day he did die: He died to God, -- the most dreadful of all deaths. He lost the life of God: He was separated from Him, in union with whom his spiritual life consisted. The body dies when it is separated from the soul; the soul, when it is separated from God. But this separation from God, Adam sustained in the day, the hour, he ate of the forbidden fruit. And of this he gave immediate proof; presently showing by his behaviour, that the love of God was extinguished in his soul, which was now "alienated from the life of God." Instead of this, he was now under the power of servile fear, so that he fled from the presence of the Lord. Yea, so little did he retain even of the knowledge of Him who filleth heaven and earth, that he endeavored to "hide himself from the Lord God among the trees of the garden:" (Gen. 3:8) So had he lost both the knowledge and the love of God, without which the image of God could not subsist. Of this, therefore, he was deprived at the same time, and became unholy as well as unhappy. In the room of this, he had sunk into pride and self-will, the very image of the devil; and into sensual appetites and desires, the image of the beasts that perish.

3. If it be said, "Nay, but that threatening, 'In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die,' refers to temporal death, and that alone, to the death of the body only;" the answer is plain: To affirm this is flatly and palpably to make God a liar; to aver that the God of truth positively affirmed a thing contrary to truth. For it is evident, Adam did not *die* in this sense, "in the day that he ate thereof." He lived, in the sense opposite to this death, above nine hundred years after. So that this cannot possibly be understood of the death of the body, without impeaching the veracity of God. It must therefore be understood of spiritual death, the loss of the life and image of God.

4. And in Adam all died, all human kind, all the children of men who were then in Adam's loins. The natural consequence of this is, that every one descended from him comes into the world spiritually dead, dead to God, wholly dead in sin; entirely void of the life of God; void of the image of God, of all that righteousness and holiness wherein Adam was created. Instead of this,

every man born into the world now bears the image of the devil in pride and self-will; the image of the beast, in sensual appetites and desires. This, then, is the foundation of the new birth, -- the entire corruption of our nature. Hence it is, that, being born in sin, we must be "born again." Hence every one that is born of a woman must be born of the Spirit of God.

II.

1. But how must a man be born again? What is the nature of the new birth? This is the Second question. And a question it is of the highest moment that can be conceived. We ought not, therefore, in so weighty a concern, to be content with a slight inquiry; but to examine it with all possible care, and to ponder it in our hearts, till we fully understand this important point, and clearly see how we are to be born again.

2. Not that we are to expect any minute, philosophical account of the manner how this is done. Our Lord sufficiently guards us against any such expectation, by the words immediately following the text; wherein he reminds Nicodemus of as indisputable a fact as any in the whole compass of nature, which, notwithstanding, the wisest man under the sun is not able fully to explain. "The wind bloweth where it listeth," -- not by thy power or wisdom; "and thou hearest the sound thereof;" -- thou art absolutely assured, beyond all doubt, that it doth blow; "but thou canst not tell whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth;" -- the precise manner how it begins and ends, rises and falls, no man can tell. "So is every one that is born of the Spirit:" -- Thou mayest be as absolutely assured of the fact, as of the blowing of the wind; but the precise manner how it is done, how the Holy Spirit works this in the soul, neither thou nor the wisest of the children of men is able to explain.

3. However, it suffices for every rational and Christian purpose, that, without descending into curious, critical inquiries, we can give a plain scriptural account of the nature of the new birth. This will satisfy every reasonable man, who desires only the salvation of his soul. The expression, "being born again," was not first used by our Lord in his conversation with Nicodemus: It was well known before that time, and was in common use among the Jews when our Saviour appeared among them. When an adult Heathen was convinced that the Jewish religion was of God, and desired to join therein, it was the custom to baptize him first, before he was admitted to circumcision. And when he was baptized, he was said to be born again; by which they meant, that he who was before a child of the devil was now adopted into the family of God, and accounted one of his children. This expression, therefore, which Nicodemus, being "a Teacher in Israel," ought to have understood well, our Lord uses in conversing with him; only in a stronger sense than he was accustomed to. And this might be the reason of his asking, "How can these things be?" They cannot be literally: -- A man cannot "enter a second time into his mother's womb, and be born:" -- But they may spiritually: A man may be born from above, born of God, born of the Spirit, in a manner which bears a very near analogy to the natural birth.

4. Before a child is born into the world he has eyes, but sees not; he has ears, but does not hear. He has a very imperfect use of any other sense. He has no knowledge of any of the things of the world, or any natural understanding. To that manner of existence which he then has, we do not even give the name of life. It is then only when a man is born, that we say he begins to live. For as soon as he is born, he begins to see the light, and the various objects with which he is encompassed. His ears are then opened, and he hears the sounds which successively strike

upon them. At the same time, all the other organs of sense begin to be exercised upon their proper objects. He likewise breathes, and lives in a manner wholly different from what he did before. How exactly doth the parallel hold in all these instances! While a man is in a mere natural state, before he is born of God, he has, in a spiritual sense, eyes and sees not; a thick impenetrable veil lies upon them; he has ears, but hears not; he is utterly deaf to what he is most of all concerned to hear. His other spiritual senses are all locked up: He is in the same condition as if he had them not. Hence he has no knowledge of God; no intercourse with him; he is not at all acquainted with him. He has no true knowledge of the things of God, either of spiritual or eternal things; therefore, though he is a living man, he is a dead Christian. But as soon as he is born of God, there is a total change in all these particulars. The "eyes of his understanding are opened;" (such is the language of the great Apostle;) and, He who of old "commanded light to shine out of darkness shining on his heart, he sees the light of the glory of God," his glorious love, "in the face of Jesus Christ." His ears being opened, he is now capable of hearing the inward voice of God, saying, "Be of good cheer; thy sins are forgiven thee;" "go and sin no more." This is the purport of what God speaks to his heart; although perhaps not in these very words. He is now ready to hear whatsoever "He that teacheth man knowledge" is pleased, from time to time, to reveal to him. He "feels in his heart," to use the language of our Church, "the mighty working of the Spirit of God;" not in a gross, carnal sense as the men of the world stupidly and wilfully misunderstand the expression; though they have been told again and again, we mean thereby neither more nor less than this: He feels, is inwardly sensible of, the graces which the Spirit of God works in his heart. He feels, he is conscious of, a "peace which passeth all understanding." He many times feels such a joy in God as is "unspeakable, and full of glory." He feels "the love of God shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost which is given unto him;" and all his spiritual senses are then exercised to discern spiritual good and evil. By the use of these, he is daily increasing in the knowledge of God, of Jesus Christ whom he hath sent and to all the things pertaining to his inward kingdom. And now he may be properly said to live: God having quickened him by his Spirit, he is alive to God through Jesus Christ. He lives a life which the world knoweth not of, a "life which is hid with Christ in God." God is continually breathing, as it were, upon the soul; and his soul is breathing unto God. Grace is descending into his heart; and prayer and praise ascending to heaven: And by this intercourse between God and man, this fellowship with the Father and the Son, as by a kind of spiritual respiration, the life of God in the soul is sustained; and the child of God grows up, till he comes to the "full measure of the stature of Christ."

5. From hence it manifestly appears, what is the nature of the new birth. It is that great change which God works in the soul when he brings it into life; when he raises it from the death of sin to the life of righteousness. It is the change wrought in the whole soul by the almighty Spirit of God when it is "created anew in Christ Jesus;" when it is "renewed after the image of God, in righteousness and true holiness;" when the love of the world is changed into the love of God; pride into humility; passion into meekness; hatred, envy, malice, into a sincere, tender, disinterested love for all mankind. In a word, it is that change whereby the earthly, sensual, devilish mind is turned into the "mind which was in Christ Jesus." This is the nature of the new birth: "So is every one that is born of the Spirit."

III.

1. It is not difficult for any who has considered these things, to see the necessity of the new birth, and to answer the Third question, Wherefore, to what end, is it necessary that we should be born again? It is very easily discerned, that this is necessary, First, in order to holiness. For what is holiness according to the oracles of God? Not a bare external religion, a round of outward duties, how many soever they be, and how exactly soever performed. No: Gospel holiness is no less than the image of God stamped upon the heart; it is no other than the whole mind which was in Christ Jesus; it consists of all heavenly affections and tempers mingled together in one. It implies such a continual, thankful love to Him who hath not withheld from us his Son, his only son, as makes it natural, and in a manner necessary to us, to love every child of man; as fills us "with bowels of mercies, kindness, gentleness, long-suffering:" It is such a love of God as teaches us to be blameless in all manner of conversation; as enables us to present our souls and bodies, all we are and all we have, all our thoughts, words, and actions, a continual sacrifice to God, acceptable through Christ Jesus. Now, this holiness can have no existence till we are renewed in the image of our mind. It cannot commence in the soul till that change be wrought; till, by the power of the Highest overshadowing us, we are "brought from darkness to light, from the power of Satan unto God;" that is, till we are born again; which, therefore, is absolutely necessary in order to holiness.

2. But "without holiness no man shall see the Lord," shall see the face of God in glory. Of consequence, the new birth is absolutely necessary in order to eternal salvation. Men may indeed flatter themselves (so desperately wicked and so deceitful is the heart of man!) that they may live in their sins till they come to the last gasp, and yet afterwards live with God; and thousands do really believe, that they have found a broad way which leadeth not to destruction. "What danger," say they, "can a woman be in that is so *harmless* and so *virtuous*? What fear is there that so *honest* a man, one of so strict *morality*, should miss of heaven; especially if, over and above all this, they constantly attend on church and sacrament?" One of these will ask with all assurance, "What! Shall not I do as well as my neighbours?" Yes as well as your unholy neighbours; as well as your neighbours that die in their sins! For you will all drop into the pit together, into the nethermost hell! You will all lie together in the lake of fire; "the lake of fire burning with brimstone." Then, at length, you will see (but God grant you may see it before!) the necessity of holiness in order to glory; and, consequently, of the new birth, since none can be holy, except he be born again.

3. For the same reason, except he be born again, none can be happy even in this world. For it is not possible, in the nature of things, that a man should be happy who is not holy. Even the poor, ungodly poet could tell us, *Nemo malus felix*: "no wicked man is happy." The reason is plain: All unholy tempers are uneasy tempers: Not only malice, hatred, envy, jealousy, revenge, create a present hell in the breast; but even the softer passions, if not kept within due bounds, give a thousand times more pain than pleasure. Even "hope," when "deferred," (and how often must this be the case!) "maketh the heart sick;" and every desire which is not according to the will of God is liable to "pierce" us "through with many sorrows:" And all those general sources of sin -- pride, self-will, and idolatry -- are, in the same proportion as they prevail, general sources of misery. Therefore, as long as these reign in any soul, happiness has no place there. But they must reign till the bent of our nature is changed, that is, till we are born again; consequently, the new birth is absolutely necessary in order to happiness in this world, as well as in the world to come.

IV.

I proposed in the Last place to subjoin a few inferences, which naturally follow from the preceding observations.

1. And, First, it follows, that baptism is not the new birth: They are not one and the same thing. Many indeed seem to imagine that they are just the same; at least, they speak as if they thought so; but I do not know that this opinion is publicly avowed by any denomination of Christians whatever. Certainly it is not by any within these kingdoms, whether of the established Church, or dissenting from it. The judgment of the latter is clearly declared in the large Catechism: [Q. 163, 165. -- Ed.] -- Q. "What are the parts of a sacrament? A. The parts of a sacrament are two: The one an outward and sensible sign; the other, and inward and spiritual grace, thereby signified. -- Q. What is baptism? A. Baptism is a sacrament, wherein Christ hath ordained the washing with water, to be a sign and seal of regeneration by his Spirit." Here it is manifest, baptism, the sign, is spoken of as distinct from regeneration, the thing signified.

In the Church Catechism likewise, the judgment of our Church is declared with the utmost clearness: "What meanest thou by this word, sacrament? A. I mean an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace. Q. What is the outward part or form in baptism? A. Water, wherein the person is baptized, in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Q. What is the inward part, or thing signified? A. A death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness." Nothing, therefore, is plainer than that, according to the Church of England, baptism is not the new birth.

But indeed the reason of the thing is so clear and evident, as not to need any other authority. For what can be more plain, than the one is a visible, the other an invisible thing, and therefore wholly different from each other? -- the one being an act of man, purifying the body; the other a change wrought by God in the soul: So that the former is just as distinguishable from the latter, as the soul from the body, or water from the Holy Ghost.

2. From the preceding reflections we may, Secondly, observe, that as the new birth is not the same thing with baptism, so it does not always accompany baptism: They do not constantly go together. A man may possibly be "born of water," and yet not be "born of the Spirit." There may sometimes be the outward sign, where there is not the inward grace. I do not now speak with regard to infants: It is certain our Church supposes that all who are baptized in their infancy are at the same time born again; and it is allowed that the whole Office for the Baptism of Infants proceeds upon this supposition. Nor is it an objection of any weight against this, that we cannot comprehend how this work can be wrought in infants. For neither can we comprehend how it is wrought in a person of riper years. But whatever be the case with infants, it is sure all of riper years who are baptized are not at the same time born again. "The tree is known by its fruits:" And hereby it appears too plain to be denied, that divers of those who were children of the devil before they were baptized continue the same after baptism: "for the works of their father they do:" They continue servants of sin, without any pretence either to inward or outward holiness.

3. A Third inference which we may draw from what has been observed, is, that the new birth is not the same with sanctification. This is indeed taken for granted by many; particularly by an eminent writer, in his late treatise on "The Nature and Grounds of Christian Regeneration." To

wave several other weighty objections which might be made to that tract, this is a palpable one: It all along speaks of regeneration as a progressive work, carried on in the soul by slow degrees, from the time of our first turning to God. This is undeniably true of sanctification; but of regeneration, the new birth, it is not true. This is a part of sanctification, not the whole; it is the gate to it, the entrance into it. When we are born again, then our sanctification, our inward and outward holiness, begins; and thenceforward we are gradually to "grow up in Him who is our Head." This expression of the Apostle admirably illustrates the difference between one and the other, and farther points out the exact analogy there is between natural and spiritual things. A child is born of a woman in a moment, or at least in a very short time: Afterward he gradually and slowly grows, till he attains to the stature of a man. In like manner, a child is born of God in a short time, if not in a moment. But it is by slow degrees that he afterward grows up to the measure of the full stature of Christ. The same relation, therefore, which there is between our natural birth and our growth, there is also between our new birth and our sanctification.

4. One point more we may learn from the preceding observations. But it is a point of so great importance, as may excuse the considering it the more carefully, and prosecuting it at some length. What must one who loves the souls of men, and is grieved that any of them should perish, say to one whom he sees living in sabbath-breaking, drunkenness, or any other wilful sin? What can he say, if the foregoing observations are true, but, "You must be born again?" "No," says a zealous man, "that cannot be. How can you talk so uncharitably to the man? Has he not been baptized already? He cannot be born again now." Can he not be born again? Do you affirm this? Then he cannot be saved. Though he be as old as Nicodemus was, yet "except he be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Therefore in saying, "He cannot be born again," you in effect deliver him over to damnation. And where lies the uncharitableness now? -- on my side, or on yours? I say, he may be born again, and so become an heir of salvation. You say, "He cannot be born again:" And if so, he must inevitably perish! So you utterly block up his way to salvation, and send him to hell, out of mere charity!

But perhaps the sinner himself, to whom in real charity we say, "You must be born again," has been taught to say, "I defy your new doctrine; I need not be born again: I was born again when I was baptized. What! Would you have me deny my baptism?" I answer, First, There is nothing under heaven which can excuse a lie; otherwise I should say to an open sinner, If you have been baptized, do not own it. For how highly does this aggravate your guilt! How will it increase your damnation! Was you devoted to God at eight days old, and have you been all these years devoting yourself to the devil? Was you, even before you had the use of reason, consecrated to God the Father, the son, and the Holy Ghost? And have you, ever since you had the use of it, been flying in the face of God, and consecrating yourself to Satan? Does the abomination of desolation -- the love of the word, pride, anger, lust, foolish desire, and a whole train of vile affections -- stand where it ought not? Have you set up all the accursed things in that soul which was once a temple of the Holy Ghost; set apart for an "habitation of God, through the Spirit;" yea, solemnly given up to him? And do you glory in this, that you once belonged to God? O be ashamed ! Blush ! Hide yourself in the earth ! Never boast more of what ought to fill you with confusion, to make you ashamed before God and man! I answer, Secondly, You have already denied your baptism; and that in the most effectual manner. You have denied it a thousand and a thousand times; and you do so still, day by day. For in your baptism you renounced the devil and all his works. Whenever, therefore, you give place to him again, whenever you do any of the works of the devil, then you deny your baptism. Therefore you deny it by every wilful sin; by

every act of uncleanness, drunkenness, or revenge; by every obscene or profane word; by every oath that comes out of your mouth. Every time you profane the day of the Lord, you thereby deny your baptism; yea, every time you do any thing to another which you would not he should do to you. I answer, Thirdly, Be you baptized or unbaptized, "you must be born again;" otherwise it is not possible you should be inwardly holy; and without inward as well as outward holiness, you cannot be happy, even in this world, much less in the world to come. Do you say, "Nay, but I do no harm to any man; I am honest and just in all my dealings; I do not curse, or take the Lord's name in vain; I do not profane the Lord's day; I am no drunkard; I do not slander my neighbour, nor live in any wilful sin?" If this be so, it were much to be wished that all men went as far as you do. But you must go farther yet, or you cannot be saved: Still, "you must be born again." Do you add, "I do go farther yet; for I not only do no harm, but do all the good I can?" I doubt that fact; I fear you have had a thousand opportunities of doing good which you have suffered to pass by unimproved, and for which therefore you are accountable to God. But if you had improved them all, if you really had done all the good you possibly could to all men, yet this does not at all alter the case; still, "you must be born again." Without this nothing will do any good to your poor, sinful, polluted soul. "Nay, but I constantly attend all the ordinances of God: I keep to my church and sacrament." It is well you do: But all this will not keep you from hell, except you be born again. Go to church twice a day; go to the Lord's table every week; say ever so many prayers in private; hear ever so many good sermons; read ever so many good books; still, "you must be born again:" None of these things will stand in the place of the new birth; no, nor any thing under heaven. Let this therefore, if you have not already experienced this inward work of God, be your continual prayer: "Lord, add this to all thy blessings, -- let me be born again! Deny whatever thou pleasest, but deny not this; let me be 'born from above!' Take away whatsoever seemeth thee good, -- reputation, fortune, friends, health, -- only give me this, to be born of the Spirit, to be received among the children of God! Let me be born, 'not of corruptible seed, but incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever;' and then let be daily 'grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ!'"

Edited by Michael Anderson, student at Northwest Nazarene College (Nampa, ID), with corrections by George Lyons for the [Wesley Center for Applied Theology](#).] The text for John Wesley's sermons originally came from the [Christian Classics Ethereal Library](#).

<https://www.resourceumc.org/en/content/sermon-45-the-new-birth>

11. Sermon 50: The Use Of Money, 1760

"I say unto you, Make unto yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into the everlasting habitations." Luke 16:9.

1. Our Lord, having finished the beautiful parable of the Prodigal Son, which he had particularly addressed to those who murmured at his receiving publicans and sinners, adds another relation of a different kind, addressed rather to the children of God. "He said unto his disciples," not so much to the scribes and Pharisees to whom he had been speaking before, -- "There was a certain rich man, who had a steward, and he was accused to him of wasting his goods. And calling him, he said, Give an account of thy stewardship, for thou canst be no longer steward." (Luke 16:1, 2.) After reciting the method which the bad steward used to provide against the day of necessity, our Saviour adds, "His lord commended the unjust steward" namely, in this respect, that he used timely precaution; and subjoins this weighty reflection, "The children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light:" (Luke 16:8:) Those who seek no other portion than this world "are wiser" (not absolutely; for they are one and all the veriest fools, the most egregious madmen under heaven; but, "in their generation," in their own way; they are more consistent with themselves; they are truer to their acknowledged principles; they more steadily pursue their end) "than the children of light;" -- than they who see "the light of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." Then follow the words above recited: "And I," -- the only-begotten Son of God, the Creator, Lord, and Possessor of heaven and earth and all that is therein; the Judge of all, to whom ye are to "give an account of your stewardship," when ye "can be no longer stewards;" "I say unto you," -- learn in this respect, even of the unjust steward, -- "make yourselves friends," by wise, timely precaution, "of the mammon of unrighteousness." "Mammon" means riches or money. It is termed "the mammon of unrighteousness," because of the unrighteous manner wherein it frequently procured, and wherein even that which was honestly procured is generally employed. "Make yourselves friends" of this, by doing all possible good, particularly to the children of God; "that, when ye fail," -- when ye return to dust, when ye have no more place under the sun, -- those of them who are gone before "may receive you," may welcome you, into the "everlasting habitations."

2. An excellent branch of Christian wisdom is here inculcated by our Lord on all his followers, namely, the right use of money -- a subject largely spoken of, after their manner, by men of the world; but not sufficiently considered by those whom God hath chosen out of the world. These, generally, do not consider, as the importance of the subject requires, the use of this excellent talent. Neither do they understand how to employ it to the greatest advantage; the introduction of which into the world is one admirable instance of the wise and gracious providence of God. It has, indeed, been the manner of poets, orators, and philosophers, in almost all ages and nations, to rail at this, as the grand corrupter of the world, the bane of virtue, the pest of human society. Hence nothing so commonly heard, as:

Nocens ferrum, ferroque nocentius aurum: And gold, more mischievous than keenest steel.

Hence the lamentable complaint,

Effodiuntur opes, irritamenta malorum. [Wealth is dug up, incentive to all ill.]

Nay, one celebrated writer gravely exhorts his countrymen, in order to banish all vice at once, to "throw all their money into the sea:"

. . . in mare proximum [. . .] Summi materiem mali!

But is not all this mere empty rant Is there any solid reason therein By no means. For, let the world be as corrupt as it will, is gold or silver to blame "The love of money," we know, "is the root of all evil;" but not the thing itself. The fault does not lie in the money, but in them that use it. It may be used ill: and what may not But it may likewise be used well: It is full as applicable to the best, as to the worst uses. It is of unspeakable service to all civilized nations, in all the common affairs of life: It is a most compendious instrument of transacting all manner of business, and (if we use it according to Christian wisdom) of doing all manner of good. It is true, were man in a state of innocence, or were all men "filled with the Holy Ghost," so that, like the infant Church at Jerusalem, "no man counted anything he had his own," but "distribution was made to everyone as he had need," the use of it would be superseded; as we cannot conceive there is anything of the kind among the inhabitants of heaven. But, in the present state of mankind, it is an excellent gift of God, answering the noblest ends. In the hands of his children, it is food for the hungry, drink for the thirsty, raiment for the naked: It gives to the traveller and the stranger where to lay his head. By it we may supply the place of an husband to the widow, and of a father to the fatherless. We maybe a defence for the oppressed, a means of health to the sick, of ease to them that are in pain; it may be as eyes to the blind, as feet to the lame; yea, a lifter up from the gates of death!

3. It is therefore of the highest concern that all who fear God know how to employ this valuable talent; that they be instructed how it may answer these glorious ends, and in the highest degree. And, perhaps, all the instructions which are necessary for this may be reduced to three plain rules, by the exact observance whereof we may approve ourselves faithful stewards of "the mammon of unrighteousness."

I. 1. The first of these is (he that heareth, let him understand!) "Gain all you can." Here we may speak like the children of the world: We meet them on their own ground. And it is our bounden duty to do this: We ought to gain all we can gain, without buying gold too dear, without paying more for it than it is worth. But this it is certain we ought not to do; we ought not to gain money at the expense of life, nor (which is in effect the same thing) at the expense of our health. Therefore, no gain whatsoever should induce us to enter into, or to continue in, any employ, which is of such a kind, or is attended with so hard or so long labour, as to impair our constitution. Neither should we begin or continue in any business which necessarily deprives us of proper seasons for food and sleep, in such a proportion as our nature requires. Indeed, there is a great difference here. Some employments are absolutely and totally unhealthy; as those which imply the dealing much with arsenic, or other equally hurtful minerals, or the breathing an air tainted with steams of melting lead, which must at length destroy the firmest constitution. Others may not be absolutely unhealthy, but only to persons of a weak constitution. Such are those which require many hours to be spent in writing; especially if a person write sitting, and lean upon his stomach, or remain long in an uneasy posture. But whatever it is which reason or experience shows to be destructive of health or strength, that we may not submit to; seeing "the life is more" valuable "than meat, and the body than raiment." And if we are already engaged in such an employ, we should exchange it as soon as possible for some which, if it lessen our gain, will, however not lessen our health.

2. We are, Secondly, to gain all we can without hurting our mind any more than our body. For neither may we hurt this. We must preserve, at all events, the spirit of an healthful mind. Therefore we may not engage or continue in any sinful trade, any that is contrary to the law of God, or of our country. Such are all that necessarily imply our robbing or defrauding the king of his lawful customs. For it is at least as sinful to defraud the king of his right, as to rob our fellow subjects. And the king has full as much right, to his customs as we have to our houses and apparel. Other businesses there are, which however innocent in themselves, cannot be followed with innocence now at least, not in England; such, for instance, as will not afford a competent maintenance without cheating or lying, or conformity to some custom which not consistent with a good conscience: These, likewise, are sacredly to be avoided, whatever gain they may be attended with provided we follow the custom of the trade; for to gain money we must not lose our souls. There are yet others which many pursue with perfect innocence, without hurting either their body or mind; And yet perhaps you cannot: Either they may entangle you in that company which would destroy your soul; and by repeated experiments it may appear that you cannot separate the one from the other; or there may be an idiosyncrasy, -- a peculiarity in your constitution of soul, (as there is in the bodily constitution of many,) by reason whereof that employment is deadly to you, which another may safely follow. So I am convinced, from many experiments, I could not study, to any degree of perfection, either mathematics, arithmetic, or algebra, without being a Deist, if not an Atheist: And yet others may study them all their lives without sustaining any inconvenience. None therefore can here determine for another; but every man must judge for himself, and abstain from whatever he in particular finds to be hurtful to his soul.

3. We are. Thirdly, to gain all we can without hurting our neighbour. But this we may not, cannot do, if we love our neighbour as ourselves. We cannot, if we love everyone as ourselves, hurt anyone in his substance. We cannot devour the increase of his lands, and perhaps the lands and houses themselves, by gaming, by overgrown bills (whether on account of physic, or law, or anything else,) or by requiring or taking such interest as even the laws of our country forbid. Hereby all pawn-broking is excluded: Seeing, whatever good we might do thereby, all unprejudiced men see with grief to be abundantly overbalanced by the evil. And if it were otherwise, yet we are not allowed to "do evil that good may come." We cannot, consistent with brotherly love, sell our goods below the market price; we cannot study to ruin our neighbour's trade, in order to advance our own; much less can we entice away or receive any of his servants or workmen whom he has need of. None can gain by swallowing up his neighbour's substance, without gaining the damnation of hell!

4. Neither may we gain by hurting our neighbour in his body. Therefore we may not sell anything which tends to impair health. Such is, eminently, all that liquid fire, commonly called drams or spirituous liquors. It is true, these may have a place in medicine; they may be of use in some bodily disorders; although there would rarely be occasion for them were it not for the unskillfulness of the practitioner. Therefore, such as prepare and sell them only for this end may keep their conscience clear. But who are they Who prepare and sell them only for this end Do you know ten such distillers in England Then excuse these. But all who sell them in the common way, to any that will buy, are poisoners general. They murder His Majesty's subjects by wholesale, neither does their eye pity or spare. They drive them to hell like sheep. And what is their gain Is it not the blood of these men Who then would envy their large estates and sumptuous palaces A curse is in the midst of them: The curse of God cleaves to the stones, the

timber, the furniture of them. The curse of God is in their gardens, their walks, their groves; a fire that burns to the nethermost hell! Blood, blood is there: The foundation, the floor, the walls, the roof are stained with blood! And canst thou hope, O thou man of blood, though thou art "clothed in scarlet and fine linen, and farest sumptuously every day;" canst thou hope to deliver down thy fields of blood to the third generation Not so; for there is a God in heaven: Therefore, thy name shall soon be rooted out. Like as those whom thou hast destroyed, body and soul, "thy memorial shall perish with thee!"

5. And are not they partakers of the same guilt, though in a lower degree, whether Surgeons, Apothecaries, or Physicians, who play with the lives or health of men, to enlarge their own gain Who purposely lengthen the pain or disease which they are able to remove speedily who protract the cure of their patient's body in order to plunder his substance Can any man be clear before God who does not shorten every disorder "as much as he can," and remove all sickness and pain "as soon as he can" He cannot: For nothing can be more clear than that he does not "love his neighbour as himself;" than that he does not "do unto others as he would they should do unto himself."

6. This is dear-bought gain. And so is whatever is procured by hurting our neighbour in his soul; by ministering, suppose, either directly or indirectly, to his unchastity, or intemperance, which certainly none can do, who has any fear of God, or any real desire of pleasing Him. It nearly concerns all those to consider this, who have anything to do with taverns, victualling-houses, opera-houses, play-houses, or any other places of public, fashionable diversion. If these profit the souls of men, you are clear; your employment is good, and your gain innocent; but if they are either sinful in themselves, or natural inlets to sin of various kinds, then, it is to be feared, you have a sad account to make. O beware, lest God say in that day, "These have perished in their iniquity, but their blood do I require at thy hands!"

7. These cautions and restrictions being observed, it is the bounden duty of all who are engaged in worldly business to observe that first and great rule of Christian wisdom with respect to money, "Gain all you can." Gain all you can by honest industry. Use all possible diligence in your calling. Lose no time. If you understand yourself and your relation to God and man, you know you have none to spare. If you understand your particular calling as you ought, you will have no time that hangs upon your hands. Every business will afford some employment sufficient for every day and every hour. That wherein you are placed, if you follow it in earnest, will leave you no leisure for silly, unprofitable diversions. You have always something better to do, something that will profit you, more or less. And "whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might." Do it as soon as possible: No delay! No putting off from day to day, or from hour to hour! Never leave anything till to-morrow, which you can do to-day. And do it as well as possible. Do not sleep or yawn over it: Put your whole strength to the work. Spare no pains. Let nothing be done by halves, or in a slight and careless manner. Let nothing in your business be left undone if it can be done by labour or patience.

8. Gain all you can, by common sense, by using in your business all the understanding which God has given you. It is amazing to observe, how few do this; how men run on in the same dull track with their forefathers. But whatever they do who know not God, this is no rule for you. It is a shame for a Christian not to improve upon them, in whatever he takes in hand. You should be continually learning, from the experience of others, or from your own experience, reading, and

reflection, to do everything you have to do better to-day than you did yesterday. And see that you practise whatever you learn, that you may make the best of all that is in your hands.

II. 1. Having gained all you can, by honest wisdom and unwearied diligence, the second rule of Christian prudence is, "Save all you can." Do not throw the precious talent into the sea: Leave that folly to heathen philosophers. Do not throw it away in idle expenses, which is just the same as throwing it into the sea. Expend no part of it merely to gratify the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eye, or the pride of life.

2. Do not waste any part of so precious a talent merely in gratifying the desires of the flesh; in procuring the pleasures of sense of whatever kind; particularly, in enlarging the pleasure of tasting. I do not mean, avoid gluttony and drunkenness only: An honest heathen would condemn these. But there is a regular, reputable kind of sensuality, an elegant epicurism, which does not immediately disorder the stomach, nor (sensibly, at least) impair the understanding. And yet (to mention no other effects of it now) it cannot be maintained without considerable expense. Cut off all this expense! Despise delicacy and variety, and be content with what plain nature requires.

3. Do not waste any part of so precious a talent merely in gratifying the desire of the eye by superfluous or expensive apparel, or by needless ornaments. Waste no part of it in curiously adorning your houses; in superfluous or expensive furniture; in costly pictures, painting, gilding, books; in elegant rather than useful gardens. Let your neighbours, who know nothing better, do this: "Let the dead bury their dead." But "what is that to thee" says our Lord: "Follow thou me." Are you willing Then you are able so to do.

4. Lay out nothing to gratify the pride of life, to gain the admiration or praise of men. This motive of expense is frequently interwoven with one or both of the former. Men are expensive in diet, or apparel, or furniture, not barely to please their appetite, or to gratify their eye, their imagination, but their vanity too. "So long as thou dost well unto thyself, men will speak good of thee." So long as thou art "clothed in purple and fine linen, and farest sumptuously" every day," no doubt many will applaud thy elegance of taste, thy generosity and hospitality. But do not buy their applause so dear. Rather be content with the honour that cometh from God.

5. Who would expend anything in gratifying these desires if he considered that to gratify them is to increase them Nothing can be more certain than this: Daily experience shows, the more they are indulged, they increase the more. Whenever, therefore, you expend anything to please your taste or other senses, you pay so much for sensuality. When you lay out money to please your eye, you give so much for an increase of curiosity, -- for a stronger attachment to these pleasures which perish in the using. While you are purchasing anything which men use to applaud, you are purchasing more vanity. Had you not then enough of vanity, sensuality, curiosity before Was there need of any addition And would you pay for it, too What manner of wisdom is this Would not the literally throwing your money into the sea be a less mischievous folly

6. And why should you throw away money upon your children, any more than upon yourself, in delicate food, in gay or costly apparel, in superfluities of any kind Why should you purchase for them more pride or lust, more vanity, or foolish and hurtful desires They do not want any more; they have enough already; nature has made ample provision for them: Why should you be at

farther expense to increase their temptations and snares, and to pierce them through with more sorrows

7. Do not leave it to them to throw away. If you have good reason to believe that they would waste what is now in your possession in gratifying and thereby increasing the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eye, or the pride of life at the peril of theirs and your own soul, do not set these traps in their way. Do not offer your sons or your daughters unto Belial, any more than unto Moloch. Have pity upon them, and remove out of their way what you may easily foresee would increase their sins, and consequently plunge them deeper into everlasting perdition! How amazing then is the infatuation of those parents who think they can never leave their children enough! What! cannot you leave them enough of arrows, firebrands, and death Not enough of foolish and hurtful desires Not enough of pride, lust, ambition vanity not enough of everlasting burnings Poor wretch! thou fearest where no fear is. Surely both thou and they, when ye are lifting up your eyes in hell, will have enough both of the "worm that never dieth," and of "the fire that never shall be quenched!"

8. "What then would you do, if you was in my case If you had a considerable fortune to leave" Whether I would do it or no, I know what I ought to do: This will admit of no reasonable question. If I had one child, elder or younger, who knew the value of money; one who I believed, would put it to the true use, I should think it my absolute, indispensable duty to leave that child the bulk of my fortune; and to the rest just so much as would enable them to live in the manner they had been accustomed to do. "But what, if all your children were equally ignorant of the true use of money" I ought then (hard saying! who can hear it) to give each what would keep him above want, and to bestow all the rest in such a manner as I judged would be most for the glory of God.

III. 1. But let not any man imagine that he has done anything, barely by going thus far, by "gaining and saving all he can," if he were to stop here. All this is nothing, if a man go not forward, if he does not point all this at a farther end. Nor, indeed, can a man properly be said to save anything, if he only lays it up. You may as well throw your money into the sea, as bury it in the earth. And you may as well bury it in the earth, as in your chest, or in the Bank of England. Not to use, is effectually to throw it away. If, therefore, you would indeed "make yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness," add the Third rule to the two preceding. Having, First, gained all you can, and, Secondly saved all you can, Then "give all you can."

2. In order to see the ground and reason of this, consider, when the Possessor of heaven and earth brought you into being, and placed you in this world, he placed you here not as a proprietor, but a steward: As such he entrusted you, for a season, with goods of various kinds; but the sole property of these still rests in him, nor can be alienated from him. As you yourself are not your own, but his, such is, likewise, all that you enjoy. Such is your soul and your body, not your own, but God's. And so is your substance in particular. And he has told you, in the most clear and express terms, how you are to employ it for him, in such a manner, that it may be all an holy sacrifice, acceptable through Christ Jesus. And this light, easy service, he has promised to reward with an eternal weight of glory.

3. The directions which God has given us, touching the use of our worldly substance, may be comprised in the following particulars. If you desire to be a faithful and a wise steward, out of that portion of your Lord's goods which he has for the present lodged in your hands, but with the

right of resuming whenever it pleases him, First, provide things needful for yourself; food to eat, raiment to put on, whatever nature moderately requires for preserving the body in health and strength. Secondly, provide these for your wife, your children, your servants, or any others who pertain to your household. If when this is done there be an overplus left, then "do good to them that are of the household of faith." If there be an overplus still, "as you have opportunity, do good unto all men." In so doing, you give all you can; nay, in a sound sense, all you have: For all that is laid out in this manner is really given to God. You "render unto God the things that are God's," not only by what you give to the poor, but also by that which you expend in providing things needful for yourself and your household.

4. If, then, a doubt should at any time arise in your mind concerning what you are going to expend, either on yourself or any part of your family, you have an easy way to remove it. Calmly and seriously inquire, "(1.) In expending this, am I acting according to my character Am I acting herein, not as a proprietor, but as a steward of my Lord's goods (2.) Am I doing this in obedience to his Word In what Scripture does he require me so to do (3.) Can I offer up this action, this expense, as a sacrifice to God through Jesus Christ (4.) Have I reason to believe that for this very work I shall have a reward at the resurrection of the just" You will seldom need anything more to remove any doubt which arises on this head; but by this four-fold consideration you will receive clear light as to the way wherein you should go.

5. If any doubt still remain, you may farther examine yourself by prayer according to those heads of inquiry. Try whether you can say to the Searcher of hearts, your conscience not condemning you, "Lord, thou seest I am going to expend this sum on that food, apparel, furniture. And thou knowest, I act herein with a single eye as a steward of thy goods, expending this portion of them thus in pursuance of the design thou hadst in entrusting me with them. Thou knowest I do this in obedience to the Lord, as thou commandest, and because thou commandest it. Let this, I beseech thee, be an holy sacrifice, acceptable through Jesus Christ! And give me a witness in myself that for this labour of love I shall have a recompense when thou rewardest every man according to his works." Now if your conscience bear you witness in the Holy Ghost that this prayer is well-pleasing to God, then have you no reason to doubt but that expense is right and good, and such as will never make you ashamed.

6. You see then what it is to "make yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness," and by what means you may procure, "that when ye fail they may receive you into the everlasting habitations." You see the nature and extent of truly Christian prudence so far as it relates to the use of that great talent, money. Gain all you can, without hurting either yourself or your neighbour, in soul or body, by applying hereto with unintermitted diligence, and with all the understanding which God has given you; -- save all you can, by cutting off every expense which serves only to indulge foolish desire; to gratify either the desire of flesh, the desire of the eye, or the pride of life; waste nothing, living or dying, on sin or folly, whether for yourself or your children; -- and then, give all you can, or, in other words, give all you have to God. Do not stint yourself, like a Jew rather than a Christian, to this or that proportion. "Render unto God," not a tenth, not a third, not half, but all that is God's, be it more or less; by employing all on yourself, your household, the household of faith, and all mankind, in such a manner, that you may give a good account of your stewardship when ye can be no longer stewards; in such a manner as the oracles of God direct, both by general and particular precepts; in such a manner, that whatever

ye do may be "a sacrifice of a sweet-smelling savour to God," and that every act may be rewarded in that day when the Lord cometh with all his saints.

7. Brethren, can we be either wise or faithful stewards unless we thus manage our Lord's goods We cannot, as not only the oracles of God, but our own conscience beareth witness. Then why should we delay Why should we confer any longer with flesh and blood, or men of the world Our kingdom, our wisdom is not of this world: Heathen custom is nothing to us. We follow no men any farther than they are followers of Christ. Hear ye him. Yea, to-day, while it is called to-day, hear and obey his voice! At this hour, and from this hour, do his will: Fulfil his word, in this and in all things! I entreat you, in the name of the Lord Jesus, act up to the dignity of your calling! No more sloth! Whatsoever your hand findeth to do, do it with your might! No more waste! Cut off every expense which fashion, caprice, or flesh and blood demand! No more covetousness! But employ whatever God has entrusted you with, in doing good, all possible good, in every possible kind and degree to the household of faith, to all men! This is no small part of "the wisdom of the just." Give all ye have, as well as all ye are, a spiritual sacrifice to Him who withheld not from you his Son, his only Son: So "laying up in store for yourselves a good foundation against the time to come, that ye may attain eternal life!"

Edited by Jennette Descalzo with corrections by George Lyons and further formatting by Ryan Danker for the Wesley Center for Applied Theology at Northwest Nazarene University.

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12. Sermon 128: Free Grace, 1740

Preached at Bristol, in the year 1740. Text from the 1872 edition.

Nothing but the strongest conviction, not only that what is here advanced is "the truth as it is in Jesus," but also that I am indispensably obliged to declare this truth to all the world, could have induced me openly to oppose the sentiments of those whom I esteem for their work's sake: At whose feet may I be found in the day of the Lord Jesus!

Should any believe it his duty to reply hereto, I have only one request to make, -- Let whatsoever you do, be done inherently, in love, and in the spirit of meekness. Let your very disputing show that you have "put on, as the elect of God, bowels of mercies, gentleness, longsuffering; "that even according to this time it may be said, "See how these Christians love one another!"

Whereas a pamphlet entitled, "Free Grace Indeed," has been published against this Sermon; this is to inform the publisher, that I cannot answer his tract till he appears to be more in earnest. For I dare not speak of "the deep things of God" in the spirit of a prize-fighter or a stage-player. "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how

shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" Rom. 8:32

1. How freely does God love the world! While we were yet sinners, "Christ died for the ungodly." While we were "dead in our sin," God "spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all." And how freely with him does he "give us all things!" Verily, FREE GRACE is all in all!

2. The grace or love of God, whence cometh our salvation, is FREE IN ALL, and FREE FOR ALL.

3. First. It is free in all to whom it is given. It does not

depend on any power or merit in man; no, not in any degree, neither in whole, nor in part. It does not in anywise depend either on the good works or righteousness of the receiver; not on anything he has done, or anything he is. It does not depend on his endeavors. It does not depend on his good tempers, or good desires, or good purposes and intentions; for all these flow from the free grace of God; they are the streams only, not the fountain. They are the fruits of free grace, and not the root. They are not the cause, but the effects of it. Whatsoever good is in man, or is done by man, God is the author and doer of it. Thus is his grace free in all; that is, no way depending on any power or merit in man, but on God alone, who freely gave us his own Son, and "with him freely giveth us all things.

4. But it is free for ALL, as well as IN ALL. To this some have answered, "No: It is free only for those whom God hath ordained to life; and they are but a little flock. The greater part of God hath ordained to death; and it is not free for them. Them God hateth; and, therefore, before they

were born, decreed they should die eternally. And this he absolutely decreed; because so was his good pleasure; because it was his sovereign will. Accordingly, they are born for this, -- to be destroyed body and soul in hell. And they grow up under the irrevocable curse of God, without any possibility of redemption; for what grace God gives. he gives only for this, to increase, not prevent, their damnation."

5. This that decree of predestination. But methinks I hear one say, "This is not the predestination which I hold: I hold only the election of grace. What I believe is not more than this, -- that God,, before the foundation of the world, did elect a certain number of men to be justified, sanctified, and glorified. Now, all these will be saved, and none else; for the rest of mankind God leaves to themselves: So they follow the imaginations of their own hearts, which are only evil continually, and, waxing worse and worse, are at length justly punished with everlasting destruction."

6. Is this all the predestination which you hold? Consider; perhaps this is not all. Do not you believe God ordained them to this very thing" If so, you believe the whole degree; you hold predestination in the full sense which has been above described. But it may be you think you do not. Do not you then believe, God hardens the hearts of them that perish: Do not you believe, he (literally) hardened Pharaoh's heart; and that for this end he raised him up, or created him? Why, this amounts to just the same thing. If you believe Pharaoh, or any one man upon earth, was created for this end, -- to be damned, -- you hold all that has been said of predestination. And there is no need you should add, that God seconds his degree, which is supposed unchangeable and irresistible, by hardening the hearts of those vessels of wrath whom that decree had before fitted for destruction.

7. well, but it may be you do not believe even this; you do not hold any decree of reprobation; you do not think God decrees any man to be damned, not hardens, irresistibly fits him, for damnation; you only say, "God eternally decreed, that all being dead in sin, he would say to some of the dry bones, Live, and to others he would not; that, consequently, these should be made alive, and those abide in death, -- these should glorify God by their salvation, and those by their destruction."

8. Is not this what you mean by the election of grace? If it be, I would ask one or two question: Are any who are not thus elected saved? or were any, from the foundation of the world? Is it possible any man should be saved unless he be thus elected? If you say, "No," you are but where you was; you are not got one hair's breadth farther; you still believe, that, in consequence of an unchangeable, irresistible decree of God, the greater part of mankind abide in death, without any possibility of redemption; inasmuch as none can save them but God, and he will not save them. You believe he hath absolutely decreed not to save them; and what is this but decreeing to damn them? It is, in effect, neither more not less; it comes to the same thing; for if you are dead, and altogether unable to make yourself alive, then, if God has absolutely decreed he will make only others alive, and not you, he hath absolutely decreed your everlasting death; you are absolutely consigned to damnation. So then, though you use softer words than some, you mean the self-same thing; and God's decree concerning the election of grace, according to your account of it, amounts to neither more not less than what others call God's decree of reprobation.

9. Call it therefore by whatever name you please, election, preterition, predestination, or reprobation, it comes in the end to the same thing. The sense of all is plainly this, -- by virtue of an eternal, unchangeable, irresistible decree of God, on part of mankind are infallibly saved, and the rest infallibly damned; it being impossible that any of the former should be damned. or that any of the latter should be saved.

10. But if this be so, then is all preaching vain. It is needless to them that are elected; for they, whether with preaching or without, will infallibly be saved. Therefore, the end of preaching -- to save should -- is void with regard to them; and it is useless to them that are not elected, for they cannot possibly be saved: They, whether with preaching or without, will infallibly be damned. The end of preaching is therefore void with regard to them likewise; so that in either case our preaching is vain, as you hearing is also vain.

11. This then, is a plain proof that the doctrine of predestination is not a doctrine of God, because it makes void the ordinance of God; and God is not divided against himself. A Second is, that it directly tends to destroy that holiness which is the end of all the ordinances of God. I do not say, none who hold it are holy; (for God is of tender mercy to those who are unavoidably entangled in errors of any kind;) but that the doctrine itself, -- that every man is either elected or not elected from eternity, and that the one must inevitably be saved, and the other inevitably damned, -- has a manifest tendency to destroy holiness in general; for it wholly takes away those first motives to follow after it, so frequently proposed in Scripture, the hope of future reward and fear of punishment, the hope of heaven and fear of hell. That these shall go away into everlasting punishment, and those into life eternal, is not motive to him to struggle for life who believes his lot is cast already; it is not reasonable for him so to do, if he thinks he is unalterably adjudged either to life or death. You will say, "But he knows not whether it is life or death." What then? -- this helps not the matter; for if a sick man knows that he must unavoidably die, or unavoidably recover, though he knows not which, it is unreasonable for him to take any physic at all. He might justly say, (and so I have heard some speak, both in bodily sickness and in spiritual,) "If I am ordained to life, I shall live; if to death, I shall live; so I need not trouble myself about it." So directly does this doctrine tend to shut the very gate of holiness in general, -- to hinder unholy men from ever approaching thereto, or striving to enter in thereat.

12. as directly does this doctrine tend to destroy several particular branches of holiness. Such are meekness and love, -- love, I mean, of our enemies, -- of the evil and unthankful. I say not, that none who hold it have meekness and love; (for as is the power of God, so is his mercy;) but that it naturally tends to inspire, or increase, a sharpness or eagerness of temper, which is quite contrary to the meekness of Christ; as then especially appears, when they are opposed on this head. And it as naturally inspires contempt or coldness towards those whom we suppose outcast from God. "O but," you say. "I suppose no particular man a reprobate." You mean you would not if you could help it: But you cannot help sometimes applying your general doctrine to particular persons: The enemy of souls will apply it for you. You know how often he has done so. But you rejected the thought with abhorrence. True; as soon as you could; but how did it sour and sharpen your spirit in the mean time! you well know it was not the spirit of love which you then felt towards that poor sinner, whom you supposed or suspected, whether you would or no, to have been hated of God from eternity.

13. Thirdly. This doctrine tends to destroy the comfort of religion, the happiness of Christianity. This is evident as to all those who believe themselves to be reprobated, or who only suspect or fear it. All the great and precious promises are lost to them; they afford them no ray of comfort: For they are not the elect of God; therefore they have neither lot nor portion in them. This is an effectual bar to their finding any comfort or happiness, even in that religion whose ways are designed to be "ways of pleasantness, and all her paths peace."

14. And as to you who believe yourselves the elect of God, what is your happiness? I hoe, not a notion, a speculative belief, a bare opinion of any kind; but a feeling possession of God in your heart, wrought in you by the Holy Ghost, or, the witness of God's Spirit with your spirit that you are a child of God. This, otherwise termed "the full assurance of faith,": is the true ground of a Christian's happiness. And it does indeed imply a full assurance that all your past sins are forgiven, and that you are *now* a child of God. But it does not necessarily imply a full assurance of our future perseverance. I do not say this is never joined to it, but that it is not necessarily implied therein; for many have the one who have not the other.

15. Now, this witness of the Spirit experience shows to be much obstructed by this doctrine; and not only in those who, Believing themselves reprobated, by this belief thrust it far from them, but even in them that have tasted of that good gift, who yet have soon lost it again, and fallen back into doubts, and fears, and darkness, -- horrible darkness, that might be felt! And I appeal to any of you who hold this doctrine, to say, between God and your own hearts, whether you have not often a return of doubts and fears concerning your election or perseverance! If you ask, "Who has not?" I answer, Very few of those that hold this doctrine; but many, very many, of those that hold it not, in all parts of the earth; -- many of these have enjoyed the uninterrupted witness of his Spirit, the continual light of his countenance, from the moment wherein they first believed, for many months or years, to this day.

16. That assurance of faith which these enjoy excludes all doubt and fear, It excludes all kinds of doubt and fear concerning their future perseverance; though it is not properly, as was said before, an assurance of what is future, but only of what *now* is. And this needs not for its support a speculative belief, that whoever is once ordained to life must live; for it is wrought from hour to hour, by the mighty power of God, "by the Holy Ghost which is given unto them." And therefore that doctrine is not of God, because it tends to obstruct, if not destroy, this great work of the Holy Ghost, whence flows the chief comfort of religion, the happiness of Christianity.

17. Again: How uncomfortable a thought is this, that thousands and millions of men, without any preceding offense or fault of theirs, were unchangeably doomed to everlasting burnings! How peculiarly uncomfortable must it be to those who have put on Christ! to those who, being filled with bowels of mercy, tenderness, and compassion, could even "wish themselves accused for their brethren's sake!"

18. Fourthly. This uncomfortable doctrine directly tends to destroy our zeal for good works. And this it does, First, as it naturally tends (according to what was observed before) to destroy our love to the greater part of mankind, namely, the evil and unthankful. For whatever lessens our love, must go far lessen our desire to do them good. This it does, Secondly, as it cuts off one of the strongest motives to all acts of bodily mercy, such as feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, and the like, -- viz., the hope of saving their souls from death. For what avails it to relieve their

temporal wants, who are just dropping into eternal fire? "Well; but run and snatch them as brands out of the fire.: Nay, this you suppose impossible. They were appointed thereunto, you say, from eternity, before they had done either good or evil. you believe it is the will of God they should die. And "who hath resisted his will?" But you say you do not know whether these are elected or not. What then? If you know they are the one or the other, -- that they are either elected or not elected, -- all your labour is void and vain. In either case, your advice, reproof, or exhortation is as needless and useless as our preaching. It is needless to them that are elected; for they will infallibly be saved without it. It is useless to them that are not elected; for with or without it they will infallibly be damned; therefore you cannot consistently with your principles take any pains about their salvation. Consequently, those principles directly tend to destroy your zeal for good works; for all good works; but particularly for the greatest of all, the saving of souls from death.

19. But, Fifthly, this doctrine not only tends to destroy Christian holiness, happiness, and good works, but hath also a direct and manifest tendency to overthrow the whole Christian Revelation. The point which the wisest of the modern unbelievers most industriously labour to prove, is, that the Christian Revelation is not necessary. They well know, could they once show this, the conclusion would be too plain to be denied, "If it be not necessary, it is not true," Now, this fundamental point you give up. For supposing that eternal, unchangeable decree, one part of mankind must be saved, though the Christian Revelation were not in being, and the other part of mankind must be damned, notwithstanding that Revelation. And what would an infidel desire more? You allow him all he asks. In making the gospel thus unnecessary to all sorts of men, you give up the whole Christian cause. "O tell it not in Gath! lest the daughters of the uncircumcised rejoice; "lest the sons of unbelief triumph!

20. And as this doctrine manifestly and directly tends to overthrow the whole Christian Revelation, so it does the same thing, by plain consequence, in making that Revelation contradict itself. For it is grounded on such an interpretation of some texts (more or fewer it matters not) as flatly contradicts all the other texts, and indeed the whole scope and tenor of Scripture. For instance: The assertors of this doctrine interpret that text of Scripture, "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated," as implying that God in a literal sense hated Esau, and all the reprobated, from eternity. Now, what can possibly be a more flat contradiction than this, not only to the whole scope and tenor of Scripture, but also to all those particular texts which expressly declare, "God is love?" Again: They infer from that text, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy," (Romans 4:15) that God is love only to some men, viz., the elect, and that he hath mercy for those only; flatly contrary to which is the whole tenor of Scripture, as is that express declaration in particular, "The Lord is loving unto every man; and his mercy is over all his works." (Psalm 114:9.) Again: They infer from that and the like texts, "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy,; that he showeth mercy only to those to whom he had respect from all eternity. Nay, but who replieth against God now? You now contradict the whole oracles of God, which declare throughout, "God is no respecter of persons:" (Acts 10:34) "There is no respect of persons with him." (Rom. 2:11.) Again: from that text, "The children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth; it was said unto her," unto Rebecca, "The elder shall serve the younger;" you infer, that our being predestinated, or elect, no way depends on the foreknowledge of God. Flatly contrary to this are all the scriptures;

and those in particular, "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God;" (1 Peter 1:2;) "Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate." (Rom. 8:29.)

21. And "the same Lord over all is rich" in mercy "to all that call upon him:" (Romans 10:12:) But you say, "No; he is such only to those for whom Christ died. And those are not all, but only a few, whom God hath chosen out of the world; for he died not for all, but only for those who were 'chosen in him before the foundation of the world.'" (Eph. 1:4.) Flatly contrary to your interpretation of these scriptures, also, is the whole tenor of the New Testament; as are in particular those texts: -- "Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died," (Rom. 14:15,) -- a clear proof that Christ died, not only for those that are saved, but also for them that perish: He is "the Saviour of the world;" (John 4:42;) He is "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world;" (John 1:29;) "He is the propitiation, not for our sins only, but also for the sins of the whole world;" (1 John 2:2;) "He," the living God, "is the Savior of all men;" (1 Timothy 4:10;) "He gave himself a ransom for all;" (1 Tim. 2:6;) "He tasted death for every man." (Heb. 2:9.)

22. If you ask, "Why then are not all men saved?" the whole law and the testimony answer, First, Not because of any decree of God; not because it is his pleasure they should die; for, As I live, saith the Lord God, "I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth." (Ezek. 18:3, 32.) Whatever be the cause of their perishing, it cannot be his will, if the oracles of God are true; for they declare, "He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance;" (2 Pet. 3:9;) "He willeth that all men should be saved." And they, Secondly, declare what is the cause why all men are not saved, namely, that they will not be saved: So our Lord expressly, "Ye will not come unto me that ye may have life." (John 5:40.) "The power of the Lord is present to heal" them, but they will not be healed. "They reject the counsel," the merciful counsel, "of God against themselves," as did their stiff-necked forefathers. And therefore are they without excuse; because God would save them, but they will not be saved: This is the condemnation, "How often would I have gathered you together, and ye would not!" (Matt. 23:37.)

23. Thus manifestly does this doctrine tend to overthrow the whole Christian Revelation, by making it contradict itself; by giving such an interpretation of some texts, as flatly contradicts all the other texts, and indeed the whole scope and tenor of Scripture; -- an abundant proof that it is not of God. But neither is this all: For, Seventhly, it is a doctrine full of blasphemy; of such blasphemy as I should dread to mention, but that the honour of our gracious God, and the cause of his truth, will not suffer me to be silent. In the cause of God, then, and from a sincere concern for the glory of his great name, I will mention a few of the horrible blasphemies contained in this horrible doctrine. But first, I must warn every one of you that hears, as ye will answer it at the great day, not to charge me (as some have done) with blaspheming, because I mention the blasphemy of others. And the more you are grieve with them that do thus blaspheme, see that ye "confirm your love towards them: the more, and that your heart's desire, and continual prayer to God, be, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do!"

24. This premised, let it be observed, that this doctrine represents our blessed Lord, "Jesus Christ the righteous," "the only begotten Son of the Father, full of grace and truth," as an hypocrite, a deceiver of the people, a man void of common sincerity. For it cannot be denied, that he everywhere speaks as if he was willing that all men should be saved. Therefore, to say he was not willing that all men should be saved, is to represent him as a mere hypocrite and dissembler. It cannot be denied that the gracious words which came out of his mouth are full of

invitations to all sinners. To say, then, he did not intend to save all sinners, is to represent him as a gross deceiver of the people. You cannot deny that he says, "Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden." If, then, you say he calls those that cannot come; those whom he knows to be unable to come; those whom he can make able to come, but will not; how is it possible to describe greater insincerity? You represent him as mocking his helpless creatures, by offering what he never intends to give. You describe him as saying on thing, and meaning another; as pretending the love which he had not. Him, in "whose mouth was no guile," you make full of deceit, void of common sincerity; -- then especially, when, drawing nigh the city, He wept over it, and said, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often *would* I have gathered thy children together, -- and *ye would not*;" *_EthelEsa -- kai ouk EthelEsate_*. Now, if you say, *they would_, but _he would not_, you represent him (which who could hear?) as weeping crocodiles' tears; weeping over the prey which himself had doomed to destruction!*

25. Such blasphemy this, as one would think might make the ears of a Christian to tingle! But there is yet more behind; for just as it honours the Son, so doth this doctrine honour the Father. It destroys all his attributes at once: It overturns both his justice, mercy, and truth; yea, it represents the most holy God as worse than the devil, as both more false, more cruel, and more unjust. More false; because the devil, liar as he is, hath never said, "He willeth all men to be saved." More unjust; because the devil cannot, if he would, be guilty of such injustice as you ascribe to God, when you say that God condemned millions of souls to everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels, for continuing in sin, which, for want of that grace he will not give them, they cannot avoid: And more cruel; because that unhappy spirit "seeketh rest and findeth none;" so that his own restless misery is a kind of temptation to him to tempt others. But God resteth in his high and holy place; so that to suppose him, of his own mere motion, of his pure will and pleasure, happy as he is, to doom his creatures, whether they will or no, to endless misery, is to impute such cruelty to him as we cannot impute even to the great enemy of God and man. It is to represent the high God (he that hath ears to hear let him hear!) as more cruel, false, and unjust than the devil!

26. This is the blasphemy clearly contained in the horrible decree+ of predestination! And here I fix my foot. On this I join issue with every assertor of it. You represent God as worse than the devil; more false, more cruel, more unjust. But you say you will prove it by scripture. Hold! What will you prove by Scripture? that God is worse than the devil? I cannot be. Whatever that Scripture proves, it never can prove this; whatever its true meaning be. This cannot be its true meaning. Do you ask, "What is its true meaning then?" If I say, "I know not," you have gained nothing; for there are many scriptures the true sense whereof neither you nor I shall know till death is swallowed up in victory. But this I know, better it were to say it had no sense, than to say it had such a sense as this. It cannot mean, whatever it mean besides, that the God of truth is a liar. Let it mean what it will it cannot mean that the Judge of all the world is unjust. No scripture can mean that God is not love, or that his mercy is not over all his works; that is, whatever it prove beside, no scripture can prove predestination.

27. This is the blasphemy for which (however I love the persons who assert it) I abhor the doctrine of predestination, a doctrine, upon the supposition of which, if one could possibly suppose it for a moment, (call it election, reprobation, or what you please, for all comes to the same thing,) one might say to our adversary, the devil, "Thou fool, why dost thou roar about any

longer? Thy lying in wait for souls is as needless and useless as our preaching. Hearest thou not, that God hath taken thy work out of thy hands; and that he doeth it much more effectually? Thou, with all thy principalities and powers, canst only so assault that we may resist thee; but He can irresistibly destroy both body and soul in hell! Thou canst only entice; but his unchangeable decrees, to leave thousands of souls in death, compels them to continue in sin, till they drop into everlasting burnings. Thou temptest; He forceth us to be damned; for we cannot resist his will. Thou fool, why goest thou about any longer, seeking whom thou mayest devour? Hearest thou not that God is the devouring lion, the destroyer of souls, the murderer of men" Moloch caused only children to pass through the fire: and that fire was soon quenched; or, the corruptible body being consumed, its torment was at an end; but God, thou are told, by his eternal decree, fixed before they had done good or evil, causes, not only children of a span long, but the parents also, to pass through the fire of hell, the 'fire which never shall be quenched; and the body which is cast thereinto, being now incorruptible and immortal, will be ever consuming and never consumed, but 'the smoke of their torment,' because it is God's good pleasure, 'ascendeth up for ever and ever.'"

28. O how would the enemy of God and man rejoice to hear these things were so! How would he cry aloud and spare not! How would he lift up his voice and say, "To your tents, O Israel! Flee from the face of this God, or ye shall utterly perish! But whither will ye flee? Into heaven? He is there, Down to hell? He is there also. Ye cannot flee from an omnipresent, almighty tyrant. And whether ye flee or stay, I call heaven, his throne, and earth, his footstool, to witness against you, ye shall perish, ye shall die eternally. Sing, O hell, and rejoice, ye that are under the earth! For God, even the mighty God, hath spoken, and devoted to death thousands of souls, from the rising of the sun unto the going down thereof! Here, O death, is they sting! They shall not, cannot escape; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. Here, O grave is thy victory Nations yet unborn, or ever they have done good or evil are doomed never to see the light of life, but thou shalt gnaw upon them for ever and ever! Let all those morning stars sing together, who fell with Lucifer, son of the morning! Let all the sons of hell shout for joy! For the decree is past, and who shall disannul it?"

29. Yea, the decree is past; and so it was before the foundation of the world. But what decree? Even this: "I will set before the sons of men 'life and death, blessing cursing.' And the soul that chooseth life shall live, as the soul that chooseth death shall die." This decree whereby "whom God did foreknow, he did predestinate," was indeed from everlasting; this, whereby all who suffer Christ to make them alive are "elect according to the foreknowledge of God," now standeth fast, even as the moon, and as the faithful witnesses in heaven; and when heaven and earth shall pass away, yet this shall not pass away; for it is as unchangeable and eternal as is the being of God that gave it. This decree yields the strongest encouragement to abound in all good works and in all holiness; and it is a well-spring of joy, of happiness also, to our great and endless comfort. This is worthy of God; it is every way consistent with all the perfections of his nature. It gives us the noblest view both of his justice, mercy, and truth. To this agrees the whole scope of the Christian Revelation, as well as all the parts thereof. To this Moses and all the Prophets bear witness, and our blessed Lord and all his Apostles Thus Moses, in the name of his Lord: "I call heaven and earth to record against you this day, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that thou and thy seed may live." Thus Ezekiel: choose life, that thou and thy seed may live;"Thus Ezekiel: (To cite one Prophet for all:) "The soul that sinneth, it shall die: The son shall not bear" eternally, "the iniquity of the father.

The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him." (18:20.) Thus our blessed Lord: "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." (John 7:37.) Thus his great Apostle, St. Paul: (Acts 17:30:) "God commandeth all men everywhere to repent; -- "all men everywhere;" every man in every place, without any exception either of place or person. Thus St. James: "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him." (James 1:5.) Thus St. Peter: (2 Pet. 3:9:) "The Lord is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." And thus St. John: " If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father; and he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world." (1 John 2:1, 2.)

30. O hear ye this, ye that forget God! Ye cannot charge your death upon him! "'Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die?' saith the Lord God." (Ezek. 18:23ff.) "Repent, and turn from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin. Cast away from you all your transgressions where by ye have transgressed, -- for why will ye die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God. Wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye." "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked. -- Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" (Ezekiel 33:11.)

[Edited by Ken Harris (student at Northwest Nazarene College) with corrections by George Lyons of Northwest Nazarene College (Nampa, Idaho) for the Wesley Center for Applied Theology.]

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