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Real
THANKFULNESS

SIMEON ASHE



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Real Thankfulness

OR, A SERMON PREACHED In PAULS Church LONDON, Upon the second day of November, 1645.

At a Public Thanksgiving for the taking in of the Towns and Castles of Caermarthen and Mounmouth in Wales, it being the first LORD'S-day after the inauguration of the Right Honorable Thomas Adams now Lord Major of that famous City.

By Simeon Ash Preacher at Basingshaw, London, and one of the Assembly of Divines.

PSAL. 50. 14. Offer to God thanksgiving, and pay thy vows unto the most high. PSAL. 50. 23. Who so offereth praise, glorifieth me, and to him that ordereth his conversation aright, will I show the salvation of God. LONDON, Printed by G. Miller for Edward Brewster at the Sign of the Bible on Ludgate-hill near Fleet-bridge, M. DC. XLV.

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Foreword

To the Godly and Well-Affectioned Reader,

Grace, peace, and divine mercy be unto you from our Lord Jesus Christ.

In this present age, where tumults and tempests of various sorts do most grievously afflict both Church and State, it is most fitting that we cast our eyes unto those pillars of faith, whose writings, like the beacon of a lighthouse, guide us safely through the tempestuous seas of our times. Such is the labor of our beloved brother in Christ, Simeon Ashe, whose treatise "Real Thankfulness" now lies before you.

It has pleased the Lord to bestow upon Master Ashe a most rare gift; that of discerning the very heart and essence of true gratitude. In a time where men's hearts are often inclined towards murmuring and discontent, this godly man exhorts us to lift up our souls in genuine thanksgiving, directing our gaze towards the unspeakable mercies we have received at the hands of our Gracious Redeemer.

As you turn these pages, you shall find not merely the empty platitudes of a distant theologian, but the warm exhortations of a pastoral heart, yearning for the flock of Christ to know the depth, width, and height of God's love and thus respond with a thankfulness that is both deep and real.

It is my earnest prayer, dear reader, that as you peruse this sermon, your heart might be inflamed with a renewed passion to render unto

the Lord the sacrifices of thanksgiving that He so richly deserves. In times of both prosperity and adversity, may this work be a continual reminder of our bounden duty and sweet delight: to offer up to our God the fruit of lips that acknowledge His name.

May the words of Ashe, like the melodious strains of a sacred psalm, draw you ever closer to the heart of our Saviour, and may "Real Thankfulness" become not merely the title of a book, but the very posture of thy soul.

In brotherly love and pastoral care,

J.H.

Dedicated to the edification of the Saints

TO THE RIGHT HONORABLE THOMAS ADAMS

Lord Mayor of the renowned City of LONDON, and to the right worshipful Aldermen and Sheriffs thereof,

Right Honorable,

When I first composed this Sermon in obedience to your command, I never intended for it to be known beyond the Pulpit. And though I have reservations about publishing my works, your Lordship's earnest desire, which I hold as a command, combined with the

requests of others, have persuaded me to present this Sermon for print.

I venture this Dedication not solely because the Sermon was delivered and is now printed at your behest, but also to openly and gratefully acknowledge the affection you've shown me in various ways.

The essence of my Sermon remains as you heard. I cannot recall any specific point I have either added or removed; some phrases are altered (as my memory couldn't retain the exact words), and the scriptural quotations are elaborated more than when first preached. The topic is apt for our times, especially when our City has been granted so many occasions for Thanksgiving. Living out our praises is what God anticipates, and this I believe.

In many of our gatherings, when we come together in song and praise, God might ask of us, *Quid verba audio, cum facta video?* This people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are distant. Let your actions echo your words. When will your deeds display your gratitude? My Lord, I've often heard you pose the question, *Quid retribuam Domino?* Allow me to remind your Lordship: with increased blessings come greater obligations to serve the Lord. Providence has placed you in a position of Honor and Trust, and much is expected: *Magistratus virum indicat*. One is truly tested by their actions. Many will judge you by your deeds this year. You may face temptations that might sway you, but always recall to whom you owe allegiance and before whom you will account for your deeds. Prioritize God in your actions, seek the welfare of Zion, take counsel from those who offer godly wisdom, and I urge you to reflect frequently on our solemn National Covenant. We must not incite the Almighty's wrath through its neglect, for our current suffering is a

reminder of His displeasure, as mentioned in Lev. 26:25. As Psalms 65:1 and 61:8 remind us, let our praises and actions align in gratitude. Right honorable and worshipful, you have been united in leading this great City. May you work harmoniously for its true welfare and encourage those who genuinely aim to uphold the sacred governance of Jesus Christ.

In service, SIMEON ASHE.

Thanksgiving Realized.

PSALM 105:45. "That they might observe his statutes, and keep his laws."

This Psalm is Eucharistical, fitting for our day of Thanksgiving, making the subject of the Psalm and the service of the day harmonious. Within the Psalm, the lofty task of praising God is:

First, Commanded and partly directed in the first four verses: "O give thanks unto the Lord, &c."

Secondly, Persuaded throughout the remainder of the Psalm.

Two principal arguments urge God's people to this angelic duty:

1. The quality and variety of divine interventions for their solace: "Remember his marvelous works, that he hath done, his wonders," v. 5. To leave a deeper imprint upon their hearts, an extensive catalogue of divine favors is listed. We find an

enumeration of grand, noteworthy providences spanning almost forty verses.

2. The purpose which the Lord set forth and aimed at in these numerous and significant acts. This intent is illuminated in my text: "That they might observe his statutes, and keep his laws." True thanksgiving is not just in words but in living (thanks-living) - in dedicated obedience to the God of our Salvation, the God of our mercies. This is the focal point of my text. Within it, we observe:
3. The titles by which the rule of man's obedience is described: Statutes and Laws.
4. The expressions suggesting the preciseness of such obedience: Observe and Keep.
5. The method by which this precise obedience is encouraged: through all the marvelous deeds of the Most High, both for His servants and against their adversaries. After detailing a multitude of these deeds, the Psalmist draws to a conclusion in the text. He states: "That" or (as the older translation puts it) "to the intent" they might observe his statutes and keep his laws. Should anyone ponder upon reading these illustrious providences, the reason the Lord performed so many grand wonders for Israel, the text provides clarity: "That they might observe his statutes and keep his laws."

From the division of my Text, I draw unto the explication of its several terms. Though I intend brevity, some discourse is requisite to lay forth the way for that which must be observed and enhanced from this foundation.

Ye have already been apprised of the two titles rendered in this Text unto the rule of man's obedience. The first is "Statutes". The original word hath been translated as, firstly, a "Decree", as in Psal. 148:6: "He hath set a decree which shall not pass." Just as the lower creatures' actions are circumscribed by God's decrees (oft termed the ordinances of Heaven), so should man's deeds be directed and confined by His Commandments.

Secondly, it means a "Portion", as seen in Prov. 31:15: "She riseth also while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household, and a portion to her maidens." Truly, God's commands are a rich portion to His people. As Job professed, "I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food," (Job 23:12) and David avowed, "Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever," (Psal. 119:111). To a soul touched by grace, God's work is reward, and His service is elevation.

The second term is "Laws". This word typically signifies the moral law, the Decalogue — that unchanging rule by which all nations, in all times, must order their actions before God.

Having clarified the terms describing God's revealed will, I move to elucidate those that suggest man's due response.

The term "Observe" suggests, firstly, to heed or retain in memory, akin to how old Jacob heeded the sayings (the dreams) of Joseph in Gen. 37:11. Secondly, it can mean to safeguard, as Jacob implied in his prayer in Gen. 28:20: "And God be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go."

This aligns with the meaning of the subsequent term, "Keep", which naturally denotes to guard with vigilance, much like how fortifications are shielded from fire and foe when a threat is near, as

in Nahum 2:1: "He that dasheth in pieces shall come up before thy face: keep the munition; watch the way."

These interpretations, rooted in the original texts, are not trivial. They resonate with the broader discourse of the Holy Ghost elsewhere. The Lord's laws ought to be enshrined in the chambers of man's heart and memory, as in Prov. 3:1: "My son, forget not my law; but let thine heart keep my commandments." Moreover, all God's precepts ought to be shielded from harm, ensuring no violations occur, as echoed in Prov. 7:2: "Keep my commandments and live; and my law as the apple of thine eye."

I touch upon these matters briefly, guiding us toward the main theme intended in the Text and suiting our purpose on this solemn day.

[Doct.] The regular observation of God's Commandments by man is the very aim of His magnificent acts for our comfort. In fewer words: The goal of God's benevolence is man's obligation.

Or thus, reflecting upon the testimonies of the Psalm and the experiences of our present days: The Lord punishes His adversaries and delivers His servants with this end in view: that they might observe His statutes and keep His laws.

My dear ones! Who amongst us can recount in sequence the manifold deeds our God has accomplished for us of late, just as in times past? Our allies have been succoured, our foes have been vanquished, our petitions have been acknowledged, our spirits uplifted, our troops triumphed, our adversaries overthrown. I beseech you, saturate your minds with the specifics recited this day and on other occasions past. And to this reflection of all, append this Doctrine upon which I now embark: That in all His actions, God's

true purpose is that we might observe His statutes and uphold His laws.

In addressing this profound subject, worthy of our deepest contemplation, I shall, with my usual straightforwardness, strive for two objectives:

1. To elucidate the truth, so it may be correctly grasped.
2. To apply it, so its wisdom might be productively harnessed.

I commence with the first, wherein I shall be brief to ensure ample time to address the latter. The latter is my primary focus, given its profound and timely significance.

Yet, before delving deeper, I find it prudent to offer some cautions. To avoid misconceptions in the topic at hand, I propose that the following four points be duly noted.

1. Man's obedience is the end of God's gracious providences concerning His precept, though not always concerning His secret, eternal purpose. I recall the words of the Psalmist: "When the wicked spring as the grass, and when all the workers of iniquity do flourish; it is that they shall be destroyed forever" (Psal. 92:7). Here, I address not God's end concerning His everlasting, righteous decree, which He keeps hidden in His bosom. As to the end of His command, revealing His desire to mankind, the words of Moses, that servant of God, are clear and fitting for our purpose (Deut. 10:12-13). After listing various, wondrous favors granted unto Israel, he declares: "And now, Israel, what does the Lord thy God require of thee but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to

serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart and soul, to keep the commandments of the Lord and his statutes?"

2. It is God's intention (as aforesaid) that men obey, though too often it's not executed. Even after God has endeavored to secure man's obedience through His blessings, His expectations are frequently thwarted. The lamentation of the Lord concerning His vineyard in Isa. 5 encapsulates this sentiment. Despite the remarkable deliverances and victories He has bestowed upon us, there remain but a scant few who heed His expectations, reforming their ways and obeying His divine laws.
3. Though the observance of God's statutes by man is an aim, it isn't the sole one of His abundant favors. Among many purposes always in His divine sight, in His fatherly kindness towards His people, He dispenses comforts specifically to uplift their spirits and ease their journey through this world's wilderness. "Let the Lord be magnified, who takes pleasure in the prosperity of his servant" (Psal. 35:27). "As the mountains surround Jerusalem, so the Lord surrounds his people. For the scepter of wickedness shall not rest on the land allotted to the righteous, lest the righteous stretch out their hands to do wrong" (Psal. 125:2-3).
4. Man's dutiful submission to divine commands isn't God's ultimate end in all His magnificent acts. The pinnacle of all God's intentions and providences is His own glory: "The Lord hath made all things for himself" (Prov. 16:4). Whether in those unconvinced by His kindness or in those enriched by His grace, He shall be glorified. Pharaoh's resistance to God's interventions was ultimately to God's glory (Exod. 14:4). Those obediently fruitful under God's grace and kindness, filled with righteousness, contribute to the glory of God through Christ

(Phil. 1:11). Thus, all acts culminate in the honor of the most high God, the orchestrator of all. Furthermore, beyond the obligations of obedience, the well-being and happiness of the sincerely obedient—both in this life and the next—are purposed by God as ends subordinate to His eternal glory. "Oh, that they had such a heart as this always, to fear me and to keep all my commandments, that it might go well with them" (Deut. 5:29). The Apostle, urging the Romans towards sanctification, adds, "But now being made free from sin and become servants to God, you have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life" (Rom. 6:22).

Having set forth these cautions and propositions to ward off misunderstandings, and to ensure the true interpretation of my Text and Doctrine, I shall move forward to the Application, which stands as the second undertaking promised in the elaboration of the matter.

The enhancement of this timely instruction (thus revealed) [Use.] is primarily what I envisioned when selecting this Text. And I earnestly pray that God might grant me grace in this final, most significant portion of my Sermon, so I may touch your hearts for your spiritual enrichment and edification. All that I shall propose by way of Use, I shall present under these three categories:

1. Information.
2. Reprehension.
3. Exhortation.

I shall swiftly address the first two types of Uses, but I ask for patience as I expand upon the last. It stands as the most beneficial, most pertinent to this Assembly, and most apt to foster the praises we today offer unto our Lord.

From this, it clearly and necessarily emerges that the disobedience of those individuals who have experienced the greatest and most gracious interventions of the Almighty is utterly reprehensible and indefensible.

Such transgressors do not merely breach the Laws of Sovereignty, but also of Friendship. Their omissions and missteps represent not only breaches of duty but also ingratitude and betrayal.

It is worthy of note how the Holy Ghost frequently presents this particular circumstance as a weighty emphasis upon the sins of both Nations and individuals. This is done to humble their hearts deeply and to vindicate God in His most severe chastisements. Thus, Samuel confronts a defiant Israel in 1 Sam. 12:6-12. He recalls the myriad mercies shown to them, followed by their sins which those very mercies make even graver. And when they sought another king, despite the Lord being their King, it marked a grave offense. Beloved, I must refrain from drawing direct parallels between these passages and God's providences towards this humble Kingdom and this Kingdom's misdeeds towards the Lord. I beseech you to make such comparisons yourselves. In doing so, I trust the earnest contemplation thereof will serve both in exalting our God and in humbling us in His presence. England's deliverances and blessings, as well as London's, surpass those of other Kingdoms and Cities. Therefore, the sins of England and of London are more heinous, horrid, high provocations of the most high God.

As the transgressions of a people are intensified in the eyes of the Lord, so too are the offenses of individual persons. In this manner, Samuel magnifies the disobedience of King Saul, saying in 1 Sam. 15:16-19: "Then Samuel said unto Saul, 'Stay, and I will tell thee what the Lord said unto me this night. When thou wast humble in thine

own sight, were thou not appointed head of the tribes of Israel? And did the Lord not anoint thee King over Israel? And did the Lord not command thee on a journey, instructing thee to utterly destroy the sinners, the Amalekites? Wherefore then didst thou not heed the Lord's command, but instead sought after the spoil, committing evil in His sight?"

I shall refrain from elaborating on this Scripture, which might aptly apply to many of the elite in this City. However, I entreat you to reflect upon the modest beginnings from which the Lord hath raised many of you. Consider your own lives and ponder what account you might offer to His Majesty for your obedience—or lack thereof—to His divine Commandments. Indeed, God has used such methods even with His cherished servants to stir true repentance within them. The grievous fall of David is widely recognized, and it is known how the Lord, through Nathan, brought the gravity of his sins to his own attention in 2 Sam. 12:7-9. Herein lies the crux of the matter: "Wherefore hast thou?" Thou, so favored and elevated by God, how can you justify such actions?

Allow me one more instance, chosen especially as it pertains to those of my own profession, to illustrate that we, as Ministers, too, must recognize and emphasize our own misdeeds. The notorious indulgence of Eli towards his sinful sons is well-documented. Consider how a messenger from the Lord underscored his wrongdoing in 1 Sam. 2:27-29. We, who serve as God's ministers, must view our own missteps with even greater revulsion, given the esteemed and sacred roles with which we've been entrusted.

This contemplation could be expanded by noting that guilt, when perceived in this light, is profoundly troubling to a heart earnestly

seeking repentance. Such anguish was felt deeply by David when he lamented, "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned" (Ps. 51:4).

Though I must depart from this point, as it does not align with the specific purpose of today's discourse, I proceed to the next application. This serves to reprove two categories of individuals, who directly contradict the divine intent highlighted in my Text when God bestows blessings.

Firstly, we cannot refrain from addressing those who, upon reflecting on this doctrine, become less obedient and more indulgent in their lives due to God's patience and benevolence. Such behavior mars King Rehoboam, as mentioned in 2 Chro. 12:1, "When Rehoboam had established the kingdom and strengthened himself, he forsook the Law of the Lord."

For many, it might be rightly said that they would not have acted so dishonorably if God hadn't been so generous in His gifts. Such individuals exhibit grave folly, drawing poison from God's kindness, just as a spider derives venom from flowers, whereas the industrious bee extracts wax and honey. To such persons, I have three points to offer, hoping they may provoke reflection and reform:

1. Abusing God's bounty in this manner is a grave indication of a soul not yet reborn. "Though grace is shown to the wicked, he does not learn righteousness; even in a land of uprightness, he acts wrongly," as written in Isa. 26:10. The hypocrite might be likened to a spinning top, which only moves when struck. The Psalmist speaks eloquently of such deceptive hearts in Psal. 73:34. In times of hardship, they seek God, but with insincerity, for their hearts are not steadfast in His covenant.

2. In this context, even idolaters show more respect to their lifeless idols than these individuals show to the one, true, and living God. The Prophet Hosea describes the reasoning of idol worshippers in Hos. 2:5, "I will go after my lovers, who provide for my needs." Considering this, we can decry such offenders, echoing the lamentations of the Lord in Jer. 2:9, where He bemoans the unfaithfulness of His people, even when other nations remain loyal to their false gods.
3. Such behavior is no better than that of beasts. As Moses says of Jesurun in Deut. 32:15, "Jesurun grew fat and rebellious." This imagery is akin to a stubborn ass, which, when well-fed, becomes unruly, either running from its caretaker or resisting him.

Thus, in revisiting the divine grace described in my Text, let us not become wanton in our blessings but instead remain ever faithful and obedient to the Giver of all good things.

The fervent Prophet Jeremiah reproaches those of base inclinations with striking words, "When I filled them, they committed adultery and assembled in harlots' abodes. They were as lustful horses, each desiring his neighbour's wife. Shall I not punish such actions?" says the Lord. "Will I not seek vengeance on such a nation?"

May the Lord rouse the dormant consciences of those whom this stinging reproof addresses, that they may be transformed by His abundant grace through Jesus Christ.

The second group I address with a gentler touch [Use 2] are those whose objectives in seeking and granting favours oppose the edicts and example set by our divine Lord. I reference two types of culprits here:

1. Those who, in pursuit of worldly gains, seek only to please their earthly desires, to sate their infernal cravings. Apostle James reprimands such men in Jam. 4:3, "You ask wrongly, desiring to indulge your passions." And there's a rebuke for Baruch in Jeremiah's question, Jer. 45:5, "Do you seek grandeur for yourself?" Let those who desire sloth, luxury, pride, vengeance, and suchlike, while coveting positions of honour and power, take this admonition to heart.
2. Those who, when bestowing positions of wealth, power, and trust, chiefly (if not solely) aim to bolster a faction against the rule and path of Jesus Christ. I shall not cite specific examples but entrust it to your wisdom and conscience to discern and apply this broad warning.

If any use their wealth, influence, or vigour to elevate those who oppose godliness, the purity of Gospel tenets, and the advancement of our Church Reformation, I hope they reflect that such actions are not guided by the Spirit of God. I refrain from drawing parallels with Balak's offer to elevate Balaam if he would curse Israel, lest I appear too sharp. Nor do I intend my words as concealed jabs against those who genuinely work to exalt Jesus Christ. May my tongue be forever silenced before I knowingly speak against the honour of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Finally, I move to my concluding application [Use 3], urging all towards a twofold duty, which I shall expound in two parts.

First, from this, we are moved to extol God for His [Branch. 1] benevolent providence, in which He, through acts of kindness, seeks to sway and move our hearts to His holy obedience.

This deduction is ready at hand, taken from the words immediately following the Text, "Praise ye the Lord." To enliven our hearts towards admiration and reverence of God in this matter, consider these following meditations:

1. That human obedience does not in any way benefit God. "Can a man be profitable to God? Does He gain from your perfect ways?" (Job 22. 2, 3). "If thou art righteous, what givest thou Him? What does He receive from thy hand?" (Job 35. 7). These questions bear strong denials, suggesting that our most diligent efforts cannot benefit God.

Men employ servants for their own gain. Yet, in relation to the All-sufficient God, all must admit, "When we have done all that is commanded, we remain unprofitable servants" (Luk. 17. 10). David, a man after God's heart, admits, "My righteousness extends not to thee" (Psal. 16. 2). No addition can be made to that which is already infinite and perfect.

2. Man's disobedience does not harm God. "If thou sinnest, what harm dost thou inflict upon Him?" (Job 35. 6). The sun remains unblemished, regardless of one's refusal to appreciate its light.

The same perfections and joys that the Lord eternally possesses will remain, even if no creature serves Him. Amongst men, it differs. A kingdom requires all its parts, both great and small. The head relies upon the feet, as does the entire body.

3. It is God's abundant mercy that prompts Him to reveal His will to man, that we might comprehend what pleases His Majesty. "He shows His Word to Jacob, His decrees to Israel. He has not done so with any other nation" (Psal. 147. 19, 20).

Had the Lord left us in our natural ignorance, like the Heathens unfamiliar with His Commands, we could not blame Him. Yet how much more are we indebted to God, who, after giving light, adds favors to encourage its righteous use?

4. Even if the Lord sought our obedience solely through threats, we would still have reason to be grateful. For it is better to be driven to God's work than to forsake it. David acknowledged this in Psalm 119. 67, 68, "Before I was afflicted, I went astray; but now I obey Your word. You are good, and what You do is good."

Thus, the kind and paternal methods God employs to mold our hearts and lives to His Commands should elicit our affection and thanksgiving.

5. Our best efforts to serve and worship the Almighty are imperfect. Our shortcomings taint our offerings, rendering even our righteousnesses as unsightly rags. When Nehemiah, after doing much for God, recognizes his flaws, he pleads, "Lord, pardon me according to thy great mercies" (Neh. 13. 22).

God knows our shortcomings, as stated in Psal. 90. 8, "Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret sins in the light of thy countenance." Is it not wondrous that God, despite this, bestows continual favors to inspire our obedience?

6. Lastly, and most remarkably, God promises to reward our obedience. "In keeping of His commandments, there is great reward" (Psal. 19. 11).

Every Christian, aware of himself and accustomed to earnestly compare his offerings to God with his gifts from God, will readily confess that he is always infinitely indebted to His Majesty. Hence,

given His past benevolent providences urging obedience and future glorious promises crowning that obedience, we have all the reason to exclaim, "Praise we the Lord," and to urge one another, "Praise ye the Lord."

Next follows the second branch of my Exhortation, which has been my primary intent all this while: [Branch. 2].

To encourage your dedicated effort to apply all of God's benevolent providences to the advancement and improvement of obedience, I implore you, brethren, "by the mercies of God, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God," which is your due service.

If my exhortation, based on this foundation, seems unreasonable, then set it aside. I speak to those of understanding; judge what I say. Beloved, I am deeply sincere in this message, which is not only timely but also of utmost importance. I would be most reluctant to leave without a positive response to this reasonable request, which I make in God's name for your benefit.

Numerous examples might underscore this exhortation. Notably, Israel's double and triple resolution, borne of this reflection, declares, "God forbid that we should forsake the Lord, for He brought us and our ancestors out of Egypt, performed great signs before us, &c. Thus, we will serve the Lord."

Furthermore, when Joshua voiced doubts about their commitment, the people replied, "Nay, but we will serve the Lord." And when pressed even more by Joshua, they affirmed, "The Lord our God will we serve, and his voice will we obey."

Yet, I would cite a simpler example than Israel's reliance on God. Even the Heathens, driven only by moral considerations, reciprocate kindness due to the law of equivalent return. "If you do good to those who are good to you, what merit is there? Sinners do the same." In relation to God, I ask nothing more. Simply strive to repay God's kindness with obedient behavior, and that is all I ask.

I recall when David, despite Saul's relentless pursuit to kill him, chose not to harm Saul when given the opportunity. This act moved Saul to declare, "My son David, I will no longer seek to harm you, for you valued my life today" (1 Sam. 26. 21). God's patience and love towards us far surpass anything David demonstrated to Saul. Not only has He refrained from punishing us despite our many transgressions, but He has also protected us from those wishing us harm. Moreover, we not only enjoy safety but also abundant comforts from our God. How much more, then, should we commit to honoring God and not dishonoring Him with disobedience, striving always to observe His statutes and keep His laws.

2. This grateful obedience the Lord will graciously accept as full recompense for all His bounties. After Moses enumerated numerous blessings bestowed upon Israel, he concludes in Deut. 10. 12, 13: "And now, O Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to walk in all His ways, to keep His Commandments?" It's as if he proclaimed, "This is all; God will be satisfied with this; He looks for no more." O beloved, our debt to the Almighty is profound, yet such is His generosity that with sincere observance of His laws (to which we are bound as rational beings) He grants us full acquittance in our hearts.

However, if this consideration does not sway you, consider how the Lord perceives disobedience from those He generously blesses. How

poignant is God's lament against Israel via the Evangelical Prophet: "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth, for the Lord hath spoken: I have nourished and brought up children, but they have rebelled against me. The Ox knows his owner, and the Ass his master's crib, but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider." (Isaiah 1:2-3) In light of this sorrowful proclamation, I beseech: Have you not yet aggrieved God enough? Will you persist in grieving Him further?

3. Exalting God's praises benefits us in numerous ways:

1. It garners wisdom in the eyes of those who acknowledge our profound obligations to God. "Keep therefore and do them; for this is your wisdom and understanding in the sight of the Nations. For what nation is so great, who hath God so near to them?" (Deut. 4. 6, 7). Isn't it wise to recognize He who safeguards us? And isn't the pinnacle of wisdom aligning our aims with God's purposes?
2. Applying God's goodness in obedience reveals our heart's integrity. Consider David's plea: "O Lord, I have walked in mine integrity...For thy loving kindness is before mine eyes, and I have walked in thy truth." (Psalm 26:1, 3). Threats may drive hypocrites, but love's cords pull the gracious heart closer to God.
3. When gratitude for past favors inspires obedience, we can expect even greater future mercies. After Moses lists Israel's blessings in Deut. 29, he concludes, "Keep therefore the words of this Commandment, and do them, that ye may prosper in all ye do." Just as a farmer generously sows seeds in fertile soil, God seeks our obedience and promises manifold blessings in the Scriptures.

4. However, grave judgments loom for those who persist in disobedience despite God's benevolence. Consider Deut. 28. 47, 48: "Because thou servedst not the Lord thy God with joyfulness...therefore shalt thou serve thine enemies." And when Samuel emphasized the importance of obedience, he warned in 1 Sam. 12. 24, 25: "Fear the Lord, and serve him... But if ye shall still do wickedly, ye shall be consumed, both ye and your King." We are painfully aware of our King and Kingdom's precarious state. God forbid that our ongoing disobedience should lead to complete ruin and desolation.

What I have said is sorrowful, and my heart grieves to say it. Yet even more lamentable is that which the Apostle Paul recounts regarding God's judgment on the poor, blinded Heathens for their ingratitude, as they did not live up to their light or their blessings, Rom. 1. 21. "Because when they knew God (knowledge gleaned from God's works), they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful," &c. Thus, God gave them up to vile affections, as described in verse 24. The penalty laid upon the immortal soul is heavy due to the soul's inherent value. Mere torment is less grievous to a conscious soul than its subjugation to sinful desires. This supreme judgment is the consequence of not reciprocating God's gifts with obedience. And let none dismiss this, claiming, "This concerns Heathens; we are Christians." Consider, if our enlightenment is more profound and God's works more gracious amongst us, surely our disobedience would bring equal or greater judgments.

Having presented the arguments to reinforce my exhortation, I trust they have resonated with you, prompting resolutions to apply your experiences in obedient gratitude. I now offer some directives to guide your obedience and genuine thankfulness unto God, stemming naturally from my text and teachings:

- 1. God should always be prioritized over man.** While I do not dissuade from paying respect to rightful superiors of any stature, I echo the Apostles' sentiment: "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye," Acts 4. 19 & 5. 29. Let the greatest benefactor receive the most substantial regard. Who, indeed, could rival God in benevolence? While Joseph, Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were doubtless grateful to their earthly masters, their supreme allegiance was to God. They refused to appease man when it contravened God's will. The blessings from God, in their abundance and quality, surpass any earthly favor.
- 2. We should serve God with all we possess.** "Both riches and honor come of thee, and thou reignest over all," 1 Chron. 29. 12, 14. It stands to reason that all gifts from the Lord should be devoted to His service. Just as merchants expect their oversea agents to use supplied goods for their profit, so should we deal with God as we wish others to deal with us. The Apostle's reasoning in 1 Cor. 6. 20 rings true: "Glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's." Thus, if we accept the premise, we cannot deny the conclusion. Consider this: if anyone possesses wisdom, strength, authority, or resources not received from the Lord, then refuse to dedicate them to Him. Yet I beseech each soul, using the Apostle's words, "What hast thou that thou didst not receive?" 1 Cor. 4. 7. The logical inference is: "Thou shalt love (and therefore obey) the Lord thy God with all thy heart, soul, and might." It is wholly inequitable and unreasonable to withhold any part of ourselves in our dealings with God, the source of all grace and comfort.
- 3. Therefore, our obedience unto God should be tendered speedily.** For is not the Lord so far beforehand with us in His

favors that, at this very instant, we are engaged obsequiously to submit unto His government? Joshua, having particularized to Israel ancient providences by which God had expressed His care and kindness towards them and their forefathers, calls for service without delay: "Now therefore fear the Lord, and serve him" (Josh. 24:14). Let none of you dare to put off God even one day longer with procrastinations. A wise father said that "cras, cras" (tomorrow, tomorrow) was the crow's call. Delays will breed guilt and bring danger. Let us remember how much we owed to God's grace before we began to offer even a semblance of humble, holy, hearty service. Therefore, let us obediently remember our Creator, Protector, Benefactor, our God blessed forever. "Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts" (Hebrews 3:15).

4. **Therefore, in all ways of holy obedience, we should walk humbly with our God.** It may humble our hearts that the Lord's excellencies alone aren't enough to draw us to Him without daily additions of His favors. Yet, when we weigh our deeds against God's expectations and deserving grace, it is astounding that we might find any reason to boast. The Apostle Paul might have had reason to glory in his labors for Christ, yet he declared he "served the Lord with all humility of mind" (Acts 20:19). Let's often remind ourselves of our vast debts to Christ, debts we cannot repay, to maintain a humble spirit.
5. **Therefore, all our services for God should radiate the warmth of ardent love.** St. Paul's efforts for Christ seemed to emanate from this fervent love: "For the love of Christ constraineth us" (2 Cor. 5:14). And when David pondered God's mercy, he exclaimed, "I love the Lord" (Psalm 116:1). This love should be the foremost motive for our obedience.

6. **We should serve the Lord in truth because of the great things He has done for us (1 Sam. 12:24).** This truth stands opposed to falsehood. God's blessings are tangible, not mere words. Thus, our responses to Him should also be genuine and heartfelt. "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this" (James 1:27).
7. **Serve the Lord in sincerity, which opposes selfishness.** The righteous aim for God's glory, not their own gain. Remember God's words: "Did ye at all fast unto me, even unto me?" (Zechariah 7:5). Our actions, whether in private or public, should be for the glory of God (1 Cor. 10:31).
8. **We should always observe God's statutes and keep His laws.** The Lord expresses this desire in Deut. 5:29. His ceaseless blessings should inspire us to tireless devotion. If ever there were a moment in our lives when God ceased to bless us, perhaps then we might have cause to halt in our obedience. Yet God's love and favor are constant, so let us be steadfast, "always abounding in the work of the Lord" (1 Cor. 15:58). May it never be said of any among us that we began in the Spirit and ended in the flesh.

All these eight rules—necessary truths—are naturally deduced from my doctrine and concern everyone in this great Congregation, without exception. I cannot fathom by what seeming pretense any might dare to plead exemption from these directions. I pray God that none among you departs this Assembly without obediential resolutions upon your spirits. Most of my sermon and counsel concern those for whom the Lord hath done the most in ways most remarkable and glorious. No city in the world hath been more magnified by divine providences than this wherein we reside. No

people on earth hath been more enriched with temporal and spiritual provisions than ourselves. May our God grant that our obediential improvements may be somewhat answerable.

Nevertheless, by virtue of the equity of my doctrine, the Lord expects to be best served and most advanced by those whom He hath most enriched and advanced. Thus, give me leave to address you, Right Honorable Lord Mayor and Right Worshipful Aldermen of this esteemed City. God expects more from you than from your brethren. "For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required; and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more" (Luke 12:48). You are not only bound to be exemplary in your endeavors to observe God's statutes but also to ensure that others under your command conform to God's commandments. *Magistratus est custos utriusque tabulae.*

Right Honorable, your Lordship, having been acquainted with my plain ministry for several years, knows I have not waned in your affections due to my directness. Thus, I boldly direct my faithful words unto you:

1. Do not, through indulgence, spare the punishment of those who dare to cast God's Commandments aside. Could you overlook those who slight the works raised and maintained for the safety of this City? As revealed from my text, God desires His laws preserved from violence. I once heard a preacher liken a remiss Magistrate to the sign of "George on Horseback," who stands all year with a hand on the sword yet never strikes. My Lord, "You have not received the sword in vain" (Romans 13:4). While I wouldn't advocate for undue severity, I would stress the importance of justice. Granted, your Lordship must be as cautious as courageous. Therefore, you might echo Solomon's

prayer: "Give thy servant an understanding heart, to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad" (1 Kings 3:9). However, remember: foolish pity can harm the City. Ensure that common drunkards, profane cursers, brutish wantons, and the like do not escape the penalty prescribed by the Law. For "Phineas executed judgment, and it was counted unto him for righteousness" (Psalms 106:30-31).

2. I call upon your zeal against Popery, that most abominable practice which brings desolation. I implore you to conduct frequent inquisitions to ascertain if, in some hidden corners of this City, Idolatry is practiced through the Mass. I urge, in particular, that a search be made for Jesuits, those intolerable incendiaries who fan the flames of contention among brethren, who have been the cause of the unfortunate divide between our King and Parliament, our Sovereign and his Subjects. I once heard a tale of a man who, upon seeing a tree naturally splitting, thrust his hand into the breach. Providence, in an act of vengeance, swiftly closed the split, trapping the man's hand. Though I cannot attest to the verity of this tale, its moral stands: without a doubt, Jesuitical spirits roam these coasts and this City. Many suspect they have had a hand in some published pamphlets, fanning the flames of discord. It is my ardent wish they might be caught and made an example of. The Pythagoreans marked the number two with infamy, as it was the first to deviate from Unity. Solomon warns, "He that soweth discord among brethren is an abomination unto the Lord" (Prov. 6:16-19). And this warning extends beyond Jesuits, even in this City. There are many who sow discord not just among individual brethren, but also between the Kingdoms of England and Scotland. Thus, I beseech you, brethren, "Mark them which cause divisions and offences, contrary to the doctrine which ye

have learned; and avoid them. For they...serve not our Lord Jesus Christ" (Ro. 16:17-18). Exercise caution with Malignants, ensuring that such troublemakers are not carelessly trusted or welcomed. I daily pray for the conversion and forgiveness of those who oppose our Reformation. But, I must caution you: *Abundance cautela non nocet*. As the Disciples once feared Saul in Jerusalem (Act. 9:26), so too should we be wary of the false-hearted among us. Is it not grievous when those who abandoned the City and Parliament return to a warm welcome, suffering less than our loyal brethren? I may not dictate the course of action, but I entreat God to grant the Parliament and City wisdom in this matter.

3. I earnestly implore you to ensure stricter observation of the Sabbath, holding up the venerable Nehemiah as an exemplary figure. His actions, detailed in the scriptures, reveal his holy zeal. I beseech your Lordship to suppress buying, selling, and sporting on the Lord's day. I often recall the words of the distinguished servant of Christ, Dr. Staughton, a minister in this City, who once said during times when Sabbath observance was scoffed at, that any man surrendering a doctrine as vital as the fourth Commandment to Christianity would merit countless deaths. As you love the Lord and the life of our Religion, cherish the Sabbath. Stand firmly against those doctrines and practices which profane it.
5. I earnestly petition for your utmost effort towards the resolution of our grievous divisions surrounding Church matters. Not only are there Congregations of Anabaptists, Antinomians, and Brownists in this City that are overlooked, but there are also, as reported, groups of men who deny the Deity of Christ and the divine authority of the Scriptures. I recall that when Gallio was

Deputy of Achaia, an insurrection arose in Corinth against Paul, leading to great tumult. Yet, as the scripture notes, "And Gallio cared for none of these things" (Act. 18:17). May it never be that your Lordship or any magistrate in this City shows such indifference to our present challenges. Marcus Curtius, in his love for his country, sacrificed himself to a chasm in the earth to appease the gods. I believe that many in this City, both Ministers and laymen, would willingly lay down their lives to reconcile dissenting brethren. For, alas, divisions threaten to dissolve us entirely. A kingdom divided cannot stand. My soul yearns for London to be unified in truth and holiness, much like Jerusalem, "A City compact together" (Psal. 122:3).

To achieve this unity, I fervently request that you promote the speedy establishment and practice of Church governance. If the Church were blessed with discipline according to Christ, it would stand as formidable as "an army with banners" (Cant. 6:10). This would curb profanity, suppress superstition, check errors, discourage Malignancy, better observe the Sabbath, and heal our divisions. Motivations abound for every true child of Zion to dedicate themselves fully to this endeavor. Zealous care in this regard will bring honor now and comfort in the hereafter. Nehemiah, after his diligent service, pleads, "Remember me, O my God, concerning this, and wipe not out my good deeds" (Nehem. 13:14). In these matters, the counsel of God's faithful Ministers is paramount, as Artaxerxes proclaimed: "Whatsoever Ezra the Priest... shall require of you, let it be done speedily" (Ezr. 7:21). Some might misconstrue this, accusing Presbyterians of seeking dominion over consciences. Yet, I assert that this is a baseless accusation. We ask only for what aligns with the teachings of Christ and willingly submit to His divine rule, seeking no favors contrary to Holy Scripture.

This counsel I humbly present for your Lordship's consideration. I do so with confidence, as it resonates with our solemn National League and Covenant. In conclusion, I entreat all, both Aldermen and Citizens, to consider how this counsel to the Lord Mayor applies to each one of you. Oh, that God might inspire you to unite in support, just as Ezra was once encouraged in his reformation: "Arise, for this matter belongeth unto thee; we also will be with thee. Be of good courage, and do it" (Ezr. 10:4). I will close with David's words to Solomon regarding the Temple: "Arise therefore and be doing, and the Lord be with thee" (1 Chron. 22:16).

FINIS.

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ePub, .mobi & .pdf Editions July 2023. Requests for information should be addressed to: Monergism Books, PO Box 491, West Linn

Or 97068