



CHRISTIAN GRACES

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by Wilhelmus à Brakel

Chapter 1:

Of the Glorification of God

There are no virtues that are not included in the perfect rule of life, the law of God; we have pointed out the main points in each commandment in the previous chapters. Now we shall explain some of them further and encourage the soul that loves holiness to practice them.

Virtue is a perfect agreement of man with the will of God, as presented in the law.

It can be considered either in disposition or in action. Disposition is the virtuous state, infused in the rebirth by God, and obtained through various exercises, from which the virtuous one works holily towards all kinds of objects.

He who possesses one virtue possesses them all. Not only because they are all connected to each other, not only does one virtue exist alone, and many virtues converge in practicing one virtue. But also because the disposition of the heart is virtuous and capable of working according to the required object; the holier the disposition, the holier its deeds; through the practice of one virtue, the holy disposition is increased, and thus more capable of producing others.

One virtue, considered as virtue, is not greater than another; because it is a perfect agreement with the law in all circumstances, less conformity is a lack and sin; but the objects and circumstances are greater and smaller, and in this respect, one effect of virtue is greater than another, and because man is imperfect, one person has more of the virtuous disposition and activeness than another.

The ultimate end of everything is to glorify God.

II. The ultimate end is first in intention, and last in execution. As a person becomes enlightened, they see higher things and envision obtaining them. A newly converted Christian sees the dreadfulness of eternal damnation and gets confused ideas about salvation; from this arises the intention to be delivered from the former and obtain the latter. As they become more and more enlightened, they also see higher things and envision obtaining them, until they know and love the highest end, which is the glorification of God. Driven by this, they employ all means to obtain it; a lesser Christian, aiming at lower things, nevertheless ends in the glorification of God, with thanksgiving for the received good. But the greater a Christian

becomes, the more they work from top to bottom, that is, love for the glorification of God impels them to do everything that can serve that purpose. This ultimate end, the glorification of God, we place in the first position.

God Glorifies Himself.

III. God glorifies

1. Himself, as He reveals His perfections to creatures, both in the works of nature and in the works of grace.

(a) God glorifies Himself in the works of nature, in creation and sustenance. See: Psalm 8:2, 4. O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! When I look at your heavens... Psalm 104:24 ... You have made them all with wisdom. Rom. 1:20. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. Acts 14:17. Yet he did not leave himself without witness, for he did good by giving you rains from heaven.

(b) God glorifies Himself in the work of grace, as He shows:

- His righteousness: Rom. 3:25. Whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness.
- His wisdom: Ephesians 3:10. So that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known.
- His mercy and grace: Ephesians 1:6. To the praise of his glorious grace.
- His love: Titus 3:4. But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared. Thus the whole earth is full of his glory. Isaiah 6:3.

God Glorifies Christ.

2. God glorifies His Son, the Mediator Jesus Christ: Acts 3:13. The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified his servant Jesus. And the Son glorifies the Father again: John 17:4. I glorified you on earth.

His Children.

3. God glorifies His children, both in this life, as He adorns them with His image, and makes them formidable in the eyes of the world: Isaiah 43:4. Because you are precious in my eyes, and honored, and I love you. Ezekiel 16:14 ... Your renown went forth among the nations because of your beauty, for it was perfect through the splendor that I had bestowed on you. And God glorifies them after death: Hebrews 2:10 ... For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory. Romans 8:30 ... And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

God has all glory in Himself.

VI. The Lord has all honor and glory infinitely in Himself, even when there was no creature to acknowledge it. He is the God of glory. Acts 7:2. The King of glory. Psalm 24:8. The Father of glory. Ephesians 1:17. From this glory emanates a brightness that even the angels cannot endure, and therefore they cover their faces, crying out: Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts. Isaiah 6:3. When this brightness shines upon a person, they vanish, and cry out: Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts! Isaiah 6:5. The glory of God cannot be diminished or increased by a creature. It remains the same whether a person

despises or glorifies it. It is only goodness that God, who is light, covers Himself with light as with a garment, and dwells in unapproachable light, which He somewhat reveals to humans and allows them to delight in it, glorify, acknowledge, boast, and praise Him, and make Him known to others as such. This is salvation and the work of angels: Luke 2:14. Glory to God in the highest. This is the blessedness and the work of glorified souls: Revelation 4:11. Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor. This is the blessedness and the work of believers on earth, who are formed for the praise of His glorious grace, to declare His praise. Isaiah 43:21. Every godly person delights in this work, like David: Psalm 145:5. On the glorious splendor of your majesty, and on your wondrous works, I will meditate.

To glorify God is to acknowledge Him as such.

V. To glorify God is to, out of sight of His perfections, with love, joy, and reverence, recognize, praise, and make Him known to others as such. The glorification of God arises from the sight of His perfections. The knowledge of God comes either through faith or through sight; these two the apostle distinguishes, 2 Corinthians 5:7. Faith recognizes God to be as He reveals Himself in the Word; in the Word, the perfections of God are described, as they are manifested in the works of nature, and particularly as they appear in the face of Jesus Christ, in the great work of redemption: 2 Corinthians 3:18. And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another.

Faith attends to all expressions of God in His Word, especially as He reveals Himself to Moses: Exodus 34:6. The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, etc. Faith establishes these as certain truths

and acknowledges God to be such; and faith causes a person to conduct themselves towards such a God as is suitable for God and for them. Indeed, to believe is to glorify God: Romans 4:20. No unbelief made him (Abraham) waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God. Though a believer may have nothing more than the faith that God is such a God in Christ, and such a God for them, and does not find the sensible revelation within themselves, they must proceed on that basis, rejoice in it, acknowledge, boast, and praise Him with love and joy. This is the mistake of many favored ones, that they do not esteem the sight of faith highly enough and do not accustom themselves to glorify God thereby. Though the Lord reserves the immediate sight for heaven, He still grants something of it to His children on earth, according to the promise: John 14:21. I will manifest myself to him. Though not all believers are placed with Moses in the cleft of the rock when the Lord proclaimed His name, though they are not all taken up to the mountain where Jesus was glorified, though they are not all caught up with Paul to the third heaven, yet the Lord occasionally gives His children on earth a clearer view of Him, as through faith, and grants them clearer knowledge of His perfections. Faith and the clearer sight of God are the origin of the glorification of God.

From the sight of God flows love for His praise.

VI. From the sight of God arises love for the glorification of His Name. Those who see God's perfections are immediately ignited in love, not only to be united with that Lovely One for themselves but to exalt, praise, and make known all the virtues of the Lord to others, so that the Lord may be glorified by many: Psalm 70:5 Let those who love your salvation say continually, "God is great!"

From knowledge and love flows joy and delightful consent, that God is such a glorious and blessed God: Psalm 69:33. The meek shall see and be glad. Psalm 97:12. Rejoice in the Lord, O you righteous, and give thanks to his holy name!

Man being enabled by knowledge, love, and joy, sets the glorification of God as his ultimate end; out of love for that end, he does and refrains from everything that can serve it, and he returns everything to that end, and ends in that from which he began to work. Many psalms begin and end with Hallelujah: Romans 11:36. For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever.

This is the command: 1 Corinthians 10:31. So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. 1 Peter 4:11 in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ.

One glorifies God in themselves with the heart.

VII. Loving this end and envisioning it as the goal in everything, one endeavors to glorify God in themselves and in others. In oneself, one glorifies God with the heart, with the tongue, and with deeds.

1. With the heart.

- (a) When one endeavors to see God in all His works and engages in contemplating the perfections of God revealed therein: Psalm 107:43. Let the one who is wise attend to these things; let them consider the steadfast love of the Lord. Psalm 139:17, 18. How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them! If I would count them, they are more than the sand. I awake, and I am still with you. Psalm 104:34. May my meditation be pleasing to him; for I rejoice in the Lord.

(b) When one marvels and loses themselves in the glories of God between God and their soul and with consent says, Psalm 145:3, Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised, and his greatness is unsearchable. Psalm 139:6, Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high; I cannot attain it.

(c) When one elevates the Lord above all in holy movement in their heart and praises His Name in solitude: 1 Peter 3:15. In your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy.

2. Tongue.

VIII. The heart, filled with holy meditations, sets everything in motion, and unable to contain itself, expresses itself in words in solitude, as David did: Psalm 103:1. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Likewise, Psalm 71:14, 15. But I will hope continually and will praise you yet more and more. My mouth will tell of your righteous acts, of your deeds of salvation all the day, for their number is past my knowledge. Forgetting oneself in the contemplation of God's perfections, the soul bursts forth in rejoicing, and the praises of God are in her throat, Psalm 149:6. The musings cause the lips of the sleepers to speak, Song of Solomon 7:9. And they sing songs in the night, Job 35:10. Psalm 42:8. By day the Lord commands his steadfast love, and at night his song is with me, a prayer to the God of my life. Colossians 3:16 ... Singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

3. Deeds.

IX. When aiming to give God honor and glory:

(a) One humbles themselves before the Lord as a sinner deserving condemnation and runs to Him for grace, to give Him the honor of His mercy.

(b) When one requests everything they desire from the Lord, acknowledging Him as the origin and giver of all good.

(c) When one bows reverently before Him to honor Him in His worshipfulness and majesty.

(d) When one suppresses a rising sin out of the fear of God, to give Him the honor of holiness and reverence.

(e) When one seeks refuge under His protection and shelters with Him without fear, to glorify Him in His omnipotence and faithfulness.

(f) When one presents themselves as servants to Him, saying: O Lord! Indeed, I am your servant; I am your servant, to honor Him in His sovereign rule and worthiness of service.

(g) When one submits themselves silently to Him to give Him the honor of wisdom and compassion, in all kinds of afflictions, and thus forth in all occurrences and exercises, to give Him the honor of those attributes that are relevant therein. If one does these and other things, the glorification of God is indeed enclosed therein, even if one most keenly has their own salvation in view; but one must strive for higher aims and accustom themselves to begin everything with lively aims of glorifying God and ending everything with the glory of God.

One glorifies God among others with words.

X. 1. With words.

(a) When one, with the purpose of making known the glory of God to others so that they may also glorify the God worthy of all honor, instructs others in the way of salvation, and in various ways leads them to the Lord Jesus, encourages them to faith and repentance, exhorts and admonishes them.

(b) When one speaks of God and His deeds to them, to also show them the glory of God in all His works: Psalm 105:1, 2. Oh give thanks to the Lord; call upon his name; make known his deeds among the peoples! Sing to him, sing praises to him; tell of all his wondrous works. Isaiah 12:4. And you will say in that day: "Give thanks to the Lord, call upon his name."

2. And deeds.

With deeds and one's entire life, when one, with the intention of glorifying God, behaves in the presence of people in such a way that the image of God shines forth therein. God is invisible, the natural man does not know God, and does not see Him, neither in the works of nature nor of grace; but when a child of God, who partakes in the divine nature, displays the image of God in their conduct, the heart of an unconverted person is often powerfully convinced that there is a God, that God is to be honored, feared, loved, and served, and it is a means by which some begin to seek the way of salvation and thus are converted. A regenerated person, seeing the image of God shining in another, is thereby stirred up in the love and fear of God, and some who are in a state of decline are brought to repentance and restored in their former zeal; and even if our behavior did not have that effect, we glorify the Lord, as far as it concerns us, when the intention is there to show with our behavior that God is such a God, and one will take home as a reward a sweet peace of conscience. This is the command of the Lord Jesus: Matthew 5:16. In the same way,

let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven. See also: John 15:8. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit. The apostle Peter desires that wives will seek to win over their husbands in this way: 1 Peter 3:1. Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives.

God is not glorified by the world.

XI. It is evident from what has been said how one glorifies God. Those who love God and delight in the honor of God and the glorification of His Name will find much sorrow when they consider the behavior of people in this regard.

1. Let your eyes roam over the entire earth: on the one hand, how God does not leave Himself without witness, doing good from heaven, giving rain and fruitful seasons, filling the hearts of people with food and gladness. How God reveals His eternal power and divine nature, His glory and awesomeness, His patience and kindness in His works; on the other hand, consider the behavior of people: of all people, with few exceptions, are turned away from the Lord, they put Him out of their minds, neither acknowledge, thank, nor glorify Him, as if God were not, as if He were not so glorious and worthy of all honor, as if all that they are and that they receive did not come from Him. They are all like pigs, who with their faces downwards, pick up acorns but do not look up to the tree from which they fall. So it is with humans: they eagerly grasp the goods but they do not look up to the Lord who gives them, indeed, they misuse them against Him. One who loves the honor of God, observing this with attention, finds cause for sadness and lamentation; will then

that high and lofty, glorious God have no honor from people for all His goodness! O degenerate, twisted, and malicious generation! And looking upon humanity, one will feel sorrow over their distress, that they do not reach the end for which they were created, miss out on that blessedness, and thereby fall under and remain in the wrath of God.

And very few from the church in these days.

XII. 2. Go once to the church, lovers of God's honor, for is not that the people who should glorify God, who are formed for that purpose, who should be the honor of Christ? But how sad it is there in this regard! The multitude, the God-fearing, who by the peculiar goodness of God are still His chosen ones, are without knowledge, without love, without fear of God, without desire to draw near to God, without the form of godliness, without the intention of giving glory to God; they are generally worldly, living according to their desires, hating the good and the good people, some making it worse than other sects, even heathens; for their sake, the Name of God is blasphemed. Sit alone, mourn over this, let silent tears drip from your eyes, call them Ichabod. Lament: how the faithful city has become a whore, how the crown has fallen from her head!

(a) There are those who openly serve the world, who scoff at godliness and the godly; drunkards, gamblers, dancers, flaunters, slanderers, liars, irritable, envious, in short, all sorts of wicked people. What if these people were outside the church? But now that they are inside, they take away the church's splendor and are a disgrace to God and Christ, the Head of the church.

(b) Others come to the public assembly, sing praises to God, stand up, or bow down in worship, write, and say, "Praise be to God, thanks be to God," speak of God and His Word; but they show with

their deeds that it is only superficial, out of habit, and with the mouth alone without the heart, they follow hypocritical Israel, of whom Psalm 78:36, 37 says: "They flattered him with their mouths; they lied to him with their tongues; their heart was not steadfast toward him; they were not faithful to his covenant." Against these, God speaks, Isaiah 29:13, 14, "Because this people draw near with their mouth and honor me with their lips, while their hearts are far from me, and their fear of me is a commandment taught by men; therefore, behold, I will again do wonderful things with this people, wonderful and marvelous things."

(c) Others think that they truly see, love, and glorify God's honor when they marvel and delight in the creatures, even though they remain attached to them; when they find themselves enraptured by the beautiful face of the sky, in the evening, at night, or in the morning, when they rejoice over a pleasant forest or meadow, when they observe the assembly of creatures and plants with attention and show them to others. Even if they mention the Creator with their mouth when speaking of it, but do not see Him in that work, nor rejoice over His attributes displayed in that work, and do not praise Him with love, that is not glorifying God, but marveling at the creature; that is, not displaying the Creator in it to others, but often themselves, boasting of how wise they are in investigation, and how much they have to do with glorifying God. Marveling at the glory of the Lord in the works of nature is entirely different and cannot be understood by a natural person.

(d) Others go even further, yet do not glorify God. When they take the Word of God as their object, search out its mysteries, take pleasure in coming to know a mystery, marvel at the wise arrangement, at the fulfillment of the prophecies, at the wonderful things that are yet to happen, yes, even at heavenly things, then some

think that they are doing a holy work and glorifying God in it: indeed, from this it may arise that the sin which the world does, and which they themselves used to do, now has no hold on them, because they are now so earnestly set on the knowledge of biblical matters, so that this earnestness now has all their affections and all their time. And because they now find contentment in that knowledge, they do not need pleasure in other things; also, external knowledge has power for external purification: 2 Peter 2:20. "For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." All this is not glorifying God; but clinging to something external, of which 1 Corinthians 13:2 says, "And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing." True-believers can come to this, who receive the Word with joy, Luke 8:13. Concerning such, Paul says, Hebrews 6:4, 5, "For it is impossible, in the case of those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come." Thus Balaam speaks of himself: Numbers 24:15, 16. "The oracle of him who hears the words of God, who sees the vision of the Almighty, falling down with his eyes uncovered." Let no one be satisfied with these things, thinking that he is glorifying God, lest he be deceived in the end; but strive to see God as his God in Christ in everything, to be inflamed with love for Him, and from that disposition to praise God, that is glorifying God.

Punishment of the desecrators of God's Name.

XIII. Therefore, you hearers who profane the Lord's Name. You, who do not glorify the Lord, for whom you were created, and to whom the Lord has shown so many physical and spiritual blessings; even if you

do not consider this as such a sin, even if you lightly overlook it, it is nevertheless a terrible evil, and it brings you under the dreadful wrath of God; therefore, pay close attention to what I will say to you briefly, and let it lead you to repentance.

1. It is a truth known to all, that he who does not aim at his end, is good for nothing, is good for nothing anywhere. You were created to glorify your Maker; all the kindnesses of God, which He has shown to you, bind you to that end. But you do not know that end, do not love it, do not strive for it, do not do it; but you dishonor Him, and revile Him in everything you do; and what is more, you dare to mingle among His people, to sit with them at the Lord's table, and present yourself as one of the children of God, and under that name you live ungodly and worldly, and thus you blaspheme the Name of the Lord, Rom. 2:24. So you see that you are not good for your end, but to be thrown away unworthily. Therefore, consider that it is said to you, John 15:6, "If anyone does not remain in me, he is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned." To remain in Christ is to remain united with Him by faith, and from that union to bring forth holy fruits, by which the Father is glorified, verse 8. But you do not do this; therefore, you will be cast out and burned with contempt.
2. You have put yourself in a state where you may not do what makes God's glory evident, as long as you remain like this. You have not wanted to do it, so now you will not do it; God does not want it done by you. See Psalm 50:15, 16, "Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me." But to the wicked God says: "What right have you to recite my statutes or take my covenant on your lips? For you hate discipline, and you cast my words behind you." Because you do

not honor God, but despise Him, God will also despise and make you contemptible. You seek glory and honor, but God will cover you with shame: 1 Sam. 2:30, "Those who honor me I will honor, but those who despise me will be disdained."

3. This will happen to you, the Lord says it, the Lord will do it. It is your lot to receive what is written: Malachi 2:9, "So I have made you despised and humiliated before all the people, because you do not keep my ways." When you die, you will leave a stench, and you will have a donkey's burial, and you will be an object of loathing to all flesh, Isaiah 66:24. And when you rise in the resurrection, you will be for disgrace and everlasting contempt, Daniel 12:2. Thus will be the end of all who do not glorify God in this life.
4. Because you do not glorify God, God will give you over to all kinds of sins, and especially to defile your own body with filthy desires: Rom. 1:21, 24. "For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him. Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves."
5. And to conclude it all, God will glorify Himself by revealing His righteousness to you, in punishing you in an extraordinary manner. This is a terrible state, to be an object of God's righteous vengeance, so that angels and men will see it and with pleasure acknowledge, saying, "Yes, Lord God Almighty! Your judgments are true and righteous," Revelation 16:7. When Nadab and Abihu did not glorify God, God burned them with fire from heaven, and it is added, Leviticus 10:3, "Among those who are near me I will be sanctified, and before all the people I will be glorified." Concerning Pharaoh, it is said, Romans 9:17,

"For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, 'For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I might show my power in you, and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.'" When God glorifies Himself in punishing those who do not glorify Him, then God does not want them to be pitied; but says, Amos 6:10, "Do not preach"—thus they preach—"one should not preach of such things; disgrace will not overtake us." And on the contrary, God wants people to rejoice and glorify the Lord when He exercises righteous vengeance: Psalm 58:10, 11 "The righteous will rejoice when he sees the vengeance ... And man will say, 'Surely there is a reward for the righteous; surely there is a God who judges on earth.'" Hear this, despisers of God, and tremble; for your judgments are approaching, repent, and thus flee from the coming wrath.

The believers are very deficient in this.

XIV. Lovers of God's glory, also consider the precious daughters of Zion, rejoice when you see in them that hidden longing, weeping, waiting, praying, rejoicing over comforting encounters, and giving thanks for received blessings, that willingness to live pleasing to God, and to devote themselves entirely to the service of the Lord; but how often are they still weak and small children! How little is the vision of God! How little is one set to glorify God within oneself and before others! How quickly that purpose fades from one's thoughts! How little zeal, earnestness, breakthrough, and demonstration are there in this! How often they faint! How many weaknesses and sins are revealed in their conduct! Oh, that the Godly would only walk as lights in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation! That it could be seen that the love of God possessed their hearts, that the fear of God was before their eyes, that they were adorned with the image of Christ! That it could be seen that they had died to

themselves, to honor, love, gain, comfort, and fear of man; that they were not only for the glory of God themselves, but sought the glory of God in everything, and made that their end in all their deeds! But how is the gold so dimmed, the fine gold so changed! Lamentations 4:1. Therefore mourn, and be grieved that God, even by His children, is so little glorified, and let it cause you heartfelt pain.

Encouragement to glorify God.

XV. But you yourself, make it your endeavor from now on to glorify God while you are still here. It is not enough for you to hate and flee from sin, to live godly, and to do deeds in which the glorification of God is enclosed; but elevate your heart to a high degree of Godliness, which is to aim to glorify God in all your actions. Keep this end constantly before you, so that through constant activity you may acquire a habit of it. I set myself to urge you to this, and you, set yourself also to be stirred up to this.

God demands it.

1. Let the demand of God and the continual exhortations enter into your heart; consider with attention these few passages from the great multitude: 1 Corinthians 6:20, "Glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's." 1 Corinthians 10:31, "Do all to the glory of God." I present these passages to you, not to teach and confirm to you an unknown truth, but to deeply impress the matter upon you by my pen, and to bring you to it with an obedient heart, knowing that it is no incidental thing, but that you have nothing else to do but that. Haven't you set yourself to obey the Lord? Haven't you often asked Him: Lord, what do you want me to do? He now answers you: glorify Me, aim at that in everything; let that be the beginning from which you are prompted to work, let that be the end in which you cease and

rest. Come then, do it now, and begin it at once, so that you may not be found a mocking asker.

The Lord Jesus and the saints have preceded us in this. XVI. 2. I present to you the examples of the Lord Jesus and His saints. Examples have great power to move; therefore, do not let your heart remain stiff, but become pliable and willing to follow them. Surely you love the Lord Jesus; now, love seeks conformity. Your Jesus has left you an example for this purpose, so that you would follow in His footsteps. And you yourself pray: draw me and I will run after You. Jesus aimed in everything He did to glorify His Father: John 17:1, 4 "... that your Son may glorify You. I have glorified You on the earth." So join yourself to Jesus, learn this from Him, and follow Him in doing so. Whose heart will not delight in the glorification of God when he perceives with what love and burning zeal the saints are engaged in this work, and encourage each other to it? Just consider the example of David, and hear him speak thus: Psalm 103:1, "Bless the Lord, O my soul! And all that is within me, bless His holy name." Psalm 104:33, 34. "I will sing to the Lord as long as I live; I will sing praise to my God while I have my being. May my meditation be sweet to Him; I will be glad in the Lord." Psalm 71:14-16, "But I will hope continually, and will yet praise You more and more. My mouth shall tell of Your righteousness and Your salvation all the day, for I do not know their limits. I will go in the strength of the Lord God; I will make mention of Your righteousness, of Yours only." He knew well that he could not ascend to such a high and glorious work by himself: therefore he prayed to be able to do it, verse 8, "Let my mouth be filled with Your praise, and with Your glory all the day." He cannot satisfy himself with praising the Lord; he is not content to say once or twice: "Praise the Lord," but in Psalm 136 he exclaims no less than twenty-six times: "For His mercy endures forever." And in various Psalms he begins and ends with: "Hallelujah, praise the Lord." Yes,

seeing the infinitude of the Lord's glory, and that he was too small to praise it according to his affection, he calls upon angels, men, and everything to help, and ends: "Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. Hallelujah!" Psalm 150:6. Therefore, join yourself to him, and cry out together: "To Him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise, and honor, and glory, and power forever and ever."

The blessings lead to that.

XVII. 3. Consider, from whom do you have life, breath, and all that you have? The air you breathe; the sun, moon, and stars that illuminate and delight you; the sky that covers you; the earth that you tread upon; the food and drink that you consume; the animals that you use, are they from you? Do they belong to you? Is it not all the Lord's? Is it not He who, in His goodness, gives it to you day by day, despite your unworthiness and sinfulness? Yes, children of God! Is it not the Lord who has given you the precious Savior, who gives you the Holy Spirit, and blesses you with spiritual light and life, and has prepared eternal glory for you? Everything returns to where it came from. Therefore, let your heart, contemplating your insignificance, the inestimability of the goods, and the goodness of the Lord, also bring all that to the Lord, and with a heart full of love and wonder, exclaim: "From Him, and through Him, and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever, amen." Romans 11:36.

That is the purpose on earth and in the church.

XVIII. 4. Note the purpose for which God has placed you on the earth. Is it just to work and rest, to eat and drink, to return after many worries and occupations to nothingness? Dic, cur hic? Say, what are you here for? Is it not to know, acknowledge, and glorify your Maker? And children of God, to what end has He regenerated you and placed you in His church? Is it without purpose? Is it only to

lead you to heaven through this path? No, but it is to glorify Him on earth. See this: Isaiah 43:21. "This people I have formed for Myself; they shall declare My praise." Isaiah 61:3. "... that they may be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He may be glorified." 1 Peter 2:9. "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." You were not born, you did not live, you received, you had nothing to enjoy, if this were not the end. If this is the end, what else do you have to do but this? God has, so to speak, entrusted His interest, His honor to you, and made you proclaimers of His Name. Therefore, be careful how you guard this precious pledge, and how you bring God His end, and carry out that invaluable work. Well then, do it with zeal!

God is worthy of it.

XIX. 5. God is worthy of it, it is due to Him that both you and everything there is, glorify Him. Even if there were neither salvation, nor sweetness, nor benefit in it; even if we were not appointed to this end, even if it were in our choice to do so or to leave it without sin; even if we were not bound by so many blessings, if only a small ray of the Lord's glory shone upon the soul, one would say: "It is enough for me that God is God, that He alone is worthy of all, I choose to glorify Him, and let this be my only work, both in this life and for all eternity." God is worthy to be eternally glorified, even if there were no creature in heaven or on earth, and as soon as there is a creature, the Lord obligates that creature to glorify Him, solely because He is God. This reason cannot move a person unless God reveals Himself to him, and shows him the power and glory of the Godhead.

The twilight of nature, the clarity of Scripture may convince an unconverted person of his duty, he may begin something in a natural way; but when the light of grace, showing the glory of the Lord in the face of Jesus Christ, shines upon the believing soul, then it truly starts to glorify God. Whether with shame for His holiness, whether with disappearance before His majesty, whether with awe and trembling before His greatness, whether with wonder at His incomprehensible infinity, whether with love for His loveliness, whether with joy over His goodness, and so on in other respects, according as the Lord reveals Himself to the soul. Then, yes, even if man had a thousand bodies and a thousand souls, he would willingly surrender them to wear them out in the glorification of God, and he would consider them all too small to be able to express or utter the praise of the Lord, and he would consider it enough reward to be annihilated therein. Then, yes, then one rejoices that everything is subject to the Lord, that everything is ready, if only He speaks. It is his pleasure to think that all angels and souls of the perfectly righteous in heaven, and all children of God on earth have their eyes on Him, all expect salvation from Him. They love Him, rejoice in Him, bow down reverently before Him, and joyfully extol the honor of the glory of His Majesty, and exalt Him infinitely above all praise, and consider themselves unworthy to see, think, or speak anything of the Lord; but it is an unspeakable grace that this is allowed to a creature. If this cannot lift your heart to join them in crying out: "Lord! You are worthy to receive glory and power," then, quick soul, give honor to the Lord, because He is worthy.

It is exceptionally advantageous.

XX. 6. Because God wants to arouse us through the advantageous, we must let ourselves be stirred by it; therefore, consider the benefit that a soul glorifying God receives.

(a) It is a great honor to be a means by which God is glorified; for it is the greatest, the holiest, the highest work. Of Moses, Aaron, and Samuel, it is said to their honor, Psalm 99:6, "Moses and Aaron were among His priests, And Samuel was among those who called upon His name." It is the work of angels, who cry out: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts! The whole earth is full of His glory." They rejoiced when God formed the earth, Job 38:7. They sang on the day of Christ's birth: "Glory to God in the highest heaven!" Luke 2:14. This is what the saints do in heaven, and this will forever be the work of the elect, Revelation 4:11.

(b) This brings great joy to the soul. Glorifying God is not such a heavy, sad, sorrowful, and unprofitable work that one would need to use many reasons to compel someone to do it; for it is man's salvation. Salvation is pleasure and joy in seeing the Lord's perfections, loving them, and boasting in Him. Those who do not yet know this do not know their highest blessedness. How delighted David was in this, and how delightful he portrayed it! Psalm 92:2, 3, 5, 6. "It is good to praise the Lord, and to sing praises to Your name, O Most High; To declare Your lovingkindness in the morning, And Your faithfulness every night. For You, Lord, have made me glad through Your work; I will triumph in the works of Your hands. O Lord, how great are Your works! Your thoughts are very deep."

(c) It is pleasing to God. He takes pleasure in His children glorifying Him, in their setting it to their pleasure, joy, and blessedness, and in their doing so according to their ability. See this: Psalm 22:4. "But You are holy, enthroned in the praises of Israel." Psalm 69:31, 32. "I will praise God's name in song and glorify him with thanksgiving. This will please the Lord more than an ox, more than a bull with its horns and hooves." This is as a sacrifice. Verse 33, "The humble will see this and be glad."

(d) The Lord rewards that abundantly, 1 Samuel 2:30, "Those who honor Me I will honor." While Paul and Silas were singing hymns to God, the doors of the prison were opened, and everyone's chains came loose, Acts 16:25, 26. If anyone cares for the honor of God, God will also care for his honor; if anyone spreads God's glory among men, God will also cause him to find honor, love, and favor among men; if anyone is for God, God will also be for him: Psalm 91:14-16. "Because he loves me," says God, "I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. He will call on me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him. With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation." When one aims at the glory of God in everything, then all our work will be done purer and holier. The end sets the worker in motion, provides him with means, and even makes heavy means light. If one loves God's honor, he denies his own, he keeps himself on the right path to that end, and does not look at what is for or against himself; he breaks through opposition, and overcomes all difficulties, he finds rest after the work, whatever its outcome may be, for the purpose was pure, and the means were according to God's instruction, he does not fear the light; but he wants to be seen and tested, so that his works may be shown to be done in God, John 3:21.

(e) It is a means of conversion for the unconverted, and it stirs the godly to glorify God. See there all the benefits that are contained in that holy and glorious work. Therefore, aim for it, whoever's soul has a desire to do it, and whom you deem blessed for practicing it, saying: "Blessed are those who dwell in Your house; They will be praising You continually." Psalm 84:5.

Objection of the Godly.

XXI. Some godly, reading or hearing this, will look upon it as a matter too high for them; others will be saddened, seeing on one side the glory and loveliness of the matter, and on the other side how far they are from it, and how impossible it is for them to come to such a state; others will make excuses, either to exacerbate their misery, or to quietly excuse themselves and somewhat ease their conscience, and not strive for it afterwards.

Namely: I do not see the glory of God; I find neither sweetness nor power in it; if I begin, it is only a matter of the mind, and I do it more by reason than with a loving heart; I am too sinful, sins overwhelm me and keep me down, so that I am glad if I can just keep running to Jesus, to use Him for justification, and keep making new resolutions to guard against sin; I cannot determine my state, and do not know if I am truly born again and a child of God; I am so confused in the turmoil of earthly things that I usually cannot find my heart; I am greatly overwhelmed with crosses, one adversity follows another, so that I remain under them, and can hardly observe the time of exercise, and if I do them at all, I find myself confused, listless, and despondent.

How then could I be fit for such a lofty work, to begin and end everything from sight of, and love for the glorification of God?

Answer.

XXII. Response

(a) Your state is both lamentable and reprehensible; beware lest you deceive yourself in it, for it will not excuse you for neglecting this great work. You were created for this, the Lord gives you blessings for this, and He has begun the work of grace in you for this purpose.

(b) The Lord has children of various ages and sizes, yet they all have the same Spirit and the same spiritual life; that life also has the same operation in all, though unequal in degree. The least of them knows the Lord somewhat, not only knowing that glorifying the Lord is his duty, but he also has a desire and inclination for it. He is already inclined to glorify God, because he is known to be not of the world, but, as they call it to their own condemnation, to be refined, and they also somewhat manifest that the Spirit of Christ is in them, and their good works begin to be evident, though they are still very small. And though the little ones are not yet moved out of love for that end to do this or that, yet they end in the glorification of God, thanking Him when they have received something from the Lord, and it grieves them when they have done something that dishonors godliness, the godly, and thus God.

(c) Therefore, follow that inclination to glorify God, which lies at the foundation of the heart, and increasingly aim for that, remaining within the bounds of your spiritual strength, a child as a child, a young man as a young man, and a father as a father, being content with the measure of grace one currently has, and earnestly desiring and striving to attain a higher degree of grace in the future. Those aforementioned hindrances arise largely from neglecting to glorify God and are removed by active endeavor; therefore, do not wait until those difficulties are removed, for then you will never begin, but do the work with the shortcomings that unavoidably come with it, as best as you can. Do not linger at falls, but rise again, and strive more and more to break through, and the Lord will help and give strength to the weary, and multiply the strength of those who have none.

(d) Do not cease from praying that you may also have this privilege to do so, and to receive the ability to do it. Look to others who are further along than you, associate with them, and learn from them.

Get accustomed to aiming for it continually, no matter how far you stray from your goal, and you will find that you will increase in this, and in increasing in this, you will increase in all. May the Lord send you His light and truth to guide you. Amen.

Chapter 2

Of the Love for God.

The content of the law is Love, therefore it is expressed in one word: Rom. 13:9, 10. And if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law. Love actually has no object other than the highest, the most lovable, the solely satisfying, the unchangeable, which is God; from that love flows the love for all that God wills to be loved, and thus for our neighbor. Adam, before the fall, knowing God immediately and being united with Him, also loved God immediately.

But after the fall, man is in enmity with God, and does not love Him; when God grants His children again the privilege of being able to love Him, this happens through the intervention of the Mediator who has removed enmity and who brings the elect back to God in friendship; this friendship is exercised through faith, by which the reborn, accepting the merits of Christ as the ransom, finds peace with God, enjoys God's love for Him, and in communion with God grows to love Him, so that faith awakens and activates love; in this

regard, faith working through love, Gal. 5:6. In this, the love of the believers is distinguished from the love Adam had. All love that is separated from faith, and thus works as mentioned, is not true love; natural men may write and talk about love, but it is blindness; they may call God: dear Lord, and imagine that they love God, but they deceive themselves, they do not love God. They may judge that God is lovable, and do something according to reason that resembles it, but their heart is cold and devoid of love.

Description.

II. Love is a sweet movement of the soul toward God, poured out by the Holy Spirit in the hearts of the believers, by which they delight in God from union with Him and the sight of His perfections, and in joyful embracing of His will, they fully devote themselves to His service.

Is a sweet movement.

(a) Love is a movement. Love is compared to fire; fire is swift in movement, so is love vehemently in motion: Song of Solomon 8:6 ... for love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame. Love is a sweet movement. The soul is subject to many and diverse movements, some sorrowful, some joyful; love refreshes the heart, it is a sweet movement; among people it is sweeter to love than to be loved: Song of Solomon 7:6 ... O love, thou art better than wine!

Alongside God.

(b) Love has God as its Object. It is a capability of man that he can love, and is inclined to love; but not knowing the worth and lovability of God, man chooses something physical to love, he clings

marvelously to it, and that in a disorderly manner, thus he ruins himself and abuses the glorious in him. But the believer, fixing his gaze on God, loses all beauty and glory, he withdraws his love from it, indeed cannot love it, he hates it because it goes against the love of God; but God becomes and remains the Object of his love. He rejoices that he can love God, he cannot be satisfied in this love, and feels much sorrow that he does not love God more, God is and remains the highest of all that he can love; indeed the only one, and he desires to love nothing except for God's sake. Psalm 31:24. Love the Lord, all his saints! Psalm 18:2 ... I will love thee, O Lord, my strength! God is the Object of love, because He is God, for His own sake, because He is worthy; everything that can inspire love is in God. God is love, John 4:8. Our love is made possible by His love for us: 1 John 4:19. We love him, because he first loved us. Our love is also kindled by the benefits of God: Psalm 116:1. I love the Lord, because he hath heard my voice and my supplications. Psalm 31:24. Love the Lord ... for the Lord preserveth the faithful. These are incentives, but the ground, the actual reason for love is God Himself, because He is God, because He is love, because He is lovable, because He is worthy, not to obtain something else through it; for then there would be something above God, which one loved more.

The Holy Spirit works them.

(c) Love does not come through one's own activity or ability; a creature cannot give it to us; a heavenly teacher may preach about love with a heart full of love, but he will not awaken love in anyone's heart, love is not for sale for all the goods of his house, but it is solely a voluntary gift from God; this divine spark is kindled in the heart of man by the Holy Spirit. Romans 5:5. Because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us. 2 Thessalonians 3:5. And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of

God. Deuteronomy 30:6. And the Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart ... to love the Lord thy God.

In the children of God.

(d) The Holy Spirit, arousing love in the hearts of the children of God, works in accordance with human nature; man cannot love what he does not know, and does not love beyond what he knows; so also the Holy Spirit works this love, through knowledge. God gives His own enlightened understanding. He reveals Himself to them, they know His perfections, and thus the love of God is kindled in them: 1 John 4:7, 8 ... every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. Matthew 22:37. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

Through union with God.

(e) Having sinned, man finds God to be a consuming fire, he cannot approach God, and though God is most lovable, he cannot love God; for love seeks union, and the perception that one is lovable, which has power over us, makes us flee; therefore, union must come first. The union between God and the sinner is brought about by the Mediator, the Lord Jesus Christ; He brings them to God, 1 Peter 3:18. In Him they become one with God: John 17:21, 23 ... that they may be one in us. I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one. Only then can man love God, when he can regard God as his God, otherwise the presence of God makes him fear and flee from God. Reverence and love go together, but fear and love do not coexist: 1 John 4:18. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear.

This union with God occurs on the side of man through faith; thereby the soul approaches God: Ephesians 3:12. In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him. In this union one loves God, and love then seeks to come closer and closer to the union and remain in it, which is an exercise of friendship, as between friends, and between father and children: James 2:23 ... he (Abraham) was called the Friend of God. John 15:15. Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.

And its will.

(f) To love God is a privilege for the elect. These were, like the others, children of wrath; but God draws them out of the state of sin, gives them life, a childlike disposition, and thus also a loving heart. Because they are born of God, and God is love, they also incline towards their heavenly Father, and love Him; their understanding, will, affections are not only made capable, but are also active in love towards God; it is not enough for them to nourish love internally, but they are diligent in showing it with tongue, eye, and the whole body, so that they are known as lovers of God. Therefore, they are called lovers: Psalm 97:10. Ye that love the Lord, hate evil. Psalm 69:36 ... the lovers of His Name shall dwell therein.

Manifests in various forms.

III. Love for God manifests in many deeds, which we shall present with that purpose, both to make the nature of this love clearer known, and because an unconverted person, considering them, would be convinced that he does not love God, and so that the favored ones might be persuaded that they love the Lord.

1. Esteem.

Where the love of God is in the heart, there is esteem and exaltation of God, infinitely above all that there is, not only with judgment, but also with the entire will; everything that is glorious, lovable, high disappears in the glory of the Lord, and in the estimation of that one says with full consent: 1 Chronicles 29:11. Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty.

2. Joy.

In love there is joy; when the soul is allowed to see the Lord up close, then it cannot be sad, but that sight gladdens the heart, so that all reasons for sorrow disappear; Psalm 16:11 ... In thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.

3. Reverence.

In love there is reverence; when the soul, in a loving disposition, raises itself to the Lord, the glory of the Lord shines upon it in such a way that it dare not look upon the Lord with eyes lifted up, but it bows down, and marvels that it may love the Lord, and being irradiated with divine love, it does not disappear, just as David behaved in the presence of the Lord: Psalm 5:8 ... I will worship toward thy holy temple in thy fear.

4. Activity.

In love there is activity; love prompts to seek communion, the soul is set on it; it searches out all opportunities to draw near, presents itself in the Lord's presence, whether the Lord might cast an eye towards it and look upon it, and whether it might see Him; it then goes to the

Word, then to prayer, then to the church, then to a company of the godly, and it is all done to find the Lord. It may become sluggish, listless, and despondent at times, but the heart turns upward again, the eye is lifted up again, sometimes with silent tears, sometimes with a sigh, sometimes only with an expression of its desire: Song of Solomon 3:1. By night on my bed I sought him whom my soul loveth. Isaiah 26:9. With my soul have I desired thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early: for when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness. There is a strong desire in the soul. It is: When wilt thou come unto me? Psalm 101:2, My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God; when shall I come and appear before God? Psalm 42:3.

5. Delight.

Where there is love, there is pleasure in enjoyment; when the soul is near to God, and can delight in mutual love, then it can do without everything, then it is well contented: Song of Solomon 2:3, 4. As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste. He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love. Psalm 104:34. My meditation of him shall be sweet; I will be glad in the Lord.

6. Grief.

Where there is love, there is grief over absence and separation. A loving soul soon feels whether it is near or far, it is immediately moved: Song of Solomon 5:4, 6. My beloved put in his hand by the hole of the door, and my bowels were moved for him ... my soul failed when he spake: I sought him, but I could not find him. Because He is her light and life-force, the God of the joy of her rejoicing, how can it be otherwise, but that she mourns when the Lord hides

Himself, or when she has caused estrangement by her behavior. From there come the sad complaints: How long, Lord! wilt thou forget me for ever? how long wilt thou hide thy face from me? Psalm 13:2. For these things I weep; mine eye, mine eye runneth down with water, because the comforter that should relieve my soul is far from me, Lamentations 1:16.

7. Obedience.

Where there is love, there is willing obedience; there is joy in serving the beloved, in doing something in which the beloved finds pleasure; so it is also here. When one loves God, one delights in His will, one unites with it, and one is eager, whether dwelling at home or going out, to please Him, 2 Corinthians 5:9. This is demonstrated by the Lord Jesus: John 14:23. If a man love me, he will keep my words. 1 John 5:3. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments.

8. The same object.

Where there is love, one loves and hates the same things; the enemy of one is also of the other, the friends of one are also of the other: Psalm 139:21, 22. Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate thee? I hate them with perfect hatred: I count them mine enemies. Psalm 119:63. I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts.

9. All for the beloved.

Where there is love, one has everything for the beloved's sake. So here too, whoever loves God gladly gives to God everything he has. When honor, wealth, life, etc., come into conflict with God, His will, and His honor, a lover of God will willingly let go of everything and

be glad that he has something to offer to God. Paul testifies of the believing Hebrews, Hebrews 10:34, For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance. And of himself he says, Acts 21:13, I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.

10. Closest union.

Love cannot be satisfied except with the closest and most perfect union. Therefore, a lover of God, unable to be satisfied in love in this life and knowing that the perfect and immediate union with God is only in heaven, desires to die in order to be perfectly satisfied in love: Philippians 1:23. For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better.

Conviction.

IV. It is known by all through experience that love is such and has such effects as we have described above. Now, bring the nature and deeds of love to the most beloved object, namely God, and examine your heart thereby, and you will be able to see as in a clear mirror whether you love God or not; whether you merely have a natural love for God as the supreme good, which is more a judgment that God is lovable, and that man is obliged to love God, as a sweet movement of the heart, manifesting itself in the aforementioned deeds, or whether you love God in Christ as your God and Father, and even if love is still small and imperfect, whether you truly love. If many were to repent and examine themselves in this matter, it would be revealed to their conscience that the love of God is not in them. Come, consider yourselves, if it might be a means of your conviction, and

thus of your conversion. Listen attentively to me, may it touch your heart!

Those who do not love God.

V. You do not love God.

1. He who lacks the above. Is in you the esteem, the joy, the reverence, the longing and seeking, the satisfaction in enjoyment, the sorrow over loss, the obedience, the hatred of sin, and love for the godly; do you have honor, goods, life, soul, and body for the Lord's sake, do you long for salvation? Natural man, should you not answer, truly these things are not in me, does one not love God only when those movements are in someone, as I am now convinced, so I do not love God; I used to say: dear God! dear Lord! I imagined without trial that I loved God but now I see that I have deceived myself.
2. He does not love God who loves the world, for God and the world are directly opposed to each other, he who loves one hates the other; this is the mouth of truth: Matthew 6:24. No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon. The apostle John confirms this: 1 John 2:15. Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

You may ask, what is the world?

I answer: All that is visible, which is on the earth, and occupies your heart: lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, as it is explained in verse 16.

You may ask: what is love for the world?

I answer: clinging firmly to visible things, to food and clothing, to money, to honor and prestige, each in his opportunities and circumstances, to people's love for you, to luxuries, revelries, sensuality, and the like; if alongside this are all your concerns, desires, thoughts, and pursuits. The eye looks at it, the ear hears it, the mouth speaks of it, the hands grasp it, and the feet run after it, and everything, soul and body, is exerted to obtain it, and having obtained it, to hold it fast. According to whether it goes well with him in this, he is happy or sad, so that the earthly is all the pleasure and enjoyment; even though one may rightly say with his judgment, it is all vanity, salvation above all, and yet the heart is in the earth, the aim is earthly, all activity is for the earthly; so one is certainly but a worldling, a person of this world, whose portion is in this life. Therefore, you who are convicted of this, be further convinced that you love the world, and consequently, that you do not love God.

3. He does not love God who is still entirely in self-love; in believers, this is not entirely dead yet; but it does not rule there, it is acknowledged, declared an enemy, fought against, and mourned over; but where it rules, there the love of God cannot have a place. It is entirely against the nature of this love to love and seek oneself: 1 Corinthians 13:5. Love does not seek its own. Paul sets the love of God and of pleasures as two conflicting things: 2 Timothy 3:4. Lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God.

When one aims at oneself in all one's actions, to obtain or retain this or that for oneself; when hatred, envy, wrath, revenge are kindled against those who are hindrances in one's own pursuit, then one lives in self-love, and that is evidence that one does not love God, and it

becomes all the clearer when one does not go further in religion than self-love can tolerate, and when one withdraws from it altogether or in part, if it would be detrimental to us in honor or goods.

Now take these three set matters together, and draw the conclusion; he who does not have the nature and deeds of the love of God, who loves the world, who lives in self-love, does not love God. But I do not have the nature and deeds of the love of God; I love the world, I am entirely in self-love; so I do not love God.

Their miserable state.

VI. Having convinced you that you do not love God, we will further show you your miserable state, in order to bring you to repentance.

1. Be assured that you hate God. This will be even more abhorrent to you than if you were to say it of yourself; you will not want to believe it. You will say: oh no! I do not hate God, and yet it is the truth; do not flatter yourself now that your unrighteousness is found, which is hateful. That there are those who hate God is undeniable. See this: Exodus 20:5 ... of those who hate Me. Psalm 68:1 ... his enemies shall flee before Him. Romans 1:30 ... haters of God. John 15:24 ... but now they have both hated Me and My Father.

You may say: although there are those who hate God, yet I do not hate God, of that I am very well aware.

I answer:

(a) You are convinced from the foregoing that you do not love God; from this it is certain that you hate God, there is no middle ground. Besides people and other things, in some other cases, not loving does

not imply hatred, namely, when one does not know people whom one has not seen and does not know, one does not love them, yet one does not hate them either, one leaves them be. But one cannot be neutral toward those one knows, who are above us as masters, who work alongside us constantly, and with whom we constantly interact; toward these one cannot be neutral, for in one's heart one will find either attraction and affection or aversion and disaffection. Aversion of the heart, disaffection is hatred, even if it does not reach the highest degree and sensitivity of the passions, and to malicious opposition; aversion, reluctance is hatred.

(b) Furthermore, because you have an aversion in all things, and in all those through whom God reveals Himself as holy and righteous, causing your conscience to be disturbed, you hate God even more; for that which one loves or hates, one loves or hates even more. Now, you hate, you have an aversion, a reluctance in the light of true godliness because it exposes you, unsettles you with fear of the impending judgment; this is witnessed by God: John 3:20. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. John 15:18, 19. If the world hates you, know that it has hated Me before it hated you ... because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.

(c) Furthermore, because you continually sin against God with pleasure and delight, is it not because you do not want God to be Lord over you, because you want to be your own master, to live not according to His, but your own will? Thus, you certainly despise, reject God; now, despising, rejecting, flows from hatred, and are manifestations of hatred; just as honoring with submission, acknowledging, and obeying are manifestations of love.

(d) Furthermore, because you love the world and the worldly, it is infallible that you hate the opposite; but God and the world are contradictory; he who loves one hates the other; therefore, from your love for the world, you can conclude that you hate God. Behold now, you who are convinced that you do not love God, that you live in that state which horrifies you, namely, that you hate God.

Exhortation to love God.

VII. 2. All of you who do not love God, know that God also does not love you, that God hates you, that you are God's enemy: James 4:4 ... Whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. Listen to how God is disposed towards you, Psalm 5:5, You hate all evildoers.

3. God's wrath is upon you and will destroy you: Luke 19:14, 27. But his citizens hated him ... saying, 'We do not want this man to reign over us.' But as for these enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, bring them here and slaughter them before me. Proverbs 8:36 ... all who hate me love death. What are you, who do not love God? A miserable person in yourself; you, who are so abominable, are hated by God, by the Lord Jesus, by the holy angels, and by the godly. You have nothing to expect but to remain forever under the wrath of God. Poor creature! Has it not been long enough to live like this? Is it not time to wake up before it is too late? Then arise and flee from the coming wrath!

Of the lovers of God.

VIII. But you, lovers of God, who have read attentively what I have said about the nature and deeds of love, apply it to your hearts; did it not all approve itself to you, did it not give rise to a desire for the love

of God, and were you not convinced that you truly love God, although it may still be small and very imperfect? Rejoice then in that most precious gift; for it is not the goodness of your nature that you have begun to love God, it is given to you by grace, it has come to you from God's love for you, and it is evidence that God has known you from eternity: 1 Corinthians 8:3. But if anyone loves God, this one is known by Him.

If then there is a beginning of the love of God in you, awaken it, so that this spark may become a flame; you, who are distressed that you love the Lord so little, and with all your heart desire to love more, listen, and let your soul be trained in the love of God.

Love is the purest.

IX. 1. Love is the purest virtue, no virtue can be compared to it; indeed, no virtue is virtue if it does not derive its luster from this; nowhere do we come closer to God than in love, God is love, 1 John 4:8, Whoever loves, has become a partaker of the divine nature. In such a person there is light, purity, warmth, holiness, joy, and all that can be called blessedness. You have already experienced how your soul was enamored with love when you heard us explain its nature and deeds, and when you saw the passions of a godly soul, or heard them recounted by others; therefore, follow your desire, fall in love with that which is lovely.

God is the most lovable.

2. God is the most lovable in Himself, all that is lovable is in God; to love the beautiful, the graceful, the glorious, the lovely is no difficult task, it draws the heart by itself. God is all these in an infinite way; whoever sees God cannot but love; words are too insufficient, passions too small, everything falls short of showing

forth the loveliness of the Lord. No one knows what God is, except one to whom God has revealed Himself, and God reveals Himself to no one without inflaming him in love, because He is God, because He is the Lord, who is worthy of all honor and love.

God loves you.

3. The infinite God, the eternal Love, loves you, believers! Jeremiah 31:3 ... Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love. John 16:27. The Father Himself loves you. Ephesians 2:4. But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us.

The sun cannot shine on a mirror without reflecting back, nor on any polished metal without warming it, and giving warmth in return. Can a person resist the love of the most beautiful and lovable, who desires that one should love Him in return without the love being kindled? Will then the love of God toward you, which you believe in, and have seen and tasted a small ray of love, not ignite your hearts in that love? 1 John 4:19. We love Him because He first loved us.

And many benefits bestowed.

4. Consider all the great benefits that the Lord has bestowed upon you, bestows, and will eternally bestow, which come from love, and are proofs of it. Man's heart is so devoid of love that all the benefits one shows him cannot persuade his heart to love him; one receives the benefits, and the heart remains indifferent to the giver. But when benefits come from love, and that from one who is very lovely in himself, and whom we ourselves love, then they move the heart. God, the lovable, loving you, and somewhat beloved by you, demonstrates His love to you with invaluable

benefits as tokens of love. He gives you His Son out of love as a Redeemer and Savior: 1 John 4:9. In this the love of God was revealed toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. Out of love, He draws us to Himself: Jeremiah 31:3. Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you. Out of love, He adopts His own as His children: 1 John 3:1. Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God. Out of love, He chastens them for their good: Hebrews 12:6, 10. For whom the Lord loves He chastens, ... that we may be partakers of His holiness. When they are saddened, His love is moved to comfort them: 2 Thessalonians 2:16. Our God and Father, who has loved us and given us everlasting consolation and good hope by grace.

Have you not partaken of these benefits? If you know that, and then realize that it all comes from a Fatherly love, will that not kindle your love? Then I do not know what will.

Is pleasing to God.

5. Proceed further, and see how pleasing it is to God; you have the privilege, you may love the Lord, and when you love Him, the Lord delights in it, and repays that love with new reciprocal love and blessings, according to His promise to the lovers. It is a wonderful kindness; love begins with Him first, and through His love He enables them to love Him, and when they love Him, He rewards it with reciprocal love. John 14:21 ... He who loves Me will be loved by My Father.

The Lord has His eye on them and guards them from all evil: Psalm 145:20. The Lord preserves all who love Him. He gives them blessings beyond all comprehension: 1 Corinthians 2:9. What eye has

not seen, and ear has not heard, and has not entered the heart of man, what God has prepared for those who love Him. Yes, even the evil that seems to lead to their destruction is turned to the best for the lovers of God: Romans 8:28. We know that all things work together for good to those who love God. A lover of God is not only pleasing to God, but he is also loved by the Lord Jesus, by the holy angels, and by all believers; everyone looks upon such a one with pleasure and delight.

Love sanctifies.

6. Love is holiness and works holiness, for which the believers long and strongly desire. Love keeps a believer in communion with God: 1 John 4:16 ... He who abides in love abides in God, and God in him. This is not only a sweet, but also a holy and sanctifying state. Love teaches duty, love incites to duty, love guides in the performance of duty. Without love, the best work is of no avail, 1 Corinthians 13:2. But everything must be done in love: Ephesians 1:4 ... That we should be holy and without blame before Him in love. The whole law is summed up in love: Matthew 22:37. The end of the commandment is love. 1 Timothy 1:5. Love cannot remain hidden, for it is holy fire; it is active outwardly, drives fiercely, 2 Corinthians 3:14. The love of Christ compels us. Therefore, the apostle speaks of the labor of love, 1 Thessalonians 1:3. Love makes all work light, love overcomes all danger, breaks through all opposition, and rejoices in tribulations; Romans 5:3-5 We also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope. Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us. Therefore,

whoever desires to be holy, let him be active in the love of God.
You lovers of the Lord, hate evil. Psalm 97:10.

Examples.

7. Come then, follow after the Lord Jesus, who loved the Father, John 14:31. Join the God-fearing, who are called lovers of God many times, Song of Solomon 1:3, Psalm 69:36, Isaiah 41:8. Exercise yourself to increase in love: Love the Lord, all His saints! Psalm 31:24. Keep yourselves in the love of God, Jude 1:21.

What to watch out for.

X. You then, who desire to walk in the love of God, beware from now on of what has hitherto hindered you from increasing and breaking through in love, which is:

(a) Ignorance; little knowledge causes little love; therefore, examine the Word attentively, give prudent attention to His work outside and inside you, fix your gaze to catch sight of the Lord, and be active in keeping close to the Lord.

(b) Divided love. Believers still have the old Adam in them, which still craves the earthly, self-love is not yet dead; if one indulges it a little, it takes even more, and the more that love grows, the less the love of God becomes; therefore, one who desires to increase in the love of God must resist and cast out the other; this wavering prevents growth.

(c) Little communion with God. Love needs to be exercised, or it grows cold. Separate yourself from everything from which you may separate, so that the Lord may have your heart alone; be constant in

prayer, meditation, seeking advice, dependence, and above all, adhere strictly to the time of your exercise, for thereby one is restored each time, and one becomes more accustomed to the Lord.

(d) Unbelief. Faith works through love; if one does not believe that one is loved by God, one cannot be warmed in love, but if one believes that God loves us, then one is again inflamed with love for God; we love Him because He first loved us.

(e) Timidity. When one is in danger of losing some honor, of considering the cause of God as damage, as shame, as life is feared, and one then shrinks back, pretends, hides, then love is greatly injured, and sometimes one has a long struggle to return to a loving state; but when one breaks through, when it comes to it, then love gains double strength. Perfect love drives out fear, not only the fear of God, which makes one flee from God, but also the fear of danger.

What to consider.

But if you desire to increase in love,

(a) Take your life, honor, possessions, and everything you have in your hand, entrust it to the Lord, let Him take care of it, and do not concern yourself with it, so that you can readily leave it if the love of God requires it.

(b) Display the image of God that is in you, however small or great it may be, and let the world see that you have a different nature and are in covenant with God.

(c) Believe in the love of God for you, and rejoice in it.

(d) Pray for the increase of love.

(e) Associate continually with the lovers of God and be their companion.

(f) Guard against willful sins, and strive to do the will of God, and if you fall, do not remain down; humble yourself with sorrow for having sinned against love, and rise again, clinging to the immutability of the love of God and to the immutability of the covenant. Thus, by habituating yourself to the Lord, you will go from strength to strength and become more abundant in love. May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God! 2 Thessalonians 3:5.

Chapter 3

Of Love for Jesus Christ.

The law demands love for God and for everything that God commands to be loved. Before the fall, love had no other object than God and humanity, encompassing neighbors under the term. The law of nature does not teach more. But in the Gospel, God has presented another object of love, namely, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Mediator between God and humanity. The law demands love for the work; the Gospel reveals the object. The Lord Jesus is God and holy Man; as God, we must love Him as God, of whom we have spoken. But here, we recognize Him as Immanuel, God and Man in one person, as Mediator and Savior, and in that relation or connection, He is the object of our love. We have spoken of the nature of love, so it is not necessary to repeat, and therefore, we will encourage you to demonstrate that love for the Lord Jesus.

Conviction of Those Who Do Not Love Jesus.

II. The Lord Jesus has few lovers in the world; He would have more if He desired. But He does not grant this privilege to most. It is a great privilege and grace for those few who are allowed to love Him. And those who love Him do so to the extent that they even lay down their lives for Him, loving Him until death and into eternity. The heathens to whom the Gospel is not preached do not sin by not loving Him, for it is not commanded to them, and He is not presented to them. The Jews and Muslims know about Jesus; therefore, it is their sin not to love Him, to hate Him, and all those who are called Christians after His name. The Antichrist, though he boasts the name of Christ, sins by not loving Jesus but persecuting Him and His church and becoming intoxicated with the blood of the saints. The heretics who want to carry the name of Christians also sin by not loving Him, hating Him in His truth and His children, persecuting each according to their power. All these will bear their judgment, and it will be unbearable for them.

But those who are in the church, of which the Lord Jesus is the head, indeed should love Him, but how few lovers of Him are in it!

(a) Many do not concern themselves with Him at all. They hear His name mentioned, they hear Him described and praised in sermons, they themselves also mention Him, but do not care who He is and what He is. He is a stranger to them; they have no desire to know Him, nor do they make any effort to do so. And if someone tries to make Him known to them, they say, "Depart from us, for we have no desire to know His ways." They let Him be what He is, and not knowing Him, they do not love Him, for it is impossible to love someone you do not know. There is neither sadness at missing Him,

nor longing for Him, nor union of the heart with Him, nor sorrow that they do not love Him.

(b) Many know Jesus only superficially, not inwardly by the light of the Holy Spirit; therefore, there is no love for Him. They would like to have Him as a servant to keep them from hell and to help them into heaven, of which they also have no true conception. But beyond that, they have nothing to do with Him. There is no entrance into a covenant with Him, no surrender to Him, no believing acceptance for justification and sanctification, no union of the heart, and no exercise of communion with Him. They know neither His absence nor His presence; they are content as long as they are good churchgoers, partake of the Holy Communion, lead an honorable life, and have the imagination that they will be saved. They go away content, although Jesus remains a stranger, outside their hearts and thoughts. You know what love is for people; from that, you will see that you have no love for Jesus, whom you should love more intensely than people. You will say that you love Jesus.

But I ask you: where is the evidence? Is there that esteem, that reverence, that sorrow, that longing, that effort to live in practical union with Him, that communion with Him, the likeness of nature, that obedience, and the keeping of His commandments, which we have presented above and of which you yourself are convinced? If you consider your love for people and transfer it to love for Christ, you must be convinced that you do not love Jesus, no matter how good you think of yourself. Many who are in the church openly show that they do not love Jesus; they live worldly and godless lives, curse, gamble, dance, drink excessively, indulge in gluttony, fornicate, secretly commit all sorts of injustices, hate the godly, persecute them with words and deeds, and do everything an enemy of Jesus would do. These are baptized, stay with the church, and imagine that they

will be saved; but we tell them plainly that they are enemies of Christ, that they do not love Christ but hate Him. It would have been better for them never to have heard Christ's name than, being covered with the name of Christian, to oppose Christ in this way. They do not harm Christ, for He is above them; they harm themselves.

Their miserable state.

III. All of you who do not love Jesus, consider your miserable state.

1. You can be convinced from the Word of God that it is impossible to be saved without faith: John 3:36. "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on them." To be disobedient to the Son is not to believe in Him, which is contrary to believing in the Son: Mark 16:16. "Whoever does not believe will be condemned." But you do not believe in the Son, even though you believe that He is and that He is a Savior for all believers; because you do not love Him; where there is no love, there is also no faith: for faith works through love, Galatians 5:6. Faith without works is dead, James 2:26. If you do not wish to deceive yourself, you must pass judgment on yourself that you will not be saved.
2. Jesus does not love you, Proverbs 8:17, "I love those who love me." He loves only His lovers; therefore, you are not among His beloved. He who loves, for them He died, Ephesians 5:25. Not loved by Him is also not redeemed by Him; those who do not love the Lord Jesus are objects of His hatred and wrath; love and hatred are opposed: Romans 9:13. "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated." If you do not love Jesus, Jesus also does not love you; and if Jesus does not love you, He hates you: Psalm 45:8. "You

love righteousness and hate wickedness." Proverbs 8:13. "I hate pride and arrogance." It was terrifying for those present when He looked around at them in anger, Mark 3:5. How terrifying will it be for you when Jesus, who is not only called a Lamb but also a Lion, Revelation 5:5, looks at you in wrath on the day of judgment! Consider carefully and place yourself under that, for you are under it, what is stated, Revelation 6:16-17. "They called to the mountains and the rocks, 'Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can withstand it?'" How wretched you are then, who do not love Jesus; for Jesus does not love you. You have no share in His suffering and death; He hates you, He is angry with you, so tremble!

3. You, who do not love Jesus, are the most cursed creature under the sun: listen with application to you to that place, which cannot be read without terror: 1 Corinthians 16:22, "If anyone does not love the Lord Jesus Christ, let them be cursed! Come, Lord!" It is the greatest curse that can be named: this curse will not only come upon such, but they themselves will be the curse, and therefore be abhorrent to all flesh, Isaiah 66:24. In that state you will be for eternity if you do not repent in this life; you will experience what is stated, Luke 19:27, "But those enemies of mine who did not want me to be king over them—bring them here and kill them in front of me." Oh, that you would be moved to faith by the fear of the Lord!

What prevents the lovers from being assured that they love Jesus.

IV. As wretched as those are who do not love Jesus, so blessed are those who adore Him. One who does not love Jesus quickly imagines

that he loves Jesus; but one who truly loves Jesus often fears that he does not love Him. Such a person has two reasons within himself that lead him to have such suspicions about himself, namely: he does not feel the sweet movements towards Jesus that he thinks should always be present in love; furthermore, if he truly loved Jesus, he would obey Him more and live a holier life.

These individuals need to know:

1. That it is a great likelihood of love when one is so suspicious of their actions; when concern is accompanied by a desire to love Him and sorrow that one does not love Him; when it does not only stem from fear of the judgment that will come upon those who do not love, and from the desire to be saved, so that one only desires love as a means to obtain something else. But if the concerns arise from and are accompanied by a desire to love Jesus because one takes pleasure in loving itself; that is not only a likelihood, but it is proof that one loves Jesus. It is the nature of sincerity to distrust oneself when one does not see a matter clearly within themselves; thus act the children of God. Consider this: Psalm 139:23-24. "Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."
2. One must consider that the habit, the truth, and the sensitivity of passions in love are distinct; one can truly and strongly love, even if one does not have sweet and sensitive feelings. Does a mother not love her child if she does not cuddle, embrace, kiss, and delight in the sight of her child? It is known that her heart is in a loving disposition toward her child; even when she does not think about it and does something else, the love still comes to the surface upon seeing her child, and the distress when the

child is missing or encounters any trouble arises from love, and all her actions are aimed at doing well for the child, even though she does not focus on her purpose, so it is here. Even if you are not always engaged in emotional outpourings of the heart, even if you do not live in embraces, in sweet conversation, the love for Jesus can truly be in the heart and manifest in actions. Sweetness mostly arises in a believer from receiving tokens of love from Jesus, when He kisses the soul with the kisses of His mouth, when His left hand is under her head, and when He embraces her with His right hand. But this is a rare moment of short duration. But constant love lies in the heart and manifests itself on occasions, and is evident in the purpose of our actions.

3. The imperfection in sanctification is indeed a sign of the imperfection of love, but not evidence of complete absence; love is still small, and besides, the old Adam is still there, these two are at odds with each other: the corrupt nature prevents love from breaking through, and sins do not arise from love, but from corruption, which prevents and overcomes love when it is not strong enough; it sighs against it and is saddened by it: Romans 7:17. "As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me." Where there is aversion, where there is hatred, where there is resistance to sin, where there is a desire, where there is love for godliness, where there is prayer for the Spirit for sanctification, where there are principles to please Jesus out of love, there is truly sanctification. From this, believers, you see that your reasons for concern are unfounded, that they should not hinder you in your outpouring of love for Jesus; worries and fears prevent it. And to assure you even more that you love Jesus, pay attention to these matters:

Signs.

V. 1. If you truly perceive the nature and actions that we have set forth in the previous chapter, § 3, you will be convinced that what has been said there is truly love. Now bring your heart to it, and in the presence of the omniscient God, with assurance, know that if there is love, it is not from yourself but is a gift of grace from God, and therefore, comparing yourself with the things presented there, you must say; truly, I love Jesus!

2. Place beside Jesus all that you love on earth; and see towards whom your heart inclines. Would you rather be with the one who tenderly loves you, or with Jesus, if it were given and allowed for you to delight in His love? Do you prefer money, the precious, the beautiful, the enjoyable, or Jesus? I am not asking what your judgment would say, but where the affections of your heart lie. When you make such a comparison, you will not say: that means a lot to me, Jesus is the one, Jesus alone, without Jesus would trouble me; but Jesus with the absence of everything else would content me, I would willingly forsake everything for Jesus, if only I could live in love with Jesus.

3. If you were assured that you would be saved, would you then have all that you desire? Would you then live joyfully and peacefully?

You may say, I would rejoice in that; but it would not satisfy me in this life, I must have Jesus, I must live with Him in mutual love: if I had to be separated from Him in this life, then I would end my days in sorrow. It is not enough for me to receive blessings from Jesus; but it is about the Person. To live with Jesus in love, that is the desire of my heart, Jesus alone, instead of all, and with the absence of everything, Jesus is enough for me.

4. What are you sad about? What do you long for? When are you well? When you make much profit, when you are loved by many, when everything goes according to your wishes?

You may say, no; but in the midst of prosperity, I become sad when I think that my Jesus is gone, when I see or hear someone who loves Jesus, then my heart is overwhelmed, my silent tears stream down my cheeks, my eyes lift up to Jesus, and I sigh: where might my faithful, my sweet, my friendly Jesus be, where is He lingering? He is my love, my joy, my life, my rest, my all, I cannot live in estrangement any longer; oh, that He would turn to me, visit me, kiss me with the kisses of His mouth, and ignite my love through His love! How I would delight, how I would sit under the shade of His overshadowing love! I would be intoxicated with love. And when He refreshes me with His presence, then the earth is too low for me, the wide world is too small, my soul wants to escape, I must be above, I long to be dissolved and be with Christ, that is by far the best for me. Here soul and body are too weak to endure the influences of love, here Jesus leaves again, after light comes darkness, after warmth comes coldness; therefore, oh blessed eternity! oh eternity with Jesus!

5. Tell me: why do you go to church? Why do you turn to the Bible? Why do you often seek solitude? What do you do there? What do you think there? What do you seek there?

You answer: my Jesus is gone, He has withdrawn, I seek Him, who loves my soul, I lament there my folly, that I did not open to Him when He knocked, that I drove Him away by my sin, that I grieved His Holy Spirit. There I sigh, there I weep, there I pour out my bitter complaints, there I become despondent, when I think how others live in love, how sweetly Jesus appears to them, and that I always have to

stand from afar, that Jesus hides Himself from me, and does not even allow Himself to be found by me. Therefore, I go to the hearing of His Word, if He is there; therefore, I go to the Bible, if I might hear His voice there; therefore, I go to a company of the godly, if He might reveal Himself to me there. So it is then about Jesus.

6. With whom do you associate in the world, with worldly people, or with the godly?

You say: I can readily answer this: earthly and natural people stink like dead, I cannot stand them, they are harmful to me. I cannot unite my heart with them, I have an aversion to them, their talk of godliness is disgusting to me, because I see that they do not know Jesus, that they do not mean it with their hearts, and when I see that they are against the true godly, they become unbearable to me. But if I find someone who loves the Lord Jesus, they are precious in my eyes, my heart wonderfully unites with such a one, even if I have never seen or heard of them before. Those who love Jesus are glorious to me, my heart goes out to them, I love them, I side with them with my whole heart, with them I want to be esteemed and despised, with them I want to live and die, I rejoice when I see them, I consider myself too unworthy to be among them, and yet it is my refreshment, I consider myself fortunate when I can associate with them as the lowest servant.

Conclusion

VI. Consider all of this together. Even a natural person would say that such a disposition is a loving disposition, and those actions are true signs of love, and you must be convinced of this, especially when you read what was said in the previous chapter. If you secretly listened to someone and noticed that their heart was working like this, would you not consider them blessed? Would you not say to

yourself; truly, they love Jesus? Would you not come to love Him, and would your affection not be drawn towards Jesus? And coming to yourself, are you not convinced that the aforementioned disposition and movements are in you? Therefore, you must conclude, I cannot deny it, I do not want to deny it, I must say, and I say it: I love Jesus, although a silent fear somewhat troubles me.

Do not let that be taken away from you, and do not take it away from yourself, either by thinking that it is too great a matter for you, or that you might deceive yourself, or because you are so sinful. Cast it away as harmful thoughts, for they hinder the sweet exercises of communion, the confident interaction with Jesus as your own, and you as His own. The more vividly you believe that you love Jesus, even if there is still much that should not be there, the more you will come to love. Life is life. Truth is truth.

The blessed state of the lovers.

How blessed you are, who love Jesus, for God loves you! John 14:21 ... "He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father." John 16:27. "For the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me." The Lord Jesus loves you: John 14:21 ... "He who loves Me ... I will love him." If you are loved by God and by the Lord Jesus, then They will do everything for you that eternal love produces. Will God then not watch over the beloved of His soul? To deliver from all that can harm, and to provide for all that is necessary? Psalm 108:6, 7. "That Your beloved may be delivered, save with Your right hand." Psalm 127:2. "It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows; for so He gives His beloved sleep." Oh, how great is the good that the Lord will give to His beloved! "I will manifest Myself to him," John 14:21. "We will come to him and make

Our home with him." verse 23. "That I may cause those who love Me to inherit wealth, that I may fill their treasuries." Prov. 8:21 God's heart is toward you, God's eye is on you, God's hand is for you; all that is uncomfortable comes upon you in love, Rev. 3:19. Everything must work together for good to you, Rom. 8:28. All that can make you happy and satisfied is for you, 1 Cor. 2:9. It may be said of you: "Blessed are you, O Israel! Who is like you, a people saved by the Lord, the shield of your help and the sword of your majesty!" Deut. 33:29. But the pinnacle of your blessedness is love itself, that you may love eternally, and in the immediate manifestations of love, and enjoying love with the Father and the Son, and the Holy Spirit you shall remain satisfied, without end.

Exhortation.

VII. Here love is imperfect, therefore we need constant exhortations: you then, who desire to abound more and more in love for the Lord Jesus, consider these things:

Jesus is lovely.

1. Contemplate Jesus in His loveliness. When the bride described Him from head to foot, she concluded: "His mouth is most sweet, yes, He is altogether lovely. This is my Beloved, and this is my Friend, O daughters of Jerusalem!" Song of Solomon 5:16. He is, according to His Divine nature, the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of His person. He possesses all Divine perfections infinitely. According to His human nature, He is perfectly holy; those who love holiness must love Him. As Mediator, He is crowned with honor and glory. He is the most kind, the most friendly, the most compassionate, the most loving of all. Grace and sweetness are poured out on His lips. He is full of grace and truth,

righteousness and kindness, so that He is both awful and lovely at the same time. If anything can draw and move your love, it must be the Lord Jesus, if only He would reveal Himself to you, and you could behold the King in His beauty.

Jesus loves His own.

2. Love begets love. Jesus now loves you with the greatest love: because He is love, He can love the unlovable, and take pleasure in doing good to His beloved. His love for you is an eternal love, without beginning and without end, it is the most intimate and fervent love. Consider where He proves His love for you:

(a) He comes into the world for your sake, and takes on your nature, and becomes like you in all things, except sin. He even takes on the form of a servant. Thus He puts Himself in your place. He becomes your Substitute, takes your sins from you, and bears them as if He had done them Himself, He bears the punishment of your sins. Ephesians 5:25. "Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her."

(b) How despised He has been, and what contempt He has endured! Everything was against Him; God was angry with Him, and poured out His righteous wrath against your sins on Him. Go to the manger, and follow Him to the cross, and look at Him in His extreme anguish and distress. Imagine that in His deepest sorrow He speaks to you like this: Look at Me, My chosen ones, My beloved ones, love for you brings Me to this state. My love is so great that I would suffer it a thousand times over before I would let you perish. In love, He pays your ransom, and brings about an eternal redemption for you, reconciles and satisfies you with God, and brings you to Him as a reconciled Father.

(c) You still lie on His heart, He thinks of you continually, He prays for you, and is your Advocate with the Father, His eye is on you, to keep you.

(d) Consider how sweetly He has drawn you to Himself. He sends the Gospel for your sake to the place where you would be born. When it was your time, He called you, He wooed you, He stood knocking at your heart, waiting for you to open to Him. When you were rebellious and disobedient, He bore with you patiently, He persuaded you, He enlightened you, He gave you a heart that came to love Him, so that you yourself sought Him and followed Him.

(e) How many times has He spoken to your heart, how many love-kisses has He given you, how often has He comforted you in your sorrows, rescued you in your distress, encouraged you in your despondency! How patiently He has borne with your weaknesses, and repeatedly proven His goodness, as if you had not sinned against Him!

(f) And at last He will bring you to Himself in heaven, so that you may be with Him forever; there He will glorify you, there He will rejoice over you, there He will perfect you in love, and thus He will be with you, and you with Him, forever, and He will satisfy you in love for eternity. Consider this, believe this, and if it cannot draw your heart to reciprocal love, then you are truly loveless. Stir up your love, therefore.

To love Him is joy.

3. In love there is joy. The heart of man is inclined to cheerfulness; in the world there is no joy for you, the most delightful things sadden you, when Jesus is absent, you will agree with what I once sang about the month of May: How sweet is the time of

song and flowers, In which both animal and human rejoice! But for me, it is only sadness, As long as I lack Jesus' love; But when He once grants my soul: You are Mine, I am yours, for eternity; And makes me rid of sinful life; Then it is my time of song and flowers!

When the soul may rest in the shade of Jesus' love, and when her love sweetly goes out to her Beloved, then she has a heaven full of joy, then she is truly content, then she wishes that love would never be disturbed, as the bride said: Song of Solomon 2:7. "I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, by the gazelles or by the does of the field, do not stir up nor awaken love until it pleases." Jesus rejoices in the outpouring of His love to you: Isaiah 62:5. "As the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you." So also does a loving soul rejoice in the outpouring of love to Jesus, and in the feeling of Jesus' love for her: Song of Solomon 1:4 ... "The king has brought me into his chambers; we will be glad and rejoice in you. We will remember your love more than wine. The upright love you."

Jesus is loved by the Father, angels, and saints.

4. Consider attentively how Jesus is the object of the Father's love, of the angels, and of the believers.

(a) The Father's love goes out to Jesus, God loves Him: John 5:20. "For the Father loves the Son." Matthew 17:5. "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

(b) The holy angels love Him, they rejoice to behold Him, they worship Him reverently, Hebrews 1:6. They stand ready to serve Him, Matthew 4:11. In His birth, in His suffering, in His resurrection, and in His coming to judgment, they accompany Him with joyful willingness and love.

(c) The believers on earth love Him, their hearts go out to Him, He is the center around which their passions of love revolve. Therefore the virgins love you, Song of Solomon 1:3. "Because of the fragrance of your good ointments, your name is ointment poured forth; therefore the virgins love you." Imagine how every believer mourns when Jesus is away, how they long for His coming to them, how they rejoice when they sweetly find themselves in His communion; it is all for Jesus, what they seek, what they cry out for, what they weep for. It is Jesus alone in whom all their delight is. What beautiful expressions we find in the meditations of the believers! Namely:

- It is much better for me to die for Jesus than to reign over the world.
- My Love is crucified.
- If my heart were cut into a thousand pieces, in each piece one would find the Name of Jesus written in golden letters.
- Lord Jesus, I love You more than my own self, than my loved ones, than myself.
- Money must perish, with all those who prefer all the good rather than to spend a day with Jesus. And so on.

Will everyone's heart give forth a flame of love, and will your heart not catch fire as well? Come, join all lovers of Jesus, and say with them:

Jesus, sweet Jesus, Jesus is the highest of all that can please me; Jesus, do You want me? I want You, only You, and say to all creatures: no! If Jesus were to ask you now: Do you love Me? Would you not answer: Yes, Lord, You know that I love You? Well then, hold fast to this, always wander in this love, and let it make you wings, to run your race with joy, let the love for Jesus urge you to live

pleasingly to Him, to glorify Him here, and patiently wait until He takes you to Himself for eternity.

What to beware of.

VIII. Henceforth, be diligent to maintain yourself in this love, to increase it, and to constantly stir it up. To that end, you need to beware of some things and despise others.

Beware:

- 1. Diminishing knowledge.** Knowledge produces love, therefore one must be active in increasing knowledge of Jesus. Those who have only superficial knowledge are generally very deficient and unstable in love; when the Lord exceptionally favors them, all is well, but when that ceases, their love immediately weakens. But those who have learned to know Jesus from the Word in all circumstances have greater ability to contemplate Jesus closely, to fall in love with Him, and their love is firmer; even when the sweet encounters are not so keenly felt.
- 2. Divided love.** If the world and all that is in it are still desirable, if the eye and heart still draw to themselves, if one is still so set on one's own will, honor, pleasure, then love for Jesus cannot be strong. Jesus wants the heart alone; if His enemy finds entrance, then He leaves, and when Jesus departs, your love becomes weaker; therefore, do not hesitate between two opinions. If you want to love the world, and be loved by it, then love it wholly, and let Jesus go. But if you want to love Jesus, and be loved by Jesus, then love Him alone and wholly, and let the world go, do not look back at it.

3. **Limited companionship.** Love wants to be maintained; if one is too far from the fire, one grows cold, the closest friends grow distant due to lack of companionship, so it is here too; Jesus wants to be sought, and to see that one greatly values His friendship. Jesus wants to be awaited, and to have time to engage in mutual expressions of love. Therefore, one must humble oneself to speak with Him, and again tell Him the state of one's heart toward Him, and maintain a familiar conversation with Him by expressing our desires to Him, and our sorrow that we cannot love Him more; that stirs up love.
4. **Unbelief.** If one lightly doubts one's share in Jesus, if one distrusts that He loves us, if one is active in refuting all the reasons He has shown love, eagerly accepting reasons for the opposite, even seeking them out, as if one had accomplished a masterpiece, if one concludes: Jesus does not love me, I do not love Jesus. Then, I say, one is unable to exercise love, and to receive reciprocal love. Guard against disputing love, and holding Jesus' love in suspicion, and denying the graces which are proofs of Jesus' love; for that is the right way to make Jesus depart.
5. **Bold sins.** Jesus is holy and loves holiness, but hates ungodliness; with daily weaknesses and stumblings, He has pity, and will not cease to show His love because of them. But bold sins are against love, then Jesus withholds His love, His Spirit is grieved, and if Jesus withholds His love, then one cannot love Him either. And one is oneself rendered unable to exercise love by bold sins, the conscience is troubled, one becomes timid, one dares not approach, one has spoiled it too much, there is too great a separation, and sometimes it takes much effort before one returns to a loving attitude.

6. Timidity in professing Him is a kind of shame; one wants to exercise love secretly but does not want it known by others. One is ashamed of Him because one fears damage, shame, therefore one withdraws. When one comes into situations that require one to show love for Jesus, His honor and cause, if one then hides and does not dare to say: Such One is my Beloved, yes, such One is my Friend. Jesus notices this soon, and He is displeased; it is a cause for Jesus to also hide Himself from you, and it is a sign that you have little love, and such actions greatly diminish it.

And what to do.

From what has been said, it can be inferred what stirs up love, and what is to be pursued for this purpose, namely:

(a) **Believe that He loves you**, and to recognize every true grace as evidence of His love for you.

(b) **Continually separate yourself from everything**, to delight and satisfy yourself only in the love of Jesus.

(c) **To be willing to give up everything for Jesus without withholding anything**, offering yourself and all that you have to Jesus, declaring that you willingly want to part with it for Him.

(d) **To tell others about Jesus' beauty and loveliness**, so that they too may come to love Him, and He may be loved by many.

(e) **To wear His livery with joy**, wanting everyone to know that you have Jesus as your Lord, and that if anyone should touch Jesus to harm Him even in the slightest way, you will be wholly His, body and soul, and that you will defend His honor with goods and blood.

(f) **To carefully guard against what displeases Him**, and to strive to please Him, to become conformed to Him, and to resemble His nature.

(g) **To take time to delight in mutual love**, and if any estrangement or dimming has occurred, to restore intimacy once again.

(h) **To long for and continually stir up the desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ**, through constant thoughts of what will be above, and how sweet it will be to be always with the Lord. Amen.

Chapter 4

Of the Fear of God.

From the Love of God, of which we have spoken, flows the fear of God, of which we will now treat. Love and fear are combined: Deut. 10:12. What does the Lord your God require of you? Only to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him.

The designation.

Fear is either reverence or dread; fear as dread is generally expressed with the Hebrew words magor, and pachad, and the Greek word phobos. Fear as reverence is called yirah in Hebrew, and eulabeia in Greek; however, these words are also used without that distinction. We also call fear fruits, derived from High German; it is now rarely

used on its own, but rather in combination in the word "God-fearing," which is the same as God-revering.

Variety.

Fear springs from love, either for ourselves or for God. Self-love produces fear when something arises that would deprive us of good or cause us any harm; we fear loss, and the evil itself, and that which or who could deprive us of good or inflict harm. God has implanted in man a love for himself and wants us to use it. The law demands that we love our neighbor as ourselves, Matthew 22:39. Therefore, fear of loss and evil is not a sin. Adam had it in his nature before the fall, although there was no opportunity for it to arise in him. The Lord Jesus also had it, Matthew 26:37; Hebrews 5:7. It is permissible to fear death, other hardships, and thus to fear wild animals and evil people. But this fear becomes evil when one uses sinful means out of fear to retain or obtain good, or to escape evil, namely, when one fears people more than God, when neglecting the fear of God and obedience to His commandments, one seeks to win people over by sinful ways, and does not care whether it displeases God, as long as one can please people in order to avoid harm and receive good: Matthew 10:28. Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. Because one must have love for oneself, and from it fear, one must fear more for the evil of the soul than for the body; because being good or bad for the soul depends on God, one must fear out of love for one's own preservation, one must fear God's wrath and judgments: Psalm 119:120. My flesh trembles for fear of you, and I am afraid of your judgments. An unconverted person must also be moved to faith by fear of God's eternal wrath, 2 Corinthians 5:11. A converted person must be stirred up by fear of harm to the soul to be earnest: Hebrews 4:1. Let us therefore fear, lest, while the promise of

entering his rest still stands, any of you should seem to have failed to reach it.

Fear is distinguished into a servile and a filial fear.

Servile fear compels a slave to do the will of his master out of fear of being beaten, and so is servile fear towards God, better than stubborn and insensitive contempt of God and his judgments, and it is useful if someone is thereby brought to repentance, Matthew 3:7; Amos 4:12. Now, a convert does not need to be concerned whether his conversion is sincere, because he is driven to Christ out of fear of condemnation, and not out of love for God; for we have shown that we must love our well-being and fear our ill-being, and thereby be driven to repentance: but servile fear is evil when it is nothing but terror that makes one flee from God. We say that a person, out of love for his own preservation and fear of his own destruction, must fear God, and thereby be driven to repentance and obedience, but self-love is not the basis of filial fear; to fear to provoke God because He is powerful to punish; to be obedient so that He may not withdraw His favor from us but show it to us more, is not the nature of filial fear, although the matter in itself is good and characteristic of the children of God; not self-love but love for God, because He is God, because He is awe-inspiring, is the reason for filial fear of God, even though for us neither good nor evil would result from it.

Description.

Filial fear is a holy movement of the soul, awakened by God in the hearts of the children of God, whereby they carefully guard against displeasing God out of reverence for Him and earnestly seek to please Him in all things.

It is a movement of the soul. The noble soul is endowed with emotions, being moved to joy or sadness, to love or hate, to fear or fearlessness, depending on the objects; with regard to the fear of God, the human being is insensitive, rigid, and unmoved. There is no fear of God before their eyes. Romans 3:18. But in regeneration, the heart of stone is removed, and they obtain a fleshly, tender, pliable heart, which is very easily moved upon beholding God; when God appears to them as awe-inspiring, a movement arises in their soul, fitting for a creature next to God.

It is a holy movement. Because an unconverted person is essentially nothing but sin, everything that proceeds from it is also twisted; the ability to fear gets a wrong object, and moves in a disorderly manner; but the believers, being sanctified in essence, their movements are also sanctified, their fear has the right object, and proceeds in a holy manner, in faith and love, Acts 10:2. Devout and fearing God.

God awakens it. By nature, man is not fit for any good work; he has no pleasure in God and no desire to fear the Lord; he may tremble before God, but he cannot truly fear; but God gives them to fear Him: Jeremiah 32:40 ... I will put my fear in their hearts, that they may not turn from me. Therefore, the Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord, Isaiah 11:2.

In the hearts of the children of God. The heart is the seat of all movements, both bad and good; this precious gift God has enclosed in the hearts of His children, and all the movements of the fear come forth from the heart; their fear does not consist in mere talk, nor in abstaining from evil and doing good, nor in the appearance of fear, but in truth: the heart, mind, will, and passions are engaged here; the heart produces all sorts of acts of the fear of God. Only the children

of God fear the Lord; therefore, those who have this virtue are called God-fearing:

- Luke 2:25 ... This man was righteous and God-fearing.
- Acts 2:5. Devout men.
- Acts 8:2. And some devout men buried Stephen together.

Out of reverence for God. God is the Object of fear; Psalm 34:10. Fear the Lord, you his saints! God is Sovereignty, Glory, and Majesty in Himself, even when there were no creatures: 1 Chronicles 29:11. Yours, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty.

As a result, God is awe-inspiring in Himself; even though there are intelligent creatures who see the splendor of His glory, they cannot help but have awe for the Infinitely Awe-Inspiring One. A natural man does not know God; therefore, he may tremble at the judgments and fear the plagues, and sometimes acknowledge God as fearful, although he generally does not rise so high; but he cannot have awe for Him, that is the privilege and the salvation for the believers. A sinful person cannot bear God's awe, he would flee in terror; for God is to him a consuming fire. But God comes to His children as a reconciled Father in Christ, therefore they are both loving and reverent. Psalm 2:11. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Awe requires:

1. Understanding and beholding God's awe-inspiring nature: 2 Peter 1:16 We have been witnesses of His majesty.
2. Joyfully acknowledging and wholeheartedly approving that God is so awe-inspiring: Jer. 10:7. Who would not fear You, O King of the nations? For it is fitting to You.

3. Humbly bowing down before the Lord and worshiping Him: Psalm 5:8 I will bow down toward Your holy temple in Your fear. Psalm 95:6. Come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker.
4. Covering one's face, not daring to behold the radiance of His glory. Thus, the angels covered their faces: Isaiah 6:2. Concerning Moses it is written: Exodus 3:6. And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.
5. Trembling, unable to endure the awe of the Lord's awe-inspiring nature: Jer. 5:22. Do you not fear Me, declares the Lord? Do you not tremble before Me? Dan. 10:11 When He spoke this word to me, I stood trembling.
6. The awe for God generates in the children of God a careful vigilance not to displease God by disobedience and committing sins, and an endeavor to please Him in everything. Solomon often presents these effects of the fear of God in his proverbs. See: Prov. 3:7 Fear the Lord, and turn away from evil. Prov. 8:13. The fear of the Lord is to hate evil. Prov. 16:6. By the fear of the Lord one turns away from evil. Likewise: Jer. 32:40 And I will put my fear in their hearts, that they may not turn from me. And again: Prov. 1:7. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge. Prov. 14:27. The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life, to turn away from the snares of death. This is the nature of the fear of God. Conviction of those who do not fear God.

What use is it to understand the nature of a virtue if one does not practice it? No one knows the beauty of a virtue except those who practice it. This is what God demands of all people, this He commands His children. Let the voice of God enter into your hearts, Deut. 6:13. You shall fear the Lord your God. Eccl. 12:13. The end of

the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. He who loves God and His honor will cry out with David: Let the whole earth fear the Lord; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him, Psalm 33:7. Does the world not fear God? Indeed, the church, the children of God must do so: Psalm 22:24. Fear the Lord, all you offspring of Israel. Psalm 34:10. Fear the Lord, you his saints. Therefore, those who bear the Name of God-fearers, God-fearing. Now, if we look at the world, the fear of God has gone out of the hearts of the people, one must think of it as Abraham thought of Gerar: Gen. 20:11 Only the fear of God is not in this place.

When one comes to the church, the deeds of most members proclaim that there is no fear of God before their eyes and in their hearts. And you, come to yourself, what will you answer to the question: do you fear God? Do you present the Lord in the course of your life? Does awe arise for His majesty when you think of Him, speak of Him, or hear Him spoken of? Do you reverently bow before Him, do you tremble when you speak to Him in prayer? If a sinful thought and inclination arise in you, do you restrain them by the fear of God? Does the fear of God keep you from all sinful associations, from fornication, from unrighteousness, from lying, from slander, from cursing, from wrath, and other sins? Does the fear of God impel and urge you to the exercise of religion, and to doing all that you know the Lord has commanded you, and is pleasing to Him? Or do you love earthly things? Is all your care to obtain and retain them? Do you look to people, as if they could give or take them from you? Do you seek to please them, though displeasing to God, and are they your fear? Look back on your past life, observe the present state of your deeds. Are you convinced within yourself that you have not truly feared God so far, then take to heart your present and future miserable state, as a means that the fear of the Lord may move you to

faith. Listen, you who not only do not fear the Lord but also despise the Lord and do not heed Him, despisers of His Name, Malachi 1:6. You who despise the holy things of the Lord, Ezekiel 22:8. Listen, you who are insolent and arrogant against the Lord. Concerning you, David says: Psalm 119:21, You rebuke the insolent, the cursed ones, who wander from your commandments.

Terrible Judgment Upon Those Who Do Not Fear the Lord.

V. (a) Be assured that because you do not fear God, God will give you a fearful and trembling heart, so that you will find no rest or safety anywhere, but will be constantly tormented by your own heart and conscience. David's wish will come upon you, Psalm 9:20. O Lord! put them in fear. This curse will strike you, pay attention to what the Lord threatens. Deut. 28:65-67, And among these nations shalt thou find no ease, neither shall the sole of thy foot have rest: but the Lord shall give thee there a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind: And thy life shall hang in doubt before thee; and thou shalt fear day and night, and shalt have none assurance of thy life: In the morning thou shalt say, Would God it were even! and at even thou shalt say, Would God it were morning! for the fear of thine heart wherewith thou shalt fear, and for the sight of thine eyes which thou shalt see. Lev. 26:36. And upon them that are left alive of you I will send a faintness into their hearts in the lands of their enemies; and the sound of a shaken leaf shall chase them; and they shall flee, as fleeing from a sword; and they shall fall when none pursueth. Isaiah 2:19, And they shall go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth.

At Your Death.

(b) Be assured that if you continue not to fear the Lord, even though you may go to your end in peace, yet the fear of the Lord will seize you at the end; when everything will forsake you, the Lord will be a terror to you and will strike fear into you. Oh, how many breathe out their spirits in anguish and terror! Remember Belshazzar, and consider that it will also happen to you: Dan. 5:6. Then the king's countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another. Thus he went his way.

After Your Death.

(c) And even if in this life and at death no terror befell you, nevertheless you will be surrounded by terror after your death. Then wrath and indignation, tribulation and anguish will remain on you forever. Then you will know what it is to fall into the hands of God: Heb 10:31. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. Note the expression: Psalm 76:8. Thou, even thou, art to be feared: and who may stand in thy sight when once thou art angry? Thus the prophet presents the terror, Isaiah 33:14. The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites. Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings? Oh, that you would consider all this calmly and apply it to yourself, that you would believe it!

In which the principle of the fear of God is.

VI. Now we turn to you, believers, you will surely see your lack in this; but you will also be able to see that the Lord has implanted the principle of His fear in you.

(a) Do you not have a desire for that disposition of the fear of God, as we have described it above? You not only acknowledge it within

yourself, judging it to be good and fitting; but you grieve that you have so little of it, and eagerly desire to have it to a greater extent; that is a sign that you have already become a partaker of it; for thus are the servants of God described: Neh. 1:11 ... Let your ear now be attentive, and your eyes open, to hear the prayer of your servant, which I pray before you day and night, for the children of Israel your servants, and confess the sins of the children of Israel, which we have sinned against you: both I and my father's house have sinned.

(b) Do you not find in your heart heartfelt intentions and resolutions to walk in the fear of the Lord? Can you take pleasure in having suppressed a sin, and having done some good, unless it is done in the fear of God, and seeing your lack and inability to do what you love; is not your earnest prayer to God often that He fulfill the promise to you of putting His fear in your heart? Behold a proof of the nature of the God-fearing, this was David's prayer, Psalm 86:11, Unite my heart to fear Your name.

(c) Is your desire for the fear of God entirely powerless, and your prayer entirely fruitless, or do you find the beginnings of it in your actions? Does God not reveal Himself to you as awesome? Does your heart not say: yes, the Lord is worthy to be feared? Does not a reverent movement for God rise within you? Do you not bow respectfully before Him? Have you not experienced that because of the awe you cast your eyes down, close them, put your hands on your face? Has not a holy trembling come upon you, and when these movements became more sensitive in you, was that not your pleasure, yes, did it not rejoice you afterwards, when you thought about it, wishing to have it so again and always? Would you not commit many sins and neglect many good things if the fear of God had not prevented you; does not the fear of God indeed smother many sins in their beginning, and does it not drive you to your duty?

Because these things are in you, you must be convinced of the truth, although the degree is still small. See your disposition in Job: Job 31:23. For destruction from God was a terror to me, and by reason of His highness I could not endure. So also in Nehemiah: Neh. 5:15 ... But so did not I, because of the fear of God. Acknowledge then this grace received, and that will make you fit to read the following rebuke and exhortation with fruit.

Rebuke.

VII. The clearer you are convinced of the principles of the fear of God in you, the more you must be grieved by the lack in this, and the sinning against the fear of God, which manifests itself in the disposition of the heart, in penetration of sinful thoughts, words, and deeds, against the revelation of God's presence, and in human fear, when the fear of God must yield to it.

Exposed to all sins.

1. It is most to be rebuked that, knowing that God is awesome, that one has experienced how good it is to walk in humility with the Awesome One, and what power it has to walk in the beaten path, yet neglects to keep the Lord in view as such, and constantly to fear Him. Thus one is exposed to all kinds of sins; the gatekeeper sleeping with open doors, so every desire can enter and leave unhindered, and even if one notices it, there is still no strength of resistance, and one is overcome before one knows it, and if one tries to defend oneself like Samson, one loses one's power.

And breaks through in it.

2. This is followed by a disposition that is even more evil, namely, that one even breaks through in fulfilling the desire, not only when the conscience shows the evil and advises not to begin, to stop on the way, to suppress the desire, to remain silent in the midst of evil speech, and to desist from the sin one is engaged in; but also when the conscience reminds of God and His awe, yes, even, which is most terrible, when God Himself reveals Himself to the soul, moving the soul to desist, as if with a finger beckoning and saying: I am here, I see it well, stop, or I will make you feel my displeasure; if, I say, one is still driven on by the violence of sin, trying to hide from the revelation of God in order to be able to continue, and penetrates to the completion of the sin at hand, that is to reject the fear of God, that is to grieve the Holy Spirit of God, that wounds the soul to death, and if God were not infinite, long-suffering, and unchangeable, He would reject such bold ones.

Fear of Men.

3. The third sin against the fear of God is fear of men, a sin still clinging to the God-fearing. If one has not yet very much denied oneself, honor, love, profit, pleasure, nor has a great inclination to acknowledge the nothingness of man, that he cannot move or act by himself, can do neither good nor evil to himself, if one has not yet accustomed oneself to look through everything to the hand of the Lord, who alone does everything, and that all men are but instruments in the hand of God, who are used to do us good or evil: then arises from this a looking to men; in war one looks at the multitude and bravery of the soldiers, one leans on one's sword. Ezech. 33:26. Who would come against us? Or who would come into our habitations? Jer. 21:13. But when one sees the enemy's power to exceed ours, then one fears, and the heart

moves, as the trees of the forest are moved by the wind, Isa. 7:2. In sickness, in lawsuits, in commerce, in the pursuit of one's trade, in the pursuit of one's desire, which must be obtained through men, and so forth, then one looks to men, and ends with one's thoughts in them, as if it were to come from them, one seeks eagerly to have them on our side, one fears losing their favor. In ordinary social interaction, one fears one for his wisdom, against whom one may not speak; another for his highness and awe; the third for his wickedness; the fourth for his goodness, which one would not like to lose; now if a man has no delight in godliness; if he would be angry if the image of God were shown and his duty performed, or if one did not conform to him in sinning, if one then refrains from fear of him, and more or less conforms to him in sinning. Look, then the fear of God must lag behind and give way; there is God on one side, man on the other; on one side the fear of God, on the other side the fear of man. Now if the fear of men draws us to do something contrary to the fear of God, then one rejects the fear of God out of fear of men.

This is a terrible sin: because

1. God has forbidden it: Matt. 10:28 ... do not fear those who kill the body. Isa. 51:12 ... who are you, that you are afraid of man who will die?
2. It is the greatest contempt of God, who in you must yield to a man, it is idolatry, a sin of the Gentiles: Rom. 1:25 ... and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator.
3. It is to deny the providence of God, as if God had not ordained everything, as if God did not rule over everything, as if the creature could work by itself.

4. It disturbs and troubles you constantly.
5. It makes you fall from one sin into another. Therefore, be ashamed of your former fear of man, be warned, follow the Lord's admonition, Isa. 2:22, Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils; for wherein is he to be accounted of? Follow David's nobility: Psalm 118:6. The Lord is on my side; I will not fear; what can man do to me?

Exhortation.

VIII. It is not enough to guard against the sins that are against the fear of God; but it is the great duty to overcome them all by the fear of God. The more lively the fear of God is, the less power the sins have. Therefore, surrender entirely to fearing the Lord your God tenderly in the future, so that the fear of God may guard over you and direct you in your thoughts, words, and deeds. Oh, if only I could enliven you in this. Pay close attention to the following reasons, and you, be tender and sensitive.

God awesome.

1. Does not God possess all perfections in Himself, which can evoke awe? He is: Majesty, Glory, Almighty, Holiness, Goodness, and Awesomeness; that is His nature, how can anyone commune with God without fear and awe? Note the expression in the word, Exod. 15:11, Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods? who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders? Deut. 28:58, That thou mayest fear this glorious and fearful name, The Lord thy God. 1 Chr 16:25, For great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised: he also is to be feared above all gods. Neh. 1:5, And said, I beseech thee, O Lord God of heaven, the great and terrible God! His wrath upon the sinner is terrible:

Psalm 90:11. Who knows the power of your anger, and your wrath according to the fear of you? His goodness evokes awe, to fear Him in love: Psalm 130:4. But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared. Is it not right, proper, and necessary, that you, created by God, favored by God, fear this lofty God, and tremble before Him? The godly delight in the fear of God.

Growth.

2. After all, the principle of the matter is in you, you have a desire for it, you cannot hear about the fear of God without your heart being lifted up to it, and your desires becoming active; why then would you suppress that desire? Everything that has a principle of life is eager for growth and perfection; therefore, you also in this part. Is it not natural for a servant to fear his master, and a child his father? You have chosen the Lord as your Master, and has He not given you the Spirit of adoption as children, and placed you among His children? Have you not entered into a covenant with Him, that He would be your God, and you His favored ones? This should prompt you to fear your Master, your Father: Mal 1:6 ... If then I am a Father, where is My honor? And if I am a Master, where is My reverence? Recognize the relationship, and it will evoke filial fear.

Is the fountain of holiness.

3. The fear of God is the fountain of all holiness that you love. Sinful desires will lose their grip, the emerging corruptions will easily be quenched, one will be stopped in the midst of sinning, and one will be found ready for the exercise of all virtues: Prov. 9:10. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Prov. 15:33. The fear of the Lord is the instruction of wisdom. Psalm

19:10. The fear of the Lord is clean. Prov. 19:23. The fear of the Lord leads to life. 2 Cor. 7:1 ... perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

God takes pleasure in it.

4. The Lord takes pleasure in those who fear Him. That should be a precious thing to us, that God finds favor in us: that should be our great desire and earnest endeavor, to be pleasing to the Lord. Now, in the fear of God, God takes pleasure; for therein comes the acknowledgment and glorification of the perfections of God together: Psalm 147:11. The Lord takes pleasure in those who fear Him. How lovely it is for man to take pleasure in God, and for God to take pleasure in man!

And blesses such.

5. Although love for our own well-being is not the basis of the fear of God, we may and must be encouraged by it. It is remarkable that so many blessings are pronounced, and so many benefits promised to those who fear God. Consider the physical blessings.

(a) Contentment: Prov. 15:16. Better is a little with the fear of the Lord than great treasure.

(b) Adequate provision: Psalm 34:10 ... those who fear Him have no lack. Psalm 33:18, 19. Behold, the eye of the Lord is on those who fear Him ... to deliver their soul from death, and to keep them alive in famine. Psalm 111:5. He has given food to those who fear Him.

(c) Holy preservation: Psalm 34:8. The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear Him.

(d) Abundance: Prov. 22:4. The reward of humility and the fear of the Lord is riches, and honor, and life.

(e) All salvation: Psalm 85:10. Surely His salvation is near to those who fear Him.

Consider the promises for the soul.

(a) Revelation of heavenly mysteries: Psalm 25:12, 14. Who is the man who fears the Lord? He will instruct him in the way he should choose. The secret of the Lord is with those who fear Him, and He will show them His covenant.

(b) Compassion: Psalm 103:13, 17. As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear Him. The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear Him.

(c) Answering prayers: Psalm 145:19. He fulfills the desire of those who fear Him, and He hears their cry and saves them.

(d) And to conclude everything: Psalm 112:1. Blessed is the man who fears the Lord. Eccles. 8:12 ... I know that it will be well with those who fear God. Psalm 31:20. Oh, how great is Your goodness, which You have laid up for those who fear You!

If it pleases the Lord to encourage you by so many blessings and promises, it should please you to be encouraged by them, and having a desire for the promises, to seek them by the way through which the Lord will give them, since the fear of the Lord is so lovely in itself.

Therefore, take resolution, make it your great work; in doing so, you will learn, and because we are too corrupt, turn to the Lord in prayer, Psalm 86:11, "Unite my heart to fear Your name." Make yourself

familiar with the Word of God, for that is a means to fear the Lord, Deuteronomy 17:19, "And he shall read it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the Lord his God."

May the Lord bless this word! Fear God and give Him glory, Revelation 14:7. Amen.

Chapter 5

On Obedience to God.

Obedience comes from hearing, both in our language and in Hebrew and Greek. Often, hearing means obeying, listening to the voice, taking pleasure in the command, and doing it. Obedience is a willing submission of a child of God under God, as Lord and Father in Christ, to carry out His commands.

The object is God. All that obliges to obedience, all that can move toward it, is in God. He is the first, the only high, glorious, and holy. He is the Scepter, by Whom man is and through Whom he exists in his movement. He is the one to be obeyed and the only Lawgiver, Who can save and destroy. Every person is by God's nature and by his own state obliged to obey; that bond lies on everyone and is acknowledged and agreed to by everyone, even by the Gentiles. God demands it of His people in Scripture; not because God needs to be served by human hands, but because He is worthy, human nature requires it, and it is for man's well-being and salvation. It is a kindness of God that He desires something alongside man, commands him something, and wants something done by man alongside Him. And on the other hand, when God reveals Himself to man and makes him see His perfections, man cannot but submit to God with pleasure; he has no other basis and needs no other motives to obey than because God is God. God appears here both as Lord and as Father in Christ. As Lord, as Owner, as the highest, He was the object of Adam's obedience before the fall. But after the fall, God to His people appears not only as the Lord, as Jehovah, Who is, Who was, and Who shall be, but also as Father in Christ, so that both awe

as for a Lord and love as for a Father come together here, Jer. 26:13, "Obey the voice of the Lord your God."

The subject is the children of God.

II. The subject is the children of God. In the covenant of grace, Christ is involved in everything; everything must be done through faith in Christ. God does not want to be served by His enemies in a manner that befits Him; to serve God, there must first be reconciliation, which is accomplished only through Christ and applied through faith; that faith is active, serving God as a reconciled Father in filial love; the law is not a burden to them but a delight; not a condition of the covenant of works but a delightful rule to avoid error. The covenant partners are not presented here as slaves driven to work out of fear of punishment but as children whose pleasure it is to obey their Father. The unconverted do not know God in that relation, and even if they do something God commands, they do not do it in the commanded manner and for the required purpose, nor do they have any desire to obey God; but to His children, God reveals Himself in His obedience-worthiness. It gives them the faith to come to Him through Christ, as children to their Father. He gives them filial love for, and fear of, Him, so that they alone are fit subjects to obey the Lord. Therefore, it is called "the obedience of faith," Rom. 1:5. And believers are obedient children, 1 Peter 1:14.

The form is submission to God.

III. The nature of obedience consists in submission to God. By his nature, man is subject to God. Adam acknowledged that subjection with pleasure and gladly submitted to the Lord, but after the fall, man's nature is rebellious against God: Rom. 8:7. Because the mind of the flesh is hostile to God; for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. But being born again, and having received a new

nature, man not only knows and acknowledges that he is subject to God by nature but willingly submits himself to God in His service, saying with David, Psalm 116:16, "Truly, I am your servant; I am your servant." He surrenders himself to this with his whole heart. Rom. 6:17. But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed.

This subjection consists of:

(a) In a practical and active knowledge of the loftiness and other obedience-worthy perfections of God. The obedient one contemplates these; he remains fixed on them, and thus acknowledges that God truly deserves to be obeyed by all creatures.

(b) In delight and joy that God is worthy of all service and obedience; he cannot satisfy himself with seeing that, agreeing with it, and rejoicing in it.

(c) In recognizing the relationship or connection that all people have to God as Creator and creature, which depends entirely on God in everything, indeed, in everything, nothing excluded; and regarding himself, he not only acknowledges the bond that lies on him as a creature but also identifies himself in the relation of Father and child in Christ. Thus, with love, he sees the fittingness of obeying that lofty Lord and good Father, so that his affections are intensely moved toward it.

(d) In a practical assumption, surrender, and offering of oneself in the service of the Lord; this is not an act that passes by but is repeated each time and renewed in every circumstance, giving him a habit and a submissive disposition, from which all actions continually arise, and thus the works are done in God, John 3:21.

The consequence and end is to carry out His commands.

IV. The end of submission is to carry out the Lord's commands. The sovereign Lord and Father in Christ also exercises discipline over His children, which is unpleasant to nature and brings no joy when it is present. A child of God should not act rebelliously in this, not be sad, murmuring, stubbornly resist and harden himself against it, evade the cross, or distract himself with sins, but in this, he must also have a pliable, submissive, and obedient heart, saying: Micah 7:9, "I will bear the indignation of the Lord because I have sinned against him." We will speak of this in patience; here we have our focus on submission, to do His will.

The Lord is also King, the Lord is Lawgiver, the Lord makes His children known His will. He teaches them His ordinances; all His commands are included in the Ten Words; according to this rule, He wants them to walk, without adding or subtracting. In this are all matters of what to do and what not to do; the manner in which everything must happen; and the end from which and to which everything must be done and left; here human ordinances and preferences have no place. The obedient one sets before himself to do these commands; it is not enough for him to have internal love and desire for them, but he also wants to do them as commands of the Lord, and because they are His commands: Psalm 119:11, 111, 112, etc. "I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you. I have taken your testimonies as an inheritance forever, for they are the joy of my heart. I incline my heart to perform your statutes forever, to the end."

The manner is willingness.

V. The manner of obedience is willingness; obedience is a willing submission. It is an obedient one without sadness, without a

burdensome grief, that he is even placed under God by nature; he would not want to be unattached to God, yes, even if he were free, even if it were his choice whether he wanted to be placed under Him or not, to obey or not, he would, out of love for God, submit himself, and completely surrender to obey the Lord in everything; therefore, he willingly embraces his subjection and endeavors to obey the Lord in all voluntariness, Isaiah 1:19, "If you are willing and obedient." This willingness consists of:

(a) In a ready willingness of the heart: Psalm 57:8, "My heart is steadfast, O God, my heart is steadfast." Rom. 1:15, "... as far as it depends on me, ready."

(b) In offering oneself to the work. 2 Chronicles 17:16, "... Amaziah, the son of Zichri, who gave himself willingly to the Lord." Isaiah 6:8, "... Here I am! Send me."

(c) In seeking advice when there is something to do, saying: "What do you want me to do?" Acts 9:6.

(d) In listening for an answer, so that you may discern what is the good and pleasing and perfect will of God, Romans 12:2. "I will hear what God the Lord will speak." Psalm 85:9.

(e) In the desire and intention to do what pleases Him, what is according to His will, 2 Corinthians 5:9. "Therefore we also have as our ambition... to be pleasing to Him."

(f) In immediately getting to work as soon as one knows that God commands it now: Psalm 119:60. "I hastened and did not delay to keep your commandments."

(g) In having joy and love in the work: Psalm 119:35. "Make me tread in the path of your commandments, for I delight in it." Psalm 112:1. "Blessed is the man who fears the Lord, who greatly delights in his commandments."

(h) In joyfulness in the work: Psalm 119:14, 54, 111. "In the way of your testimonies I delight as much as in all riches." "Your testimonies are my heritage forever, for they are the joy of my heart."

(i) In zeal and fervor in the work: Psalm 104:4. "He makes his angels winds, his ministers a flaming fire." Romans 12:11. "Be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord."

(j) In fearlessness in the work, fearing neither loss of honor, nor of possessions, nor of relatives, nor of life: Philippians 1:14. "... speaking the word of God without fear." Acts 21:13. "I am ready not only to be imprisoned but even to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus."

(k) Courageous and bold in the work: Zechariah 10:3, 5. "He will make them like his majestic steed in battle... They shall be like mighty men in battle, trampling the foe in the mud of the streets; they shall fight because the Lord is with them; and they shall put to shame the riders on horses."

(l) In steadfastness, immovability, and perseverance in the work: 1 Corinthians 15:58. "... be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord."

Conviction.

VI. Thus, we have presented the nature of obedience. The truth is a clear mirror for you, whether you are obedient to God or not. That it

is your duty does not need to be proven; human nature teaches it sufficiently, the Gentiles will convict you, God demands it in Scripture: Exodus 19:5, "... if indeed you will diligently obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession." Numbers 14:9, "Only do not rebel against the Lord. And do not fear the people of the land, for they are bread for us. Their protection is removed from them, and the Lord is with us; do not fear them." Therefore, establish this, put your seal on it, saying: "I am bound, I must obey God"; and ask yourself: am I obedient already? You will answer yourself from what has now been said about the nature of obedience.

An unconverted person is not obedient to God, he cannot be; because he does not know God, he does not come to God through faith, his actions do not come from an obedient ground. Therefore, consider with attention, do you submit to the Lord? Do you know the majesty and dignity of the Lord to obey? Have you had deliberate negotiations with Christ, as Mediator and Advocate, to be reconciled to God through His suffering and death, to serve Him as a child, to love Him as a Father in filial love? Do you present yourself to the Lord in everything, and that with heartfelt willingness? And how is the effect? Is there universality? Tender care? Zeal? Breakthrough? If you want to deal honestly with yourself, you will see whether there is true obedience in you or not.

Rebuke of the disobedient.

VII. Listen, all disobedient ones, I have the word of the Lord for you. In order for it to strike more, it is necessary that I first show who the disobedient ones are, because they are very diverse in their condition.

1. All of you who do not have the nature of obedience described above, all your deeds, no matter how good you may think they are, are but apples of Sodom, and grapes of Gomorrah; they are but shining sins that have a good appearance without truth.
2. Those who do not even want to listen to the voice of the Lord: Job 21:14-15, "Yet they say to God, 'Depart from us! We do not desire the knowledge of your ways. What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? And what profit do we get if we pray to him?'"
3. Those who, hearing, do not want to obey: Ezekiel 33:31, "And they come to you as people come, and they sit before you as my people, and they hear what you say but they will not do it."
4. Those who make plans and promises; but it remains there, nothing comes of it: Matthew 8:19, "And a scribe came up and said to him, 'Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go.'" Matthew 21:30, "And he went to the other son and said the same. And he answered, 'I go, sir,' but did not go."
5. Those who do something, but only as far as it suits their interests, and no further: Mark 6:20, "For Herod feared John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and he kept him safe. When he heard him, he was greatly perplexed, and yet he heard him gladly." Saul said: "I have confirmed the word of the Lord," and in the meantime, he had banished the least esteemed and kept the best for himself, under the pretext of offering it to the Lord, 1 Samuel 15:13.
6. Those who do only the external, making much of it, but without internal obedience and faith in Christ, and to come to heaven by

that work, being like the Pharisees who clean the outside, but leave the inside unclean, Matthew 23:25, 27.

7. Those who reject obedience, are rebellious, rebel, and indulge themselves, whether in hidden or public godlessness: Psalm 2:3, "Let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords from us." Deuteronomy 9:24, "You have been rebellious against the Lord from the day that I knew you." Job 15:25-26, "Because he has stretched out his hand against God and defies the Almighty, running stubbornly against him with a thickly bossed shield."
8. Those who are obedient to the devil, to the world, and to their own desires; they willingly do whatever the devil wants: 2 Timothy 2:26, "and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will." They also follow the world's desires: if the world wants people to have this or that fashion, they immediately obey; if the world wants people to be vain in words, to dance with her, to revel, they willingly participate. If one can gain someone's favor, no sin is too gross; they fear nothing but that the world would not acknowledge them as its own, despise them, and that they would not be considered refined; James 4:4, "You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God." Whatever desire arises, they follow it with all their heart and pleasure, so they are servants of sin, Romans 6:17, disobedient to the truth, but obedient to unrighteousness, Romans 2:8. These are in a dreadful state.

VIII. To you, I have the Word of the Lord, to announce to you your dreadful state, and the terrifying judgments that will come upon you,

if it might be a means to your conversion.

1. It is the most dreadful state, for it is forsaking God, separating from God, having nothing to do with God. Shall a creature, a worm of the earth, who needs everything, shall a human forsake God, the living God, the Fountain of Life, his Maker, the high, alone glorious, and worthy of all obedience God, forsake Him, separate from Him, reject Him? Yes, disobedience is rebellion, opposition, defiance against God, fighting against God; it is everything that can be called evil: 1 Samuel 15:23, "For rebellion is as the sin of divination, and presumption is as iniquity and idolatry." It is not just disobedience to parents, it is not rebelling against authorities, it is not a sinful passing act; but it is a disobedient state of the heart, a rebellious, opposing, defiant heart. If you could see this disobedience in its nature, you would be frightened of yourself. Scripture calls such a heart, an evil heart, and those, abominable and unfit for any good work: Hebrews 3:12, "Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God." Titus 1:16, "They profess to know God, but they deny him by their works. They are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work."
2. Note also, that you are in a state in which you cannot perform any religious act, and all that you do, even your prayer, is an abomination to God: Proverbs 28:9, "If one turns away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer is an abomination." Isaiah 1:4, 12, 14-15, "Ah, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity ... When you come to appear before me, who has required of you this trampling of my courts? Bring no more vain offerings; incense is an abomination to me. New moon and Sabbath and the calling of convocations—I cannot endure iniquity and

solemn assembly. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hates; they have become a burden to me ... When you spread out your hands, I will hide my eyes from you; even though you make many prayers, I will not listen; your hands are full of blood." Prayer is the refuge of a miserable person; but your prayer is an abomination. Woe to you, miserable one!

3. God forsakes them, and delivers them to the devil. Because you are disobedient to God. If you are disobedient to God, rebellious against God, then God has also forsaken you, then God is also your enemy, then you belong to the devil: 2 Chronicles 15:2, "The Lord is with you while you are with him. If you seek him, he will be found by you, but if you forsake him, he will forsake you." Psalm 18:26-27, "with the crooked you show yourself tortuous. For you save a humble people, but the haughty eyes you bring down." Ephesians 2:2, "in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience." Yes, you are locked up in disobedience as in a prison, you cannot get out, you are given over to it, and can do nothing but be disobedient. Romans 11:32, "For God has consigned all to disobedience, that he may have mercy on all." You even stumble over Him who is the only salvation, namely Christ: 1 Peter 2:7, "So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe, 'The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,'" 1 Peter 2:8, "and 'A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense.' They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do."
4. Take to heart the judgments of God that will come upon you; if you could see them, the hair on your flesh would stand up with terror. The God whom you disobey is stronger than you! As great

as His goodness is towards the obedient, so great is His hatred and wrath towards the disobedient. Where will you go when He avenges Himself upon you? The Lord is a jealous and avenging God; the Lord is avenging and wrathful; the Lord takes vengeance on his adversaries and keeps wrath for his enemies. The Lord is slow to anger and great in power, and the Lord will by no means clear the guilty. His way is in whirlwind and storm, Nahum 1:2-3. "Your children have forsaken me ... Shall I not punish them for these things? declares the Lord; and shall I not avenge myself on a nation such as this?" Jeremiah 5:7, 9. "How can I pardon you? Your children have forsaken me and have sworn by those who are no gods. When I fed them to the full, they committed adultery and trooped to the houses of whores. Shall I not punish them for these things? declares the Lord; and shall I not avenge myself on a nation such as this?" Do not imagine any grace, any salvation, as long as your heart remains in a state of disobedience; for there is no grace, there is no salvation for you, but only wrath, only curse, and damnation. Hear and tremble at the expressions that are said to you: Romans 2:8, "but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury." Ephesians 5:6, "Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience." Jeremiah 11:3, "Cursed be the man who does not hear the words of this covenant." For the disobedient, there is nothing but eternal destruction, that will be their end, as it was the end of the disobedient first world, 1 Peter 3:20. Therefore know and see that it is evil and bitter for you to forsake the Lord your God. If the propriety, the high dignity of God's glory cannot move you to obedience, let the fear of God's wrath and judgments do it.

Punishment of the Godly.

IX. Now I turn to the children of God, whom the Lord has given an obedient heart; yet they still have the old nature within them, and thus still a principle of disobedience, which often has strong effects and manifests itself in many actions, such as negligence—not paying attention to God as Lord, and to the command given to them by God. The Word flows by, it is forgotten, and one transgresses without realizing it. Carelessness, as if one were not surrounded by enemies, and thus one falls into the trap before knowing it; if obedience had more power, one would not be so careless and rush into things without consideration.

Opposition; disobedience sometimes appears even more powerful and sinful; the desire for sin is often so strong that it penetrates, even when the obedient heart is revealed and does not very strongly resist, because it is weak, yet it sighs against it; it goes even further, so that one walks for a long time with a gnawing of the heart, and one cannot come to lively, serious, and complete intentions and resolutions to completely and forever abandon that sin.

It goes even higher at times, so that the will seems to be overcome for a time; it is as if one does not want to come to such a resolution; when one comes to prayer, the sin becomes lively even then, the conscience says: now you should make a complete decision before the Lord; the will is silent, and one can even come so far as to not want to pray for strength against that sin, and for complete intention and resolution, because the desire is so strong, and the spiritual life lies in a swoon, and when one has come so far that the whole will is persuaded to make a complete decision and prays with all one's heart for strength, one is still unstable, because the sin still has too much power, and one falls into it again not long afterward.

This is a very unpleasant state, and it shows that our old nature remains inclined to disobedience. Believers have to acknowledge, lament, confess their disobedience, and constantly renew themselves through faith in Christ. But on the other hand, they must guard against unbelief and rejection of their state, as if they, like others, were completely consigned to disobedience; for they can see from the above that in them there is truth, and an obedient heart, which issues many movements and acts of obedience and that there is a hatred, a displeasure in the obedience of the flesh, and that the reborn part fights, sighs, and prays against it.

Be serious then in this struggle; for you know:

(a) that the devil, the world, and the flesh are masters to be despised, that you, who are of divine descent, partake of the divine nature, and are endowed with a princely spirit, that you would subject yourselves to those filthy, despicable, and hateful monsters in obedience.

(b) They are too harsh and cruel masters, they never say: 'it is enough,' they always want more, whether you are tired or have no pleasure in it anymore, you must still do it all over again when the opportunity arises; they do not give you time to calm down, to think of God and his sweet service, to obey the Lord in any matter; but they want your whole heart, all the members of your body, all your time, and still they are not satisfied.

(c) You know how harmful it is to obey them; in it there is nothing but a restless mind, then a troubled conscience, then bondage, then fear and dread, they make your life too anxious and death too terrible. What fruit then did you have from those things of which you are now ashamed? Romans 6:21. Therefore have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, Ephesians 5:11.

Revival

1. God is worthy of obedience.

X. Delight in obeying the Lord, and to be stirred up thereto, consider the loveliness of obedience from every angle. Look now upon the Lord, for He is indeed worthy of all obedience, because He is God. You acknowledge this with pleasure, and you have often wished with all your heart that everything, in heaven and on earth, would be subjected to the Lord in obedience; and it has pained you to see that God was not obeyed by men. Will you then not set yourself to obey this great God, saying: Here I am, what do You want me to do? Moreover, is He not your Father, who has begotten you, who has made you and established you? Deuteronomy 32:6. When you were nothing, He created you; He made you a human being, and has given you sustenance and protection thus far, and with His watchfulness preserved your breath. He has given you His own Son, drawn you with lovingkindness, placed you among His children, and chosen you as His heir. Can all this not bind you to Him, to obey Him as Lord and as Father, and to say: Indeed, I am Your servant, yes, I am Your servant.

2. It is a sweet work.

Obeying is a very sweet work; the Lord does not impose a hard service on His children, nor does He make them serve Him with harshness. His commandments are not burdensome, 1 John 5:3. My yoke is easy, and My burden is light, Matthew 11:30. So then the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good, Romans 7:12. They are paths that are trodden, Psalm 84:6. Smooth and delightful paths: Psalm 119:165. Those who love Your law have great peace, and they have no stumbling blocks. Proverbs 21:15. It is a joy for the righteous to do justice. Your own heart chooses the way, you

yourself delight in it; as Paul says of himself, so you also say, Romans 7:22, I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. Therefore lift up your heart in the ways of the Lord, embrace the will of God, and incline it to obedience; for their ways are ways of pleasantness, and all their paths are peace, Proverbs 3:17. Then you shall walk securely in your way, and your foot shall not stumble, verse 23.

3. God delights in it.

The Lord has a special delight in an obedient heart, and in the deeds that come from such a heart, even if they are imperfect, He will overlook the deficiency in Christ. David was a man after the Lord's heart, because he had such an obedient heart; he stumbled many times, indeed fell heavily, yet the Lord said of him, 1 Kings 15:5, Because David did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, and did not turn aside from anything that He commanded him all the days of his life, except in the matter of Uriah the Hittite. No work, however holy it may be in itself, can please God if it does not come from an obedient heart, God wants the heart; yes, even we want the heart of those who serve us, then we first find pleasure in their service; when the obedient heart is there, then God takes pleasure in our work: 1 Samuel 15:22 ... obedience is better than sacrifice. God took pleasure in sacrifice; for of Noah's sacrifice it is said, Genesis 8:21, The Lord smelled the soothing aroma. But if sacrifice and obedience stand against each other, then God takes greater pleasure in obedience. A righteous child gladly desires to please his father, so also you, have delight in doing the Lord a pleasing service, and you will do that through obedience. Will God make you pleasing, Psalm 145:19; and will you not make the Lord's?

4. God blesses such.

Moreover, it is not in vain to serve the Lord, let the godless think so, who outwardly obey God to obtain bodily blessings, and when they do not come, sadly forsake the Lord's service; but you, upright ones, know that the Lord is such a good and gracious Lord, that He richly rewards His obedient servants: Isaiah 45:19 ... I did not say to the seed of Jacob, 'Seek Me in vain.' Malachi 1:10. Is there anyone among you who would shut the doors (of the temple) for nothing? And you do not kindle fire on My altar for nothing. God promises to the obedient all kinds of bodily blessings: Isaiah 1:19. If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land. Yes, obedience has the promises of salvation through Christ: Hebrews 5:9. And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him. Although the benefits are not the basis of obedience, yet we must be stirred up by them. Moses looked to the reward, Hebrews 11:26.

5. It is the practice of the saints.

The examples of others are capable of stirring us up, so also take note of the examples of the obedient. The Lord Jesus is the perfect pattern of obedience; He has left us an example, that we should walk in His footsteps. He, the servant of the Lord, humbled Himself, becoming obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross, Philippians 2:8. The holy angels are obedient servants of the Lord: Psalm 103:20. Praise the Lord, you His angels! You mighty ones who do His word, obeying the voice of His word.

The saints on earth are examples to us, obedience was their delight, obedience was their work.

Noah was obedient to God in all things; even though he was ridiculed by the whole world for building the ark, nevertheless he did the Lord's command.

Abraham, the father of the faithful, whose footsteps we must follow, how obedient he was! Whatever God said to him, wherever God sent him, he obeyed blindly, he left everything, he went out, not even knowing where; he did not spare his son.

Moses is usually called the servant of God: Numbers 12:7. My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all My house.

David, how obedient he was to the Lord, the history of his life shows, in the books of Samuel and his Psalms, especially the one hundred nineteenth, abundantly.

And so elsewhere in the Word mention is made of a Godly person, you will immediately see his obedience.

Set them before you, desire to walk in obedience with them, and you will glorify God in your life with them, and be glorified by God, both here and in eternity. May the Lord incline your hearts to His statutes, to serve Him with a willing soul! I conclude with David's admonition to his son Solomon: And you, my son Solomon! know the God of your father, and serve Him with a perfect heart, and with a willing soul, 1 Chronicles 28:9.

Chapter 6

Of Hope in God.

God gives His children great and glorious promises; but God does not always give them immediately. He delays them, and sometimes

allows many difficulties to intervene to test their faith. Nevertheless, to continue courageously, hope is necessary, of which we will now speak.

- Hope; Hebrew tikvah, tochelet, sebber, all meaning expectation, and translated as hope.
- Also lok, kislah, kesel, because the foolish world hopes without grounds, and mocks the expectation of the godly.
- Also bittachoon, which comes from trust without fear.
- Greek: elpis, to build on faith, without wavering, to expect surely.
- Sometimes it means the thing hoped for; here: the movement of the soul.

Description.

II. Hope is a habit infused by God, through the means of the Word, into the hearts of believers, by which they patiently and industriously expect the future promised goods from God.

Is an infused habit.

Hope is a habit. Habits are generally distinguished into acquired and infused. • The acquired ones perfect either the understanding, or the will, or the actions to do artworks; these abilities are acquired through many activities. • The infused habits are: Faith, Hope, Love, etc. A person cannot obtain these by his activity, because of his blindness, wrongness, and incapacity. But they are infused by God into the soul, and being infused, they are increased by the cooperation of the Holy Spirit, through many exercises. God does not infuse them into every act, so that the person would be stripped again and again; but making the soul spiritually alive, God gives it a virtuous disposition and ability to work spiritually, and from that

ability, the regenerated person, with the cooperation of the Holy Spirit, who must continually flow in, produces all kinds of virtues. So also here in Hope, which is not a passing act, but a habit, a suitable disposition of the soul, from which actions arise.

Consists in certain expectation.

III. The nature of hope consists in certain expectation. Hoping is not having, possessing; what one has, one cannot hope for. Now hope that is seen is not hope; for what a person sees, why does he also hope for it? Romans 8:24. But hope expects, looks forward to what is not yet seen, not yet present, but will come: Romans 8:25. But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it. Therefore, the apostle joins expecting and hoping together, the following explaining the first, Philippians 1:20, According to my earnest expectation and hope.

Hope is a certain expectation. It is not wishing, I wish I had that, as Balaam said: Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my end be like his! Numbers 23:10. Such is the hope of the unconverted; they have no part in the promise, nor in the matter. and yet they say: I hope to be saved; so their hope is but a wish, which will come to nothing: Proverbs 11:7. When a wicked man dies, his expectation perishes; even the strongest hope has failed.

It is also not doubting, to be between hope and fear, arising from the probability for and against, to obtain the desired thing; wavering is not hope, but in hope there is certainty; I say in hope, not in those hoping, for in believers everything is imperfect. In the hope of people, there can be no perfect certainty, because they can be and become deceitful, changeable, and powerless; but this cannot be in the hope of God, because God is true, unchangeable, and almighty; when He promises a matter absolutely, which would depend on man,

there can be no doubt in hope: but in those hoping, there is weakness of faith on all sides, therefore also weakness in hope, as seen in the disciples who went to Emmaus: Luke 24:21. We were hoping that He was the One who was going to redeem Israel. Yet despite all this, it is the third day today, etc.

Yet this does not take away the certainty in hope, and a believer is obliged to strive for the full assurance of hope: Hebrews 6:19. Which (hope) we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast. Hebrews 10:22. Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith. 1 Peter 1:13 ... hope fully for the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Thus hope is a certain expectation.

Of Future Goods.

IV. The object of hope is the promised or future goods. God Himself is the supreme good and the complete salvation of humanity. God promises Himself to the believers in the covenant, and thus God is the object of hope: but also God is the Promiser and the Giver of all salvation to His children, and thus He is again the object of hope; they look to Him, expect from Him, in Him rest the hopeful as in the Good, the True, the Unchangeable, the Almighty: Psalm 42:6 ... hope in God. Acts 24:15. Having hope in God. Therefore He is called, Israel's hope, Jeremiah 14:8. Psalm 71:5. For You are my Hope, Lord, Lord!

Physical.

From God, hope expects goods. The goods are either physical, spiritual, or eternal. Hope also looks to physical goods. God has also promised physical goods, generally everything they need to serve His purpose in this life: Hebrews 13:5 ... I will never leave you nor

forsake you. 1 Corinthians 10:13 ... God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it. On this promise, a believer may and must cast aside all fear, and confidently expect it. Man encounters many situations on which his physical well-being depends; from this arises desire, that it might succeed according to his intention. From this comes fear of an unfavorable outcome; how should he behave concerning hope?

I answer: That desire and that fear are natural, they should not be killed, but sanctified. He should hope on the general promise of God's help and care, and confidently and peacefully rely on it, and expect it with certainty; if he has a God-pleasing matter in mind, and he treats it in a manner commanded by God, he has boldness to ask God for a good outcome, and to make his desire known to God through prayer and supplication, and to depend on God while using the means, and to be encouraged concerning the outcome, inclining towards the desired side. Especially when God gives him special believing boldness and earnestness in prayer, and when, trusting in the use of means, he can work near to God and in His strength; or when God appears to him extraordinarily, and gives him a strong confidence that the matter will have the desired outcome. I say, if God does it, and not he himself, encouraged either by probability, or by the grace of being able to pray and depend on God, then the matter may miss; but because we have no special promises regarding specific physical cases, one cannot have a certain expectation without extraordinary revelation from God, that such a particular matter will have the outcome we intended and desired; but one can be certain that it will be blessed and best, as the end shall be. If it turns out according to our desired desire, it will be blessed; if it turns out differently, it will be much better and more blessed than if we had obtained our desire; for all things must work together for good to

those who love God, Romans 8:28. We must be careful not to be too set on our own will, as if we would not be blessed otherwise than just to obtain that thing: we must be active in denying our own desires, and in resting in the wisdom and goodness of God, and with the general promise of God: He cares for you, He will make it, I will not forsake you, to be content and pleased. If God does what pleases us, it will cause joyful gratitude. If God does not, it must make us content with the will of God, not to esteem earthly things, and to live from the hand of God; be careful, guard against unbelief and sorrow. Thus one must act in poverty, in persecution, and other adversities and prosperity.

Spiritual.

V. Hope also pertains to spiritual goods. Sometimes a believer is in abandonment, in darkness, in temptation, or under the power of corruption; sometimes he is in strong desire for assurance of his salvation, for peculiar consolation, for sanctification, whether in general or in a particular virtue. Here one must act as in physical cases, as immediately presented. Here are also general promises, which are planted in the house of the Lord, which will be given to grow in the courts of our God, Psalm 92:14. Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ, Philippians 1:6. If you ask anything in My name, I will do it, John 14:14. Upon this general promise, a believer must also have a general hope, and surely expect its fulfillment; but because the Lord has not promised the time, measure, or manner, a believer cannot expect it in particular with certainty. The general promise is enough to sharpen his desire, to pray, to strive enough in hope and certain expectation that the Lord will hear and give, that the Lord will preserve him in faith, sanctify

him, and guide him by His counsel. He must deny himself in the process.

Eternal.

Hope has as its object eternal salvation. Hope is a hope of salvation, 1 Thessalonians 5:8. The hope which is laid up for you in heaven, Colossians 1:5. The hope of the glory of God, Romans 5:2. The hope of eternal life, Titus 1:2. All that is on the earth is passing, is to be regarded as little; but the eternal is everything. When eternity sinks into the heart, and man considers himself as going hence, and as either being eternally in glory or in horror, then he trembles and fears; he cannot be at peace unless he is assured of his eternal blessedness. This God promises to the believers, this they must consider as the end to obtain, and therefore strive and reach for it; because God promises salvation, they must hope for it, and surely look forward to it, and expect it, which gives comfort and zeal for godliness.

As Promised.

VI. Hope looks to promised goods; where there is no promise, there can be no hope, and even if there are promises, there can be no hope unless they are promised to us; only the believers are heirs of the promise, therefore only they can hope; therefore when the Scripture speaks of hope, it also speaks immediately of promises, therefore it is called the hope of the promise, Acts 26:6. The hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised, Titus 1:2. Therefore the Gentiles are said to be without hope, because they are strangers from the covenants of promise, Ephesians 2:12.

And Future.

Hope looks to future goods. Faith and hope both establish a matter. Faith looks to future goods as well as hope; but they differ in that faith represents the future goods as if they were already there. Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen, Hebrews 11:1. But hope postpones the matter, and marks it as yet to come. Not that I have already attained ... but I press on ... reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus, Philippians 3:12, 14.

The one hoping says: it is true, I do not have it yet, but I will have it. Not perhaps, not there is good likelihood, but surely, infallibly, it cannot miss, it is certain, it is fixed, I will have it, that is what I aim for, that is what I act upon, that is what I count on, that is what I rely on. This concerning the object.

Is Only in the Children of God.

VII. Alongside the object, we add the subject, which are the children of God. An unconverted person has no ground for hope because he has no promise at all, and also being dead, he cannot produce acts of life; but to have hope is only the privilege of the children of God; they have received life in regeneration, and thus the ability to exercise the act of hope: 1 Peter 1:3 ... Who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope. To them alone are the promises made, therefore they alone also have grounds for hope: Hebrews 6:17, 18. In which God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel ... so that we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to lay hold of the hope set before us. Therefore hope is called: The hope of the righteous, Proverbs 10:28. Galatians 5:5. These alone hope, those alone are exhorted to hope: Psalm 130:5, 7. I wait for the Lord; my

soul waits, and in His word I do hope. Israel hope in the Lord. It is painful that those who may and can hope do not engage in it more.

God works them.

VIII. The cause of hope is God alone. God promises the things: 1 John 2:25. And this is the promise that He has promised us, eternal life. God gives the hoped and promised thing: 2 Timothy 4:8. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing. God instills the ability to hope and gives them the immediacy to hope: Romans 15:13 Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. 2 Thessalonians 2:16 ... who has given us a good hope in grace.

Through the Word.

The means is the Word. In the Word, God presents the matter in its beauty and loveliness; in the Word, He presents the Mediator through whom the promised things are obtained; through the Word, God works faith in the Savior, and by that faith, hope is wrought in us. All blessings, as promises, are grounded and confirmed in Christ, who by His blood has removed the separation between God and man, and by His merits has obtained salvation for the elect: 2 Corinthians 1:20. For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen.

A believer, hoping for the promises, has his eye on the Lord Jesus, to obtain them through Him; therefore, the Lord Jesus is called our Hope: Colossians 1:27 ... which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. And He is set as the Object of our hope: 1 Thessalonians 1:3 ... and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. 1 Timothy 1:1 Who is our Hope. No one partakes of Christ, and thus of the goods of the

covenant, except through faith. Faith, working on Christ, by accepting, by mine, by making it one's own, by abandoning, looks at the promised goods as its own. And thus hope comes from faith, expecting its own goods, knowing that they will be given in their own time; so that faith is the ground in this respect of hope: Hebrews 11:1. Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. Romans 15:13 ... with joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope. Now, since the word reveals Christ, is the means of faith, and presents all the glorious promised goods, so the Word is the means of hope; therefore, hope is called the hope of the gospel: Colossians 1:23. Consider this: Psalm 119:49, 81. Remember the word to Your servant, upon which You have caused me to hope. In Your word I hope.

It Has Patience with It.

IX. Hope has as an adjunct or supplement, patience. There is much time, much cross, much struggle between the promise and possession; then hope comes and shows the glory of the goods and the certainty of obtaining them, and then patience comes and supports hope, so that it does not fail under adversities because that is the way by which God leads to the possession of the promised thing; and because there is no other way, and that one must either let go of the goods and renounce them, or choose the end with the way at the same time, thus hope becomes a patient expectation. One sets oneself to endure, one wants to endure, one endures willingly and with a quiet mind because the glory and certainty of the goods infinitely outweigh it. Thus the Lord Jesus went before, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, Hebrews 12:2. Therefore we also must run with patience the race that is set before us, verse 1. Therefore the apostle says, Romans 8:25, But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it

with perseverance. And speaks of the patience of hope, 1 Thessalonians 1:3.

Leads to the Use of Means.

X. The consequence of hope is diligence. Hope does not remain idle, does not allow engagement in other things; but it urges to diligence, to obtain the end by the right way. The end sets one in motion and prompts to take means at hand. God, who has promised to give the end, guides His children to it through the means of diligence. He causes them to forsake the world, to keep their eyes on heaven, to lay aside every burden and sin that easily ensnares us, to press through everything that stands in the way and hinders us with courage; He makes them walk in the way of His commandments, and by perseverance in doing good, seek glory, honor, and immortality. This is shown in the exhortations: Strive to enter through the narrow gate, Luke 13:24. Therefore, beloved, since we have these promises, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God, 2 Corinthians 7:1.

Conviction of those who deceive themselves in hope.

XI. Having seen the nature of hope, then come to yourself, and see if that hope is in you. You need no other mirror to be made known to yourself than the truth itself. You will allow me to say that he is a wholly miserable person who has all hope cut off of ever being saved.

You will say: I am not yet in that state; I still have good hope of being saved.

I answer that it is indeed true that an unconverted person, even the most wicked, has not yet had the hope of being saved cut off; not because he, remaining thus, has any salvation to expect, but because

he lives under the ministry of the Gospel, and it is not known whether God will convert him or not; but that is not the issue we are talking about now. But the question is: what do you say of yourself, do you have grounds to expect salvation, and do you exercise actual hope? You unconverted one, you might say: I know well that I hope for eternal life.

I further ask: is your hope already good, does it have a foundation, are you truly hoping? Is your hope not a figment? Is it more than a wish like Balaam's? There is a hope that deceives, that disappoints; is it not of the utmost importance that you carefully examine whether your hope is a true hope, which leads to salvation, rather than mere deception?

You may say: I am satisfied with my hope; let me rest, I will not have my hope taken away from me.

I say: true gold should endure testing, good work does not fear the light. If you do not want to know for someone else how you stand, then try to know it yourself, and to that end, read what I say here, in solitude and tranquility; if your hope is good, I will not take it away from you; but if it is deception, then it is time for you to awaken, while there is still time. Answer these questions to yourself.

1. Is faith in Christ, reconciliation with God and the experience thereof, the despising of the world and all that is therein, the denial of your own desires, the love of God, the holiness of life, the blessedness after this life, is this your good, your beloved good; do you know it, do you set your eyes upon it, do you long for it, is it your aim, do you strive to obtain it? When you find promises in the Word, are there qualities to which those promises are made? Are you partaker of those qualities, so that you see that the promises are made to you? Do you come to God

with them, as the True and Almighty, and rest in the promising God through them? Do you expect those goods, do you aim for them, do you lay everything down for them? Do you stand against everything that hinders you, do you push through it, do you endure everything for it, do you reach out for it, do you grasp it, does it sanctify you? What does your heart say? If you are convinced in yourself that those things are not in you, then you do not have hope, and your saying, I hope nonetheless, is only deception; you will truly be deceived if you die in that state.

2. Answer again: is your outlook, your expectation, your hope, your rest not on people? On that lord, on that friend, who will help you, ... now it will go well, and do you not end with the movement of the heart in them, in their presence, in their favor, in their power? Is money and wealth not your trust, do you not aim for rest in pursuing that; and when you have it, do you not derive courage from it, does it not take away your fear? Do you rely on your skill, on your quickness, on your strength? If you find no help and rest anywhere, is your hope not in the change of time, in: there is nothing to be done, it must be so, patience? Does your heart say: yes, that is right, that is how my state is presented. Then be assured that you have no hope in God, in salvation; for those are contrary and contradictory things, which cannot go together.

3. Answer again: you hope to be saved; but do you have a foundation, or is it only because you want to be in heaven, when you can no longer endure it here, because it is better there than in hell? Or is it because your spirit testifies to you that you will indeed be saved, and you are at ease on that account? Or is it because you are baptized, diligently attend church, partake of

the Holy Communion, pray to God, give alms, and lead an irreproachable life?

Does your heart say: yes, that is it.

I say to you, those are not grounds for hope, no promises have been made to such, your hope is vain. You now, who are convinced by the threefold questions that you do not have true hope, consider how miserable you are; for in the whole Bible there is not one promise for you, not one, with which you can comfort yourself; but all the threats, all the curses that are in the Word, apply to you, you will experience them, if you do not repent. Listen to what the Lord says about your hope, Job 8:13, 14, The hope of the hypocrite shall perish. Whose hope shall be cut off; and his trust shall be a spider's web; well interwoven, but the weakest thing there is, which a wind or a broom takes away, then it's all gone. Job 11:20, The eyes of the wicked shall fail, and their refuge shall perish; and their hope shall be the giving up of the ghost. What will it benefit you that you have deceived yourself with imagined hope, when you will find yourself shut out? Therefore, awaken and repent.

Punishment of the Godly.

XII. The godly are also to be admonished because they are weak in the activity of hope, even though they have grounds and already have the principle of hope within them, as they must be convinced of in answering the three questions posed above. Indeed, it is a great misfortune that they labor more to combat their hope than to awaken it, as if they had won then, when they say: My strength has perished, and my hope from the Lord, Lamentations 3:18. All promises are made to you; why do you not acknowledge that, when your judgment, being the Word, is convinced of the truth? How is it possible that the heirs of the promises care so little about them, so

little strive for possession, hope for them, and expect them with longing and joy!

Reasons for the weakening of hope.

XIII. There are matters that hinder them, such as: (a) The promised things are often in darkness, so they cannot see their glory and beauty, which hinders their desire for them; this usually arises from neglecting to consider these matters and to keep their eyes on them. (b) There are sins that cause them to doubt their state, and fear not having a share in Christ and all His merits. (c) The cross overwhelms them with its severity and duration, causing their hearts to bow down, Psalm 42:6. (d) Historical faith is contested, or it is too weak to firmly establish matters in their clarity and truth. This hinders a godly person from being active in hope; but I say it should not hinder them, they should work with the little grace they have and follow their convinced judgment; for neglecting hope confuses them more and more, takes away their strength, and causes them to sink into listlessness, discouragement, and even despair; they dishonor God in His goodness, truth, faithfulness, and omnipotence; they give the devil an opportunity to toss them to and fro. And be assured, you will not overcome it this way; by fighting, one overcomes, and the more earnest in hope, the more diligent in the work. Therefore, do not give in to hopelessness, even if the heart is not sensitive in longing for the goods, even if there is no sweetness in the work of hope for the present, even if the unbelieving heart rebels against it, nevertheless, rely on your judgment to partake in the promises, and you will find that hope will revive.

Exhortation.

XIV. Arise, sluggish soul, upwards; it is not here below. In the Lord are righteousness and strength; to Him shall one come. Establish the

help of the Lord in all bodily and spiritual matters, secure your salvation firmly and unwaveringly, because He who promised it to you is faithful. Say: I will be helped, the Lord will, yes, He will lead me by His counsel, and afterward receive me in glory. Rejoice in your happiness and in those great blessings promised to you. Take account of it, take the path that leads there, endure everything, yield to nothing, for everything will work together for good. Expect salvation, hope fully for it, push through everything with a firm and brave heart, everything must bow to you, it will not fail, you will prevail, and you will inherit the crown of life and attain the end of faith. For:

The Goods are Lovely.

1. The goods one hopes for are so lovely and attractive that they ignite all desires of those who contemplate them attentively. To be cared for by God in this life, and thus to be without worry about the outcome of things; to depend on God in working, and to know that the outcome, whatever it may be, will be the best. To expect grace, light, comfort, sanctification in this life, and thereafter the blessed communion with God in perfect love and holiness, that is glorious and most desirable. Now, God has promised these things to you; are they not worthy to be desired, hoped for, pursued, and acted upon?

The Promises are Sure.

2. The promises of these things are certain; God will not change, no creature will deprive you of them; for they rest: (a) on God's truth, faithfulness, and omnipotence: Heb. 10:23 ... for He who promised is faithful. Isa. 26:3. It is a confirmed purpose. Isa. 54:10 ... the covenant of My peace shall not be removed. (b) It relies on Christ, as on a firm and unshakable foundation: 1 Peter

2:6 ... Behold, I lay in Zion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious, and he who believes in Him will not be put to shame. Can that which Christ has acquired miss? It rests on the Word, of which the Lord Jesus says, John 17:17, Your word is truth. 2 Cor. 1:20. For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen. (c) On the eternal and unchangeable Testament, confirmed in the death of the Testator, Heb. 9:15-17. I appoint you a kingdom, Luke 22:29. (d) On eternal love: Jer. 31:3 ... Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love. Those whom He foreknew, predestined, called, justified, He also glorified, Rom. 8:29, 30. (e) On God's oath: Heb. 6:17, 18. Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath. That by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation. (f) On the given pledge, which is infinitely more valuable than the promised thing itself: Eph. 1:13, 14 ... in whom you also ... were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession. (g) On communion with Christ; He, being the Head and already in heaven, surely the members will follow: Eph. 2:6, He raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Therefore the apostle says: We were saved in this hope, Rom. 8:24. Who will refuse to rely on such firm assurance?

Hope is Strong Consolation in the Cross.

3. Hope is strong consolation in the cross, and all adversities in this life, and through everything sees the promised goods: 1 Thess. 4:17, 18 ... thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words. Thus, hope presents arguments: For I consider that the sufferings of this

present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. Rom. 8:18. Hope sees the profit of afflictions and the glory that follows: 2 Cor. 4:17. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

Encourages Brave Struggle.

4. Hope encourages brave struggle, because it shows the certainty of victory: 1 Cor. 9:26. Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. I fight: not as one who beats the air. 2 Cor. 5:5, 6. Now He who has prepared us for this very thing is God ... Therefore we are always confident.

Gladdens the Heart.

5. Hope gladdens the heart; man cannot live without joy. Now, in the world, the Godly have many tribulations; had they not, they would faint. It is all about joy that man strives for; a cheerful heart gives strength to soul and body. Now, hope also boasts in tribulations, Rom. 5:3, and Rom. 12:12, Rejoicing in hope.
6. Hope sanctifies the soul; imagination, desire leave the work; but certain hope prompts it; because the hoped-for things are spiritual and holy, they make the hopeful holy as well; moreover, because the way by which God leads His children to glory is holiness. See this: 1 John 3:3. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure. Hope is lovable in itself, and is lovely because it comforts, because it gives courage, because it rejoices, because it sanctifies.

Glorifies God.

7. And in all this, as the greatest, hope glorifies God, glorifies the Lord Jesus. It acknowledges God's sovereignty, to take up or lay down a sinful person. God's free grace, to give such salvation notwithstanding sins. His truth, immutability, and faithfulness that He keeps His word and will fulfill His promises. His omnipotence, to preserve them to salvation despite all their enemies, and to give it to them. The love of God and of the Lord Jesus, to set Himself as a Surety, and by the power of His satisfaction to acquire that salvation for His own. Therefore, all who have a desire to glorify God, be active indeed in hoping continuously. Be continually engaged in the Word of God, to seek out all kinds of promises, to appropriate them to yourself, and to act on them. Do not cease to pray that the Lord may make you hope. Stir up others, and let the encouragement of others to hope steadfastly enter into your hearts. And thus working, you will find that your hope will not disappoint, but that surely, in its own time, after you have patiently waited for it, you will partake of it.

Chapter 7

Of Strength or Courage.

Between the promise and the possession of the thing which hope confidently expects, not only much time is to be expected, but also much opposition from the enemies; therefore, one who hopes needs courage to endure everything and break through everything, therefore we add to hope, Strength or Courage.

Description.

II. Strength is an undaunted steadfastness of heart, given by God to His children, by which they, in a living hope of obtaining the promised goods, overcome the fear of all danger and opposition, break through resolutely in battle, and persist courageously in obedience alongside God.

It is a true saying, *ardua quæ pulchra*, glorious things are difficult to obtain. This is so in the natural as well as in the spiritual. The things that are attainable are the greatest; those who do not know them do not bother, and do not risk anything for them; but those who know them risk everything and strengthen their hearts with hope. That strength, even if it is considered stubbornness and obstinacy by the worldly, is nevertheless an excellent virtue, an ornament for a Christian, pleasing to God, terrifying to the world, and useful for oneself. It is a virtue that God demands, and to which believers are often exhorted: be strong.

Its seat is in the soul.

The seat of strength is the soul, the understanding, will, passions of a believer; all of these are engaged towards the objects in every respect. It is not a work of the body, although that is also necessary for execution; but a work of the soul, not only of the understanding, to contemplate this virtue in its beauty, but all faculties are active. It is not an act that is exercised once or sometimes, but it is a habit, a lasting disposition and ability, which is first poured out by God, but exercised by the influence of the Holy Spirit, and becomes more capable and stronger through many deeds: Psalm 112:7, 8 ... his heart is steadfast, trusting in the Lord, his heart is upheld, he will not fear.

It is not the heart of the unconverted that is the subject of strength, they are depraved for every good work, Titus 1:16. They have neither promise, nor faith, nor hope, nor internal spiritual life; what strength and courage would they then have? But the regenerated alone are the courageous ones, who have what we just said, which the unconverted do not have. Every righteous person is brave, like a young lion, Prov. 28:1. To the called saints the apostle says: act like men, be strong, 1 Cor. 16:13.

Is engaged with evil and good.

III. The object and the end are the same here. Strength looks to the good that can be obtained and to the evil that can be overcome. God promises many goods to His own, both for body and soul; but in such a way that they will be obtained through the means ordained and commanded by God. The courageous one knows these, loves them, believes the promise, expects them in hope; upon that he sets to work, pursues and grasps after them. In this work, much opposition arises, namely: loss of honor, of goods, and even of life; here one encounters shame, contempt, ridicule, hatred, and opposition from everything that exists; here comes poverty, sickness, all kinds of adversity; all of which are capable of inspiring fear, and by fear, to abandon the work, either entirely or in part. But courage does not yield, it presses through more vigorously, it regards nothing, and does not even hold life dear; besides, the soul comes into spiritual deserts and temptations, faith is assaulted, hope shaken and tossed here and there, so that often hearing and sight fail. But the courageous one goes on blindly, does not faint, takes courage and fights like a valiant hero, defending himself and damaging the enemies. But another evil comes with this, which strikes deeper than the preceding one, namely, the old Adam, who flatters, who entices, who draws away; here one stumbles, there one falls, then one

receives a painful, then a deadly wound in the soul, the good is neglected, the evil is committed, this is capable of making the fighter unbelieving about his state, to become hopeless and discouraged. But the strong one sees through it all; if he cannot walk with the burden, he crawls with it, he rises again if he falls under, and resumes the fight with new courage; if he cannot see, he believes, he trusts in the Lord Jesus, entrusts Him with the end, and will and shall go through it, whatever it may cost; if the enemy is too strong, if he is overcome, still he does his best, he does not give up; he who is down, fights also. Thus, strength has both good and evil as the object of its activity.

Exists in a living hope.

IV. The essence of strength consists in an undaunted steadfastness of the heart, which includes: A living hope.

1. The hoped-for goods are so lovable that they can endure all discomforts; the hope in the faithfulness and truth of the promising God establishes the acquisition firmly and undeniably certain, and the stronger a believer is in this, the stronger the courage is as well.

Overcoming opposition.

2. A victory over fear. Nature recoils from suffering and seeks to avoid it. But the courageous one overcomes the fear because he sees that there is no other way to obtain the beloved goods, and at the same time, that everything that opposes and encounters him does not have the power to overcome him and deprive him of his purpose, but that an almighty help is by his side; therefore, the fear disappears. See this: Psalm 27:1. The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? And: Psalm

23:4. Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil.

And persevering in the performance of his duty.

3. A perseverance in the performance of his duty. A courageous embarking on the path that leads to the possession of the hoped-for goods, while waiting for everything that may encounter. Depending on God and Christ, and relying on their help, he sets out. These three constitute the undaunted steadfastness of the heart, courage. See this posture: Rom. 8:35, 37-39. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, ... nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. 1 Cor. 15:58 ... be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

God works them through various ways and means.

V. The cause of strength is God. He will strengthen your hearts, Psalm 31:24. He gives power to the faint, and to them that have no might He increases strength, Isa. 40:29. This requires further consideration, to understand how God works in this, and how He makes man work, through various means, which serve as secondary causes.

1. God gives a clarified view of the glory of the end: that is, of the goods to be obtained, presenting them as certain and unshakeable. As the end becomes clear to the understanding,

and the heart becomes more assured of its certainty, so is the strength greater and the effect more intense. See it in the Lord Jesus: Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, Heb. 12:2. Also see this in Moses: Heb. 11:26. Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward.

2. God assures the soul of His help and support, and impresses upon it His promise regarding this. Isa. 41:10, Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand. A believer accepts these promises and strengthens himself with them; and just as someone in a storm, feeling too weak to stand, grasps a post or tree and remains standing through its immobility, so the courageous one also seizes the strength of the Lord and remains strong and steadfast: Isa. 27:5 ... he shall take hold of My strength. So did David: 1 Sam. 21:6. But David strengthened himself in the Lord his God.
3. The Lord shows the soul the shortness, the insignificance, the powerlessness of everything that opposes, that the honor of men, their love, the goods of this world, and everything that seems beautiful and glorious in it, are not everything, that they can well do without it, and can be just as cheerful; Hab. 3:17, 18. That the Lord is the Portion, and the all-sufficient Portion, Lam. 3:24. That all the beauty in the world, compared to this portion, is but loss and dung, Phil. 3:8. That all the hatred, wickedness, and persecution of men, are but a bubble with beans, because they cannot move or stir themselves except according to the will of God. That poverty, adversity, etc. are but a light affliction, which quickly passes away, 2 Cor. 4:17. Through this, the soul is so strengthened against fear that it even delights in weaknesses,

in needs, in persecutions, and distresses for Christ's sake, for when they are weak, then they are strong. Thus, they boast in weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon them, 2 Cor. 12:9, 10.

4. The Lord shows them the goodness and righteousness of the cause they are engaged in, that He has commanded it to them, that it is not theirs, but His cause; this makes them courageous in the fight. They consider it their honor that they may fight for Jesus' cause against the enemies, and that they receive wounds in this battle. This is what the apostles did, speaking boldly before the council to the point of amazement, Acts 4:13; and went away, being beaten, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name, Acts 5:41.
5. The Lord shows them the godlessness, the injustice of those who oppress them, and recognizing that the Lord is a just Judge, they see that He hates their persecutors, their cause, and their aims, and therefore, He Himself will fight against them, and repay them according to their deeds; this breeds courage, and boasting and triumphing over them, they say: The Lord is on my side; I will not fear; what can man do to me? All nations surrounded me; it is in the name of the Lord that I cut them off, Psalm 118:6, 10. This encouraged David in the battle against Goliath, that he had blasphemed the Lord, 1 Sam. 17:45.
6. The Lord shows them His previously proven help, both bodily and spiritually, as if He said: "When you thought everything was lost, when you had already judged the judgment of destruction and death upon yourself; when unjust things had the upper hand over you, faith failed, hope was almost at an end, spiritual life lay in faintness, and you thought, 'it's over, I won't come out

of this again'; and yet, has the Lord not saved you many times?" This experience gives great strength. The Lord who delivered me from the lion and the bear, He will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine, 1 Sam. 17:37. 2 Cor. 1:10. Who delivered us from so great a death, and does deliver; in whom we trust that He will still deliver us.

7. The Lord comforts the soul in the battle, He assures it inwardly with His grace, and says to it: "My grace is sufficient for you: if I am your God, if I forgive you all sins, if I love you, if I keep you in My strength, if I glorify you eternally, is it not well with you? Well then, I will do it and I will do it, I will not forsake you, I will not abandon you. Come now, be brave, and I will be with you; the evil you fear, either it will not be able to, or it will have no power to carry out what you fear, or I will give you sufficient strength to bear it, and I will make it turn out for the best. Indeed, when you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, nor shall the flame scorch you; therefore, take courage, and fight as a hero." When the soul is comforted in such a manner, it receives wings, to fly high like an eagle, to run and not grow weary, to walk and not grow faint.
8. And surprisingly, despair sometimes engenders strength. When one recoils in fear, and has conceded everything, then, when one is in the lowest state, when one has become despondent under the cross; when one has yielded to the world in everything; when one has hidden in persecutions, pretended, or denied the truth; when one has followed one's desires in everything, and seems to have been conquered by them, then life, hidden within, begins to manifest itself and one gains strength from weakness, one

becomes strong in the battle and puts armies to flight, Heb. 11:34. Just as fire, being compressed by surrounding cold, or by something else, breaks out all the more fiercely, so it sometimes happens with a believer: the conscience wakes up, faith becomes active, fear disappears; for one has nothing more to lose, it can't get any worse: thus one comes out again, one shows who one is, and one becomes stronger than one has ever been: the weak says: I am strong, Joel 3:10.

We sometimes see this in those who have denied the truth, that they retract, and endure the fire much more courageously than someone who remained steadfast.

Their deeds.

VI. The effect of courage is to boldly break through in the battle and persist courageously in obedience alongside God. Skill or habit is in vain if it never comes to action. God has given grace to His children for this purpose. Not that it should remain still and hidden within them, but so that they should work for it. Particularly, courageous bravery cannot remain silent when there is opportunity, as there are always opportunities; the enemies are always busy fighting against the grace within them, to eradicate it or prevent it from being exercised; they are always surrounded by the commandments of the Lord to do and to refrain from something, therefore there is always opportunity for spiritual courage.

Repels enemies.

1. He breaks through in the battle. A Christian must continually be in armor; he is in the militant church: the enemies, the devil, the world, and the flesh are constantly at work, constantly attacking his life, therefore he must also be constantly engaged in resisting

them. The command is: Strive to enter through the narrow gate, Luke 13:24. Fight for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints, Jude 1:3. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, 1 Tim. 6:12.

In a battle there is:

(a) Something beloved, this is here the spiritual life, here and hereafter salvation. The enemies rise up against him and want to deprive him of it, and prevent him from displaying it.

(b) One knows the enemy, who he is and what he aims for. Believers know the devil, the world, and the flesh well, and they know him.

(c) Enmity in the heart; thus here there is not only a complete contradiction of natures, which cannot help but drive each other out, but they are also in each other's way, they deprive each other of pleasure, therefore they may neither see nor hear each other.

(d) Cunning, to anticipate an advantage; the enemies are cunning to spy out all opportunities, and a Christian, though innocent as a dove, is also as wise as a serpent.

(e) Violence; the enemies have great power, which they use to the utmost against the body and the soul, without sparing anything; the believer has little strength in himself, but by the almighty help, he resists them in everything and yields nothing.

(f) Outcome; in the battle, one may prevail over the other, but in the end, the believers are more than conquerors. Because a Christian has such enemies, strength and courage are necessary; he uses these: having overcome fear, he attacks with spiritual weapons, boldly breaks their ranks, and tramples them underfoot.

Doing the will of God.

2. A courageous person is not satisfied with repelling his enemies and driving them away; but in the meantime, he also boldly breaks through to accomplish obedience to God, he lifts up his heart in the ways of the Lord, as Jehoshaphat did, 2 Chronicles 17:6. He does in secret between God and himself what the Lord wants him to do, and outwardly he appears as a Christian indeed, he does what needs to be done, he says what needs to be said, he does not bother with the barking of those dogs, he lets them see it, he strides forward courageously, and makes them retreat, saying with David, Psalm 119:115, Depart from me, ye evildoers! that I may keep the commandments of my God. This is the nature of courage.

Conviction of the unconverted in various respects.

VII. The nature of spiritual courage or bravery thus presented is a sufficient mirror, both for the unconverted, to show them that they have none of it, and for the godly, to convince them of their lack in this regard.

The unconverted.

1. They have neither part nor desire for the spiritual and eternal goods of the covenant of grace; they have no promises, no hope, no labor to obtain them, therefore no enemies who seek to take them away; everything concerning them is in peace with the devil, the world, and the flesh; if they have troubles, it is about having and keeping earthly things; or if it concerns leaving sins, it is a struggle between conscience and will; if it is about their salvation, it is the pronouncement of the judgment of their condemnation from God in their hearts if they do not repent,

and sometimes even a beginning of condemnation itself; whatever it may be, there is no courage through the assumed strength of the Lord Jesus.

2. If they are engaged, or will be engaged, in any external religion, it is all lukewarm and feeble, it is only to appease their conscience a little, or to obtain something external, and if they can obtain that without the external work of religion, the very least thing is enough to divert them from it, and everything they do in this regard is, in themselves considered, a burden and a weariness, and they have but a donkey's pace and a tortoise's pace.
3. There are some who have more light, even some inclination to convert, to live godly lives, to confess the truth of the gospel; but if something appears from afar that could bring them some harm or shame, or if it is in times of persecution, there are prisons, fire, gallows, swords, galleys; here fear seizes them, preventing them from going further: and they pretend, it is enough, far enough. Where is here the courage that overcomes fear out of love for God and for spiritual goods?
4. Some fear damnation, and would gladly be in heaven after their death, they also see the way to heaven; but they see no way to walk that path. Thus they fall into desperation and despair; then all work is lost, and one retains only a troubled and frightened heart, or one dispels that melancholy by indulging in sinful desires. Thus one deadens the conscience, or one takes one's own life, and even jumps into hell, which one feared.
5. Some are engaged in work that somewhat resembles courage; but it is no less than that. They join the godly, as they love and esteem them, which pleases them. They speak arrogantly, they rebuke, they argue, they triumph, they neither fear nor care about harm or shame; yet it is not with the aim and out of love for spiritual goods, it is not in assured hope, it is not in

dependence and acceptance of Christ's power, it is not in obedience alongside God. But it is only a foolish impulse that does not fear danger because it does not know it, or imagines that it is not there and will not come, or it is for one's own glory, as if saying: see my zeal for the Lord. Or one has a shameless bold temperament, and that is the beginning of their actions, without aiming at the right end, without being united with Christ, and working in his power, and without Christian prudence, which guides courage, and therefore it is not courage, but sinful folly, hypocrisy, and audacity.

Shall obtain nothing.

All of you, whom we have discovered there, know that you have neither spiritual life, nor faith, nor hope, nor spiritual courage; how will you be saved?

1. If the mighty take the kingdom of heaven by force, Matthew 11:12. If no one is crowned unless he has fought lawfully. If only the runners receive the prize, 1 Corinthians 9:24. Where will you lazy, fearful, reckless, foolish, reckless, shameless bold ones go then?
2. Take to heart what God says about such as you; it applies to you Matthew 25:30, And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. What will happen to you is stated in Revelation 3:16, So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. Are you afraid of judgment, Revelation 21:8. The fearful... their part is in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone.

Rebuke of the Godly.

VIII. Now I come to you, Godly; I would rather comfort, but I cannot tolerate sin, therefore I must also speak a word of rebuke to you, so that you may be healed. You have seen the nature of courage, and it has already shown you your lack in this regard; we will present it to you even more closely, so that you may have a disgust for its impropriety and sinfulness, and lift up your head from your shortcomings.

1. Many spend little time contemplating the goods that are hung up as a prize, to obtain them through courageous struggle; one should live in the contemplation of eternal glory, until it seems far, far above all that was lovely, delightful, joyful, and sweet; so that it ravishes us with desires to obtain it as our only salvation. How beautiful it should be for us to walk with God in love, in fear, in obedience in this life, and thus to behold the invisible things with an uplifted heart, above all that is visible! But in this, people are very negligent, which weakens the desire to obtain it, and the natural desire for the visible becomes greater; from this arises that the end does not strongly motivate the work, and the heart, desiring more things, is less set on the one, and one cannot be content with the spiritual unless one has the physical alongside it, and this is the fountain of all restlessness and slackness in the work.
2. One does not pay attention to the enemies, that the devil goes about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. That the world seeks to steal and draw our hearts to itself with both caresses and disfavor, thus ensnaring us in inextricable traps. That our corrupt nature is constantly at work to hinder us from doing good and to draw us into sin. Because of this, one becomes more careless in preserving what one has and obtaining what

the reborn part desires, and one does not fear where one should fear. Thus, the hands become sluggish and the knees weak.

3. Because the end moves further out of sight, and earthly things draw nearer, fear seizes the heart. One fears where one should not fear: loss, shame, the reproach of many, speaking falsely of all evil, poverty, persecution, death, and all that is contrary to nature, have great power to instill fear in us, despite all the admonitions: Do not fear those who kill the body, and do not fear, you little flock, why are you afraid? Do not worry! Despite all this, one trembles with fear for the present, and even more for the future, and that fear robs us of courage, hinders us in our duty, and draws us to what does not befit us. Where the brave overcome fear, fear overcomes us who should be brave; we let ourselves be trampled by enemies, the heroes fall in battle. Where is the undaunted steadfastness?

4. One is feeble in all work, in prayer, in fighting against enemies, especially against one's besetting corruptions, in the practice of virtues, which demand continual opportunities; one does something, for the spiritual life is there, but everything goes so sluggishly, it is such a heavy task, it goes in fits and starts, the initial zeal and fervor are greatly cooled, one does not courageously persevere in obedience to God, one is immediately despondent under bodily crosses, if things do not go as desired, one is immediately weak in faith beside one's state, one doubts God's love, the hearing of prayers, God's providence, everything is in disarray, and everything goes as if half asleep, or as if half fainting. If you show yourself slack in the day of distress, your strength is limited. Proverbs 24:10.

Although God will not bring upon His children the judgments that will come upon the unconverted for their uselessness, lukewarmness, and fearfulness, they must nevertheless be deterred from such sins for which the wrath of God comes upon the children of disobedience. Moreover, the lack of courage only causes them unrest and distress of spirit, and confuses them more and more in all kinds of sins, the enemies gain more power, and keep them captive longer, they will not overcome it through giving in to a lack of seriousness. Therefore, do not be sluggish in your zeal. Be fervent in spirit. Romans 12:11. Therefore be zealous and repent. Revelation 3:19.

Revival.

IX. Come all of you who fear the Lord, and find yourselves under the power of your enemies, who have little strength to resist, and who use the little strength they have weakly, listen, and let your hearts be in a willing state to be awakened, while I shall endeavor to rouse you to courage in the battle.

God's command.

1. Hear the voice of the Lord and let His address uplift your hearts; just as Lazarus arose from the dead at the voice of Christ, so shall you be awakened from lukewarm slothfulness to noble bravery at His voice. This is the word of God to you: Deuteronomy 31:6, Be strong and of good courage; fear not, nor be afraid, 1 Corinthians 16:13, Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong. Isaiah 35:4. Say to those with fearful hearts: Be strong, do not fear. Hebrews 12:12. Therefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees.

No other way to heaven.

2. Should you not be brave in the battle; for there is no other way to heaven than through courageous fighting. This is the way ordained by God: I will set enmity. This way you chose when you entered into the kingdom of Christ, and enlisted under His banner. Either you must withdraw from the covenant and desert as a rogue from the flag, abandoning God, heaven, and everything, or you must set yourselves to brave fighting, to overcome the devil with all his host, the world and all that is therein, and sin with all its allurements. The crown of glory must be so precious to you, the spiritual life and communion with God so dear, the will of God so pleasing to you, that you are willing to fight courageously all your life. Do not let this weigh heavily on your heart, thinking: all my life in arms, all my life fighting and in the struggle, all my life in such exertion of strength, that is indeed an unpleasant way, there is no getting through. Yes, the heaven must be so dear to you, or you must forsake it. Yet know that courageous fighting is not as heavy a task as you suppose. Always fighting and being overcome, or always being in a state of equal strength and in doubtful outcome of the struggle, that is hard work; but to conquer while fighting, and to go on and on, taking one city after another, and inflicting blow upon blow on the enemy, that is joyful work; thus it will go with you, if you but behave bravely according to your strength, whether you are a child, or young man, or man and fight. The struggle seems so daunting to you because you do not proceed courageously, but through your sluggishness, carelessness, and lack of seriousness, you give the enemies an opportunity to see an advantage; thereby they become bolder, and you weaker; therefore rise up in the ways of the Lord, attack courageously, resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

Their state and disposition.

3. The consideration of your state is apt to stir you up to bravery. The Lord has chosen you for salvation. He has drawn you out from the power of the enemies, and called you as He called Abraham from Ur of the Chaldeans, as Israel from Egypt, and has placed you among His children in the kingdom of His Son. You are born of God, and thus God's offspring, royal children, Psalm 45:10, 14. Even kings themselves, Revelation 5:10. You have the bold, princely Spirit, Psalm 51:14, A lionheart, Proverbs 28:1. The Lord has set you like the horse of His Majesty in the battle, Zechariah 10:3. And He says of you, verse 4, They shall be like mighty men, who tread down the mire of the streets in the battle. They stride through thick and thin, so that with every step the earth trembles; for the Lord will be with them, and they shall put to shame those who ride on horses. A foot soldier shall bring down a rider from his horse. Will you then be overcome by a devil, by a despised worldling, by a filthy lust? A king is too noble for that, that he would allow himself to be captured by a mere soldier; so you too, be brave according to your state, and do not yield to a contemptible enemy, do not forget your bravery, lest you bring shame upon your lineage.

The nature of the enemies.

4. Pay attention to the nature and powers of the enemies, and it will make you more courageous. They are so wicked that they will not tolerate the slightest good, the slightest movement of spiritual life. The more you yield to them, the more they desire, and the more strength they gain; they know no stopping or tiring until they would have brought soul and body into hell. They stand directly opposed to the high and holy God, to your beloved Lord Jesus; can you look upon that with good eyes, can you bear it? Besides, they are contemptible, vile, disgusting, and

abominable; who can think of them without indignation? And will you let yourself be overcome by them? They have already been overcome by the Lord Jesus. He has crushed the head of the devil, Genesis 3:15 Hebrews 2:14. Conquered the world, John 16:33. The power of reigning has been taken away from sin, Romans 6:2, 14. Thus, they cannot harm you, they cannot pluck out a single hair from you. It would be too great cowardice to fear the struggles of a half-dead enemy. Therefore, do not let yourself be overcome by such a wicked, contemptible, and powerless enemy, but fight bravely, trample them like dung under your feet. Do as Jonathan's armor-bearer, who followed him and killed the enemies behind him; thus, follow the Lord Jesus, who goes before and strikes them dead before you, and gives you a push. Come then, be courageous in the battle, victory over such enemies will surely be yours.

There are many spectators.

5. Note that everyone's eyes are on you and observe how you behave in the battle. You have entered the arena with the enemy, and the spectators stand all around to watch the fight. On one side stands your King with the holy angels and believers; their hearts are with you, they are eager for you to win. Christ's cause is yours, and your cause is His and theirs; they will rejoice and boast when you win. On the other side are the devils and the world; they gnash their teeth, they would like to see harm brought to Christ's cause by your defeat. Will you then be weak in the battle? Will you let yourself be overcome in everyone's presence? Will you do such dishonor to Christ, since He is a spectator of this battle, and has invited everyone to see your courage and to encourage you to bravery? Would angels, if they could, and the godly be covered with shame and grieved for your

sake? Will you allow the enemies to triumph as victors? How will you dare to come to your King and lift up your face to Him? No, no, it must not be so; be bold then as a hero, so that Christ may boast over you, as the Lord boasted over Job's steadfastness, Job 1.

Many helpers.

6. Acknowledge your own strength, and look to your helpers and fellow combatants. It is true, by nature you have no strength, and being born again, your strength is small, Revelation 3:7. But Christ's strength is yours, because you have received it; therefore you can do all things through Christ, who gives you strength. Philippians 4:13. Use it then, run with Him through a troop, leap over a wall with Him, to seize your enemies in their stronghold, Psalm 18:30. For you gird yourself with strength, verse 33. And train your hands for battle, verse 35. Then rejoice: The Lord is with me among those who help me; therefore I shall see my desire on those who hate me, Psalm 118:7.

Examples.

7. Remember those who have fought before you, and how successful the outcome has been, and they are now crowned as conquerors. Look at the list of heroes: Hebrews 11. James 5:10, 11. My brethren! take the prophets, who spoke in the name of the Lord, as an example of suffering and patience, ... you have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end intended by the Lord. Look at Paul: 2 Timothy 4:7, 8. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness. Look at other believers who live with you, how each one fights according to his strength; and will all this not stir up your courage? Therefore,

whoever has such a King before his face, who is in such a flashing army, who is surrounded by so many brave heroes, each determined to lay down his life for the Lord Jesus, and to fight unto death, will he not fight bravely?

Great promises.

8. Also, take to heart greatly the promises that God has made to courageous fighters. God will support you while you fight: Psalm 27:14 ... be strong, and He will strengthen your heart. (a) The Lord then makes the promised goods clearer in their loveliness, and livelier in their hope. (b) He shows the brevity and weakness of the opposition, so that they see through it and already count themselves as victors. (c) He shows them the past assistance provided. (d) He comforts them and encourages them. (e) He removes the fear of opposition. (f) He pours strength into them, and girds them with might, so that even the weak says: I am a hero. (g) The Lord promises the crown of glory. To him who overcomes, I will give to eat of the tree of life. He shall not be hurt by the second death.

- I will give him ... of the hidden manna; a white stone.
- Power over the nations.
- The morning star.
- White garments.
- His name shall not be blotted out of the Book of Life.
- I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.
- I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God.
- I will write on him the name of My God.
- I will grant him to sit with Me on My throne. Behold these promises, Revelation 2, 3. Whoever desires all these glories, he

must and shall attain them through courageous fighting; therefore, with courage, to work!

But behave yourself well, and do the work properly; for if anyone also competes, he is not crowned unless he competes lawfully, 2 Timothy 2:5.

One must arm oneself.

1. Therefore, arm yourselves from head to toe, and what these weapons are, learn from Paul: Ephesians 6:13-18. Take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness; and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; with all prayer and supplication.

To anticipate certain matters.

2. Be watchful in this battle:
3. (a) For carelessness, do not imagine that it is all won when you have taken a good resolution; resolutions easily weaken; do not imagine that the enemy is gone, he is lurking; therefore, be sober-minded and watchful, 1 Peter 5:8.
4. (b) For despondency; when the enemies seem too strong, the battle too heavy, and God seems far away, do not lose heart, for that is as good as throwing away your weapons and extending helpless hands to the enemy, who deserves no mercy; therefore,

relying on the strength and unfailing promises of God, be strong and courageous, Joshua 1:6.

5. (c) For pride and self-confidence in your own abilities. Remember Peter, when he said: I will never be offended. I will never deny You. Then defeat is nearest. Therefore, do not be high-minded, but fear, Romans 11:20.

Other things to consider.

3. Consider in this battle:
4. (a) Prudence, do not go beyond the boundaries of your calling, do not walk in things too high for you, and beyond your capability, do not hastily and recklessly engage in work; do not imagine that you have enough wisdom; but always seek counsel first from the Lord, however small the matter or occasion may be; a maidservant was strong enough to throw down Peter. Also seek advice from godly individuals in particular cases, whoever listens to advice is wise. Therefore, see that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, Ephesians 5:15.
5. (b) Flee opportunities that may tempt you, especially those by which you have often found yourself ensnared; one makes good progress who, in order not to fall into sin, avoids opportunities, and who undertakes nothing special unless called.
6. (c) Engage particularly against the sin that is most urgent to you, to which your nature is most inclined, which is closest to your calling. Pay close attention to the first beginnings, for it is easiest to resist them; smother those children in the cradle, catch the little foxes, remove the dead fly that would spoil the ointment.
7. (d) Always take refuge behind Christ, He is a Sun and Shield, Psalm 84:12. As soon as you let your heart stray from Him, an arrow of the enemy will strike you. Follow David in this, Psalm

143:9, "Deliver me, O Lord, from my enemies; I flee to You for refuge."

8. (e) Be constant in prayer; for all your strength must come from the Lord, and God desires to be sought when He is to do something. Matthew 26:41, "Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation."

Chapter 8:

Of the Confession of Christ and His Truth.

Courage has a particular opportunity and is manifested in the public declaration of the grace within us, of our faith in Christ, of our love for Him, and of our hope in Him with words and deeds. Yet, the enemies cannot bear this light; therefore, they oppose it and those who shine the light. However, the courageous do not yield to them but come forth more boldly in steadfast confession. The word "confession" means to make known, reveal, confess, openly declare, promise, thank, because in confession there is a revelation of how our heart stands in relation to such matters. Sometimes it is used for the sin one confesses to having committed, either to God: Psalm 32:5 ... I will confess my transgressions to the Lord, Matthew 3:6; or to one another: James 5:16, Confess your sins to one another. But here we speak of confession insofar as it is a declaration

- of God: Romans 14:11 ... every tongue shall confess to God.
- Of Christ: Philippians 2:11. Every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

- Of true holiness and godliness: 1 Timothy 2:10 ... who confess godliness.
- Of true doctrine, Titus 1:9.

Description.

II. Confession is a steadfast testimony with words and deeds of the revealed, known, and believed truth of God, leading humanity through the Lord Jesus Christ to salvation, for the glorification of God and the salvation of our neighbors.

It is a testimony for and of Christ.

It is a testimony. God does not want His truth and the grace He has placed in someone to remain hidden but desires the light to shine out of darkness. And those in whose hearts the light has shone and who are light in the Lord should let their light shine before people, Matthew 5:10. These are called witnesses of Christ: Acts 1:8 You shall be My witnesses. Revelation 2:13 ... Antipas My faithful witness. John 1:7. This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all through him might believe. Testimony refers to the revealed truth of God; in general, everything God reveals in His Word, and specifically, the way God leads the elect to salvation. Sometimes it is called truth without any addition: John 8:32. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. 3 John 1:3 ... as you walk in the truth. Sometimes with an addition: The way of truth, 2 Peter 2:2. The word of truth, James 1:18. The truth of the gospel, Galatians 2:5. The truth of Christ, 2 Corinthians 11:10. Believers focus on this; they bear witness to it, rejecting all errors.

The essence of this truth is Christ; truth reveals Christ, who He is in His person, in His divine and human nature, in His offices, Prophet, Priest, and King, in His states of humiliation, suffering, and death,

and the power thereof unto reconciliation and acquisition of salvation for the elect, and of exaltation, resurrection, ascension, sitting at the right hand of God, and coming to judgment. This Jesus is the object of confession: Matthew 10:32. Therefore whoever confesses Me before men. Romans 10:9 ... if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus. The Lord Jesus is the eternal way to salvation: Acts 4:12. Nor is there salvation in any other. John 14:6 ... I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. Therefore, He is called the chief Leader of their salvation, Hebrews 2:10. A confessor testifies of Him as He is revealed in the Word, declaring that all people outside of Him perish, and that all who believe in Him are led by Him to salvation.

Known and believed.

III. If anyone is to testify to this truth, he must know and believe it. It is a testimony of the known and believed truth. To confess what one does not know is mere foolishness; such is the case with the Papists: I believe what the church believes; to confess what one does not believe is nothing but hypocrisy. Therefore, the Scripture speaks of knowledge of the truth, Romans 2:20. Knowledge of the mystery of God, Colossians 2:2, Knowledge of God, Colossians 1:10. Knowledge of Jesus Christ, 2 Peter 3:18. Knowledge of salvation, Luke 1:77. He must not only know the truth but also believe it; therefore, knowledge and faith are combined: John 6:69. We have believed and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God. 2 Peter 1:5 ... add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge. Confession requires not only a testimony of the truth that Christ is the only salvation but also a declaration of our faith in Him, of our hope in Him: Acts 26:27. Do you believe, King Agrippa! the prophets? Therefore, confession is called the confession of hope. Hebrews 10:23. This the apostle shows: 1 Peter 3:15 ... always be ready to give

a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you.

With words and deeds.

IV. Confession happens with words and with deeds. • With words, when one makes known the truth of God to others by speaking of it for the instruction of those who do not know it, for the edification and strengthening of those who are weak in knowledge, and for the conviction of those who oppose the truth and persecute us for it. See this: Romans 10:10 ... with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. Philippians 2:11. Every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. • With deeds, one confesses the truth,

(a) when one openly joins the true church and perseveres in communion with her, which is the people of God, of Christ, who testify for the cause of Christ and confess Him: Isaiah 43:21. This people I have formed for Myself; they shall declare My praise. 1 Peter 2:9. You are ... a chosen generation, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.

(b) when one displays the image of the Lord Jesus in a holy life, when Christ has a form in us, Galatians 4:19. When one bears the image of the heavenly Adam, 1 Corinthians 15:49. The radiance of holiness makes it known to everyone that one is with Jesus: John 13:35. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another. By this the council recognized that Peter and John had been with Jesus, Acts 4:13. By this the persecutors recognized the true Christians; he does not lie, he does not play, etc.; therefore, he is a Christian, and they were seized on that account.

(c) when one endures all suffering for the truth of Christ. God has set enmity between Christ and His own, and between the serpent and her seed; all unconverted, who are after the flesh, always persecute those who are after the Spirit, because of their opposing nature, purposes, and ways of doing. As soon as someone becomes a partaker of the nature of Christ and joins His banner and confesses Him, everything immediately rises up against him. It is hardly likely that someone will be persecuted for the hope of being saved, except for those who deny the resurrection of the dead; but it depends on the way in which one seeks salvation. The Name of Christ is so hated by the Jews and Turks that they will persecute someone to death because of it. Among those who bear the Name of Christian, hardly anyone will be persecuted because he hopes to be saved through Christ in general. But when Christ is truly known by someone, and someone confesses Him as He is, and as He is a Savior, all false Christians will rise up against him. Socinians, who also bear the Name of Christian, will. Remonstrants, as was evident in the beginning of the past century, and would still be evident if they had power. All unconverted, both outside and inside the church, and especially the Antichrist, who is drunk, and still drinks drunkenly of the blood of the saints, whoever he can get into his claws; when a true Christian manifests himself as such, he will encounter opposition from all; everyone, according to his power, will persecute him with heart and deeds and will not rest until he is out of the way. If someone behaves faithfully in this, he confesses Christ, and he who is killed for this testimony is a martyr, which in Greek is martur, and is to say as much as a witness.

In steadfastness.

V. Confession is a steadfast testimony. We mention one quality in the description, but include several others. Confession must be made:

Out of love.

1. Out of love for the Lord Jesus and His revealed truth. One may well die for the testimony of the Lord Jesus out of mere glory, without having a taste for the truth; also solely by the compulsion of his conscience, knowing that it is the truth; also out of imagination, thinking that he will be saved thereby. Thus, Papists can let themselves be killed by Turks and Heathens; thus, all kinds of false spirits can die for their beliefs. Suffering does not make a martyr, but the cause for which one suffers, and the love for the cause. If one dies for the truth, his death is indeed a testimony; but he who suffers has no benefit from it unless it is done out of love: 1 Corinthians 13:3 ... though I give my body to be burned, and have not love, it profits me nothing. Love made the bride speak: Such is my Beloved, yes, such is my Friend, Song of Solomon 5:16. And Paul, 2 Corinthians 5:14. For the love of Christ compels us.

Voluntary.

2. Voluntary. Nature fears suffering; that fear is not opposed to voluntariness. If death and confession of Christ stand in opposition to each other, then the faithful confessor chooses confession with death over life with denial, and not reluctantly or half-heartedly, but with a willing heart. Though suffering and death may cause him fear, and though he cannot cast away that fear, he nevertheless overcomes the fear so that, while still feeling the fear, he does not yield to it in order to avoid denial; rather, he chooses to confess Jesus, whatever may come. He has an internal desire for this and freely presents himself to the Lord, saying, "Here am I." Psalm 110:3. Your people will be volunteers in the day of Your power. See sorrow and willingness

together in the disciples, Luke 22:45, to whom the Lord Jesus said, "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." Matthew 26:41.

Boldly.

3. **Boldly.** The fear remains, and there is no sin in that; but boldness overcomes the fear and presses forward, even putting everything, even life itself, on the line because one esteems Jesus, His truth, and His cause so highly and sees so much glory for Jesus, for us, and so much benefit for others in it. Boldness reveals itself, it despises reproach and pain. One does not present oneself as a slave, not with shame, not trembling and then involuntarily and forcibly giving testimony; one does not act pitifully in order to gain favor with the enemies, hoping they will treat us gently. With them, there is no compassion; the mercies of the wicked are cruel; they will do what the Lord has decided concerning you, no more, no less. In that lowly presentation, there is some appearance of wavering, and the enemies will become more confident, thinking, "We already have him, we will surely get him further." But one must, both in words and in appearance, present oneself as a brave hero who has entered the battlefield against his enemy, like Peter and John: Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. Acts 4:13. So boldly did Stephen stand before the council that all who sat in the council, looking steadfastly at him, saw his face as the face of an angel. Acts 6:15. One must be as bold when life is at stake, not less than in times of freedom.

Prudence.

4. Prudent. This is a fine word; many have it constantly on their lips when they do not want to work, and it amounts to saying, "Leave the work, give in to the cause of Christ," and that is considered peaceableness and wisdom; but when one comes forward boldly, then it is considered foolishness, stubbornness, recklessness, and it is his own fault if he gets into trouble and brings others into suffering. Beware of that devilish prudence, detest it, and arm yourselves against such prudent people; they betray the church, they hinder the confession of Jesus, and they obstruct the confessors. But prudence must guide the work; one must not step beyond one's calling and station, not go where one has no business, not cast pearls before swine; those are the ones who have been found to become angrier and more stubborn when one tries to bring them to conversion through the Gospel; one must carefully guard against speaking too much or too little when defending Christ's cause, against pride, domineering behavior, seeking one's own glory. One must foresee and avoid evil, unless other circumstances require us to wait for it. When the Lord Jesus sent out His disciples to preach the Gospel, He gave them this lesson: Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves. Matthew 10:16.

Sincere.

5. Sincere. All pretense, all ambiguity must be removed from the confession; that was Peter's sin, and the first disavowal is called both a denial of Christ and the second and third denial, Matthew 26:34, 70. But in confessing the truth, one must come out fully and declare all the truths of the gospel and how they lie in our hearts, clearly, plainly, without concealment. One will have more peace in one's heart if one has said too much to express one's faith in the evangelical truths well, than if one has said too little

out of a quiet fear: Titus 2:7 ... showing yourself to be a pattern of good works, in doctrine showing integrity, reverence, incorruptibility.

Perseverance.

6. Perseverance, steadfastness. It is not enough to have great courage before it comes to the test and to triumph before the battle and victory, as many have done, and then to fail and deny with shame when it comes to it. It is not enough to begin and to hold out for some time, and then to give in at last; but one must remain steadfast to the end. One must know beforehand that in times of persecution the Antichrist will undermine it in such a way that it seems as if we had complete freedom to remain with the truth of religion, yes, as if Romanism were now so Reformed that it was almost one faith with the true Reformed church. But there is only a small point, which one must only cross over, then one would be free from death and everything else, yes, one would even be handsomely rewarded. For example: whether one embraces and believes all the truths that are in the Roman church; because indeed, it believes many truths with the Reformed church. Whether one renounces all the errors of Calvin, or those in the Reformed church; because what does Calvin matter to you, he was only a man, and the Reformed themselves admit that he erred here or there, and there are many disputes in the Reformed church; what one says, the other denies. So you could say or sign without hurting your conscience that you accept the truth of the Roman church, and reject the errors of Calvin, and those that might be in the Reformed church. Now, life or death hangs on this point, and it's such a small point.

But know that on this little point, however small one makes it, it all hangs; for if the point is so small, and if everyone agrees on it, why would anyone kill someone over that small point? So it's not that small. It is a departure and abandonment and denial of the true church and of Christ, the Head of that church, and of the truth, of which the true Reformed church is the pillar and ground, and it is a joining of the assembly, in the army of the Antichrist, who persecutes the true church, sheds the blood of the saints, and opposes Christ. On that ground, one could also become Jewish or Turkish, because there are still some truths in them. It is true, our faith is not based on Calvin, he was a man; in what he erred, we do not want to defend him. It is also true that the Reformed church is not perfect, and we do not want to defend the errors of this or that; but if they are gross, their proponents are expelled. However, in the case of confessing to make such a statement, it is a net to catch the simple; therefore, one must remain steadfast in everything, not leaving behind even one claw with Moses, not loosening even the smallest link of the chain. This is the perseverance that the Lord Jesus demands: Matthew 10:22 ... but he who endures to the end will be saved.

The end is the glorification of God.

The end of confession is the glorification of our God and the salvation of our neighbor. Not the suffering, but the cause makes a martyr; not only the cause, but the purpose makes a good martyr. Confession must arise out of love and be done for a holy end, which is:

1. To glorify God, that is, to save the perfections of God, His goodness, righteousness, truth, etc., which are revealed in man, by revealing Christ and with words and deeds, expressing the truth, even with a holy life. For, says the Lord Jesus, in this My

Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit, John 15:8. As with patiently enduring everything to death for the sake of that truth; for when someone suffers for the truth, it becomes apparent, and it is examined and known more. John 21:19. This He said, signifying by what death he would glorify God. To aim at this in one's speaking, doing, and suffering, that is grace, that makes a martyr, who is acceptable to God, angels, and men.

Salvation of the neighbor.

2. A Christian not only wants to be saved himself but also loves his neighbor and gladly wants to bring them to the knowledge of the truth, conversion, and salvation; he sees that confessing the Lord Jesus is a fruitful means to that end, therefore, he comes out in times of peace and in times of persecution, he is glad when he has the opportunity to do so, he knows that the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church, that others are won by speaking and living the truth. He aims for this according to the apostle's lesson: Ephesians 4:29 ... Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. And he shows that suffering for the truth also has that fruit: Philippians 1:7 ... you all are partakers with me of grace, both in my chains and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel.

Confession demands God.

VII. Thus, we have presented to you the nature of confessing the truth. Now, this is the duty of everyone who wants to be saved; salvation and damnation depend on it. Stamp this on your heart. Matthew 10:32-33, "Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My

Father who is in heaven." Look also at Romans 10:9-10, "that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." Some try to comfort themselves in times of persecution by convincing themselves that if one has true faith in one's heart, then it is enough to be saved; even if one remains silent with the mouth, even if one externally joins the church of the antichrist, that is just an external ceremony that gives or takes nothing. He is foolish who risks his goods and life for that, goods and life are worth more than a penny. But this consideration is refuted by the apostle, saying that one confesses with the mouth unto salvation. Where true faith is in the heart, there the mouth will not be silent: 2 Corinthians 4:13, "And since we have the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, 'I believed and therefore I spoke,' we also believe and therefore speak." Consider also 1 John 4:15, "Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God." Make whatever excuses you want, you will only deceive yourself to your eternal destruction; for salvation and damnation hang on confession.

Conviction of the unconverted.

VIII. When the church is flourishing, a multitude of all sorts of people flock in, but they are not all able to confess Jesus; such as:

(a) the ignorant, who do not know the way of God to salvation, these cannot give an account of the faith, what would they say? They are inexperienced in the Word, the truth is hidden from them, they have not known the way of peace.

(b) Those who do not believe in Christ; they may have some letter knowledge of Christ, but they have no negotiation with Him to

receive Him and to make Him dwell in the heart by faith, to be in Him and to grow in Him.

(c) Those who have no love for the glory of God, for the truth, for the edification of the church: those for whom salvation is not glorious and lovely, who see more glory, sweetness, advantage in earthly things, in life and in the temporary enjoyment of sin.

(d) Those who live daily in the visible, in all worldliness and in all the lusts of the eyes and of the flesh, the greatness of life, and meanwhile content themselves with an external slovenly religion.

You all are not here to proclaim the Lord's name. You already deny the Lord Jesus in times of peace. Titus 1:16 applies to you. They confess to knowing God, but they deny Him by their deeds, for they are detestable, disobedient, and unfit for any good work. When persecutions arise for the sake of the Word, they will fall away like ripe plums, preferring the honor of the world, money, and comfort far more than Jesus with all His fullness. They will not endure any harm or disgrace for the love of Jesus; indeed, they may even become persecutors, if not the bitterest ones, of the true confessors of Christ; for many of them are already opposed to the true godly. Know that the Lord Jesus has already pointed you out in His walk on earth: Matthew 13:20-21. But he who received the seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles. Luke 8:13 ... and in the time of temptation, they fall away.

And what will be your end? That which Paul says, Philippians 3:19, "whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame—who set their mind on earthly things." Christ will deny you before His Father, before the angels, and before men, on

the day of judgment: Matthew 7:23. Then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'

Exhortation.

IX. Now I turn to you, true believers, to urge you to boldly confess the Lord Jesus. Prepare yourselves for the testing of your faith and strengthen yourselves to be steadfast in confession; for they will come. So has God always dealt with His church. God brings persecutions upon them from nation to nation. Now it is the turn of the church in France, and perhaps soon it will be ours; for rarely has the church been at rest for as long as it has been in the Netherlands. The Dutch church is entirely corrupted, not only in morals, but all sorts of novelties in doctrine are emerging; where ignorance does not prevail, errors break through. A sure sign that the Netherlands will be visited, either by external or internal persecutions of men who will not endure sound doctrine and hate the holiness of life. The godly will be tested so that the truth of the doctrine and the life of the few faithful may shine forth, according to the prophecy of Paul, 2 Timothy 3:12, "Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution." Therefore, prepare yourselves so that when the trial comes, you may be ready and steadfast to confess Jesus, and thus obtain the crown of the martyrs.

As an exhortation, I will enclose this letter which I wrote for some persecuted and oppressed brethren.

A Letter of Exhortation to Steadfastness in the Confession of the Lord Jesus Christ and His Truth, in Times of Persecution and Martyrdom.

My dear Brothers in the Lord Jesus Christ, who are counted worthy by Him to be witnesses for His cause and to suffer and stand against

the Antichrist. Grace and peace be multiplied to you from the God of all grace and comfort!

Having heard of your suffering and steadfastness, I am reminded of the words of the apostle, Hebrews 13:3, "Remember the prisoners as if chained with them—those who are mistreated—since you yourselves are in the body also." And of the declaration of the Lord Jesus, on the day of the general and final judgment. Matthew 25:36, "I was in prison and you came to Me." Therefore, being unable to come to you bodily, I attempt with the pen to pay you a visit, praying that the almighty and merciful God may bless my address for the strengthening and comforting of your souls.

Be courageous, you heroes of the Lord, do not falter in the battle. Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong, 1 Corinthians 16:13. Pay no heed to temptations from without or within, once the spiritual light has dispelled the mists of the soul, once the heart has been strengthened by grace, once the internal assaults have been repelled and lost their power, then one is able to appear externally, like a horse of majesty in battle. Our hearts are susceptible to being tossed here and there by internal temptations, and even if one remains standing, it can cause discouragement and sorrow, especially in times of suffering; among these are the following:

(1) No one knows of my suffering, it happens in secret; if I could suffer publicly on a scaffold, then the Lord Jesus would still be glorified through me, the Gospel would still be confirmed, believers strengthened, and others convicted; but now my suffering is useless and fruitless.

(2) I suffer not so much for the truth as for my sins; God punishes me for past transgressions, therefore I find no comfort in my suffering, only burden.

(3) I suffer under an evil title, they burden me with crimes, and the best they can do is laugh at me, calling me a martyr, not of the Lord Jesus, but of Calvin.

(4) I suffer not out of love for Jesus and His truth, but only because of the compulsion of my conscience, which cannot believe what it knows to be false, and cannot deny what it knows to be true, or I suffer and do not deny, because I fear being condemned after my death if I denied.

(5) The suffering lasts so long, and there is no hope of ever being delivered, this makes me despondent and sorrowful.

(6) It all comes down to a small matter; it is just a ceremony, I hold the faith in my heart, even if I outwardly join them and conform to them, it is coerced.

(7) Other godly people are doing just fine, so why am I in such misery?

(8) I am always full of fear, whether of death, of longer and more severe suffering, of the wickedness of men, of their cunningness; therefore I am more drawn and compelled to suffer, than enduring it with willing fortitude; the suffering is too heavy for me, I cannot bear it any longer; in addition, I am distressed about my own, who have denied, and above all about my children, who have been put into monasteries and have been imbibing idolatry from a young age. I will first try to dispel these thoughts, and then I will exhort your souls to steadfastness, courage, and patience.

Secret Suffering.

1. It is the practice of the enemies to make believers suffer a thousand deaths secretly, for they have experienced that publicly killing them produces more believers than those who are killed, and on the other hand, believers desire to suffer publicly, thinking, in their misconception, that they would glorify Jesus more in doing so. But know that the Lord Jesus and the holy angels see both the public and the secret suffering, and God brings their hidden suffering to the knowledge of the church; your suffering resounds throughout the entire world. In public suffering, often something personal is mixed in; indeed, the conflicts do not lack, as if one were steadfast out of self-glory, to avoid the contempt of denial, and for other reasons, which confuse the soul more and take away the purity, comfort, and courage in suffering more than in secret suffering. Therefore, do not choose any kind of suffering, neither more nor less severe. The sovereign Lord, who does everything in unfathomable wisdom and out of unsearchable love for every faithful martyr, is pleased to take such a path with you. It is not the cunning and malice of the enemies, it is not our choice, prudence, or imprudence; but it is the Lord's providence, thus He desires to be glorified by you and to bring you to glory. He who is capable of enduring slow suffering is often incapable of enduring public suffering; the fear of a violent death has caused many to fall away or deprives them of all calm thoughts of faith, hope, and love, which one sometimes has more abundantly in slow and solitary suffering. Hidden suffering will not always remain hidden; it will all be revealed on the day of judgment, and all people will recognize you as a faithful martyr; therefore, submit to God, and say with blind submission: Your will be done, do with me as it pleases You, only give strength.

Not for Christ, but for sins.

2. There is a struggle that can greatly distress the soul; namely, that one does not suffer for the cause of Christ, but that it is God's punishment for sins committed in the past and for previous denial. Although this struggle takes away courage in suffering, it is very beneficial by this event; for thereby the soul is led to examine itself, it is led to Christ, everything is turned upside down, the previous sins, the previous sinful life come vividly to mind, one begins to doubt whether one has ever had grace, whether one is truly converted, whether everything has come from an enlightened mind, one is terrified of death, one fears being damned.

Pay attention, and do not evade these thoughts; but dwell on them, and let the concerns work more intensely; this is followed by bitter struggles, and sorrow towards God works a repentance that leads to salvation. One begins anew, as if one had never done right, one looks to Jesus, to have a part in His blood, as the ransom for our sins, one prays, one weeps, one waits, one longs for Christ to have Him as our Surety, one chooses Him, one accepts Him, and brings Him into the heart through faith, one surrenders oneself, without any reservation, and without revocation.

New concerns arise: whether one is chosen, whether it is too late, and the time of grace has already passed; it becomes dark, Jesus hides Himself, the Lord seems to reject the soul, and it seems as if there is no grace for eternity. This is followed by a inclination to deny Christ, because one has no part in Him anyway. Pay attention, do not evade this struggle either; for when everything will be at its most intense, grace will break through, one comes more calmly to Jesus, one sees that He offers Himself in the Gospel, one enters into the covenant of grace, one dares to rely more confidently on Jesus, to entrust our soul into His hands without fear. Thus one realizes that

sins are forgiven through Christ's blood, that salvation is obtained; from this flows peace of conscience, joy of spirit, fervent love for Jesus, and a willing readiness to suffer and die for His name. See, such a beautiful form the soul gains from this trial, that one suffers not for the truth, but for one's sins: one then sees the opposite, namely, that God is reconciled, that sins are forgiven, that suffering comes from God, and that He calls us to confess His name and glorify Him through that path, and that He will crown us with the glorious crown of the martyrs through that way; the eternal becomes glorious, and the earthly contemptible, and joy makes all bitterness sweet. From weakness and from previous denial, one gains strength, and one becomes stronger to improve, to no longer trust in oneself, but to stand in the power of God, and with joyful courage endure everything to which the Lord graciously calls and deems us worthy.

Under an Evil Name.

3. The trial of suffering under an evil title, under the accusation of disobedience to authority, of having committed this and that evil; that one is obstinate, that one is merely a martyr of Calvin, and for his errors. Swiftly deflect this trial, for you know well that the enemies do not have a wicked deed as the basis for torturing you, but it is their aim to make you renounce the truth, and they have only devised an evil title. You know well that you have nothing to do with Calvin, and that you do not hold him in higher esteem than other faithful teachers, that you do not rely on his word, but only on the Word of God. God, the angels, and the believers also know this well, yes, even the enemies themselves know it, and they adopt that evil title to harden their hearts and to weaken yours. Thus the Jews also dealt with the Lord Jesus, they said, John 10:33, "We do not stone You for any good work, but for blasphemy." Matthew 27:47, 49, "This man

calls for Elijah. Let us see if Elijah will come to save Him." No wonder then, that having the same nature as the enemies, they do the same. The Lord will reveal the reason for your suffering on the day of judgment, and your glory in heaven will not be diminished but increased by it. Just be faithful.

Out of Conscience Compulsion.

4. It is a heavier trial to be fought with the thoughts: I am not suffering for the truth, but only out of compulsion of my conscience; it is not out of love for Christ, but out of fear of being damned if I deny; I am weak in faith regarding my state, I doubt whether I am born again, whether Christ is my Savior, and whether I will be saved, even though I suffer and die for the truth; for unbelievers can, out of compulsion of conscience, being convinced of the truth, suffer and die for the truth; indeed, salvation or damnation depends on confession and denial. Impress these passages deeply upon your heart, Romans 10:10, "For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." Matthew 10:32, 33, "Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven." There you see, it is better to remain faithful in confession; even if it is defective in manner, even if it is out of compulsion of conscience, than to deny and do violence to your conscience; and also, whether the compulsion of conscience mostly moves you, do not say that, that there is no love for Jesus and His truth mingled in it; one sees it because it is the strongest, but if one examines closely, and gazes a little at Jesus, one will find that one loves Him too much to deny Him. One will say: dear Jesus, I do not want to deny You. Love manifests itself

in sweet passions, but it actually consists in the rational will; where the rational will values, chooses, and urges confession of Jesus, that is confessing Jesus out of love. Then let it not confuse and discourage your soul, but rejoice that your conscience is enlightened and alive, and recognize that it is not the conscience alone that moves you to faithful confession; but even if the conscience were silent, indeed, if it were quieter than the rational will, love would then manifest itself more; when the sun sets, then the stars are seen better, which are there during the day as well, but are not seen because of greater light. And regarding your state, if there is heartfelt sorrow, disgust, pain, shame over past sins and the present sinful heart; if there is an activity to accept Christ as Savior and to apply Him to the soul, even with darkness and contention without assurance; if from this comes a tender vigilance over one's heart, to avoid sinning, and there arises an inclination to adhere to Jesus in faithfulness, and to suffer and die for His name, even if it displeases Him, without giving much light and comfort, therein is truth, life, and faith, go on relying on the promises, the Lord will surely precede you with grace and comfort, even if it is at the end of your life; it is a braver act, in darkness and internal contention of faith, to remain faithful to Jesus, than when one enjoys many sweet comforts and consolations of the Spirit. Oh! It is a great grace to be jealous over one's heart, to be humble with tears to follow Jesus: for such often work the purest and become the strongest Christians. Just keep courage.

The Difference is Small.

5. In the previous trial, another one arises, reinforcing each other to bring us to denial, namely, it comes down to a very small difference, they just want you to renounce Calvin's errors, which

one can easily do, for, if Calvin has errors, I do not want to uphold them, and I do not need to suffer for Calvin's sake. They are also willing to allow me to keep my faith in my heart, they will not inflict suffering on me for that, as long as I externally conform to their practices, attend mass, and merely bow with the body before their wafer and images; that external act is just a ceremony, salvation depends on faith, and that one preserves in the heart. It is not like in the persecutions of the Heathens, where one had to renounce Christ; the parties now confess themselves that Christ is the Savior.

Response.

This is the stumbling block over which many have fallen into denial; therefore, one must consider closely what serpent lies hidden under that grass. It all hinges on that little thing, even if that little thing were ten times smaller; for it is joining the church of the Antichrist, it is uniting with that people who persecute the church of the Lord Jesus, who have shed the blood of the saints like water, and thus you bring upon your soul all the blood of the saints, and you are guilty of all the persecutions, as if you had done it in person, and you will not escape God's vengeance for the blood of his saints. Yes, even if they did not demand any declaration from you, and even if they did not require you to attend mass or show any reverence to their images, being satisfied that you left the Reformed church and called yourself a member of the Roman church, you had denied Christ, His truth, and His church, and you had entered into the blood-rich realm of the Antichrist; and even if one confesses Christ with the Name, one denies Him in deed; why then do they persecute those who confess Christ with words and deeds? They nullify the power of Christ's one perfect sacrifice by offering Him up daily for the forgiveness of sins, by denying that Christ has paid for actual sins, after baptism; they

worship a piece of bread as the glorified Jesus, this is just as much a complete denial of Christ as in the persecutions of the Heathens; therefore, be watchful.

But if one goes further, and attends mass, bows before the bread god and the images, it will not excuse you that you do it only with the body, and not with your heart, for God wants the body too. 1 Corinthians 6:20. God demands confession; but doing that is not confession before men, but denial before men; it is hypocrisy, for the heart and the deeds do not correspond. Do not think it is just a ceremony, it is a real act, it is an act of idolatry, expressly forbidden, Exodus 20:5, "You shall not bow down to them." That was the faithfulness of the seven thousand left in Israel, that they had not bowed their knees to Baal, Romans 11:4. Faith of the heart is of no avail when confession of the mouth is separated from it; true faith and confession of the mouth always go together. Romans 10:9, "If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart ... you will be saved." 2 Corinthians 4:13, "I believed, therefore I spoke." Forced actions will not excuse you before God; the love of Christ must have such power over you, the salvation must be worth so much to you, that you do not allow yourself to be coerced, that you are willing to endure all torments for the sake of Jesus. Therefore, be encouraged, the suffering that is past is already gone, the suffering that may yet come, you do not know, the present is only suffering and it passes as quickly as time flies; live and worry about each day, for you do not know what tomorrow will bring, each day has enough trouble of its own, Matthew 6:34.

Other Godly Ones Are Without Suffering.

6. There is yet another trial that troubles the soul, namely, there are so many Godly ones who pass through the world so easily,

they have rest, sit under their vine and fig tree, and enjoy their peace, and die in faith. But I am plagued all day long, and my punishment comes every morning; why does it go so badly for me, while it goes so well for others?

I answer: Is not the Lord sovereign? May He not do with His clay as He pleases? Is it not grace that you have not long ago been cast into hell? It behooves us to embrace His sovereignty with love and to be submitted without contention; all the more because we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, Romans 8:28. That all is wisdom and love, what He meets us with through His foreknowledge and determined counsel. Job said, "He will accomplish what is appointed for me," Job 23:14. Do not be jealous of another's happiness; may not the Lord give and take away? May He not give of His own to whom He wills? Is your eye evil because the Lord is good? Rather, be glad about that, that God still shows that He is good; but above all this, the Lord shows you greater kindness than all those who spend their days in peace according to the body; I will not speak to you of the illuminations of the Holy Spirit, of the kisses of the Lord Jesus, of the sweet consolations, of the submissions, of the martyr spirit, with which the Lord surely visits you; whereas others spend their days in darkness, weak faith, and many sins to the soul, though prosperous in body. Is then the body more than the soul? The prosperity of the body more than the well-being of the soul? But God shows you the greatest favor that a creature on earth can enjoy, that is, to be a witness of Jesus, to show that love for Jesus can do all things, that many waters cannot quench, to stand as a hero in the battle against the Antichrist, to expect the crown of the martyrs, to glorify God is the end of man; the more someone attains that as his end, the happier he is. Now, each of you is more for the glorification of Jesus than a thousand other

Godly ones. Therefore, be content with your share, and rejoice in it, and thank the Lord that He deems you worthy to be martyrs.

Suffering is Too Heavy and Lasts Too Long.

7. The final trial I will present is this: the suffering is too heavy for me, it lasts too long, I cannot bear it any longer, I must once again come to denial, and besides that, I am greatly distressed because I am bereft of my own, they have renounced, my children are placed in convents, and are being raised in idolatry; wretched am I, where shall I go? What shall I do? I am at the end of counsel and courage.

Know that you consider the cross too heavy, and the time too long. The fear of suffering before it comes is heavier than the suffering itself; when one is in it, when God calls us to martyrdom, He generally also gives a martyr spirit. If one becomes despondent, the Lord gives courage again, and comforts the soul with inward grace; and when grace fills the soul, then suffering is no longer suffering; when Jesus comes into view, and His love ignites ours, then one can step over mountains of suffering as over molehills. God knows how much you can bear, He will not tempt you beyond your ability; either He will moderate the cross according to your strength, or increase your strength according to the cross. The Lord will give an outcome with the trial, either by giving you contentment in His will, so that His grace is sufficient for you, and you can boast in your weakness and take pleasure in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties, for Christ's sake, being powerful when you are weak, 2 Corinthians 12:6, 10. Whether He lightens the cross and gives relief; for all this comes to you from men, but not from men, but from God, who has counted the hairs of your head; just as He sends it to you in love to glorify you, so He can also diminish it;

whether He completely delivers you, or sets you free; for with God all things are possible; or whether He brings you into glory, saying: "Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Enter into the joy of your master," Matthew 25:21. And as for missing your own, and their denial, it is true, it adds to your suffering; but even so much must Jesus be worth to you: Matthew 10:37. He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.

Thank the Lord that you have something dear in the world, to show your greater love for Jesus by forsaking it; and as for the denial of so many thousands, it is true, they are miserable, who have denied Jesus; but besides the Reformation, the Antichrist has received no heavier blow than through their denial; for thereby a great multitude has been mingled under the papacy, whose hearts hate it, and through them more light is kindled among the Papists, they see the futility and falsehood of their religion, and the truth of the Reformed religion, and they are able to renounce popery and join the Reformed when the times will change, as is imminent. And as for your children, who are locked up in convents, God will take care of them, according to His unchanging covenant: "I will be your God, and the God of your offspring after you," Genesis 17:7. The Lord provides for them and preserves many from the vanities of the world, in which they might otherwise have been drowned. He can keep them in the truth, or, if they have not yet known it, reveal it to them, and when the times will change, then God will make them acknowledge, confess, and live by the truth. Let your prayer be for them, and commit them to the faithful Lord; therefore, let nothing trouble you, break through everything like a hero, pay no attention to anything, nor hold your life dear to yourself, Acts 20:24. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life, Revelation 2:10. Fight the good fight of

faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called, and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses, 1 Timothy 6:12.

Encouragement to Steadfastness.

My dear brothers, upon whom a splendor of glory rests, allow me to encourage you to courage and steadfastness. If you do not need it, being supported by the Spirit of boldness yourself, and you, who have fought so bravely thus far, nevertheless it is my duty and affection to share with you what the Lord has given me. Allow me, then, to show my love to you, so that I may hear on the day of judgment: "I was in prison and you came to Me."

The Ordinary Workings of God.

1. Look at the examples of so many thousands of martyrs who, valiantly fighting, have obtained the crown of glory and now triumph in heaven. It is God's way of all times to call some to be witnesses unto blood, so that the Lord Jesus may be glorified, the world convicted, and the church strengthened. If I understand anything from the Revelation of John, it seems to me that the fourth vial is now being poured out, and the fifth vial is soon to be poured out upon the throne of the beast, that is, Rome, which is not long after this to be destroyed, whereby the reign of the antichrist will be darkened. After that, he will be eradicated, and a glorious state of the church will follow, so that it seems to me that you are also among the last who have the privilege of being martyrs for Jesus. I say, among the last, for I believe that the church, even in other countries, still has persecutions to expect; but they will be brief. Therefore, do not faint in the end, but take as an example of suffering and steadfastness all the previous martyrs of Jesus, who, for the

Name of Jesus, have been persecuted, tormented, and killed by Jews, pagans, and the antichrist, yet have remained conquerors in all things, keeping the faith and confessing Jesus to the end. To recount all their glorious testimonies, great and enduring suffering, courage, and faithfulness would be impossible work and not suitable for a letter; I will only present to you the register, recounted in Hebrews 11:35-38: Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented—of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth. And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith... See, so steadfast have the martyrs been; indeed, many, having too great a desire for martyrdom, have imprudently offered themselves, not fearing to encourage the martyrs, standing in the flames, and cried out: "I am also a Christian!" Women even hastened to the places where the believers had gathered, having heard that the enemies were approaching to murder them all, fearing they would come too late, and took their children with them so that they too might become martyrs in their youth; and will you then, who are called to martyrdom, faint? Will not their steadfastness inspire you to endure everything steadfastly and immovably for the Name of Jesus? The greater the suffering, the greater the glory. Do as the companions of Daniel, who, not wanting to worship the image at Nebuchadnezzar's command, said to him: "We have no need to answer you in this matter. If that is the case, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king. But if not, let it be known

to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up," Daniel 3:16-18.

Comparison of Suffering with Eternal Glory.

2. Compare your suffering with eternal glory. What do you have to lose? You will say: honor, possessions, father, mother, wife, children, comfort, yes, even life itself. And what do you have to suffer? You will say: hunger, cold, nakedness, filthy prisons full of loathsome vermin, heavy chains, bloody labor, merciless beatings, hardly being able to lie down to sleep a little, and finally, being broken on the wheel, burned, hung on gallows, and eaten by dogs. But know that all these are light afflictions that soon pass away; so Paul calls them, 2 Corinthians 4:17. Will you regain those desirable things by renouncing them? Will you escape those miseries by renouncing them? You know yourself, no. And even if by renouncing them you should avoid those torments, and then had an unbearable rage of conscience, which let you rest neither day nor night, and the wrath of God filled your soul with terror and anguish, and your body with painful stones and gravel, with unbearable gout, with evil ulcers, with painful accidents, all of which emaciated you to the bone, so that you would seek death without being able to find it. Or you would exhale your wretched soul in the feeling of hellish pain, a few days after you had denied, and, restored in all freedom, even in luxury, would you then have won? Certainly, as soon as you have denied, you will regret it, and you will wish and seek to be in your former state again. From their gaunt cheeks, their sorrowful countenance, their deathly posture, one sees how it is within those who have denied Jesus and remained in their possessions; a thousand times they would raise your state above theirs. You are now in it, and you cannot regain what you have

lost, and the wrath of God would pursue you if you regained everything: your wife, your children would only serve to burden the distress of your soul. To avoid the water would be to leap into the fire, and it would all end in damnation in the end. Be assured, for experience teaches it daily, that the enemies do not believe your denial, you would still be hated by them; they still seek your life; is it not then better to remain steadfast in the confession of Jesus, since by denying you can gain nothing, and even if you could win the whole world with denial, and you suffered loss to your soul, what would you give in exchange for the redemption of your soul? Whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it, Matthew 16:25.

Consider against all your suffering and against all the pleasures of the world the eternal glory, and you will come to the conclusion with Paul, Rom. 8:18, "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." Oh, how blessed, how sweet, how glorious it will be to be accompanied by the holy angels after death, in whatever condition they may be, to heaven! Oh, how all the inhabitants will stand, seeing a courageous hero and conqueror make his triumphant entry into heaven! How kindly will the Lord Jesus welcome the soul! What hallelujahs will resound over your victory! It is too high for our understanding, our tongue is weak, no eye has seen, no ear has heard, and it has never entered into the heart of man what God has prepared for those who love Him, and especially for His faithful witnesses. That inheritance of the saints in light, that immediate communion with God, that life by sight, being satisfied with the all-sufficiency of the Lord, being illuminated with the light of His countenance, embraced by His love, encompassed by His omnipotence, filled with His goodness, and even shining in pure

holiness, burning in love, incomprehensibly joyful in God, standing among the angels, accompanied by the souls of the most perfect righteous, and at the same time seeing and feeling the Lord in His perfections, praising and exalting Him; that is blessedness, that is glory. Being united with this own body on the day of judgment, but glorified, and being conformed to the glorious body of Christ, standing at the right hand of King Jesus, in the sight and view of the whole world, and especially of those who have tortured and killed them, and there being glorified and crowned by Jesus as conquerors, with soul and body. Being led by the Lord Jesus into heaven, and there having fullness of joy forevermore, without diminution, without end, without fear; that is the great good that the Lord has reserved for those who fear Him, for those who trust in Him in the presence of men. Pay close attention to the passage, Revelation 7:9, "After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number... standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands." Verse 13, "Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, 'Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?'" Verse 14, "And I said to him, 'Sir, you know.' So he said to me, 'These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.'" Verse 15, "Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple. And He who sits on the throne will dwell among them." Verse 16, "They shall neither hunger anymore nor thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any heat." Verse 17, "For the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes." Now compare all your suffering, and all that is glorious and enjoyable on earth, with this eternal and blessed glory, and you will not be able to stand the comparison with your thoughts, because the difference is too great. Will this not make you

joyful in your suffering? Will this not make you courageous in the battle, in which victory by the power of God is certain, and the crown is sure?

It is the greatest glory to confess Jesus.

Consider the Lord Jesus from every angle. He is so excellently glorious that it is the greatest glory for us to confess Him as our Lord and King; we have nothing to be ashamed of in Him. God the Father confesses Him, proclaiming from heaven: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." The angels confess Him in His death and resurrection, indeed all the angels worship Him. How boldly and joyfully have all martyrs confessed Him, sealing their confession with their death! Would you be ashamed of Him? Is He not worth a little suffering to you? He has well deserved it a thousandfold from you, that suffering a little you might confess Him; how much good has He done to you! Out of love for you, He leaves His glory, He takes on your human nature, and that in the form of a servant. He becomes poor, so that He had nowhere to lay His head. He takes your sins upon Himself and stands in your place as Surety.

How heavy it was for Him to deliver you from eternal damnation, to reconcile you to God, and to lead you to glory! The wrath of God over your sins made Him crawl like a worm on the earth, and roll in His own blood, which He sweated from the hellish anguish in His soul. He is betrayed, bound like an evildoer, and led away captive. He is judged by the churchmen as worthy of death as a blasphemer of God, struck with fists, spat upon in His blessed face. He is given blows to His cheeks, and He is mocked and tormented with mockery and pain. He is delivered to the Gentiles, dragged from one court to another, led with a mocking robe through the streets of Jerusalem, paired with a murderer, and demanded death as the worst of the

people; He is pitifully scourged, crowned with a crown of thorns, which they strike into His head with sticks; He is led out, carrying His cross, and dies on the cross, in the greatest distress of His soul, and in the utmost contempt and pain; and He suffers all this, out of love for you, to deliver you from sins and damnation. He made the good confession that He was the King, the Savior, which cost Him His life. And will you now be ashamed of Him, would you deny Him, not want to suffer anything for the loving and dear Jesus, and by your suffering show how dear and precious He is to you? The Father has assigned to His suffering this honor: "That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father," Philippians 2:10-11. Will you then withdraw, to give Him that honor? Will you do Him dishonor, be ashamed of Him, deny Him, for all His love and goodness to glorify you, to be exalted by Him? Far, far be it from anyone's heart to think such a thing. Come then, let the love of Christ compel you, have nothing too precious that you would not want to give it up for Him, to glorify Him by bold confession; be glad that you still have a body and a life, to show thereby that you love and honor Him, be glad that it takes a little long, so that your confession may endure long, and you may glorify Him long on earth.

The grace received obliges.

4. Acknowledge the grace that God has shown you. He lets others lie drowned in sin, and allows them to walk on the path to hell to their destruction. But to you He shows the riches of His grace: how marvelously He has drawn you to Himself through wonderful ways! Every deed and every step is a proof of His love; remember all the ways in which the Lord has trained you from your youth. He kept His eye on you when you strayed from

Him; He was patient when you remained stubborn; He stretched out His hands to you all day long when you resisted. He lured you; He drew you with love. He convinced you of your miserable state; He revealed His Son to you; He gave you the faith by which you accept Jesus as your Surety. He made you a new creature, gave you a new heart, and caused you to walk in His holy ways. How many times has He comforted you and spoken to your heart! He enabled you to remain faithful when He called you to suffer and has supported you thus far, keeping you in faith by His power; He gives you His bold and heroic Spirit, and makes you willing in the day of His power in holy attire. When you are weary, He gives you strength, and multiplies your might when you have none. He sometimes shows you the glorious crown, and makes you taste how good it is to be near God. He makes you count the reproach of Christ as greater riches than all the treasures of the world. He speaks to you: now, my son! Be brave, take courage, and do not fear; for I am with you, do not be dismayed; for I am your God; I will strengthen you, yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand; when you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, nor shall the flame scorch you. Will not all this goodness of God kindle your love, to say: I will cleave to the Lord, He is my portion; therefore I will hope in Him, I commit body and soul to Him, let Him do with it according to His pleasure. He gives me but faithfulness in this present suffering for His Name's sake, and makes me steadfast to endure courageously all that is yet to come; for nothing shall befall me except by His hand. I see the enemies pass by, God commands them: curse David, do thus and so, and no more shall they do. Arise then, as heroes of God, be strong, and the Lord will strengthen your hearts.

In confession, incredible advantage for the church.

5. In the faithful confession of Christ and His truth, there is incredible advantage, both for the church in general and particularly for others. The church is not exterminated by the torture and killing of the martyrs, but it is built up by them; when persecutions arise for the sake of the Word, then the church is purified, the chaff is blown away, the gold is separated from its dross, and shines brighter, and becomes more venerable in the eyes of the world. Small and pure is more glorious than a mixed great multitude; if it is rooted out in one place because it was corrupted to the ground there, and the number of the true godly was extremely small, almost as nothing, it raises its head again more gloriously in another place. Even if there were many godly people left, through their scattering they have the opportunity to let their light shine in other places, each individual becomes like a preacher, and founds a little church in the places where they reside, as happened in the persecution of the church, Acts 8:4. It is true, it looks dark, and it will become even darker, and I believe that other churches will also be purified by persecutions. But I am well assured from the Word of the Lord that the antichrist will not reign as universally as he has done. The Lord will still maintain a standing party for Himself, whose courage will not fail; but they will stand as heroes and fight against the antichrist with the Word of their testimony, until the Lord pours out His judgments on him on a day, suddenly and unexpectedly, and glorifies the church.

You, brethren, are the pillars of the church, the proclaiming voice of the glory of the Lord Jesus, your testimony resounds throughout the whole world; therefore, be careful to remain steadfast; for everyone's eyes are on you, so that the enemies do not rejoice, and the

righteous, for your sake, are not ashamed and grieved. Your steadfastness brings many to repentance, and they begin to seek the truth of the gospel, and who knows how many children you will win in your chains! The wavering are strengthened, and those who succumbed and denied out of fear in the first storm are encouraged by your steadfastness to revoke their denial, and to fight and suffer anew for the truth; by your steadfastness the enemies will find more trouble than they initially thought. And perhaps God, who raises up new martyrs by the thousands, will make your church alive again out of ashes, to the chagrin of their enemies. Indeed, I see from the restoration of such an incredible multitude, and their steadfastness, what great things lie ahead. When fire is confined, it bursts out all the more violently; if the new converts had been left in peace, and contented themselves with their denial, it would have been the end of the church there according to human estimation; but now there is still hope. Therefore, see now, the Lord has placed such a great matter in your hands, those who have gained confidence through your steadfastness would falter again through your cowardice and denial. Therefore, stand as men, and you will prevail with your testimony.

Also for yourself.

6. And as for you, has martyrdom not brought you many benefits? Previously, you lived, or rather fell into many sins that now have no power over you in the least, perhaps some of you have been converted, who were unconverted in freedom; those whom you denied out of fear are now encouraged to endure all things; has the knowledge of divine truths not increased and become more spiritual? Is the heart not holier? Are the prayers not more fervent? Do you not have a greater and more intimate communion with God? Is God not kinder to you? Do you not

have many more consolations? Can you not rejoice more in the hope of glory, and is not all earthly things less in your eyes? And even if there are dark days, weak faith, and struggles, are not the wrestlings stronger, and does not the Lord repeatedly strengthen you with power in your soul? Would you exchange your state for a royal crown with all the pleasures of the ungodly? Look then and acknowledge gratefully the grace that God shows you. Oh, how precious you are in the eyes of the godly all over the world, and how great are the blessed texts for you in the Bible! Allow me to remind you of these. 1 Peter 4:14, "If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you." Matthew 5:11-12, "Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven." See the triumph of Paul, shortly before his martyrdom, 2 Timothy 4:7-8. "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing." Lift up your heads, make the words of Paul your own through faith, and follow him, saying: "Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written: 'For Your sake we are killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.' Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor

things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Romans 8:33-29.

Encouraging Conclusion.

Now then, my beloved brothers, be brave in the battle, do not yield a hair, do not give a claw, for the more you yield, the more the enemies will demand from you, they are never satisfied; it is safer to stand in a matter that one might perhaps yield to in some circumstances, and when standing might be called imprudent, than to yield too much. You will be safer and escape many snares; the conscience will have ten times more peace about the former than the latter. The braver you are, the more the enemy will lose courage. And the more you increase in strength, the more glorious your victory will be. Let them do with your body what they will, or rather, what God wills them to do to you, and strengthen yourself with David in the LORD, your God.

Possess your soul in your patience, which you truly need; arm yourselves, that no renegefulness arise even in your hearts, and even if you could avenge yourselves, yet do not do it, but be as a sheep that is voiceless before its shearers. Pray for those who persecute you, repay good for evil, taking the Lord Jesus continually as an example to follow His footsteps, the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God. Arm yourselves with the whole armor that the apostle proposes, Ephesians 6. The meek is better than the strong, patience not only makes suffering lighter but gives glory to the patient, convinces and even overcomes the enemies.

So then, my beloved brothers! Be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord, 1 Corinthians 15:58. Be faithful unto death, and the

Lord will give you all the blessings that He promises to the overcomers, Revelation 2, 3. "I will give him to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God. I will give you the crown of life. He shall not be hurt by the second death. I will give him to eat of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written, which no one knows except he who receives it. I will give him power over the nations, and he shall rule them with a rod of iron. And they shall be dashed to pieces like potter's vessels. He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels. I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. And I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And I will write on him My new name. I will grant him to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne." Behold, such invaluable promises God gives to faithfulness, and for a small suffering. Therefore, be faithful unto death.

I conclude with the apostle's blessing, 1 Peter 5:10, "But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you. Amen. Dear brothers, upon whom the glorious light of God rests, I remain with all my heart.

Your loving fellow brother in Christ.

How to behave when called to confession. X. Now we turn again to you, Dutchmen. If your heart is stirred by these reasons, and you have a desire to confess the Lord Jesus, then begin the work immediately; you live in the midst of a crooked and perverse

generation, which does not know God and the way of salvation, and has no desire for godliness. Come out, then, with the purpose of confessing Jesus by a godly life, so that everyone may be convinced of your renunciations, humility, meekness, love, kindness, so that everyone may see that the heavenly nature is in you. Speak of Christ, of the necessity and power of His suffering, of the nature of faith and regeneration.

XI. Join the godly, so that you may be made manifest that you stand with them For Christ against the world. Join the true church, and be diligent in public worship, and in the use of the Holy Communion, therein one confesses the Lord Jesus; to separate oneself from it, and to hold oneself apart, is a kind of silent denial of Christ and His cause. If reproach and damage come upon you because of this confession, rejoice in it, it is a small beginning of martyrdom.

XII. When the Lord brings persecutions upon the church and through the world, when errors are stiffly maintained in the church and when such pastors and others who stand for truth and godliness are oppressed and persecuted; then oppose them, and remain a companion of those who fear the Lord and confess His truth; if you are cast out by them, if you are compelled to unite with them, if you are deprived of your possessions by refusing, thrown into prisons, treated as criminals, even threatened with sword, gallows, and wheel, or even put to death, then stand and consider that the Lord is calling you to martyrdom. Whether the persecution comes from within, or whether it is done from outside by the antichrist, it is the same, and your confession is the same, and your faithfulness is the same, and your reward is the same.

XIII. Do not be dismayed if you are made to suffer under an evil name; for that is old, the Lord Jesus was also persecuted and killed

under an evil name; they said: We do not stone You for any good work, but for this and that reason. The old pretenses were: You are disobedient to your authorities, you are standing against them, you are inciting rebellion, you are causing division in the church, you have soul-destroying errors and heresies, and seek to propagate them; enough pressure, away with him. I say, do not be dismayed by them, but continue steadfastly to adhere to the truth, and to bear witness to it, with words, conduct, and suffering.

XIV. If the persecutions come from the antichrist, you are permitted to flee as far as you can, to spare yourself for better opportunity; but do not flee there, where you are most likely to come through to the world, but where the godly flee, where there is a church, or some likelihood of establishing one; do not hold worldly goods so high that you would endanger yourself for them.

XV. One may flee from the persecutions of the antichrist; but not when the persecutions arise in the church, because with the antichrist it is all over, he has already been expelled from the church, and he now contends not otherwise than with fire and sword. But in the emerging persecutions in the church, one must not flee, but remain to bear witness against the persecutors, and for the truth it is necessary to seal it with one's death; new persecutions demand new martyrs. But if one cannot escape the hands of the antichrist by fleeing, then one must know that God calls us to bear witness for His cause, and then stand. When we speak of fleeing, we do not include the pastors, teachers, and elders in it, unless his congregation, fleeing, calls him as well, and so he remains with his congregation. Otherwise, he must stand as long as his congregation is there, and in a condition where he can serve it, even if it means sealing the truth with his death before their eyes.

XVI. To arm yourself against persecutions, whatever they may be,

(a) Read much in the Word of God, not only to strengthen your faith, but to be more and more confirmed in the truth, and thus more capable to fight for it and to suffer. It is the sword of a spiritual warrior.

(b) Read much in the books of martyrs, both old and new, there you see their spirit and courage as if you were there, which enlivens the heart and gives a desire for martyrdom, and when our turn comes, the familiar examples will be in your memory and strengthen you. You will also see their mistakes therein, which will serve as good beacons for you.

(c) Associate much with the godly, and speak with each other about bearing witness, in times of peace and persecution, and encourage one another.

(d) Pray much that the Lord will give you a bold spirit; knowing that, if the Lord were to let go of His hand, you would not stand, but would fall into denial through the slightest fear; know your weakness, distrust yourself, however convinced you are now of the truth. Cling to the Lord to be faithful in the hour of temptation.

(e) Exercise much faith in Christ now, to be assured of your share in Him, and to learn by experience how good it is to be near the Lord, so that faith may be stronger, even when feeling fails, and it is assailed from all sides.

(f) Strive earnestly for sanctification, to lead a blameless life, and to have a blameless conscience before God and men, for the righteous are as bold as a young lion, Prov. 28:1.

Chapter 9

On Contentment.

Because confession generally causes harm to physical goods, and because the boldness in confessing is often troublesome to many, it is necessary that one endure that harm through contentment in the will of God, concerning the physical state we are now discussing.

Contentment (Hebrew: dai) means fullness, abundance, sufficiency. Often that word is attributed to God Himself; the Lord calls Himself El Shaddai, God who has everything and can produce everything from His fullness. It is usually translated as Almighty. In Greek, autarkeia, which is composed of two words, meaning sufficiency and self, indicates having enough for oneself, being content with oneself; for no one can be content unless they have enough, and one has enough when they no longer desire more. So contentment does not consist in the abundance of goods, but in the fulfillment of desire. If the desire is great, much is needed for its fulfillment; if it is small, a little is enough. A small bottle is filled with a little, and to fill a large barrel, much is needed. Man needs little to live in the service of God; if desires are appropriate to necessity, then a little is enough to fill one's desire and belly.

Description.

Contentment is a Christian virtue consisting in an agreement of the desires of the children of God with their present state, because it is

the will of their God in Christ, and His arrangement pleases them so, in which they rest with pleasure, in quiet tranquility, joyfulness, and gratitude, trusting that the Lord will make the present and the future turn out for their best, whereby they use the present state for growth in spiritual life and for the glorification of God.

It is a Christian virtue.

It is a Christian virtue of the children of God. The unconverted are evil for every good work and do not know the nature of this virtue. Seeing it in the children of God, they disdain it as meekness of spirit, endurance, Stoic insensitivity, and consider them unfit for high things because it is a treasure hidden from them. But the children of God have it from the beginning, and seeing the beauty of this virtue, they strive to possess it to a greater degree. The true dwelling place is the heart; contentment is not mere saying, not mere restraint, not abstaining from pursuing the goods of this world; it is not a fleeting thought of wanting to be content, but it is a disposition of the soul. Understanding, will, affections are in a contented state, and from that disposition arise such actions that correspond to that disposition. This disposition is only in the children of God, in the godly. Godliness is great gain with contentment.

Has regard to the present state.

The object is the present state. Believers, being and remaining in the state of grace, encounter various matters both in soul and body; sometimes they more closely align with their desires, and sometimes they greatly differ from them. It is easy to be content when the Lord gives the desires of the heart, but when the encounters do not align with the desires, then it is hard work to reconcile one's desires with the encounters; concerning this, a Christian is diligent. The goods themselves do not provide contentment; whether a person is rich, in

a moderate state, or in poverty, they can be either discontented or contented. A rich person and a person of moderate means should equally strive for contentment in their state, just as the poor person should in theirs: one should not strive to be in another state, thinking that one would be better off, but the effort is to conduct oneself well in the state in which one finds oneself. A poor person thinks: if only I were in a moderate state; a person of moderate means: if only I were rich; a rich person: if only I had more; an unmarried person: if only I were married; a married person: if only I were unmarried; a sailor: if only I had a job on land; a tradesman: if only I were a merchant, and so forth. These are foolish thoughts; contentment does not lie therein, but the state in which one is is the best for being content. The admonition is: Be content with the present. Hebrews 13.

Consists in agreement of desires with the same.

The form or nature of this virtue consists in the agreement of our desires with the present state. Human nature is not self-sufficient; man is merely a vessel into which something can be poured, and in order to be filled, he has desires, which reach out like hands for what he considers would fulfill him; after the fall, desires became disordered, both in terms of the things he desires, which cannot fulfill him, and in terms of the manner, desiring too eagerly and vehemently. This wrongness still remains in part in the children of God after rebirth and causes them much distress. Although their judgment is against it, they still want and desire much; they want things to be good according to their desires, which are too hollow, as they could be fulfilled by earthly things, whereas they should moderate their desires according to the good they have, whether much or little.

Desires not to be eradicated but to be directed.

Desires should not be eradicated, as if being without desire were true contentment; that would dehumanize a person, making them worse than a beast. Desires should be against evil; it should burden us; it should cause pain; one should feel discomfort and desire to be relieved of it. Good should be lovely to us, and our desires should go out to enjoy it, and one should follow desires by using the means conducive to that end; so contentment does not exclude desires, nor the use of means, but it excludes all desires that lead to sinful things. All desires for more than one needs, all fervor and passion of the heart's passions for things that are otherwise lawful to desire; all torment of the spirit, heartache, and frustration when things don't go our way; all bad means to achieve one's desires; all neglecting of lawful means, and tempting God.

But all that is still not contentment; contentment consists in the agreement of our desires with the present state, in wanting to be in the state one is in, and in no other. Before being in such a state, one may well desire what we judge to be necessary, but with a true and just judgment, and when one is in a burdened state, one may well desire to be delivered from it and to come into a better one; this does not contradict contentment. But when one is presently in a state, whether good or bad, one must be satisfied with the present, and align and bring our desires to that state, as it currently exists. Even natural people with a stoic fate, it must be so, there is nothing to be done about it, wanting to calm themselves, saying: if one cannot do as one wishes, then one must wish as one can, showed that contentment consists in an agreement of desires with the present state. The godly have much more reason to align their desires with their state and to want it thus, because it is the will of God. This not only applies to the physical, but also to the spiritual; being content

when things don't go our way is hard work in both, but even more so in the spiritual. When one is in spiritual darkness, abandonment, temptation, under the power of corruption, even then one must be content and align our desires with our state, not because that state is pleasing to us, or ever could be, not that we would not strive to be delivered from it, but because it is the will of God not to give us more grace at present, because He wants to bring us through that way to salvation and the glorification of His Name.

Because it is the will of God.

VI. The foundation on which and why they are content with their present state is because it is the will of their God in Christ Jesus, and it is so ordained. A person cannot love and desire the painful as painful; but there is another reason why they embrace a present evil and painful condition or state, namely, because it pleases God. It is one thing to be content because God wills it, because there is no resistance against it, and everything must yield to God's power and hand; then it is not a matter of wanting so, desires do not align with the state; but it is a matter of must, and that doesn't differ much from the pagan fate; and it is another thing to embrace the will of God, even to the highest degree in itself, and lovely for them. For the will of God to have power to contentment, one must regard God as their God, as reconciled in Christ Jesus. Faith is particularly important here; whether one accepts Jesus, offered to them, with emphasis, and thus comes to God; whether faith works with return and assurance of our state of grace; whether one considers themselves to be reconciled by the habit of faith, without renewed action or assurance; whether one only clings, to have a share in Jesus, and thus comes to God in hope through Him. The stronger this faith is, the stronger the contentment in the will of God is. This believing disposition arouses love for God, and love acknowledges

the sovereignty of God, and the propriety of submission; love engenders delight in the will of God, and thus love for the will of God overcomes and surpasses love for oneself. One still feels the pain of evil, which may and should remain, but the love for God's pleasure prevails, and therefore their desires align with their state; one wants thus, even with tears in their eyes, because the Lord wills it, which is more delightful to them above all, and makes the bitter sweet, and the heavy light; see this in the perfect pattern, the Lord Jesus, John 6:38, "For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me." Matthew 26:39, "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will."

Yields pleasure.

VII. The effects or fruits of contentment are:

(a) Pleasure in that state, because it is the will of God. See: 2 Corinthians 12:10. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs.

(b) Quiet tranquility, not a carelessness and insensitivity, but an active embrace of the will of God, which causes them to be silent, not in irritability or despondency, but in faithful submission: Psalm 39:10.

(c) Cheerfulness or joyfulness. Not about the adversities themselves; all chastisement, when it is present, does not seem a matter of joy but of sorrow; but the will of God makes the bitter sweet, therefore the apostle says: We also boast in tribulations, Romans 5:3. Count it all joy, my brothers, when you fall into various trials, James 1:2.

(d) Gratitude. A Christian sees the hand of God as the hand of a loving Father; they know from experience that it is good for them to

be afflicted, and that He afflicts them out of faithfulness; therefore they thank God in everything, 1 Thessalonians 5:18, and say with Job: "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; Blessed be the name of the Lord!" Job 1:21.

(e) Resting in and trusting in the Lord's providence. A contented person takes such pleasure in God's will that he does not worry about the present or the future day; because he believes that God is his Father, and therefore everything that God brings upon him will be good and for his best; therefore he is at peace and content: Psalm 91:1, 2. He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, "He is my refuge and my fortress; My God, in Him I will trust."

(f) Growth. Through contentment, one escapes many hindrances that prevent us from godliness; whether discontent produces many sins and keeps us in a sinful state; whether it holds us back from exercising many virtues. Through contentment, one lays aside all burden, and the sin that easily ensnares, so that one can more freely run with patience the race that is set before us, Hebrews 12:1. Only when one bears the cross contentedly is it to our advantage, and one becomes holy through it, Hebrews 12:10. When one boasts in tribulation, then tribulation produces patience, and patience, experience, and experience, hope, Romans 5:3, 4. Then the cross becomes a school: Psalm 94:12. Blessed is the man whom You instruct, O Lord, and teach out of Your law.

(g) God is glorified by this; for thereby they show that the Lord is sovereign and may do with His creature as He pleases; then they show that God is sufficient, and that having God, one can do without everything; then it becomes apparent that God is good, faithful, and true, wise and almighty: 1 Peter 1:7. That the genuineness of your

faith... may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ. 1 Peter 4:16 ... if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter.

Conviction of the Unconverted.

VIII. The presented and declared truth is capable of convicting the unconverted of their evil state, and the godly of their lack and sin.

Unconverted are discontented.

(a) There is always something wrong: either one has no children, or one has too many; one has learned the wrong trade, wishing to be a shopkeeper, or able to learn a craft, then things would go better; everything I start is against the wind and current, and where will it all end in the end? So-and-so has the business, the love, the respect; but I am looked down upon; everyone is against me, treating me unfairly, acting wickedly towards me and mine, slandering, and stealing my honor, everyone is targeting me, there is always trouble brewing, so that one can never rest day or night due to unrest from within and without.

(b) Another is sluggish and lazy, and therefore insensitive.

(c) Another has a sweet and gentle temperament and can let everything pass over them.

(d) Others use reason and see things through, or they see that there is no way through; therefore, patience by force, there is nothing to be done about it; or they will tackle it this way, and then it will be fine.

(e) Others, when they miss the mark, grab onto anything nearby, they distract themselves, one with this and another with that.

(f) Others become completely despondent and despairing, and would walk to the gallows to end the torment.

(g) Others, even if they can manage the present, worry about the future day, every bad rumor makes them tremble, and robs them of the peaceful enjoyment of the present.

(h) Others seek their pleasure in eating and drinking, in money, in status, in satisfying their sinful desires.

(i) Others find their pleasure in their hands, and dig like moles in the ground to extract pleasure from it, or in people, pandering to them, flattering and worshipping them, to gain their favor. Thus, every unconverted person seeks rest without finding it. And their contentment is only unrest.

(j) Another will make it a bit better, and claims to be content, if he says, in the will of God, even though he has never sought or obtained reconciliation with God in Christ, and therefore has neither God's help nor favor to expect.

All of you who are as now described, know:

(a) that you are without God, without Christ, that God is not for, but against you. And if He stirs up, who can calm? If He leaves you, what will help you? Then you can be nothing but terror within and without.

(b) All your striving, all your contentment and discontentment is only sin, is only filth, in which you wallow, like a pig in its mire, and it makes you more and more repugnant in the eyes of God, and more offensive to true godly people. And if your present state, according to your imagination, is enough or not enough for you, the outcome of

everything you seek will turn out for your harm, and will cause you all discontent, sorrow, terror, anguish, and fear, until eternal damnation will rob you of everything you now hold onto to some extent, and the wrath of God, and the fire of hell will fill you forever; therefore, turn to the Lord, seek reconciliation with God in Christ, then He will be your contentment, and having contentment in Him, everything will work together for good.

Punishment of the Godly.

IX. Now I come to the godly. It is sad that those who have God as a reconciled God, who have chosen God as their only and all-sufficient Portion, rejecting everything that is not God, still have so much discontent because things in the world, and for the body and soul, do not go as nature would like.

(a) Their eyes and hearts still look too much to earthly heights, beauty, goodness, food, drink, clothing, as if these could bring them any pleasure.

(b) They also want to have their way, and if things don't go according to their wishes, if people don't give them what they want, then they become sad, irritable, and angry.

(c) They eat their bread with displeasure because it is not as abundant and tasty as they would like it to be.

(d) They tremble and quake for the future; it's all about what shall we eat, what shall we wear?

(e) Anxiety squeezes the heart, and worries take away joy and life.

(f) They waver concerning the providence of God.

(g) They immediately consider God as angry.

(h) They reject their state.

(i) And expose themselves to the attacks of the devil, who easily gains a foothold to toss us to and fro.

(j) Spiritual life loses its strength; and if the Lord were not faithful and unchanging, one would be ruined in body and soul; earthly adversities can cause so much harm. In this state, one likes to be pitied, one wants to be comforted, but in such a way that one's desires are fulfilled; one would be encouraged if only that sorrow were gone, if one could first obtain what one desires, then comfort would come, then one could live without worry and serve the Lord.

Admonition against Anxiety.

X. What shall I say? Pity you? That I will do; but in such a way that I do not harm you, and foster sin, but rather awaken you to overcome useless worries, evil discontent, and crushing anxieties; for

1. You will see for yourself from the revelations that you are still very carnal, and your eyes are fixed on things that are insignificant. Are you then still of this world, like the others whose portion is in this life? Is the earthly capable of bringing contentment? When you entered into the covenant of grace, did you stipulate that you should have it your way and to your liking in the body, or did you forsake that? Why should the body be more concerned than the soul? Should bodily lack affect you more than the lack of the soul? Be ashamed before God and men that you are still so carnal.

A Quiet Denial of God's Providence.

2. Do you not see that it is idolatry? There is a secret turning away from God, a failure to depend on Him, a quiet denial of God's providence, and a hidden accusation of cruelty, or unwillingness to care for you, of changeability, and of not fulfilling His promises; under the pretext of necessity, there is a desire to rest on the physical and live by bread alone; and even if bodily things alone are not relied upon, it is still partly so; God and the earthly together should satisfy us; or do you serve God so that He may give you the physical? How evil is that attitude; how far it is from the state of Asaph, Psalm 73:25, Whom have I in heaven but You? And there is none upon earth that I desire besides You! Vs. 26, My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever. Therefore, be ashamed when you come before God because of your sinful state.

Pride.

3. Those worries and trembling concerns spring from a prideful heart, both in relation to God and to people: Regarding God, as if one were deserving of something, as if God were obligated to serve us according to our will; if one truly understood their sinfulness and deserving of punishment and turned back to it, they would come to a lower state and sink in wonder that God still tolerated them, indeed gave them so much, even more than others who may have much less than us, considering that we may be even more wicked or sinful than them.

In relation to our neighbor, it is pride; for one looks at those who are greater than us, and it's, "Why not me as well?" Seldom is the concern truly about lack for the present; nature is content with little; but it's to satisfy one's desires, to have as much as another, to remain in honor and not come to the contempt of being poor, to depend on

the church or another; truly, in itself, that should not matter to us. God desires us to have desires for our well-being, to come to honor in the world; but those desires must be overcome and denied when God wants to humble and keep us humble; therefore, under the guise of necessity, honesty, or being better able to serve God, there is pride; God desires to be served by one in a higher state in the world, and by others in a low state; the will of God must be our satisfaction, in whatever state we may be in; the despondency over one's low state is merely grandiosity; therefore, be humble, and you will be relieved of useless concerns.

In Vain.

4. All your concerns are in vain; you will not gain a cent more because of them. God has already decided from eternity how much you will have; there is a modest portion, Prov. 30:8, which God has assigned to each and gives in due time. This portion, no one will take away or diminish, and you will not increase it with your concerns and worries, nor will you break or change God's fixed plan. Were there not greedy Israelites who gathered much manna, and when they came home, they had no more than their measure; were there not others who, for lack of strength or because they came to a place where not much had fallen, gathered little, and when they came home, they too had their measure full, one did not have excess, the other did not come up short, 2 Cor. 8:15. Therefore, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Matt. 6:25. Who of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? Vs. 27 All these things the Gentiles seek, vs. 32.

Disgrace to God.

5. You dishonor God and harm yourself; for with those gnawing concerns, you show that God alone is not sufficient for you, and you cannot be satisfied with Him unless you have as much physical wealth as you deem necessary. Is it not a disgrace for a father who is rich enough to let his children suffer lack despite their cries and pleas? So, do not with your discontent and useless concerns cause others to have such thoughts about the Lord, as if He had no love, no mercy, no compassion, no care for His children? Instead, you would glorify Him if you were content with the present, and if your salvation consisted in enjoying God Himself.

And concerning yourself, you bring yourself into constant unrest, anxiety, fear, distress; you deprive yourself of pleasure and joy in God. You hinder your growth because that attitude displeases God and is not suitable for making good use of the means of edification; worries suffocate the Word and good impulses, making them unfruitful, Matt. 13:22. Unbelief has the opportunity to rise above and toss the worried soul here and there; the desire for religion diminishes, free approach to God is hindered, the thought that adversities come from God's wrath makes the soul tremble; thus, silence, dependence on God, childlike trust in God, largely disappear. And all for a bit more or less bread? For one's own will? For one's own glory? For the future, which one does not know what it will be like? Oh, these are too trivial matters to lose the welfare of one's soul over.

Prevents gratitude.

6. When the Lord will have given you deliverance from your distress, as He surely will in His time, then you have rendered

yourself incapable of being truly thankful to the Lord by your previous discontent and murmuring; a shame over your past mistrust will bring new distress to the soul; and it often happens that when the Lord has fulfilled your improper desires, He then gives a thinness to the soul, then one is at a loss, and one would wish to be back in the previous narrowness and have a better state of soul; therefore, behave well now while you are in a school where you can learn much that you cannot learn in times of prosperity. So be careful, guard against being murmurers and complainers about your state, walking after your desires, Jude 1:16. But possess your souls in patience, and be content with the present; then you will be able to serve the Lord in prosperity and adversity.

Exhortation.

XI. Therefore, children of God, rich, middle-class, small, lowly, poor, oppressed, driven by storms, whoever you are and whatever your condition, for you all need encouragement, because no state in itself gives contentment; learn to align your desires with your state, whatever it may be, and do not try to bring your state to your desires; for there would be no end to it; cast away discontentment as a harmful plague to the spiritual life, and possess your souls in contentment. To this end:

God Himself urges.

1. Meditate on all powerful exhortations, and hear them from the mouth of the Lord, speaking thus to you:
 - Psalm 37:5, Commit your way to the Lord, trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass.

- Psalm 55:23, Cast your burden on the Lord, and He shall sustain you; He shall never permit the righteous to be moved.
- Heb. 13:5, Be content with such things as you have, for He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."
- Matt. 6:31, 32. Therefore, do not worry, saying, "What shall we eat?" or "What shall we drink?" or "What shall we wear?" For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.
- Isa. 33:16, His bread will be given him, his waters will be sure.
- Likewise, 1 Peter 5:7, Casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.

Do not pass quickly over these passages, but observe each and every word in particular; mark them in such a way that God from heaven addresses you with those words, and not only commands you not to worry but to be content; and is God's command not enough to obey Him? Is His exhortation not enough for your awakening?

But besides that, pay attention to the promises that the Almighty, good, and true God makes: He will bring it to pass. He will sustain you. I will never leave you. Your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. He cares for you. Are God's promises too little for you? Would He say it and not do it? Well then, be satisfied, rejoice in His promises, which will surely be fulfilled. It's true, the Lord does not always fulfill His promises as we judge would be best for us; but the Lord will surely do it in His time; it's best that we do not receive them in our time; there is still something for us to learn; we must first be able to use them well; it is the Lord's wisdom and goodness that He postpones the matter. But there is no doubt about the fulfillments. He has not promised to give you such and such; but as much as you will need, and that must be enough for you, and He will surely give it to you; therefore, if He delays, wait for Him; for He will certainly come; He will not delay, Hab. 2:3. Even if you see no

means, or where it will come from, He is almighty, or He can do it without means, and sustain you and your children without food. Or He creates the means, even if the ravens bring it to you, even if He makes bread rain from heaven, even if He multiplies flour and oil, even if He shuts the mouths of lions and prevents the fire's power; therefore, just be still and see the salvation of the Lord.

God is sovereign.

2. Is not God, who is your Father, sovereign? Would you rather He were not? You will surely say: no, I am glad that He is, I do not wish to be above Him, I approve His sovereignty, even if He were to kill me, I would worship His free supremacy. Here, the will of God and your will stand opposed. You say: I want to have it. God says: I will not give it to you. You will have so and so little; whose will shall prevail: God's or yours? Because you know that you cannot contend against God, will you therefore murmur and complain, as children sometimes do against their parents? Indeed, that is fighting against God. But because He is sovereign and His will is supreme, and you willingly approve of it, submit your will to His, and desire as He desires, and be content in your state, because it is God's will concerning you, especially since that God is your Father, to whom you daily pray: Thy will be done. Whose will you submit to in prayer, will you not also submit to in His dealings with you, even if they are not according to your desires? Therefore, submit to God, and glorify Him therein.

Is Himself your Portion.

3. Has God not set Himself as your portion, to make you enjoy all blessedness in Him, saying: I am your God! If you have the All-sufficient for your blessedness, do you still need anything else? Is He not better to you than a thousand worlds, than a piece of money,

than a bite of bread? Therefore, say and practice what the godly did, Lam. 3:24: The Lord is my portion, says my soul; therefore I will hope in Him. From the consideration of ownership to God, the only blessed God, the God of perfect blessedness, turn to Him in times of distress, take refuge in Him, be content with Him by faith, even if it does not please Him to give you such a measure of enjoyment of Him as you desire, which is reserved for you in eternity. Rejoice in ownership, and let this content you in missing the earthly, which you would gladly have. Set before yourself the example of Habakkuk, Hab. 3:17,18, Though... the fields yield no food... yet I will rejoice in the Lord.

Has given you Christ.

4. That God, who has given you the most precious thing, namely, His own Son Jesus Christ, to deliver you from your miserable state, and to bring you to eternal glory, which He has appointed to you as an inheritance, Rom. 8:17, would He allow you to truly lack anything that you need for the body? He who did not spare His own Son but gave Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him graciously give us all things? Rom. 8:32. Behold, Christ given to you as a Savior, to have a share in all the blessings of the covenant of grace, to have salvation as an eternal inheritance, is that not enough for you? Should more money, a piece of bread be added to it before you could be content? Shame on you for thinking so. And would He who has given you the greater and the eternal, refuse you the bodily necessities? He who has given you life and body, would He not give you food and covering? Matt. 6:25 ... Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? How dare you think so? Therefore, be content with the present, it will suffice you; only add your desire to your state.

All is transient vanity.

5. What is the world after all, what is it that you desire so eagerly; what is it that you are so concerned about? It is all transient, and you yourself will not remain here forever, and you and everything on earth is only for a moment, why then do you make such a fuss about it? When death comes, you will not grieve that you had little in your life, and it will not bring you joy that you had plenty, you will not die more peacefully because of it. If you regarded every day as the last, and constantly imagined yourself dying now, would it not disturb you less, as it does now? Therefore, keep your eye on your transience and on the insignificance of the earthly, and at the same time on the promises of God, that He will bestow upon you the earthly, as much as you will need, as an additional gift and will care for you, and you will learn to be content.

A godly person has never lacked anything.

6. Has a godly person ever lacked anything? Read through the entire Bible, and you will not find one. Look at yourself. God cared for you when you were little, He provided swaddling clothes for your comfort, breasts to suckle, a lap to be cherished in, bread and clothes in your growing up, and has fed you from your birth until this day; and when you were in distress, did He not often save you? Will God then stop now? He who provides food for the young ravens when they cry to Him, who provides food for the birds and sustains everything that lives. Who fills the wicked with justice and joy, would He forget you? Would He deny you the necessary? Therefore, be content, trust in Him, be content with His dispensation, even if it is not as much as your desires, it will be as much as you need, and that is enough, and must be enough for you.

Is very beneficial.

7. Contentment brings forth much good: Rom. 8:28, We know that all things work together for good to those who love God. Namely,

(a) A tranquil soul, which is precious to God, 1 Peter 3:4. And great pleasure within oneself; a contented person tramples upon all earthly things, lives above the visible, and is too high for all the arrows of enemies to reach.

(b) Estrangement from the world. By nature, humans are concerned with the body, to care for it with the physical; a born-again person still has much of it; but when he obtains contentment in the will of God, then he turns away from the world, and does not seek his pleasure there, but walks through it as a stranger.

(c) A praying and communing state with God. Because God is his portion, he finds delight in it, observes God's hand in everything that befalls him, and believes that it is all for his good, even if it is as painful as lancing a boil; if he needs anything, he prays in faith and expects in faith what he needs.

(d) Abundant experience of God's help. To become aware that God looks upon him, hears his prayer, and saves him, is ten times more pleasing to a believer, and infinitely more joyful to him, than if he were brought from the poorest to the wealthiest state, and that experience strengthens him, that the Lord will also continually deliver him in the future. He who has delivered me from the lion and bear, will also deliver me from this Philistine. He who has delivered me out of six troubles, will not forsake me in the seventh.

(e) Gratitude. When one lacks everything and sees no way out, and God comes to help, then a crust of bread tastes better than all delicacies in prosperity; then a shelter, to shelter from rain and wind,

is more pleasant and easier than a palace before; then the soul lifts itself up to the Lord, and acknowledges Him as the Giver; then it rejoices in the Lord, then one acknowledges oneself as less than all the Lord's benefits, then it is: Bless the Lord, O my soul! and forget not all his benefits. Who redeems your life from destruction, and crowns you with lovingkindness and tender mercies, Psalm 103:2, 4. (f) Longing for glory. Then one sees that it is not down here, but in heaven; therefore, one longs to be dissolved and to be with Christ, with that hope one comforts oneself, and thereby one becomes strong to endure all adversities with courage; then one is glad that there is a rest reserved, and one hastens to enter into that rest. (g) Holiness. Just as anxieties are the thorns that choke the good seed, so contentment is a suitable state to deny oneself, to be humble, to trust in God, to delight in God as one's Portion, to come boldly before the Lord, and to show that in God there is sufficiency. Here is the fountain of all godliness.

Objections answered.

XII. Some might say: I would be content if I knew I was a child of God, and if the Lord was near to me, and allowed me to feel His goodness.

That is tantamount to saying: if I were in heaven, then I would be content. No, here one must find contentment through faith in the will of God. Unbelief about your state arises from your discontentment, not from lack. As long as you are not content, or unless your desires are fulfilled, you will generally waver alongside your state, and beside God's favor towards you, and your soul will be tossed like a wave of the sea here and there, James 1:6. Will you believe, you must be content with the present, and if you are content,

you must believe; these two go together, may the Lord grant them both to you!

Others might say: the Lord does not listen to me, I am not saved, my distress is growing ever greater, how can I be content then?

Do you see: that should be your contentment. No, not having, but being content in the will of God with confidence in the outcome, is true contentment. That the Lord does not give you is because you do not yet need it, because the Lord wants to teach you contentment in Him alone, because He wants to prepare you first to use the good well, and to comfort and help you in a way different from what your foolishness prescribes to God.

Means.

If you want to learn contentment,

(a) Always consider what you deserve, and you will be glad that you are not already in hell.

(b) Look at others, and you will not want to exchange your condition with theirs; one will have even less and be much more miserable than you physically, and will still be an example of contentment to you; another will be graceless, with whom you surely do not want to exchange.

(c) Live day by day, do not take on the difficulty of two, ten, a hundred days at once, then it would be too heavy for you; each day has enough trouble of its own.

(d) Your difficulty may not be as great as you make it out to be, because your desire is too great, therefore, strive more to moderate

your desire according to your condition because it is the will of God, than to improve your condition according to your desire.

(e) Use the means diligently and faithfully in all things, so that your conscience does not accuse you, and leave the outcome to the Lord. Rest assured in His promise, He will make it.

(f) Keep your eyes constantly on heaven, and consider the insignificance of all that is on earth; the closer to God, the further from the creature. Everything passes away, but whoever does the will of God remains forever.

Chapter 10

Of Self-Denial.

From the love of the will of God and contentment in that will flows self-denial. Greek *aparneomai*, from *arneomai*, means to entirely, wholly reject, renounce, discard, renounce ownership, homage, and dominion, deny, disown, not recognize or acknowledge as one's own, and thus to let go and abstain from it, Hebrews 11:24. It is also expressed with other words, such as to mortify one's members which are on the earth, Colossians 3:5. Putting off the old man, Ephesians 4:22. Crucifying the flesh with its affections and lusts, Galatians 5:24.

Description.

II. Denial is a Christian virtue, given by God to His children, whereby, out of love for the will of God, they, according to their understanding, will, and affections, as far as they conflict with the will of God, do not listen to them, do not follow them, but resist and reject them. With a willing relinquishment and rejection of everything that pertains to their natural well-being, as the cause of God requires, for the glory of God and the benefit of their neighbor.

Is a Christian virtue.

III. It is a Christian virtue. The Heathens perceived that their desires disturbed their peace; therefore, some sought to extinguish them by reason, and seemed to be denying themselves of some things; but it did not come from the right motive, the love of the will of God, and they did not aim at the right end, but it was self-seeking, in a different way than others, namely, to rest therein as their peace and

to gain glory among men. So their denial was a shining sin, which had a false gloss, without substance. But we speak of the denial of a Christian, which excludes all wrong self-love and the self-sustenance and self-seeking that arise from it, and which flows from love for God's will, and ends in the glorification of God.

The cause is God.

IV. The cause is the Lord, and not the human himself. The human is too deeply drowned in self-love to rid himself of it, and even if he could detach himself from it, he cannot bring himself into the opposite virtuous state; denial does not consist in a negation but in a habit.

It is the Lord who grants this grace to His children; He gives them spiritual life in regeneration, Ephesians 2:1; James 1:18. And from that virtuous state, He causes them to work, thus He gives them both the will and the work, Philippians 2:13. And especially also the mortification of sin: Romans 8:13 ... if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.

Having given life to the soul, God stirs up that life and makes it active by His preventing and cooperating power; and the believer, uniting himself by faith with Christ, and through Christ with God, thus he grasps His strength as his own and works in that assumed power to mortify the sin that is in him. Thus God is the first cause, and the human, touched by that power, moves himself, both in forsaking sinful self-love and its consequences, and in purifying and adorning himself with the opposite virtue: 2 Corinthians 7:1 ... let us cleanse ourselves. Philippians 2:12, 13 ... work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure.

Subject, the children of God.

V. The subject is the children of God. The unconverted are devoid of all spiritual life, and therefore no living movement or action can come from them; but it is a gift to the children of God, now converted and believing; they are those who are disciples of Christ and follow Him, Matthew 16:24. Denial does not consist in any actions, but it is a habit and state of the heart; their heart is turned away and averted from self-love and self-seeking, though imperfectly; one has progressed more in this than another. As that state increases, so do the actions become stronger and purer; just as all virtues, being implanted by God, are increased by many exercises, so also this virtue. Hence it comes that one person increases more in this, and another in that virtue. When virtue has taken deep root, the one who denies himself has much peace within; he is not easily carried away by secondary motives, envy, anger, or indiscretions in words, which very often arise thoughtlessly from self-love and self-seeking; he does not fear evil reports, harm, or anything coming from outside, but is calm and thoughtful, and at the same time bold in his duty, and all of it is genuine and pleasing to everyone, in everything he does before God and men.

The object is the human himself.

VI. The object or subject is the human himself. God has implanted in man a love for himself and demands it in the second table in the command to love his neighbor as himself, Matthew 22:39. But after the fall, love has been entirely twisted; because it sets itself against God and makes itself into a god, and desires that everything should end in itself; accordingly, he works for himself, and wants everyone to work for him too.

Not the received grace.

One should not deny the spiritual self, the regenerated part, which Paul calls his "I," Romans 7:20. This is a sin of many true yet weak believers, that upon falling into sin, upon a welling-up unbelieving thought, upon an assault from the devil, they immediately reject their state and think: I have no grace, I have deceived myself, it has only been imaginations. This is denying received benefits and grieving a kind of the Holy Spirit; it is pride, as if we naturally had so much more virtue than others, and as if those previous good states, movements, and deeds were done by our own strength; therefore, guard against rejecting your state, hold on to what you have, and give glory to God.

Not the affection for his physical and spiritual well-being. One must also not deny the natural self, which is the affection for the well-being of one's body, for one's health, food, drink, clothing, etc. No one has ever hated his own flesh, but he feeds it and sustains it, just as the Lord also nourishes the Church, Ephesians 5:29. But if that comes into opposition with Christ and His cause, then one must deny it all and consider it as loss and filth.

Also, one must not deny the desire for our well-being of the soul, the fear of hell, the desire for faith, hope, love, for communion with God, for salvation; this was one of the wrong foundations of the Labadists, in whose work the Lord has blown. They wanted one to reject the love for all these things, because they would make us happy, as unclean and abhorrent to God; they said one could not come with that love for Christ to partake in Him; but that one must first die and deny himself, or else one would make Christ a servant of sin and of the sinner, or that one must only come to Christ out of sight, and love, to glorify God for His own sake.

They kept the poor souls in this, and they would first teach them to deny the love for those spiritual goods and for their salvation, and bring them over into the sight and love to glorify God, for His own sake, and then they would bring them first to Christ. Thus they deceived the eager soul, and they became guilty of the condemnation of the souls who died unconverted under them by that means. Thus they opposed the Word of God, which arouses man, either through fear of evil or through love for their salvation, to run to Christ and to believe in Him.

For a more extensive view, see our Teaching and Guidance of the Labadists, starting from page 15.

But the sinful self.

VII. But one must deny the sinful self, that is, in general, the old Adam with all his movements and desires, whatever nature they may be, and against which command they may be struggling, and by whatever power of the soul or body they may be executed.

Understanding.

In particular, one must deny:

1. His natural and darkened understanding, to set that as a rule of doctrine and life, as they say: 'I understand it thus, I cannot understand it otherwise, that is then truth, I may leave that, do that, that is not a sin,' and one goes on with it. Yet the natural man does not understand the things of the Spirit of God, 1 Corinthians 2:14. This corrupt understanding must be renounced, not heard, nor followed: 2 Corinthians 10:5. Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself

against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.

Will.

2. His own will. Man wants to have his own way, no matter what it costs; if he has an impure desire, it must be satisfied, if he has a tasty or greedy lust, it must be fulfilled; he wants to do and leave as he pleases, it is: who is lord over me? Others must also do as he wants them to, and everyone, if he could, would want to prescribe laws as a king and would like everything to end in him as in a god, and if that does not happen, he becomes discontented, envious, angry, vengeful. Thus that self-seeker becomes an abomination to God and men. The Lord Jesus said: Not My will, but Yours be done, Matthew 26:39. And teaches us to pray: Your will be done, Matthew 6:10.

Affections.

3. His affections. He is empty and desires to be filled; he does not know God as the All-sufficient, he has no delight in God. Thus his passions turn towards creatures, and he says to each one that seems capable of entertaining him: are you my satisfaction? He does not rest from desiring until he gets it, and if he does not get it, he is restless and irritable. These must not be followed: 1 Peter 2:11. Dearly beloved, I beseech you ... that ye abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul.

Honor.

4. Self-honor. No sin is more common to all people and goes deeper into the heart than glory, even if he has the most contemptible disposition, even if he is disgusting in all his

behavior, yet he wants to be honored and esteemed; he aims for honor when he will do something, and he wants from others, as he imagines himself to be, recognized and treated as he thinks he is and deserves to be, and he who does not do that, or does something that seems like dishonor, should expect his wrath. This aim and desire must be pulled out: Galatians 5:26. Let us not be desirous of vain glory. Philippians 2:3. Do nothing ... through vainglory.

Goods.

5. Goods. The corrupted nature looks to the physical: he desires much, that he sets as his trust, that will sustain him; if he does not have it, he is discouraged, all his passions, aspirations, pursuits aim only at possessing; if he obtains it, he takes courage from it and rests in it; but a renouncer is content with the necessary and restrains desires for much; if he does not have much, he is content, if good fortune comes to him, he does not set his heart on it. This is the admonition, 1 Timothy 6:8, 9, And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. And when the cause of Christ requires it, then the renouncer relinquishes everything he has, even the necessary, and considers everything, if it comes into opposition with Christ, no more than loss and filth, as Paul, Philippians 3:8.

Friends.

6. Friends. Man quickly clings to another man who loves him or pleases him; father, mother, children, husband, wife lie close to the heart; proper love God commands in the second table of the

law. But one quickly makes an idol of them, one clings to them improperly, one rests and trusts in them. From that improper clinging the renouncer frees himself, especially when it draws him away from the pure religion and confession of the Lord Jesus; then he knows no father, child, friend: Matthew 10:37. He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. Luke 14:26. If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple.

Life.

7. To preserve life is the duty of a Christian, but to cling to it as if it were all salvation and all blessedness, and therefore to tremble and quake when one thinks of death, that springs either from ignorance of glory, or from unbelief that one has no share in it, or from a condemning conscience that one would be eternally damned if one died in such a state; therefore a Christian must not cling to life like that, but must also entrust it to his Father's hand through faith and be calm in it. And when it comes to the cause of Christ, whether to preserve life or to leave and renounce Christ, then a renouncer surrenders life, is glad that he has something precious that he may offer up to Christ. He who does not hate even his own life cannot be My disciple, Luke 14:26. Acts 20:24, But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself.

The form, out of love for the will of God.

VIII. The form and deeds of renunciation are done out of love for the will of God. His desires for those aforementioned things, insofar as they oppose the will of God, he does not listen to, does not obey, but opposes and rejects them.

(a) Out of love for the will of God. A man will not forsake what he loves, except for something better, which he loves more. A renouncer loves God above all that exists, and far also above himself; and because he loves God above all, he also loves the will of God above all, and loves it above his own will. Because God loves holiness and hates sin, and God commands one thing and forbids another, therefore he also loves one and hates the other. From this love then arises:

(b) Not listening to his desires, he does not listen to them, he does not consider and deliberate whether he will obey his desires or not.

(c) He does not follow them. And does not do the will of the flesh and of the thoughts, he does not serve his desires and lusts, he does not obey them.

(d) But he opposes them when they arise, he suppresses them, and quickly casts them away, just as one shakes off fire from his clothes without deliberation.

(e) Indeed, he draws them out, he cannot bear the constant welling up of evil desires in the sinful heart; it is not enough for him to reject the rising lusts, but he does not even want the upwelling itself; therefore he tries to have a purer ground, he cleanses the heart by faith, he seeks communion with God, with fear and love of God, so that the heart may come into a holier state, from which more holy and fewer sinful desires arise, and by which the regenerated part has more strength for renunciation of desires. Yes, when it comes to the cause of Christ,

(f) he can more readily and willingly relinquish everything that he might have and enjoy without sin in that case, because then it is the will of God that he should surrender it for Him and His cause. Thus

the renouncer knows when having conflicts with the will of God or agrees with it.

Purpose: Glorifying God. Benefiting Neighbors.

IX. The goal aimed at in renunciation is: to glorify God and to be of benefit to one's neighbor.

- The purpose is not to eradicate all desires and thus be without fear of evil and without inclination towards good; that would dehumanize a person and render them incapable of serving God according to His will and benefiting their neighbor.
- The purpose is not to gain honor from people and be regarded as holy; that would be extreme hypocrisy.
- The purpose is also not to earn something from God through it, as some do in blind papacy, using wrong means for their wrong purpose, abstaining from lawful food, wearing hair shirts, sleeping on the floor, self-flagellation, and similar self-willed religious practices; which have no value but only serve to satisfy the flesh, Colossians 2:23.
- Nor is the purpose to rest in renunciation as if it were one's salvation; that would be a heathen work.

But the end aimed at in renunciation is:

(a) To glorify God therein, as holy, as worthy of obedience, as the only Lawgiver, both to oneself and to show others that God is to be recognized as such and obeyed. And when the cause of Christ demands it, then renouncing everything that is dear to us, and is permissible to desire and enjoy outside of that case, then, I say, we have the advantage of glorifying God with it, showing that He is sovereign and that He may demand back everything He has given, and that He is lovable, to let go of the most beloved for His sake.

(b) Also, in renunciation, one aims to be beneficial to one's neighbor, to give godliness a luster for the conviction and conversion of the ungodly, and for the awakening of the godly, to also renounce oneself in the sinful self, and also to willingly forsake everything for the cause of Christ.

X. So we have presented to you renunciation in its nature and circumstances; this can be a mirror for you: an unconverted person can see their unrenouncedness therein, their life and attachment to the earth and their own desires; a converted person can also see their blemishes therein, how much of the old self still remains in them, and to what extent they still cling to their sinful self. And to make it even clearer to you, we will set an unrenounced and a renounced person against each other.

Characteristics of an Unrenounced Person: An unrenounced person:

(a) is a slave to their desires; they set the earthly as their portion, their lusts must be satisfied, it is how it is. They hold onto the earthly with hands and teeth, like a bat biting into fat, even though it's nailed to a board. Then it's money, then honor, then pleasure, whether impurity or righteousness and drink; when an opportunity arises, desire immediately ignites like a fire, and it must go through, even if their judgment is against it, yes, even if they are tired of sinning.

(b) They have a great imagination of themselves; one is beautiful and charming in their eyes, another is wise, the third comes from a distinguished lineage, the fourth is rich, another is learned; and so everyone has something they imagine themselves to be, even though they may not actually be. They puff themselves up about this, like a bladder blown by the wind.

(c) From this high stature of the heart arises a desire to be honored and esteemed as such; they deserve it, it is their due, and though they are aware within themselves that they are not as they imagine themselves to be, nevertheless, they want to be honored, served, feared, loved.

(d) When among people or about to go among them, they do not do so to provide what is honorable in everyone's eyes, but to be honored by people. That's what they have in mind when they dress; they choose such a color, such a style, they join such company, they avoid that, they adopt such a gait, they say this, and keep silent on that; and it's all with self-interest. So if self didn't prompt them, they would be lazier than a donkey, messier than a pig, sloppier than a beggar, dumber than a fish, or more foolish than a fool; but self is the wind in their sail, it makes them go.

(e) They pay close attention to what everyone says about them; if they are praised, even in their presence, it pleases them wonderfully, and they gladly lean into it and raise themselves a notch higher.

(f) But if, in their imagination, they are not loved, served, feared as they desire, or if others are favored over them, immediately discontent rises in their heart, they develop a dislike for such people, they hate them, they no longer associate with them, they become angry, and they seek revenge as much as they can, whether with words or deeds.

(g) They become jealous of others who have more love, honor, or profit than them. Even if the other is more worthy, they imagine that it is due to them as much as to the others, and even if they are convinced of their unworthiness within themselves, they still not only want to be equal but esteemed and honored above others; those

who are exalted above them, and those who exalt such a person above them, they are all their enemies together.

(h) They become sad and despondent if they do not get their desires fulfilled by someone else; they leave their work, they do it slower, they go against their previous course, the wind is out of their sails, yet they cannot get love and honor. Thus, an unrenounced person shows that they are not content unless everything ends in them; they work out of self-interest and end in themselves, and they want others to do the same next to them.

(i) And in matters of religion, as long as they can gain love, honor, profit thereby, they are a zealous Christian, even willing to be counted among the refined; but if that does not follow, and if the opposite occurs, then their religion is also done away with; and before losing honor, esteem, status, or wealth, they would rather forsake Christ and His cause; and once they have renounced, they will indeed become the greatest persecutors to make their apostasy honorable. There you have an unrenounced person.

XI. In contrast, we present a renounced person at a higher level, as is generally a God-fearing individual, so that everyone may see how it should be, fall in love with that state, and strive to increase in it.

(a) A renounced person desires no honor from people; they want to do nothing that would make them dishonorable and contemptible, because that would be a sin and a disgrace to godliness; if they receive honor, love, they acknowledge within themselves that they are unworthy of it, and it makes them smaller; they do not want it to end in themselves but want God to be glorified through them, so they let it all pass by or lead it to God. But honor in themselves, that they do not desire, yes, even if honor had no owner, even if it lay in the street, they would not want to take it up, out of love for themselves,

because they see that if anyone should have it, it certainly wouldn't be them, because they know their own abomination. And because they do not want it, they may well endure that another has it, and that it is brought to them from all sides; they are not jealous of it, for they do not desire it, they are not worthy of it, yes, they do not want it to end in themselves; that would be a burden and grief to them; therefore, they do not aim for honor in their actions, they are neither saddened nor upset when they do not receive honor for their actions. They do everything for God, and through God, and to God; it is enough for them to serve the Lord; they have sacrificed their honor to the Lord Jesus; it is no longer theirs.

(b) A renounced person does not desire love either. Love is even deeper and more penetrating than honor; the unrenounced wants the heart of another, but the renounced does not desire it, nor seek it; for they have a righteous judgment of themselves, they know themselves to be hateful, filthy, and disgusting; they see that their work is so crippled and misshapen that it would arouse disgust rather than attractiveness, and that it would be unreasonable for them to desire that another should love them. They take pleasure in loving others with their whole heart; they rejoice if another loves and practices the virtue of love, even if it is towards them, although they consider themselves the wrong object; they delight in it and are loved; they use it as a suitable opportunity to be useful to lovers; but they do not seek or desire another's love for themselves; it does not please them to be loved because they are loved; they are not saddened and disheartened if they are not loved; they are not jealous if another receives more love than they do, for they are not worthy of love. And if there is anything of Jesus' image in them that is truly lovable, they want that to be loved; but that is not from them, therefore they do not want love to end in them; they do not want to improperly cling to another, nor do they want to be an idol to

another; they are very jealous that by clinging to them they would receive something that belongs to God, or that the Lord would be loved less because of them. With such a loose heart towards the creature, they love their God, and it is enough for them; they are amazed that they are loved by God.

(c) A renounced person also does not desire fear. An unrenounced person, because they imagine themselves to be worthy of honor and love, also wants to be feared; they imagine that they have awe-inspiring qualities in themselves, that their wealth, their status, and the relationship by which another is less than them make them awe-inspiring; they are the man, the woman, who is awe-inspiring; when they are seen, when they speak, another must tremble and shudder in fear of their wrath. Poor worm! But a renounced person acknowledges that they have no awe-inspiring, but contemptible qualities within them; therefore, they do not want to be feared; they see the outward condition of wealth and status only as a mantle that hangs around them and does not change them within themselves; therefore, they consider it great folly to desire that someone should fear their mantle; if they are placed above another in politics or at home, they maintain that position and want another to recognize, respect, and fear them in that capacity, not because of their person, but because of God's command. Thus, they are humble in their high position, and they do not want to be feared and yet to be feared.

(d) A renounced person also does not desire service. An unrenounced person thinks that everything is due to them and that everyone should be ready to obey their command, and if they have others under them, they can never satisfy them; they become angry if obedience is lacking in the slightest. But a renounced person always wants to serve and help another; that is their pleasure; but it is more of a burden than pleasure to them that another runs and toils, sweats

and labors to serve them and is so ready to obey their command; for they see that they are not worthy of service; if they demand service from someone under them, it is not because of who they are, but because the Lord has established that order; they can be pleased in the service quickly, they overlook faults kindly, they take tender care of their servants so that they do not tire themselves too much or tire themselves out in their service; they even have compassion on their livestock.

(e) A renounced person also does not desire wealth; they have chosen God as their portion, relinquishing earthly goods; they entrust the maintenance of their body to God; they know that they are not worthy of a bite of bread in their mouth or a bag for their skin; they also regard the goods of this world as too insignificant and unstable to be concerned about; they are content with necessary food and covering; they live from the hand of God, therefore they are not jealous that another has it, and makes great profits; that another boasts about their possessions and surpasses them; the lowest state suits them best; they are not despondent if they do not have much, and if goods escape them, for it was not their portion; it is enough for them to diligently use the means to earn their livelihood; if goods come their way, they do not cling to them; they become humbler like the patriarch Jacob; they do not waste them; they are more generous towards the poor, and if the cause of Christ demands it, they willingly let go of everything and can joyfully accept the deprivation of their goods. So united with God and so detached from everything, a renounced person lives in the world.

Conviction of the miserable state of an unrenounced person.

XII. Behold, here is the mirror; come and behold yourself in it. An unconverted person will see that they are still entirely unrenounced,

and still live according to their own desires, that they are a slave to sin, that in everything they seek themselves, and want everything to end in themselves. You unrenounced ones, realize in what state you are!

1. It is a clear indication that you are still unregenerate, and thus cannot enter heaven, John 3:5.
2. You have no share in Christ and his merits. Luke 14:26
3. You are an earthly-minded person, and your portion is only in this world, Psalm 17:14.
4. In this life, you have nothing but sorrow in seeking, finding, missing, and after this life, eternal destruction: Rom. 8:13. If you live according to the flesh, you will die.

From this, the God-fearing can also see how much or how little they have of renunciation. How much their hearts still long for honor, love, respect, service, and goods of this world! From here come the secondary motives that sometimes soil their best work and cause them much pain, depriving them of all pleasure in their work. From here come despondency and timidity, alienations from each other, anger, quarrels, boasting, and speaking of one's own deeds, whether more openly or more discreetly, and from afar. O God-fearing ones, examine yourselves closely, know what your heart still clings to, see the abomination of self-seeking, and think of it as the dead fly that makes the precious ointment stink. That God abhors it. That it offends others; for it is soon seen by converts and unconverted alike. That you make yourself largely useless in making profit with your talent and being useful to others; therefore, loathe yourself, oppose it, pray against it, and fight against it. For if you are so unrenounced in times of peace, how will you fare in times of persecution?

Exhortation.

XIII. It is therefore necessary that we courageously oppose that sinful self, and strive to break through to an inward renounced posture and disposition, and to demonstrate renunciation in all occurring matters. Take to heart:

Motivations.

1. Your own condition. Who are you that you should pride yourself and seek something for yourself? God answers you: You are dust, and to dust you shall return, Gen. 3:19. Bildad and Zophar answer: a maggot, a worm, Job 25:6. Job answers: A driven leaf, dry stubble, Job 13:25. And as if that were still too great, David answers: Man is like vanity, Psalm 144:4. And that is still too great; therefore, he says, Psalm 62:10, Surely men of low degree are vanity; men of high degree are a lie; if weighed in the balance, they are altogether lighter than vanity. That is you! Do you then deserve honor, love, respect? Do you dare to seek anything to end in yourself?

All is vanity.

2. And what is it that you desire and cling to? It is all as worthless and vain as you yourself are; what makes it better for you that a dead dog, like every human, showed you honor, love, and friendship, that a clod, a piece of wood, bowed down to you? That you collected a heap of shells and shards, like little children, and thought it beautiful in your eyes? Be ashamed that you would turn hearts and eyes to what is but nothing. Why would you then defile your soul with such trifles and displease God and people by pleasing yourself? Be free from them then.

A better good.

3. And has the Lord not given you, believers, much better goods, and reserved for you? That enduring essence, that lasting good, consisting in the enjoyment of God, in communion with Christ, in peace and joy, in eternal glory, that the Lord has given you from the beginning, and that He will make you possess in perfection. Now God says: I have given you that, and I will add more to it, and now it is My will that you only keep that in mind, seek only that, delight only in that. I want you to look away from all earthly things, not to seek them, not to cling to them, but to be renounced of those things alone. If I give you anything of them, it is only so that you may use it for your growth in grace and to glorify Me. Therefore, be content with the eternal, and forsake the earthly filth, when it is for the Lord's sake.

It is righteousness.

4. It is righteousness to be renounced to all earthly things. For honor, love, fear, service, and goods belong to the Lord; they do not belong to you; will a man rob God? Give to God what is God's. It is unrighteousness to desire to be esteemed, to be something, when you are nothing; to want to be loved when you are hateful; to desire to be feared when you are the lowest slave. It is unrighteousness to think something of yourself and pretend to be what you are not, and to want others to acknowledge you as such, and to be higher than you are. See then the sin, hate it, and flee from it.

Brings much peace.

5. Renunciation brings great peace. All your unrest arises from seeking yourself: then the conscience convicts of sin, then you do not get your desire, then another is in your way, then tongues and deeds oppose you, and you get the opposite of what you aim

for; everywhere there is a hitch, everywhere there are thorns that prick you. You have much to care for and preserve, everywhere there is unrest and sorrow. But a renounced heart has much peace, it is content with Jesus, it is above the earth, beyond the reach of the world's artillery, and all that is in it; one sits in the shelter of the Most High and dwells in the shadow of the Almighty. Therefore, cast yourself away as a burdensome package. Say: there lies sin, there lies pride, there lies self-love, I have been plagued by you long enough, I do not know you anymore, I do not want you anymore, I want to live in peace with my God, and perform my work in freedom, and finish my race with joy.

Boldness.

6. A renounced person is bold, for he has nothing to lose; he fears no shame, no hatred, no harm in goods, he has left all that behind, and what the Lord has lent him, he gladly gives back to the Lord when He demands it. Therefore, he says what he must say; he remains silent when the Lord commands him to be silent; he lets his light shine, despite all those who hate it and would want to cause him grief because of it; he has no bonds, he is free and unencumbered. Thus the renounced one comes forward, and his path is like a shining light, advancing and shining until the full noon, going from strength to strength; he holds fast to his path and increases in strength. Therefore, begin the work and proceed with courage.

Examples.

7. Continually set before you the example of the Lord Jesus and His saints. The Lord Jesus renounced Himself for your sake; would you then not renounce yourself for His sake? He, Who

was rich, became poor; He, Who was in the form of God, took on the form of a servant; the Lord of glory was mocked and despised; He, Who was love, was hated; He Who is worthy of all service came to serve; the Prince of life was crucified, and that for you, and would you have something too dear to give up for His sake? Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob left their homeland and everything. The prophets renounced everything just to be faithful to the Lord. The apostles left everything and followed Jesus. The godly martyrs joyfully witnessed the plundering of their goods and willingly gave their lives for the Lord Jesus. So do likewise, seek yourself no more!

Reward.

8. Although all that we have is not ours; although all material things are not worth looking at, yet God will greatly reward everything that is forsaken and abandoned in obedience to Him out of love, and for His Name or His cause. If one forsakes honor, He will give grace and honor, Psalm 84:12. If one renounces love, the Lord will love, John 16:27. If one renounces goods, the Lord will be your abundant gold, and your strong silver, Job 22:25. Just as the Lord does not leave any service unrewarded, so He will not leave unrewarded anything that is forsaken out of love for Him and for His Name. See this: Matthew 10:39 ... whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. Matthew 19:29. And whoever has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or fields for My name's sake will receive a hundredfold and will inherit eternal life. Mark 10:30. But he will receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and fields, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life.

Here is the true and great gain to be had, to cast away sin, to rid oneself of a hindrance, to give back what is borrowed, and then to receive such great and glorious things again, that should truly incite us to renunciation. If God promises it, we must be made alive by the promises.

Means. If you desire such a holy and free state, to be renounced in all things, whenever and wherever the Lord requires us to renounce:

(a) Then make a complete decision, not only in general, but also specifically against that which most clings to you, and most hinders you or taints your work.

(b) But do not imagine that it will all be done if you have lively desires for that state and that work, and now fully intend to set yourself upon it; for the self is strong, it is the first that has been in you, it does not willingly leave, and it is not so easy to renounce it; therefore, acknowledge the strength of the old man, and the weakness of the new, and call upon the Lord for help and strength.

(c) Be on guard in everything you do and refrain from, that self does not mingle with it. You will soon notice it if you just look for it, and it will bring you great strife.

(d) But be encouraged, it must come out, and you will greatly increase if you just set your mind to it, and it will become progressively easier.

(e) Pay attention to the initial stirrings, and smother that self in its infancy.

(f) And if you cannot so easily drive it out of you, do not therefore abandon the work; but practice virtue as well as you can, and you will

find that you will increase.

Chapter 11

On Patience

Patience flows from contentment and renunciation. Greek *hupomonē*. It is a compound word of *hupo*, which sometimes means through, sometimes under, sometimes over, and of *menō* to remain; hence *hupomenō* to remain, persevere, endure, and thus *hupomonē*, patience, as if to say: to persevere through suffering, to remain the same under suffering, to step over suffering, and to remain in a state. In our language, the word comes from suffering; to be patient is to be capable of suffering.

Patience is a strength of the soul of a believer in God, by which one endures all adversities in willingness, calmness, joy, perseverance, and hope of a good outcome in fulfilling one's duty.

Is Strength.

II. Patience is a strength in God. The courage or strength, spoken of in chapter 19, contains within it:

1. Trust in God's help, by which the work is courageously begun;
2. Steadfastness, by which one remains engaged in the work and continues;
3. Patience, by which one wards off opposition so that it is not hindering. Thus, patience is a kind of strength or courage.

Courage is the brave spirit that regards adversities as capable of preventing it, and not only sees the necessity of overcoming them but also sees honor for its Lord in doing so; therefore, it steps through them as a hero. The patient one has this strength in God. Spiritual life is frail, the body is delicate and quickly feels pain from its discomfort, the flesh is weak and might easily yield to uncomfortable encounters; but the patient one takes hold of the strength of the Lord, and in that strength, they proceed: Psalm 84:6. Blessed is the man whose strength is in You. Psalm 60:12. In God, we shall do valiantly. Patience is a great work; to bear suffering well is bravery, but to seize and work in God's strength for this purpose gives a glorious end to matters.

In the Souls of Believers

III. The subject in which this virtue resides is the soul of a believer. Unconverted individuals are entirely incapable of being patient. They may indeed encounter suffering, even great adversity; some may endure it bravely, without any display of fear, agitation, or pain, whether motivated by glory or inevitability. However, they cannot be patient because they do not have a divine duty in mind to protect and fulfill, they do not have God's help through Christ, and they have no hope of a good outcome because they have no promises. Therefore, though they may be tough in suffering, they are not patient. Patience is the ornament of a Christian; a believer regards all suffering that comes from God as reconciled to them for their good and has promises of a glorious outcome, so they alone are the patient ones: Revelation 14:12. Here is the patience of the saints. That's why faith and patience are often joined together, Titus 2:2, 2 Timothy 3:10, 2 Thessalonians 1:4, to show that no one can be patient except one who is a believer. Patience has its nearest seat in their soul. This virtue does not consist in boasting with the mouth or in controlling one's

gestures; it is internal, and from there, it manifests outwardly; through habit, not so much of suffering as of continuous exercise to possess this virtue, the soul acquires a patient disposition and habit. The soul is patient: Luke 21:19. In your patience possess your souls. An impatient person has lost their heart; they cannot use it. But a patient one possesses it as their own and uses it as if having power over it, not allowing it to have excessive thoughts and movements in suffering.

In All Adversities

IV. The object of patience is all adversities, all suffering. The hardships of the righteous are many, whether to the soul or to the body, whether they come without human intervention or are sent through people, whether in times of peace of the church or in times of persecution for the sake of the Word. Some are light, others are heavier, others are dreadful, even a cruel death; all are painful for humans and are capable of besieging faith, hope, love, and other virtues, and tossing them back and forth, and, if possible, driving them out. Patience turns towards these, not to be relieved of that suffering, for that would be in vain, but to bear it, not to be deterred from its virtuous intentions and effects, even to maintain the virtues in no less a degree of holiness and confidence, so that it proceeds in suffering and with suffering, yes, penetrates more strongly, and gains strength from weakness. In this respect, patience is called the patience of suffering, 2 Corinthians 1:6. Not that one takes pleasure in suffering, nor that one may not and must not pray for deliverance, but with submission to God's will.

Consists in Endurance

V. The form or nature of patience consists of willingness, calmness, joy, perseverance, enduring suffering.

(a) Endurance means taking up the cross, as imposed by the Lord, Matthew 16:24; following Jesus with that cross, doing one's duty, whether between God and the soul alone or with regard to one's neighbor; proceeding with that cross, even if it's from Jerusalem to Golgotha, to die, and whether it be a wooden, iron, or leaden cross, she does not want to exchange it; she wants this, it suits her best, with this she bears it to heaven.

Willingly

(b) Willingly, though it is against natural desire, though it presses soul and body so much that tears burst from the eyes, yet it is not against gratitude, yet one does not force it upon oneself: but one embraces it, one wants it because the Lord wills it, the Lord's will is one's will, whether it be Tabor or Golgotha; God's will is God's will, it makes everything welcome and pleasant: Matthew 26:41 ... the spirit indeed is willing. John 18:11 ... Shall I not drink the cup that the Father has given me?

Calm

(c) With calmness or stillness of spirit. Patience excludes murmuring, despondency, and, if suffering comes through people, also anger and vindictiveness; it does not agitate the soul like a sea in a storm but lets the waves and billows pass over it, and is like a flat shore, so that the waves, as if playing, die out, or like a rock, which remains unyielding, and the attacking sea breaks against it. Thus, David received all suffering: Psalm 62:2. Truly my soul silently waits for God. For this, the church is encouraged: Lamentations 3:27-29. It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth. He sits alone and keeps silence, because God has laid it upon him. He puts his mouth in the dust.

Joyful.

(d) Not only does the patient remain calm, but he rejoices in suffering, whether he already enjoys its beneficial fruit, or whether he receives many consolations from the Lord, or whether his suffering is for the sake of Godliness and for the Name of the Lord. This was the wish of the apostle to the Colossians, that they might be strengthened with all patience and longsuffering, with joy, Colossians 1:11. Of the Thessalonians he says: Having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit, 1 Thessalonians 1:6. And of himself he says: I am exceedingly joyful in all our tribulation, 2 Corinthians 7:4.

Persevering.

(e) In perseverance, the patient endures suffering. One may have great courage before suffering strikes, and accept it with courage; but when one experiences it deeply, and when it seems to last a while, one might want to cast off that burdensome load and avoid it, even if it means sinning, or one cannot get rid of it, then it disrupts everything inside and out, and impatience with all its consequences takes over; but the patient person sets no limit to the Lord, no matter how high it may go, or how long it may last, they are content with the goodness and wisdom of the Lord, they set themselves for their entire life, so dear is salvation to them; if there is earlier deliverance, they rejoice, if not, it is also well. Thus, they endure in patience until the end of suffering. Let patience have its perfect work, James 1:4. Not that patience itself in a Godly person is perfect or makes anything else perfect; but it is called perfect when the finishing touches are put on it, although another could have made such a work much more excellent; so patience puts the finishing touches on suffering, that is, it lasts as long as suffering lasts, it does not

separate from it before then. This is the admonition to the church of Smyrna, Revelation 2, Be faithful unto death.

Hope of a Good Outcome.

(f) Patience endures suffering in hope of a good outcome. Here the proverb is true: Hope is the comfort of suffering. Patience cannot exist without hope; if there is no more hope, then patience has no place, there is no patience in hell because there is no hope. Hope supports patience. Romans 8:25. But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance. The mistake comes from our too narrowly defining the hope of the good outcome, within such a time, through such a matter, which often misses, because the ways of the Lord are not our ways; therefore, the patient person adheres to the promises of God, without limitation, namely, that the Lord will not allow us to be tempted beyond what we are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that we may be able to bear it, 1 Corinthians 10:13. That suffering will produce a peaceful fruit of righteousness, Hebrews 12:11. That it is for our profit, that we may partake of His holiness, verse 10. That the crown of life will be given as a result, Revelation 2:10. That on much suffering follows a greater degree of glory, Revelation 7. On these promises, the patient person hopes and expects them, just as they have Jesus as an example in this: Hebrews 12:2 ... who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross. Therefore, the apostle calls patience, the endurance of hope, 1 Thessalonians 1:3.

Is a Gift from God.

VI. The cause of patience is not the individual himself; a natural person may grit his teeth, restrain himself, keep silent to have the glory of steadfastness, try to pull out all movements through reasoning; but he will not be able to make himself patient. Likewise,

a Godly person cannot achieve it by their own strength; the Lord must work it in them; therefore, He is called the God of patience, Romans 15:5. The Lord gives them faith and makes them vividly see that He sends suffering to them from a paternal hand; He secretly supports them with strength in the inner man; He gives them many consolations in suffering to the soul and lets them taste His grace; He shows them the lightness, usefulness, and transience of suffering; He shows them the usefulness and glory of the outcome, which makes them calm and courageous; then they want to suffer, then tribulation works patience, and that experience, and that hope, which does not disappoint.

Works diligently in his duty.

VII. The end and consequence of patience is so that they may fulfill their duty well. The patient does not end in suffering, and in the proper disposition, in bearing suffering well, and in the manifestation of the patient disposition; but he has much more in view; he possesses his soul in patience; not to be hindered in his work, but to carry it out more effectively, both through Godly exercises within himself, and by letting his light shine among people, displaying his Godly conduct, being an example to others, bringing others to Christ, and confessing Him boldly. That is what he aims for, that is what he seeks, he sees that suffering would hinder him in that if he did not bear it well, and that suffering would be advantageous to his purpose if he bears it well; therefore, he strives for patience; therefore, taking up the cross and following Christ are joined together: Matthew 16:24 ... If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. So too patience and running: Hebrews 12:1 ... Let us run with patience the race that is set before us. So too love and other virtues: 2 Thessalonians 3:5 ... May the Lord direct your hearts into the love of

God and into the patience of Christ. 2 Peter 1:5-7 ... Add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance Godliness, to Godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love for all.

Conviction of the Unconverted.

VIII. The presented truth is sufficient to convince the unconverted that they are devoid of this virtue; even if they are insensitive, or have a gentle temperament, or can bear it as a sickness, or resist it with reason, seeing that they cannot be relieved of suffering, and therefore patience; or whether they make themselves hard and strong to gain glory, all of that is not patience. They will be able to see from what has been said that their patience is not a spiritual strength in God, as their God in Christ; that their patience does not flow from faith in Christ and from union with Him; that they do not endure suffering in willingness, calmness, joy, perseverance, and hope of making them holier and leading them to salvation, because they have no ground to appropriate any promise to themselves; that they do not seek patience to be more capable of practicing all kinds of virtues. And although some may have an appearance of patience, they are generally sorrowful, murmuring, they become angrier and more wicked, and their wrath turns against God Himself; they are like the wicked Israel in the wilderness: then they have no bread, then no meat, then no water, therefore immediately they murmur, immediately they forsake God, and return to Egypt, and even blaspheme God. When God strikes them, they become even more rebellious, Isaiah 1:5. When God does not help, it is: this evil is from the Lord, why should I wait further on Him? 2 Kings 6:33. They want to be delivered from suffering, it is what it is: *Flectere si nequeo superos, acheronta movebo*. If God will not help me, then I will call on the devil for help. Thus, they continue from wickedness to

wickedness until they bring themselves to hell, where there is no place for patience.

Exhortation.

IX. From the presented nature of patience, the Godly will on the one hand see that they do possess the principle of this virtue; but on the other hand, they will also see how much impatience is still in them. When spiritual cross overwhelms them, when it becomes dark, when God hides His face, and ceases His comforting influences, when God does not seem to hear their prayer, and does not immediately grant the desire of their soul, then they immediately become despondent, unbelieving, sorrowful; when all sorts of adversity surround them, when they last long, when they rise high, where is patience then?

Then they become sorrowful like Jonah, Jonah 4:8. They become despondent like Israel saying; The Lord has forsaken me, and my Lord has forgotten me, Isaiah 49:14. Immediately they become hopeless and they think to themselves, it is beyond hope, Jeremiah 2:23. My strength and my hope from the Lord have perished, Lamentations 3:18. If it lasts a while and it goes high, faith falters, one thinks it all comes in wrath, one complains: Will the Lord then cast off forever? And will He be favorable no more? Has His mercy ceased forever? Has His promise failed forevermore? Has God forgotten to be gracious? Has He in anger shut up His tender mercies? Psalm 77:8-10.

They waver beside the providence of God, Proverbs 30:9. They accuse the Lord of harshness, saying: You have changed to be cruel against me; with the strength of Your hand, You oppose me bitterly, Job 30:21. Then they think whether the Lord's dealings are just, and they would demand reasons from Him why God acts thus, and dispute with the Almighty, Job 30:25. Despair sometimes rises up, so

that the soul chooses strangling, death rather than life, Job 7:15. Oh, that my request would come, and that God would grant me my desire, that it would please God to crush me, that He would loose His hand and cut me off! What is my strength, that I should hope? Or what is my end, that I should prolong my life? Job 6:8, 9, 11.

If one looks at the wicked in their prosperity, it indeed stirs up resentment in the heart, saying: Behold, these are the ungodly; yet they have peace in the world; because I am plagued all day long, and my punishment is every morning, Psalm 73:12, 14. If one sees that many Godly prosper in the world, one is envious, one thinks: why not me as well? If the cross comes through people, one becomes angry, vengefulness rises up, and one bites like a dog at the stone thrown.

These disturbances are sometimes perceived by the children of God to their shame and sorrow, and rightly so, for:

(a) in impatience, many sins come together; an impatient person is a breeding ground for all sorts of corruptions that terribly defile the soul. There is unbelief alongside God's promises; there is a lack of love for God's will; there is stubbornness against God's wisdom; there is pride, as if they were more worthy; there is envy and vindictiveness against their neighbor; there is esteem for the things of this world.

(b) They become unfit to serve the Lord, to be edifying to their neighbor. They offend the weak, and they make the world mock Godliness.

(c) They bring heavier judgments upon themselves; for the Lord prevails when He judges. They make the suffering last longer, strike harder, and it does not have the usefulness it otherwise would have.

(d) They themselves remain in constant unrest and distress, both over the sins they continually see and over the cross they cannot shake off. Who has hardened himself against the Lord and had peace? Job 9:4. Therefore, guard yourself against impatience, but humble yourself under the mighty hand of God, so that He may exalt you in due time, 1 Peter 5:6. Do not despise the discipline of the Lord, and do not be grieved by His correction, Proverbs 3:11.

Exhortation.

X. Well then, believers, possess your souls in your patience: to be encouraged to do so, consider these reasons: It is commanded.

1. Surely, you desire to obey the Lord; how often have you offered yourself to the Lord, saying, "Lord, what do you want me to do?" Well then, the Lord commands you to be patient, so hear the exhortation as from the Lord's mouth. The Lord Jesus says to you, Luke 21:19, "Possess your souls in your patience." So also the apostle, Romans 12:12, "Be patient in tribulation." Hebrews 12:1, "Let us run with patience the race that is set before us." James 1:4, "Let patience have its perfect work."

Necessity.

2. There is an absolute necessity; you cannot do without it, Hebrews 10:36. You need patience so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise. There is no other way to heaven than through tribulations. You cannot evade or avoid them. On the other hand, there is much work for you to do to promote your sanctification: without which no one will see the Lord. How will you be able to do it (for you want to, and will do it to go to heaven) except through patience? It makes us accept suffering so that it does not hinder us in our path, but

makes us fit for our work; therefore, strive for this absolute necessity, practice it until it becomes a habit in you.

Suffering comes from God.

3. Note, from whom does suffering come? It does not come from yourself, for you love yourself too much for that; it does not come from people, for without the will of God, they can neither stir nor move, nor pull out a hair from you: but it is the Lord Himself who sends it to you, it is the sovereign Lord, whose hand no one can resist, against whom no one can say, why do you do this? It is your reconciled Father in Christ, who sends it to you in wisdom, in goodness, in love, and for your best. Hebrews 12:6. "For whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives." Will you then oppose the Lord? Surely you do not want that, you cannot do that: "Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live?" Hebrews 12:9. Rather say: "I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against Him." Micah 7:9. "I will not open my mouth, for it is You who have done it." This will be pleasing to the Lord.

Nature of suffering is light.

4. If you look at the suffering itself, it is not of such a nature that you would sin by impatience. It is:
 - (a) light; the fear is ten times greater than the suffering itself, as everyone who has experienced it will say, and you must admit it. Paul calls his great afflictions, incomparable to ours, light afflictions. 2 Corinthians 4:17. That they weigh heavily on you is because you do not submit yourself well to them: indeed, if the apostle calls them light, how dare you judge them heavy? The physical ones touch the

body; should one then make such a fuss about the body, which is dust and will become dust, and will also be glorified? Do not make a straw so heavy.

(b) Suffering is but for a short time; it moves quickly; what is past is already gone, what is to come, you do not have yet, and you do not know what will come, or not come; you only have the present; and that passes by in moments, and even if the same suffering were to accompany you all your life, it is still not long; for your life itself is short, it is but a smoke or vapor, so also is all suffering in this world. Paul calls them the affliction which is but for a moment. 2 Corinthians 4:17. Peter says: "For a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved." 1 Peter 1:6. Will you then be impatient over a suffering that passes by so quickly?

(c) It is a specific suffering. It will last for so long, neither shorter nor longer; it will rise to such a height, neither less nor more, as the Lord has ordained it. The Lord determined how far the devil would go in afflicting Job; he could not add even a tiny bit to it. Job 1, 2. Job acknowledged this. Job 23:14. "He will complete what is appointed for me." Whether one is sad, or despondent, or wants to avoid it and throw it off, it will still remain with you until the end. Is it not better then to accept and bear it with patience?

Beneficial.

5. Suffering is very beneficial.

(a) It is a medicine for the soul.

- It makes the soul humble because of the sins committed: Hosea 5:14, 15. "I will tear and go away; I will take away, and there shall be none to deliver ... Until they acknowledge their guilt."

- It makes the soul like a weaned child: Psalm 131:2. "Surely I have calmed and quieted my soul, like a weaned child with its mother; like a weaned child is my soul within me."
- It makes one submit with pleasure and delight to the punishment of the Lord: Leviticus 26:41. "If then their uncircumcised heart is humbled and they make amends for their iniquity." 1 Peter 5:6. "Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God."
- It makes the soul ashamed: Jeremiah 31:18, 19. "I have been punished; I was ashamed, and I was confounded because I bore the disgrace of my youth."
- It makes the soul drawn away and stripped of everything: Psalm 102:8. "I lie awake; I am like a lonely sparrow on the housetop."

(b) It makes one cautious of sin in the future and strives for holiness: Isaiah 38:15. "... I will go softly all my years in the bitterness of my soul." This is God's purpose: Hebrews 12:10. "... But He disciplines us for our good, that we may share His holiness." David experienced this: Psalm 119:71. "It is good for me that I was afflicted, that I might learn your statutes." The prophet testifies: Isaiah 26:9. "... when your judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness."

(c) Suffering makes the graces that are in the soul lively and active.

- Then prayers are revived: Isaiah 26:16. "Lord, in trouble have they visited you; they poured out a prayer when your chastening was upon them." Necessity teaches prayer. Whoever cannot pray, let him be a man of the sea or a true man.
- Then faith is revived; when Abraham was in the greatest trial, he believed against hope, Romans 4:18. David says of himself:

Psalm 27:13. "I believe that I shall look upon the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living."

- Then hope gains strength: Psalm 42:6. "Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise Him, my salvation."
- Then love is revived: Many waters cannot quench love, Song of Solomon 8:7. When the sun is gone, then the moon and stars are seen best: so it is with love. In the cross they see that the absence of the Lord is their greatest loss, and when the Lord is near, that suffering is not suffering to them, that they have enough then, and would rather be in communion with the cross than without the cross in alienation. To all these things you, believers, surely have a desire, and they are the desires of your hearts, why then would you not also desire the way by which these things are obtained? And if you desire the way of suffering for its usefulness, then it is fitting for you to patiently accept and bear that suffering, bitter though it may be, as a healing medicine.

Patience is an ornament.

6. Patience is a precious ornament and a profitable disposition for a believer. A patient soul is a childlike, willing, quiet, joyful, gentle, self-denying, believing, hoping, God-loving soul. Therefore, the patient one is precious and pleasing to God, and a suitable object of God's mercies, and God does not leave such without showing His compassion, His love, His supports, His consolations, and His help to save them: 2 Corinthians 7:6. "... God, who comforts the downcast." 2 Corinthians 1:4. "Who comforts us in all our affliction." 1 Peter 3:4. "But let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious."

Patience makes the cross lighter, so that it can be easily borne; one possesses their soul, so that they restrain disorderly desires, and they have their mind and will under control to use them according to the will of God, thereby obtaining all the benefits that we have mentioned above from suffering; for suffering as suffering does not bring about these benefits: but patience in suffering. Then the Lord is glorified by us, our neighbors are convinced thereby of the power of godliness, the godly are thereby strengthened in suffering and encouraged to bear it with patience as well.

Then suffering and chastening do their proper work while it is present, and afterwards they yield the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by them, Hebrews 12:11. Then one is glad when the Lord has taken away the cross, and thanks the Lord for it: Psalm 119:75. "I know, O Lord, that Your judgments are right, and that in faithfulness You have afflicted me." Isaiah 12:1. "I will give thanks to You, O Lord, for though You were angry with me, Your anger turned away, and You comforted me."

Examples of Christ and the saints.

7. Consider the examples of the Lord Jesus and the saints to be stirred up thereby to emulate them in patience. The Lord Jesus, as He is a glorious example to us in all our conduct, so also in patience: Isaiah 53:7. "... Yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth." 1 Peter 2:20, 21. "... But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God. For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in His steps." Consider also the example of all the other saints who have gone before you:

James 5:10, 11. "As an example of suffering and patience, brothers, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. Behold, we consider those blessed who remained steadfast. You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful."

So, since all who wear crowns have also borne crosses, follow them in bearing the cross, so that with them you may inherit the crown of life.

Means.

- Be sensitive to the cross, guard against hardness.
- Lay aside the esteem for everything that is in this perishable world. Consider the brevity of the time that remains to suffer.
- Consider that the way to heaven is through suffering, and that one cannot walk it except through patience.
- Be continually engaged in exercising faith in the promises, and hope in them, knowing that all will surely come to pass.
- Persist in reading the Word, which is given to us to teach and comfort us in patience, Romans 15:4.
- And pray continually for patience, Romans 15:5. And thus, by exercising yourself in this patience in all things, even in the least, you will increase in it. May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God and to the steadfastness of Christ. 2 Thessalonians 3:5.

Chapter 12

On Sincerity

Sincerity is expressed in the Hebrew language with various words, each explaining it in a different aspect, such as "jaschar" meaning to be right, to make right, to guide, to make flat and even; in this sense, sincerity is like a smooth and well-trodden path that directs the traveler straight, without curves, guiding them to the end.

Name

This corresponds to our Dutch word, "recht" (right), "rechtheid" (rightness), "op de rechte weg" (on the right path), "op een rechte manier gaan" (to go in a straight way). Hebrew "thoom" from "thamam", meaning to complete, fulfill, perfect. Thus, sincerity perfects everything and gives everything its final point; without it, everything is imperfect and flawed. "Nakoach" from "nokach", meaning before, against, over, and thus sincerity proceeds toward the goal that is set, holds it against itself in view, and does not deviate from it, neither to the right nor to the left. "Emeth", when the Hebrews say sincere, they say "be'emeth", in truth, that is "amen", truth, it is entirely the same.

Greek "to gnaesion", lawfully born, because only what is lawfully done from man is born and proceeds sincerely; Greek "aptharsia", actually incorruptibility, and thus sincerity indicates its purity, having no principle of corruption in itself, always remaining unchanged; Greek "eilikrineia", distinguished by light or by the shine of the sun, because sincerity can withstand the light, may be seen in the sun's rays: John 3:21. "But whoever does what is true comes to

the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God."

Description

Sincerity is a Christian virtue, laid in the hearts of believers by God through the Word, whereby they do the will of God in truth.

We call sincerity a virtue. It is not a particular virtue that comes in handy in this or that matter; rather, it is universal and penetrates through all virtues, so that what a person does is not a virtue unless sincerity is present and animates it. Perfection concerns the possession of all virtues; where something is lacking, there is no perfection. Sincerity concerns the manner in which virtues are executed, and this can occur even if the things done are flawed.

Sincerity is a Christian virtue. In some unconverted individuals, there is indeed a natural sincerity; not everything they do is hypocrisy, they do many things sincerely in their hearts in dealings and interactions with people, and also in their religion. But they lack in substance; it is only external, they lack in the disposition of their hearts, which is not spiritual, not reborn; they lack in the spiritual end that they should have in view; they also lack in the spirituality of sincerity; therefore, it is all natural work. When something is commanded of them by the Lord Jesus, which they take no pleasure in, they depart sorrowfully like the otherwise sincere young man, Matthew 19:16-22. But Christian sincerity is of an entirely different nature, has different objects, heart, purpose, and manner; it flows from union with Christ, it has likeness with Christ; therefore, it is called Christian.

In the Believers

III. The subject is the hearts of the believers. The children of God, before their regeneration, like all other people, are blind, evil, powerless, unwilling, dead in sins and trespasses; but the Lord gives them His Spirit, who enlightens, regenerates them, makes them alive through union with Christ, so that Christ lives in them and they in Christ; thereby they do everything from an entirely different principle and in an entirely different manner, in all circumstances. Sincerity does not reside in the face, in clothing, in speech, and in deeds, but in their hearts. The understanding is illuminated with a marvelous light, the will embraces the spiritual things that light presents to it, the passions go after them, and to have them, to do them, and to do them in a way pleasing to the Lord, so that they have a habit within them, and that habit shines through the face, clothing, words, and deeds; the believers are sincere: Song of Solomon 1:4 ... the upright love You. Psalm 37:37. Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright.

Upright in heart: Psalm 7:11 ... He preserves the upright in heart. Psalm 97:11. Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart. Upright in way and conduct: Proverbs 13:6. Righteousness guards him whose way is blameless. Psalm 119:1. Blessed are those whose way is blameless.

It has regard to the will of God.

The object of sincerity is the will of God. God has revealed to His church in the law what He wants done and left undone; the sincere embrace it willingly and joyfully, as the will of God, without exception of any matter, manner, time, or place; the sincere imagines the law in such a way, the understanding is occupied in keeping that rule in view, the will loves it, the passions go after it, and he aims to do therein only God's will, in which he ends without secondary

motives: Psalm 119:80. Let my heart be blameless in Your statutes.
Psalm 101:2. I will behave wisely in a perfect way.

To do this in truth.

IV. The form consists in doing everything in truth. Pilate once asked, "What is truth?" But he did not wait to be answered; but you, listen to what truth is.

1. God is Truth, Deuteronomy 32:4. He is only truth, essence, life, eternity, holiness, and glory. God is the origin of all truth outside of Him, His work is truth, His words are truth.
2. The Lord Jesus is Truth, John 14:6. Because He is the antitype and the body of the types and shadows.
3. The word of God is truth, John 17:17. And it is the object and rule of everything that must be believed and done.
4. There is also a truth that is in man: Psalm 51:8. Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts. We speak of this here.

This includes a truth of the understanding, of the heart, of the mouth, of the work, and of the purpose.

(a) A truth of the understanding, so that the understanding is enlightened by the Holy Spirit, and sees and knows the divine revealed things of the way of salvation through Christ as they are in their own forms; the comprehension and the things correspond: Titus 1:1 ... the knowledge of the truth that accords with godliness. This is to have the mind of Christ, 1 Corinthians 2:16: Ephesians 4:21. If indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus. 2 Corinthians 11:10. The truth of Christ is in me.

(b) A truth of the heart, which is a conformity of the will with the divine truths that are to be believed and done, the heart is thereby

united in desire and love to believe and do them, so that what is truth in the Word is also truth in them: Psalm 119:97. Oh, how I love Your law! Romans 7:22. For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man.

(c) A truth of the mouth, which is a conformity of the words with the heart, now, as said, enlightened and loving. This takes place when one speaks of divine matters, confesses the truth, and in interaction with people speaks as the matter is and is comprehended by the heart: Proverbs 8:7. For my mouth will speak truth; 1 Timothy 2:7 ... I am telling the truth in Christ, I am not lying. Ephesians 4:25 ... speak the truth, each one of you, with his neighbor.

(d) A truth of the work, when appearance, actions, and conduct, whatever its nature, whether in spiritual or civil matters, correspond with the heart, knowing and loving the will of God revealed in the Word: Psalm 119:97. Oh, how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day. James 1:22. Be doers of the word. Isaiah 61:8. For I, the Lord, love justice; I hate robbery and wrong; I will faithfully give them their reward. 2 John 4 ... I rejoiced greatly to find some of your children walking in the truth.

(e) A truth of the purpose, when what we aim at with the will of God, heart, mouth, and deeds corresponds; the end we aim at is particularly required in sincerity, it must correspond with all that is said, or it is all twisted. An evil purpose ruins good means, and evil means ruin a good purpose. Psalm 66:18. If I had cherished iniquity in my heart, the Lord would not have listened. Matthew 6:22, 23. The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light, but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness.

Take all this together now, everything must be one, and if all this is one, this is truth, and this truth constitutes the true essence of sincerity; where this truth is somewhat missed, there sincerity fails.

The cause is God.

V. The cause of sincerity is God: for God gives light to know the truth, gives love for the truth, gives truth in the heart, and thus also sincerity in all deeds that come from that spiritually alive heart: Isaiah 61:8 ... I will make their work the work of truth. David acknowledges that it had to come from the Lord, so he prayed for it: Psalm 119:80. Let my heart be blameless in Your statutes. Although God immediately touches and reforms the heart, God nevertheless uses the Word as a means: John 17:17. Sanctify them in your truth; your word is truth.

Conviction of the insincere, who they are.

VI. The nature of this virtue being set forth obliges everyone to practice it; God demanded it from Abraham, and likewise from all his children through faith: Genesis 17:1 ... Walk before Me and be blameless! Deuteronomy 18:13. You shall be blameless with the Lord your God. Matthew 10:16 ... therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves. Your heart shall be convinced within itself of the propriety and obligation; but coming to yourself, and holding the above-presented truth as a mirror before you, what are you like? Are you among the upright? It is necessary to convict the insincere and show them their miserable state if it might be a means to their conversion: it is also necessary to convict the upright of their lack in this regard.

All unconverted.

1. You are truly still among the hypocrites who are still in an unconverted state. How can your heart be sincere before God, whom you do not know in the face of Jesus Christ? How will you walk in the upright way, when the right way to salvation is still hidden from you? You, who have no internal desire and love for the way to go to God through Christ, to enter the path of holiness? Who have not even set your foot on that path; but you still have a darkened understanding, your stony heart, and your life in the earth? It's all twisted, it all goes away from God and His will. Thus there can be no sincerity there; or if your purpose and some of your deeds, whether civil or outwardly religious, correspond with your heart, there is still no sincerity, for the heart itself is not good, therefore nothing that agrees with it is good either. Even if you were not hypocrites, you are still not sincere before God.

And hypocrites.

2. You are downright hypocrites and hypocrites, seeking yourselves in everything you do, and all that matters to you is honor, love, profit, and for that you put on a different appearance than you are. You rarely look inward, and you have become so accustomed to hypocrisy that you don't even think about it when you do it; therefore, we will depict you once in your life, and show you how you are in social interaction, and in religion.

In social interaction.

VII. (a) In social interaction. It's as if the hypocrite had been schooled by Cain; he speaks kindly to his neighbor, he lures him out, but it is to kill him. He learned from Saul the trick of inciting others, to praise one so that he would be ensnared to overwhelm him with many favors: "I will give David my daughter, so that she may be a

snare to him." He has seen how to put a murder spike in someone's heart by rejoicing over him and inquiring about his welfare. Absalom taught him to prepare a meal to kill Amnon. Judas taught him how to betray with a kiss. David describes them: Psalm 28:3, They speak peaceably with their neighbors; but evil is in their hearts. Psalm 62:5, They bless with their mouths, but inwardly they curse. Psalm 55:21, His mouth is smoother than butter, but war is in his heart; his words are softer than oil, yet they are drawn swords.

In religion, where they are depicted.

(b) In religious matters. When there is a time when Godliness is esteemed, then the church is filled with hypocrites. It would be desirable if the hypocrite stayed away from the pulpit, if one did not hear such persons, who with all their might study to: • One, to gain the reputation of being learned, though he is not truly so, and if he has a conscience that points out his wrong purpose, it is soothed by the thought that it is to gain a name, and having obtained it, to be able to edify more.

- The other, to be esteemed eloquent.
- The third, to evoke wonder, that he has such a voice and such gifts, which send a shiver through people's brains and squeeze tears from their eyes.
- A fourth seems to be enraptured and glorified in prayer, and like an angel in preaching; but it is for honor, for respect, to receive the applause of the people, and when one comes down from the pulpit, one seeks to know what pleasure one has given, and it is like balm to the soul when there are many people present, when the congregation has been moved, when it is said: that is a lively preacher; one prefers to be in the company where

one is praised, and where one is made an idol of. The devil himself can transform into an angel of light, so his servants can well put on a hair mantle of Elijah and a garment of John the Baptist, to lie, Zachariah 13:4. Yet one knows how to adorn himself a bit more elegantly than the other. There is no more abominable and repulsive thing under the sun than a hypocritical preacher.

Turning to the members; the hypocrite sees what the Godly do, and he mimics them to also appear Godly, so the evil does not lie easily in his outward appearance, as if all who did so were hypocrites, for then the hypocrite would avoid all that; for he seeks not the name of a hypocrite, but of a Godly person. Thus, the slanderers of the Godly refute themselves when they call the Godly hypocrites; for it is evident to conscience that one must be and live as the Godly do, and when the hypocrites try to imitate that, and therefore, because a hypocrite seeks that appearance, it is truth if someone has the appearance of that hypocrisy. But the evil of the hypocrite lies in his heart and purpose, he does not seek to be what he wants to appear; he is not it, he does not aim for it, but he aims only for the name, and when he has that name, he has enough of it, he knows how to use the name to his advantage. And to gain the name, he diligently goes to church. It is as it is, he must be there, one must not miss him there. One runs to the preacher whom the Godly prefer to hear, one must especially sit in a place where one can be seen by all; if there is singing, one also takes a book in hand, even if one wouldn't read a letter in it: one also raises one's voice, not to rouse oneself and others in the praise of God, but so that others would hear what a fine voice one has, or how well one knows the melody, therefore one will begin as the precentor, and at the end add a drone.

When it is time to pray, one bows with a grand gesture, or one stands up; one knows how to make sighs during prayer, and to wipe one's eyes after prayer, as if one had wept. During the sermon, one makes an attentive display, one may even stand up, one does not turn an eye from the preacher, and one seems to be gaping and eating the words from his mouth; one may open one's book, and put a crease in it, as if one were marking a passage, even if it is far from the place mentioned by the preacher, and meanwhile, one may secretly glance sideways, to see if one is seen being so attentive, although one thinks of nothing less than the sermon; one may count the panes in the windows, the pipes in the organ, the carvings on the pulpit.

When the deacon comes to collect alms, one seems not to notice him until he was close by, and that seems to disturb one's attention; if one gives a penny, one picks the thinnest one, so that it would sound like silver coins; if one gives a little more, one wishes it to resound throughout the church.

After the religious service is done, our hypocrite goes away, and one visits one and another, with one's book in hand, to show that one comes from church, and one praises the sermon highly, and that one has had so much edification from it, though one couldn't say a word of it, and one complains of the shortness of memory. When one says a prayer, or reads a chapter, it must be done so loudly that others, even if they were in the street, could hear it; when one expects the preacher for a house visit, the Bible must be open especially, and sometimes even two or three other books with it, and one is so absorbed in reading that one does not notice the preacher, even if he is standing on the floor, and then one seems startled; one makes acquaintance with the Godly, and one speaks to others of the familiarity one has with such and such Godly people; one sometimes leans one's head to one side, one measures one's words with an ell, as

if one pays such close attention to one's words, and one even follows the bad gestures that some Godly people, without their knowledge, have adopted. Yes, to appear even more, one will make it known that one carries a little jug or flask. One is very zealous for the outward and to carry oneself masterfully in reprovng others.

One always has one's mouth full of complaints about the corruption and decline of the church; one presumes to instruct the teachers on what and how they should preach, and one has something to say about every preacher and sermon, especially about those which the Godly hear the least. The hypocrites are like beggars, one pretends to be such and such, and another pretends to be such and such, and everyone understands the art of begging best; so also one hypocrite understands himself best in this, and another in that; one is so clumsy in hypocrisy that everyone can see it, another can do it so delicately that he would deceive the best; some have learned the art so well that they deceive themselves, and by neglecting to pay attention to their hearts, they imagine that they mean it, and if it were possible, they would deceive God. Shame on you, hypocrites! With great reluctance have I dealt with revealing you to yourselves, if it were possible, to bring you to repentance.

Threatening. VIII. To that end,

1. Consider once, what a dreadful monster, and what a dreadful creature you are within yourself; for in you there is nothing human; it is all twisted, it is all dreadful and wicked; do you not recoil from yourself, for you resemble a devil better than a human.
2. Consider how repulsive and detestable you are to all honest people, both Godly and secular, and do not imagine that you will remain unknown; you may go for some time among the sincere

in secular and religious matters, but it will not last long, you will soon be noticed, and then you will be the most despised among all who live there, and even if you remained hidden, what do you gain from it except a handful of flies?

3. Know that God, with whom you have to do, knows you well: He sees through you; He observes your wrong intentions, and all your hypocritical tricks; how abominable you must then be in the eyes of God! Listen to what David says about it, Psalm 5:7, You will destroy those who speak lies; the Lord abhors the man of bloodshed and deceit.
4. And what is the expectation of the hypocrite... when God takes his soul? Ask Job, Job 27:8. Read the answer. Job 8:13, The expectation of the hypocrite shall perish. Isaiah 33:14, Hypocrites shall be seized with trembling. The Lord Jesus pronounces woes! eight times in one chapter, namely, Matthew 23, upon the hypocrites. A hypocrite shall not be saved; but shall have the most intolerable state in hell; for when the wicked are threatened with hell, they are said to be with the hypocrites: Matthew 24:51. And will cut him in pieces, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Impress this on your heart, you who are insincere, and you hypocrites, and repent before it is too late. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded, James 4:8.

Conviction of the sincere of their sincerity. IX. True believers are fundamentally sincere; for:

(a) they have spiritual light and life, they partake of the Divine nature, and Jesus has a form in them.

(b) They see their faults, are grieved over them, confess them, and seek reconciliation in the blood of Christ through faith, and fight against them.

(c) They are troubled in this, because they distrust their hearts, and become aware of the corrupt impulses; they bring their hearts before the Lord, praying: Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts. And see if there is any wicked way in me; and lead me in the way everlasting, Psalm 139:23, 24.

(d) They are general and universal with regard to things, times, places; they make no exceptions at all, and even if they fall more into one sin than another, it is still against their intention, against their heart, and it grieves them; yes, in secret they act even more sincerely than before people, and their heart is fundamentally more sincere than in their actions. They can and dare say to the Lord: I seek You with my whole heart; let me not wander from Your commandments, Psalm 119:10. Therefore I esteem all Your precepts concerning all things to be right; but I hate every false way, verse 128. All these things are true evidences of sincerity, which believers can and should rely on and strengthen themselves in their troubled thoughts, whether they are sincere because they still find so much lack in this; nevertheless, they must humble themselves over the lack and transgressions, to which we want to set their faults in this before them.

And of their lack in this. X.

(a) Look back on what we have said about the hypocrites, and examine yourself therein, whether you are guilty of any of it.

(b) See if, at any time, a plot arises in one way or another, which, though struggling against the conscience, breaks through; and if one

tries to appease their conscience with specious reasons, that this good was in it, yet the intention was not pure, but there were selfish motives underneath, so that what was in the heart was different from what was in appearance, words, or deeds.

(c) Pay close attention to whether the corruption of nature is not continually busy with secondary motives, either because the right end is not vividly and effectively pursued, not only instigating the work, or because the corruption is not sufficiently killed and maintained, or because one is careless and does not pay attention to their heart, or because one gives in to the temptations of the devil by giving opportunities and does not earnestly fight and pray against it, whereby the corruption gains strength to initiate its own motives. Sometimes the devil tempts with self-interests that have no hold but are repelled without injury. Sometimes he accuses, albeit falsely, that one has selfish motives in a work, to hinder the good and disturb the person; and a believer, not knowing his tricks, thinks that he truly has those selfish motives in that work, and is thereby disturbed; he is accused in almost everything: it is constantly: you do that for this reason, and again in another matter: you do that for that reason; but as a believer who knows those attacks, he does not bother about them, but continues with his work, even as a person who continues his journey under a hailstorm; but often the corrupt nature, welling up with secondary motives, comes along with it.

(d) It is also against sincerity when one does the work halfway; not that the flaws, which are still present in the best works, make a person insincere, but when one is heartless, listless, lukewarm, and weak in the work, one does the work indeed, but it is not with the whole understanding, with the whole will, with all one's strength, with all exertion for a holy purpose; one's own understanding, one's

own will, one's own work, one's own intention mingle in it, so that the work only proceeds halfway.

See if you also find yourself guilty of this; if yes, know:

- that although you are pleasing to Christ in terms of your person, the Lord nevertheless has displeasure with insincerity.
- That your insincerity will soon be noticed by others, especially by the Godly; it will grieve them if they are strong Christians, or it will evoke aversion and disgust against you if they have little grace.
- And it will make godliness suspicious to the worldly, and because of you, the Godly will be generally slandered, and they will say more, see such people are, they are a bunch of hypocrites.
- And you yourself will have a troubled mind and be unconfident in everything. Therefore, humble yourself greatly before the Lord, be grieved over it, and let the sight of the ugliness of your heart and deeds make you disgusted with yourself, in order to thereby have an aversion to the sin of insincerity and to strive more zealously against it, and towards sincerity.

Revival is necessary.

XI. Make it your aim to be sincere and act sincerely; for:

1. Sincerity is an altogether necessary quality of a Christian.
- A Christian is indeed sincere: Song of Solomon 1:4 ... the upright love you.

- Job: Job 1:1 ... that man was blameless, upright, fearing God, and turning away from evil.
- David: Psalm 18:24. But with the faithful you show yourself faithful.
- Hezekiah: Isaiah 38:3 ... remember how I have walked before you in faithfulness and with a whole heart, and have done what is good in your sight.
- Noah: Genesis 6:9 ... Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation.

Sincerity is also an inseparable quality of all virtues. Sincerity is required:

- In prayer: John 4:24. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.
- In faith: 1 Timothy 1:5. The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.
- In love: Romans 12:9. Let love be genuine.
- In the whole disposition of the heart: 1 Thessalonians 5:23 ... may your whole spirit, soul, and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- In all our conduct and behavior: 1 Corinthians 5:8 ... let us celebrate the festival, not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. Since sincerity is such a necessary and inseparable quality of a Christian, and of all his work, what shall one do if they do not act in sincerity?

Fit.

XII. 2. Sincerity is fitting, it suits a Christian; for the God with whom one has to do is pure Light, is the only Knower of Hearts, whom one cannot deceive, who sees the slightest deviation, who delights in

truth in the inner being, Psalm 51:6. Whose eyes are on the truth, Jeremiah 5:3. The upright are His delight, Proverbs 11:20. Dealing with such a God, does it not require sincerity? The Lord Jesus, in whom we trust, is perfectly sincere, in his mouth was no deceit found, 1 Peter 2:22. The Holy Spirit, who dwells in you, as in a temple, is a Spirit of truth, John 14:17. He leads his children in truth, John 16:13, He would grieve you if you turned aside from your ways and resorted to insincerities. The Word, by which you are born again, which is your nourishment, and a rule of life, is truth, John 17:17. The word of truth, Psalm 119:43. Will this not move you to truth in all your dealings? Your spiritual life, which is in you, the image of God that you bear, is righteousness and holiness of truth. Ephesians 4:24. Therefore, follow that sincere principle of spiritual life, follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and walk before the all-seeing eye of your God, in all sincerity, make sure your actions correspond with your name.

A lovely adornment.

XIII. Sincerity is a very lovely adornment, and insincerity renders all virtues one might possess contemptible; but sincerity makes all other virtues shine and casts a glow upon godliness, making the upright beloved by natural men, godly men, and by God Himself.

(a) Among natural men; though they may mock the godly, they have respect for the upright; they say: 'they're a bunch of hypocrites', but he who means well, who is sincere, with him I am willing to die, they wish to deal with such people, even if mostly out of self-love to avoid being deceived: the words of the upright have influence on them, and they are capable of winning others over, even without speaking; if sincerity shone forth in all godly individuals, what a glory godliness would have in the world!

(b) Among godly men, sincerity in others is lovely, they do not want to associate with deceitful people, Psalm 26:4. But their eyes are on the faithful, on the upright. Psalm 101:6. Even if someone is fundamentally born again, if sincerity in their intentions is lacking, one cannot associate with them; they want to love them, they want to walk and consult sweetly with them, but the heart is hindered, one cannot unite their heart with them, they are a labor, trouble, and grief: but with the upright, the heart is immediately united, and there is edification and pleasure in their company. Lydia used sincerity as a motive with Paul, saying: "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay." Acts 16:15.

(c) But, above all, God Himself takes pleasure in the upright. The upright are His delight, Proverbs 11:20. Just as one takes pleasure in beholding those one loves, it is also said of the Lord: His eyes see the upright, Psalm 11:7. The upright are defenseless, they do not want to use evil means to help themselves; but it is the Lord who preserves the upright in heart, Psalm 7:11, God accepts the upright as His household members, over whom He pours out His special favors: Psalm 15:1, 2. "O Lord, who shall sojourn in your tent? Who shall dwell on your holy hill? He who walks blamelessly and does what is right and speaks truth in his heart." The Lord rejoices the heart of the upright: Psalm 97:11. Light is sown for the righteous, and joy for the upright in heart. If anything can move you, let this do it. Be sincere then. The upright are beloved by all, hypocrites are hated.

Cover the weaknesses.

XIV. God values His children according to their sincerity. It does not please the Lord to make His children perfect in this life, everything here is only partial, they stumble still daily in many things; but according to their sincerity they are called the upright, with sincerity

all their weaknesses in Christ are covered. David had committed great sins, then he behaved in this way, then in that, yet because of his sincerity it is said of him, 1 Kings 15:5, "Because David did what was right in the eyes of the Lord and did not turn aside from anything that he commanded him all the days of his life, except in the matter of Uriah the Hittite; for in that he acted deceitfully." So also the sins of Asa. Yet the heart of Asa was wholly (sincere) with the Lord all his days, 1 Kings 15:14. The conclusion to the rebuke of Jehoshaphat was: "Nevertheless, good things are found in you, for you... set your heart to seek God." 2 Chronicles 19:3. Hezekiah prayed: "May the Lord, who is good, pardon everyone who sets his heart to seek God, the Lord, the God of his fathers, even though not according to the sanctuary's rules of cleanness," 2 Chronicles 30:18, 19. Thus, God will overlook your stumblings in Christ, if you walk with a sincere heart before the Lord's face. Be sincere then!

Granting boldness.

XV. Sincerity gives great boldness in carrying out our duties. Let a hypocrite fear the light, let him seek the darkness for his hiding places, let him be afraid to undertake anything from which opposition is expected, let him tremble and be terrified at every plague of God in the world; but the upright are fearless, they dare to come out, they come forth like a young lion, and perform their duty, and stand firm against all slanderous tongues, and against all danger, because they have space within and expect God's help from without: Job 27:5, 6. "Far be it from me to say that you are right; till I die, I will not put away my integrity from me. I hold fast my righteousness and will not let it go." Job 31:33, 35-37. "If I have covered my transgressions as Adam, by hiding my iniquity in my heart, because I stood in great fear of the multitude, and the contempt of families terrified me, so that I kept silence and did not go out of the door - oh,

that I had one to hear me! Here is my signature! Let the Almighty answer me! Oh, that I had the indictment written by my adversary! Surely I would carry it on my shoulder; I would bind it on me as a crown."

Thus, sincerity makes one brave. And if violence is brought against him, he is nevertheless not afraid, because the Lord helps the upright, according to the promise: 2 Chronicles 16:9, "For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to give strong support to those whose heart is blameless toward him." An upright person needs no other weapon than his sincerity.

Living in peace and dying in courage.

6. Sincerity gives a peaceful life and a courageous death. A hypocrite lives in constant unrest and fear of being exposed, and needs much deliberation to cover one pretense with another; but the upright have a satisfied conscience and are firm and sure within themselves: 2 Corinthians 1:12. "For our boast is this, the testimony of our conscience, that we behaved in the world with simplicity and godly sincerity." And when it comes to dying, and sins appear, then the comfort is that our heart has been sincere before the Lord: Isaiah 38:3. "Please, O Lord, remember how I have walked before you in faithfulness and with a whole heart, and have done what is good in your sight."

Means.

XVI. Therefore, strive diligently to acquire, through constant practice, a habit of sincerity, and such a completely sincere disposition that sincerity always bubbles up as if by itself and shines through all your actions.

(a) Acknowledge before the Lord the crookedness of the heart and its inclinations, and immediately show the hatred and disgust you have for it, and the desire for sincerity and truth.

(b) Acknowledge your inability, that it is impossible for you to bring your heart into such a sincere disposition and maintain it; but that the Lord has the power and goodness to give it to you. Come then with that desire and with that bare disposition, and earnestly, humbly, and with much persistence, pray to the Lord, saying: "Let my heart be blameless in your statutes, that I may not be put to shame." Psalm 119:80. And in that prayer, look to the Lord Jesus, who has acquired for you spirit and life, appropriating to yourself those merits, and come thereby to the Lord, showing also the promise which the Lord has made, that He would make our work true. Isaiah 61:8.

(c) Pay close attention to the heart, in which it inclines toward insincerity, and immediately oppose it, no matter how much shame or harm may come to you, hold fast to sincerity.

(d) And if something insincere has come from you, continue to look at it for a while, so that it may deeply grieve you, and that grief may afterwards make you more cautious.

(e) Keep yourself continually in the presence of the Lord; the sight of God's presence and omniscience is a powerful means to sincerity; therefore these two are joined: "Walk before my face and be blameless." Genesis 17:1.

(f) Thus, as you go on, keep your eye continually on the Word of truth, seek to understand it in its spiritual sense, and the truth will set you free, and you will increase in walking in the truth. Thus, one goes to heaven. Blessed are the blameless in their ways. Psalm 119:1.

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