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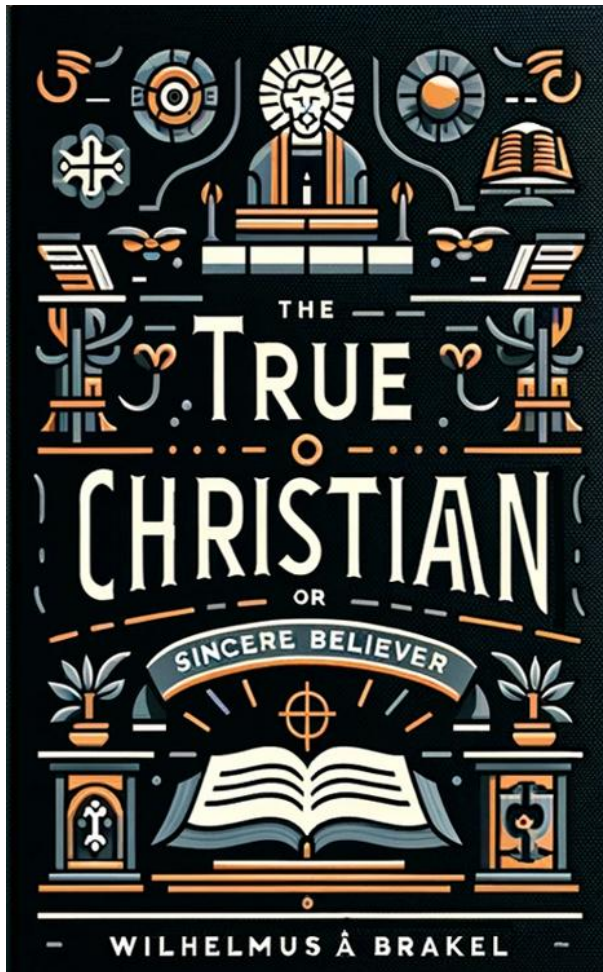
CHRISTIAN

OR

SINCERE BELIEVER



— WILHELMUS À BRAKEL —



THE TRUE CHRISTIAN

or

SINCERE BELIEVER

having a part in God through Christ, in contrast to a hypocrite and deceiver, or a natural unconverted person.

Both presented in their characters and marks as they appear in their beginning, progress, and end.

Comprised in ten chosen sermons of the pious, learned, and now blessed

Added: 1 Exercise 2 sermons

WILHELMUS á BRAKEL

In his life, a renowned teacher in the congregation at Rotterdam

ACCORDING TO THE CHURCH ORDER OF THESE LANDS

Behold the great difference of a believing person; And one who hypocritically did not receive what he expected. But he who fears the Lord and always observes His Word, God Himself has made his Portion and everything as he wishes. So that beside God, nothing on earth can delight him; Heaven is the place where he can always rest in God.

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Edifying exercise by the blessed author, conducted in The Hague among special friends.

Added: Hiding of God's Face from the House of Jacob

Preface and dedication to the flourishing congregation of Rotterdam

"Therefore, I will wait for the Lord, Who hides His face from the house of Jacob, and I will hope in Him." Isaiah 8:17

Grace and peace be multiplied unto you!

Dear and beloved friends,

These are emphatic words that we find in Zechariah 1:5: Your fathers, where are they? And the prophets, will they live forever? These words of God, directed to the Jews through the prophet, are also applicable to us and should be well noted by all, that our fathers, whom we have seen and heard, are no longer on earth but are dead and gone, as Job 14:10 states: But man dies and is laid low; man breathes his last, and where is he?

Will your prophets live forever? No; this question implies a denial, as the prophets are not exempt from dying. Although they are of great use, their lives are not spared from death; they serve their generation by the will of God, and then they sleep, and are gathered to their fathers, and see corruption. (Acts 13:36)

By prophets, we do not only understand those who have foretold future things but are also authorized teachers of the people. Thus, the ministers of the gospel are regarded and considered as prophets, as we can see and read in 1 Samuel 9:9, Isaiah 1:19; Jeremiah 1:3, Acts 13:12; 1 Corinthians 12:28. Yet, God sets their boundaries, which they cannot transgress. Even those who teach others and convert the righteous must die and speak no more. Although they, being dead, still speak in some respects after they have died, as it is said of Abel (Hebrews 11).

But if you ask: why must the prophets die, where their stay here is so desirable and desirable, and their life can be so useful and profitable? I will answer briefly:

1. Prophets must die, according to the Divine ordinance, Hebrews 9:27: it is appointed unto men once to die. And this decree affects all men, except Enoch, who was taken away from the common mass by God; and Elijah, who went to heaven in a whirlwind with a fiery chariot. Also, the last generation, which will be found alive when our blessed and glorified Lord Jesus comes for judgment, will not die but be changed. Others must, like the prophets, die and be laid in the dust of death; and they see corruption, because the Scripture cannot be broken, but as well as the counsel of the Lord must stand.
2. Prophets must die because they are not without sin. These shining lights also have their blemishes, and the best of them,

though free from great transgressions, must confess that the will to do good is indeed with them, but the evil is near them, Romans 7. And though Christ has taken away the power and sting of their sins, and forgiven them by his blood, yet He does not entirely remove the remnants of sins from them while they are in the world, nor spares them from making their bed for a time in the dust.

3. Prophets must die, that they may conform to Christ, their Head. The Chief Shepherd died, the Lord of life and glory died, but saw no corruption. But his servants must here be like their Master, that they too return to dust.
4. Prophets must die, that they may be freed from sins. They preach and pray against sins and kill them in themselves, and exhort others to subdue them, that they may be wholly freed from them. They must die; their earthen vessel must be cleansed by breaking.
5. Prophets must die, that their suffering may end, and they be relieved from those who hate and mock them, that no persecutor's hand may touch them, and they hear no more the voice of their oppressors. They find, while they live, such bad encounters as their great Lord, who was called deceiver, devil, and Beelzebub. But death comes, and they hear no more those sharp words of their slanderous tongues, which cut through skin and flesh, from which death frees them.
6. Prophets must die, that they may rest from their labor. Their life is laborious, while they study like the Preacher, who sought to find pleasing words, chapter 12:10. They labor in preaching, in prayers with and for their people, and in visiting their flock. And when one work is over, another begins again. But God will

someday call them out of his workshop into his blessed rest, to be with Him through the messenger of death.

7. Prophets must die, that they may receive the reward of their labor. Not according to merits, but through the riches of God's free grace in Christ Jesus. They have the promise of a great and glorious reward, that they will shine like the stars forever; and when the great Shepherd appears, they will then receive the crown of life. Thus, they must die, that this crown may be placed upon their head, which, to be seen here, is too glorious.

Beloved Christians! Thus, we see various reasons why our fathers depart, so that our prophets are no longer on earth. I think that you, who are reading this, are touched and convinced of this truth by the painful loss of your dear and beloved father, Wilhelmus à Brakel. Your prophet is dead and gone. Not only to your great loss, but also to the detriment of our country, the general church, your city, and congregation. The death of someone who feared God, although he was but a bruised reed or smoldering wick, is a general loss; much more so must be the death of an outstanding prophet, who by God's appointment was taken from your company, vanished from your sight, so that you, nor any inhabitant of the world, will see him here no more. He has not moved to another candlestick or assembly; but from the earth to heaven; only his flesh remains among you.

Although your desired shepherd was a holy man, of which you are convinced with me, yes, I know his witness is in the heights; yet he was not without sins and faults, and therefore death befitted him, and he died so that he might be like his Lord and Master, whom he faithfully served, and be freed from sins, against which he earnestly preached, and fervently prayed and struggled until he overcame them.

Your father Brakel also died, that he might be freed from suffering, and see and hear no more mockery or disgrace. His soul is above accusations and hateful words with God; there alone is the closest concord of love. Your prophet is dead, and rests from his laborious study, preaching, catechizing, writing, praying, and visiting you, now that he has entered into the joy of his Lord.

He spent his life days with much labor in the work of the Lord. You must testify that he was not a slack, but a serious teacher in his ministry, who spared not himself nor excused himself to be advantageous to you. Here he was planted in the flourishing congregation of Rotterdam, and you know, he did not toil the earth in vain; and having been so laborious, God called him to receive the reward of his work.

Your prophet W. à Brakel is dead, and I had to cast my penny also into your treasury, to the honor of his memory, although the reverend theologians A. Hellenbroek and D. le Roy in their funeral sermons have portrayed him to life. I will borrow not a word from it, but let this copy follow the original, to not forget him on this good occasion, having been in his time and bloom a green olive tree in the house of God, flourishing gloriously in great virtues and grace, fit to go in and out in your assemblies, before the eyes of God's people, over whom the Lord of the spirits of all flesh, by the Holy Spirit, had anointed him, and appointed as an overseer.

He was a shining light, burning in zeal, and enlightening you in holiness, like Jehoiada, who had done good in Israel for God and his house, his church, and people; he was temperate, just, and godly, while renouncing all ungodliness and worldly desires, excelling in knowledge, faith, zeal, and godliness as those who had the honor and happiness to be with him well know, while he served the Lord with

his house, and in his public ministry always found his heart and tongue touched with a coal from God's altar, preaching with much movement, earnestness, power, and persuasion, to godliness.

Thus doing, father Brakel spent most of his time in studying, preaching, praying, and visiting the congregation, especially the godly; so that your deceased prophet has the character that he served and honored the entire church of the Christian religion, which now must serve and return to the honor of our God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, from which Father of lights all good gifts and perfect gifts richly descend upon his children. Let then God be glorified, thanked, and praised for such gifts and graces, which Jehovah has placed in more than one preacher, and still daily imparts through various of his messengers, so many means of grace, while they shine with a borrowed light, from Him who is a Light, and in whom there is no darkness at all, being illuminated by the Sun of Righteousness and by the Divine Spirit, so that I may say that no greater nor more beautiful light ever shone upon a church on earth than the congregation of Rotterdam, which for many years and still now listens with open ears to what the Spirit says to the churches.

Indeed, God's people were very beloved, and held a great place in the hearts and love of those desired men J. Doesburg and W. à Brakel, who as fathers and prophets for many years studied, preached, prayed, and wrote for you with all their hearts. The sins they saw in you, they wept over; your graces they encouraged; and in your oppression, sickness, and sorrow, you had their helping hands and praying hearts. Those who followed each other were your shepherds and watchers as a father and husband for you, thus in their moving, you have lost, and had reason to weep. But are your prophets dead, the word they spoke still lives, and will stay with you. The threats they made against stubborn sinners still live and will come upon

those who remain in their sins. The encouraging, comforting words they spoke to the godly still live, as well as the eternal Gospel, and promises that, being granted to you, God will fulfill in his time, as they have told you, so that not one word will fail or fall to the ground.

My dear friends, who may have heard these sermons before, take care that you do not carry them with father W. à Brakel into his grave, but bring them to each other's memory, with all that your deceased prophet ever said to you, so that his dust, and that of other pious, holy, and zealous servants, may not rise up against you on the day of judgment. Oh, what great account will Rotterdam have to give to the great and holy God, for the abundant heavenly manna rained down here, through the lips of several outstanding, devout, and wise teachers, who still so richly dispense the means of grace to you, and whom you may still enjoy, and retain longer, unless by your unfruitfulness you might provoke the Lord, and give reason to turn your Goshen, where now the light of the gospel burns so brightly, into a land of darkness and the shadow of death.

Let your life by grace seriously display the teaching you have heard, and answer the admonitions and good counsel of the precious means of grace under which you have lived, that the God of peace may be with you, and you may be eternally happy in the fruits of the blessed glory. But those who continue in their sins, and remain in their ignorance, worldliness, and unrepentant state, will fall short of spiritual religion and serious godliness, notwithstanding the excellent supply you have had for your souls, the time of your life, so that you will find it after your death, more bearable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for you, who having been given much, will also be required much. And you, Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven, will be thrust down to hell. Today, while you hear this voice, do not harden your hearts, Psalm 95. Now is the

acceptable time and day of salvation, wherein you must convert, otherwise the Lord will come and remove his candlestick from this place, Revelation 2. God has known you out of all the generations of the earth, therefore He will visit your iniquities, if you do not become wiser and better.

But you, who fear the Lord, and have made sincere good use under the holy labor of your deceased prophets, are strengthened and comforted in the blessing, which God has added to you through them. It's true, your prophets and spiritual fathers are dead, I mean Doesburg and Brakel, but God your Heavenly Father lives, and His covenant of grace in Christ lives and is confirmed, in all things firm and sure. God will provide you with other crystalline streams, or also refresh you immediately from Himself, as the Fountain of grace and source of blessings, whose loving-kindness is better than life, Psalm 63. Meanwhile, count yourselves happy, that you still retain so many of David's heroes, who are experienced in fighting the Lord's wars; whose faithful servants' exemplary lives should also inspire you to moderation, righteousness, gentleness, zeal, godliness, purity, love, faith, and heavenly-mindedness, so that you may one day give an account with joy, and stand in the great day with your teachers, who have been and still are your fathers and prophets, at the right hand of our Redeemer, God above all blessed forever; and let all the people say with me: Amen.

As for the following 10 precious Sermons, on so many beautiful and meaningful texts, I need not say much in their praise, as they recommend themselves enough alongside the title. Indeed, the books bearing the name of W. à Brakel on the forehead do not need to be praised and highly exalted by an ornate preface and laudatory poems, much less to be deduced and dedicated to the great and rich people in the world, as is often seen for those who need it more than

this. Doubt not that many will still remember, if not the matters, at least the texts they heard discussed by their deceased teacher. Were these published by him in his lifetime, it might possibly have been broader and better in many people's thoughts; but for me, it is as good and perfect as I could desire; wishing that the reader may have as much joy and edification as the writers, who having used this necessary and useful work with blessing and refreshment, deliver it back to you, as they have received it; wishing that the Lord God may follow our modest labor with His gracious blessing, so that this book, as well as his previous ones, may be useful for the winning and building up of many souls; I dare not make a longer preface for this little book, but will conclude it, with the wish of Paul, Hebrews 13:20, 21: Now the God of peace, who brought back the great Shepherd of the sheep from the dead through the blood of the eternal covenant, our Lord Jesus Christ; may He perfect you in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

First sermon on the Evangelical prophet Isaiah 28:6

"He who believes shall not make haste." Isaiah 28:6

The Lord God, proclaiming to His church that He lays in Zion a foundation stone, a tried stone, a precious cornerstone, well-established, does so to arouse and increase faith in the heart of every individual. There are those who, until that time, made a covenant with death and had a prudent agreement with hell, taking refuge in

lies, and hiding under falsehood. By proclaiming His promises, the Lord convinces them of godless folly, which will eventually deceive them; because He who makes the counsel of the nations to nothing says, Ps. 2:1: Why do the nations rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against His Anointed, saying: Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. He that sits in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision. Then shall He speak unto them in His wrath, and vex them in His sore displeasure. Yet have I set my King.

There was, then, an excellent Foundation Stone, Jesus Christ, who would be too strong and mighty for them, to whom they had fallen as an inheritance. He also offers them a means of salvation, if only they would turn away from their wickedness and turn to Him, to be built as living stones upon that spiritual foundation.

Also, regarding God's children, it is their faith that needs to be aroused and strengthened by the promise; for although faith is already rooted in them, it is still built up and strengthened in such a manner. But although the end of the promises naturally engenders and confirms faith, not without the Lord's Spirit, it will nevertheless take an opposite effect, for the desire of God's children for Jesus and His acquired salvation being very strong, the delayed hope pains the heart, making one haste, and becomes sorrowful over the Lord's dealings, setting a limit to the Holy One of Israel. God, to whom all things are known, has also taken this precaution, not only as He teaches that the Lord's patience should be counted as salvation, 2 Peter 3:13; but also as He declares to us that he who believes shall not make haste.

After the Lord had exposed the false foundation of the wicked (v. 15), He sets forth (v. 16) a more excellent foundation, as He indicates in our text the use and end of both, saying: that he who believes, etc.

The words show us the behavior of the believers, after God's promises have been made, or the use that the believers would make of the Lord's words, as He had proclaimed to the wicked for conviction and to the godly for comfort, Jesus as the Foundation Stone of the church in Zion.

I know (says God) that to each of you who believes, my promise is as I proclaimed to you that I would soon send Jesus in the flesh as Zion's cornerstone; your desire is very great that He might be revealed to take away iniquity from Jacob; however, do not be too hasty, lest you seem to have been put to shame, for he who believes in my miracle will leave the time and the manner to Me, knowing that I will not lie.

Two matters are to be discussed here.

1. The subject of our discussion, or the persons to whom something is given. He who believes.
2. What is said of him: he shall not make haste.
 1. He who believes. Here we are pointed to the believers, who are rare in themselves, and none of them is overlooked; although it is now somewhat rare to find a true believer, yet no one should exclude themselves, as if this word did not concern them. Everyone who believed had to take this to heart. Therefore, it is necessary to pay careful attention to what is said, and who the believers are here. It is easy to see that this is not about a historical belief, although it is not completely excluded, but

rather included. Even less is it about temporary believers, who end up being put to shame. Here we are dealing with everyone who believes in Christ for salvation; for it is taken thus by Paul in Romans 9:33 and 1 Peter 2:8. Whose explanation we must follow and precede.

2. To believe, in this place, first means: to accept, to have imprinted on the heart, what God testifies concerning man's misery, and particularly spoke of these Jews, that they were corrupt in heart and deeds, guilty of particular acts, for which the Lord had threatened temporal and eternal death, that they had foolishly comforted themselves against death and hell, and were certainly to expect temporal and eternal rejection by God, as He had spoken. To hold this as certain, to the point of despairing of oneself, goes first. For not believing God's testimony of their misery, they would never leave their deceptive foundations and turn to Jesus, the chosen cornerstone, as seen in Acts 2:7, Luke 15:17, Psalms 32:5-6.
3. He who believes, understands, agrees, believes with all his heart that God has presented His Son as the Center of the gospel, as the only foundation and Cornerstone of salvation, with whom forgiveness of sins, hiding from the wrath of God, sanctification, and glorification is to be found, that God offers him to the hearers of the gospel for free. One receives Him by faith, and one shall be saved. He is convinced that this offer is also made to him in particular, that coming to Him, he will not be cast out. John 3:33, 1 Timothy 1:15-16. Now the Word of God was for those who held in their heart as truth that it concerned them, that God lays a foundation stone in Zion, with such excellencies, as described in this text; if anyone did not accept this testimony,

he made God a liar, and was incapable of believing unto salvation.

4. From this naturally flows a certain activity of the mind, that he who now believes these two truths, is busy with much going out and constant outpourings of the heart to Jesus, not only with an edifying movement, but with a constant declaration of the heart, choosing, loving, embracing this Savior, that he might be freed from all sins, self and other miseries, and have part and ownership in his righteousness unto life. As the act of faith is immediately exercised when the soul thus heartily comes out to the Lord, testifying to the truth and intent of his soul, according to Psalms 2:12, Isaiah 45:22 and 55:1, John 1:12 and 6:37. This now lies clear in the text, not only as Paul and Peter explain, but also in the circumstances; for if anyone would believe in this cornerstone, he must first choose Him for himself, before he could build on Him; and if he built, what was it other than laying the weight of a lost soul on Him, so that it might be borne by Christ and be kept standing.
5. He who believes, indicates his work of faith to be done, that peace and sanctification may increase in us; they feel that everything fades and disappears in good, everything grows in evil, when that lively union with Christ ceases, on their side. What is their work now, but to continually unite themselves with Jesus through faith and love. They constantly renew their going out, and loving of Him; they daily lay more of the weight of a crumbling house on Him, they seek from Him their light, life, grace, comfort, and to grow up to a holy temple of God. Galatians 2:20, Colossians 3:3-4. Just like David, Psalms 119 and 2 Samuel 23:5. That also the Lord has this in view, appears thus: He presented to them Jesus as a much better refuge and

hiding than lies and falsehood. Just as a godless person every day for the reassurance of his mind, folded up his false covenants, so the good had to deal with Jesus, except that the cornerstone is there, that one daily uses Him for that purpose for which He is founded, until one has used Him for the complete perfection of the building, which does not happen here before the day of death and the final judgment.

Especially something else was fitting for the Jews, that in this respect does not concern the believers of the New Testament; namely: the looking forward to Jesus' coming in the flesh, that the cornerstone would be made visible in the church. How had they to believe those promises, which now have their fulfillment; they had to hang their seal in faith to these promises of God until He, who was awaited, came. Hebrews 11:39-40: And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect. Just as now the promise of Jesus' second coming, and of the glorification of the believers, is to be believed, it is now easy to see that faith herein also comes into play; for God in this covenant had promised to send Jesus in the flesh; upon this then fitted a word: he who believes; they had to believe that not they, but their enemies would be put to shame.

II. He shall not make haste. Words that are very thoughtful and should be considered attentively, and that in several respects.

1. It is questionable whether these words are a command or a promise. According to the language of Scripture, it could be that these words were a command; but since Paul and Peter have explained it in the manner of a promise, looking at the meaning of the words, it is best to also take it up as such; nevertheless, it

can be aptly understood as a promise that flows from the nature of the matter, because haste is against the nature of faith, which is why we take it as a guarantee that is founded in the nature of faith.

2. The question is how to translate the word "haasten" (to hasten); because the Apostles, in Romans 9:23 and 1 Peter 2:6, translate it as "not be put to shame." It is known that the common translations have: he shall not make haste, as it is so taken everywhere in the Holy Scripture. Now, the Syrian translation says: he shall not be terrified or afraid. The Arabic: he shall not be put to shame. But be aware that Paul and Peter have looked at the words, as they lie in their context and meaning. Since the sound and meaning of the words differ, therefore both can be followed, being one an explanation and opening of the other. One is put to shame because one has hastened too much before the time, and one hastens because one fears being put to shame. The reason why the believers should not make haste was: they would not be put to shame, knowing that he who waits with patience will not be deceived in the end. Romans 5:3-4 and 8:25. Where the others make great haste.

Not being put to shame, indicates the following:

1. Those who believe would never miss in their expectation that Jesus would be found for them a Foundation Stone, a well-trying Stone, through Whom they would be delivered from eternal wrath and the collapse of their house, and who would be a cause of eternal salvation for them, bringing all that might be necessary for this and the future life; for He would then be their assurance, what the Father had testified of Him in the same covenant. Yes, the expectation they had on the words of God, that the wicked's covenant with death would be annulled, to

their eternal ruin, when they would bear the punishments of their wickedness and the mockery they had committed against the Lord and His people, would not fail their expectation, Isaiah 45:24 and 19:23. And you shall know that I am the Lord, they shall not be ashamed who wait for Me. Isaiah 66:24.

2. Just as someone is ashamed of his vain effort and work when his goal has failed, as this is combined, Jeremiah 3:23-24: "Truly in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills, and from the multitude of mountains: truly in the Lord our God is the salvation of Israel. For shame has devoured the labour of our fathers from our youth." So here the opposite is promised, they would never regret having believed in Jesus for the salvation of their souls, that they had mourned over sins, had kissed the Lord through faith in Him, and had walked in God's promises, for the end coming, the effort would be crowned; instead of shame, there would rather be glory. Isaiah 45:25, Romans 5:1-2. Instead of shame and disgrace, they would now receive their expected end, see the means crowned, and consequently have cause for glory in the Lord. Thus, this now applies to what is said of faith. Consequently, this is not speaking of a holy shame over sins, for that is good and desirable. But of a sinful shame, which prevents the good; but of the third kind, which is unprofitable and detrimental to the possessor, which was prone to all the godless, who thought they stood in a covenant with death and in a prudent agreement with hell. It would turn out quite differently with these.
3. He shall therefore not make haste, for they shall not at all be ashamed; so it fits to speak a word of not making haste, promised here. Then it is a good haste, which goes hand in hand with faith, of which David speaks, Psalms 119:60. That one

hurries to escape the dangers of sins, and from our enemies, the sinners; but at the same time a bad haste, whereby not waiting for God and His counsel, or to set a limit to the Holy One of Israel, or to such ways and ends that are not good; the latter is now in view, which is why the announcement is made that they shall not make haste; which is an effect of unbelief, whereby the solidity of faith on God's Word being undermined, turns too hastily to its execution and evil means. Psalms 31:13.

We will then consider:

I. The root from which the evil arises.

II. The haste itself.

III. The consequences thereof.

1. The bad root, from which this vice arises. It is a darkening of the spiritual clarity of the mind, by which not only the divine certainty of God's promises is obscured, but also people are made incapable of judging their state, what grace the Lord may have already imparted to them, and what right and property they have to Jesus, to the Triune God, and all His promises. Isaiah 49:14, 15; 50:10. There is then a dark cloud before the eye of faith.

2. From this arises a fear and terror of the mind, not trusting in such a state one finds oneself in, because one fears whether all our conditions are hypocritical, and our deeds are outwardly without sincerity and truth, and consequently we are still detached from God and from life with Him, as the Lord then might not have taken care of us. This fear, as the cause of this haste, is read in Psalm 30:8, 1 John 4:18.

II. Now the haste itself consists of these things:

1. A discontentment and grief over the delay of God's promises and blessings and our subsequent poverty and sinfulness, so that one goes with a grumbling and tormenting spirit, like Israel became distressed over the long delay before they came to Canaan. And Jonah, that God did not overturn Nineveh on the 40th day; they did not wait for the Lord's counsel; but these believers would not be distressed over the delay of Jesus' coming in the flesh, nor over the not immediate punishing of the wicked Jews, who mocked them and the Lord's messengers, saying: let the counsel of the Lord come, where is the day of His coming?
2. There is a particular urge and pressure for deliverance, blessing, and fulfillment of God's promises, without paying attention to God's time and manner, when and how He wants to work, thus not properly recognizing and considering God's freedom. Now God says: those who believe would not be so urgent, nor limit the Holy One of Israel, but give freedom, both in sending His Son, in redeeming them, and in punishing the wicked.

III. From this arise as fruits of such a bad tree:

1. A disheartened giving up of one's state and of God's favor to us; thinking that His promises have an end, Psalm 81:23, For being put to shame by their haste and excessive speed, without submission, they can do nothing but give up, like Isaiah 49:15. And thus they hurry to turn away from the Lord in unbelief and say with Joram, 2 Kings 6: This evil is from the Lord, why should we wait for Him any longer?
2. If it goes to the extreme, one gives oneself over to sins, withdraws from religion, is not as much against the life of the wicked as before, because they do not seem to be embodied. Yes,

one seems to have made a covenant with death and hell. Psalm 73:10-14 and 116:11. I said in my haste: all men are liars.

When it is said: they shall not make haste, it is not absolutely promised to them that nothing of this haste will remain in the believers; but that they will not run into this evil much or in an outbursting manner if they want to exercise faith, that they will increasingly master and dispel this evil. On the contrary, opposite to haste, they are here promised to take pleasure in the will and action of God, as the only good thing, to rest and trust in the salvation of the Lord, which according to His promises will come to the believers. And although now no haste or waiting is appropriate concerning Christ's coming in the flesh, yet concerning other promises of God, that promise has not yet died out: he who believes will not make haste, nor be put to shame.

From the above, it is clear that this is a certain truth of God in the text.

1. God's will, which promises this, binds and ties this matter together.
2. It lies in the nature of the matter, for the more faith, the less doubt and haste; what the one gains more, the other loses more. If someone trusts in the truth of God, he leaves the time and manner to God, while he earnestly, yet submissively, may persist in the desired matter.
3. The examples provide abundant proof of this; as long as God's people believe, they do not hurry, but roll their way onto the Lord. Psalms 62:3, Hebrews 3:15 and 11:39. Just as, conversely, times of unbelief were times of haste, Psalms 30:8, 31:23; 116:11. So then, whether in the days of the Old Testament or the New

Testament, he who believes will not make haste; the one will consume the other.

It is true that, regarding Christ's coming, we have nothing to deal with in terms of faith or unbelief, haste or waiting, but rather in this general respect, as the Apostles have led us. And we also find enough matter for reflection for this time, both in terms of believers and unbelievers.

If we consider those who made a covenant with death and withdrew from the overflowing scourge, judging themselves to be freed from it because they have set lies as their refuge, and have hidden under falsehood; they will immediately say that they are of the true believers because they are at ease and do not hurry, that God will fulfill His promises of justification, etc.; oh no, they gladly leave that to God. But if one examines the matter more closely, it will be betrayal on all sides. For,

1. Who does not notice that this lack of haste does not arise from an abundance of faith, submission to God, etc.; but from listlessness towards the matter. True, they sometimes seem to express something else through their outward behavior, but in truth sanctification is to them the most difficult burden that can be presented to them. They wish that it was never spoken of, nor ever came up in their hearts. As for justification, they would like to have it without efforts and without any consequences; heaven would be hell to them if they knew it because it is all holiness there. No wonder now that you do not hurry, as you have no desire for the offered matters. Count yourself rather among the people who are not eager, Zephaniah 21:2, Amos 5:10.
2. Do you not find that you hurry regarding wealth, honor, pleasure, etc., so that your heart is inseparably set on these? You

cannot live, but are as sullen as Ahab when this vineyard of Naboth is denied to you. These are matters not promised to you at all, and yet you hurry; so it is then to be assumed that it does not arise from the strength of your faith, that you no longer hurry for the spiritual goods of the Covenant of Grace, but from laziness and insensitivity of your heart in this regard.

3. And what is clearer than that you have no faith, and soon you will see and feel in your heart that you do not have it, if you just pay attention to yourself and ask your conscience.
4. Have you ever believed that you are so miserable in yourself, (as God's Word speaks) so that missing Jesus, you are prey to hell, and eternally powerless under sin, despairing in yourself, finding no counsel in any creature that can heal your conscience and reassure you.
5. Has the state of grace and redemption in Christ been clearly revealed to your soul? Have you ever accepted Jesus in this way? What exercises of faith are there on Jesus, or how do you deal with Him daily for the comfort and sanctification of your soul? Now reveal to yourself:
 1. The ignorance of Jesus Christ, who has long been presented in our church as the only Cornerstone, that one is united with Him through faith and built upon Him; and yet the majority do not know what faith is, nor that the merciful God has forgiven their sins, nor that the Lord Jesus and heaven are theirs; and yet they trust firmly in this and perish like unbelievers.
 2. Unbelief prevails on all sides. People do not believe that things are as the Word of the Lord speaks. No, the Holy Scripture is not that strict. And even if often the opposite is shown, to their astonishment, it still seems ingrained in their hearts, belief is a firm imagination of salvation, which, if left unchecked, leads to

utmost unbelief. And because it seems so easy, they can always do it when it suits them, and harden their hearts through delay; whereas faith is a gift of God, Ephesians 2:8, wrought in the hearts of those who are saved, and they experience its effects in their mind. Who does not see this misconception and delusion? And yet one may not say: O unbelieving and slow of heart!

3. There are many who do not want to believe in a manner befitting God. They do not want Jesus and the promises enclosed in Him if He includes so much holiness, sorrow for sins, precision, etc. No, on the contrary, they would rather keep their covenant with death and their prudent agreement with hell, and yet the overflowing scourge will not reach them; for which they know how to bring up many deceptions of the heart. Meanwhile, the transgression speaks in his heart, not wanting to forsake it, Psalms 86. And thus thousands go to hell, waking up when it is too late. For he who does not believe is already condemned.
4. If it gets a bit closer, people are convinced; they have no faith, still lack everything necessary for life, they are also sometimes moved to tears, they begin to pray, develop more taste for the good, leave sins, etc. But what is it? They have so many preoccupations with their body and household that it all passes over again. Or they take these things as signs of grace, and become so stiffened and careless thereby, that it applies to them, Jude 12: "They are clouds without water, carried about by the winds; late autumn trees without fruit, twice dead, pulled up by the roots." Luke 11:25-26.
5. Some have chosen and obtained something else instead of the actual exercises: for heavenly light, a clever knowledge of letters; for the life of faith, some emotions, which can make them rich

when it pleases them; for humble edification of the neighbor, ornate words set up for their own glory and honor. These people then boast with the title of wise, great Christians, so that faith has become a trade of honor. Those who do not know something about it cannot join in, where meanwhile the power of godliness is hidden and life has rotted, 2 Peter 2:20-21. Who does not now notice that these are not believers, but people whose portion is in this life?

Will not the threat come upon them that, according to our text, is made to all unbelieving Jews? And miserable then their end! Since they are not built on the rock, they must necessarily be put to shame, by virtue of contrast: he who does not believe will be put to shame!

Now pay attention to the believers, and look at them attentively, and you will be able to deduce from their haste that they do not believe as they should, from which they then draw wrong conclusions.

1. Many go, it's true, without noticeable haste, so that they cannot be accused of it, but they are no happier for it, for they are lukewarm, without seriousness, have no desire for work, nor for promises, whether they are thus tossed by their unbelief, or whether they are so carried away by sins, known to them, or by worldliness, that nothing seems left but a soul that is sick, because death grazes it.
2. Others clearly find that they are very hasty, in a sorrowful and grumpy state about their condition, and it's at its best if it's not also against God, and so you go away satisfied. After all, your heart, being incapable, cannot change you; why then do you murmur against it, when it would be better to sink down in powerlessness before the Lord, whether it pleased Him to found you on Christ, the only Cornerstone. How much hurried passing

by of God in time and measure, not paying attention to what you receive, and always beholding what is lacking, and so you call, without submission, for the Lord to hurry and come, as if it were not your work to believe, and to use the present well, and to wait with patience for the future, Psalm 130:57. Yes, to look forward to God Himself with longing.

3. You might easily say: I am dark, lifeless, and full of fear. But have you not always found that in stillness and trust was your strength, where by this haste you have always moved further away? Know then that your fear of being put to shame to perish causes you all this evil, where believing should be your first work, and not the examination of the end. And from this has now arisen, that disheartened going away, the giving up of never being helped by the Lord, that neglect of virtue, the committing of sins, the letting go of means, etc., which all again is unbelief, the cause which darkens your part in Jesus, and keeps you from daily union with Him, and makes you walk in such fear of being put to shame.

You might easily say: surely, where one believes, one does not hurry, says the text. But know:

1. That, although there is haste, there can also be faith, yet they struggle against each other; the more there is of one, the less of the other. But where there is no faith, there is also no haste.
2. You lack more the exercise of faith than the root. If you desire restoration, here must be the first improvement.

Everyone's duty is then, - alongside those who steadily proceed by faith - to set their faith in Jesus. Those who still lack faith, we want to convince and arouse to believe their misery, to understand the work of redemption, and to strive for the acceptance of Jesus Himself.

Those who now have beginnings of faith must: a. daily unite with Christ for all spiritual necessities. b. persist in His promise of grace and salvation, as promised in the covenant of grace, and thus wrestle in faith with God for His blessing.

1. Who is he who would like to be freed from all sinning, and who would like to see the waters overflow the hiding place of his soul. See here now the only means: to believe in Jesus, which through the Lord's goodness and counsel is able to save you from this eternal danger. If only you willingly turn to this path, otherwise you will terribly harm yourself on this Stone of stumbling and rock of offence, Romans 9:33. Then the Lord God has achieved His purpose of that great work of salvation, that He has founded His Son as the only Foundation Stone, precious and tried, as a Cornerstone in Zion. No greater work was ever done under heaven than this matter, undertaken from eternity. Will it now fail due to your unbelief, that you are not seen built on this only Foundation Stone, holding the house with strength? Let rather the great Builder found you also on Jesus, to make a part of the spiritual temple, 1 Peter 2:5. And here faith alone is the means. Suppose that an earthly king had commanded a great matter, and requested it of you, would you not willingly undertake it? How much more from the King of heaven?

2. Is it such a hard thing for a criminal to believe, and to testify that he deserves death, that his happiness depends only on a royal pardon, which he has to receive if he deems it necessary for him? Yet this is but a matter of faith, one agrees: God is truth and justice. He humbles this one, and exalts that one, who accepting the mentioned word, receives a part in all grace. Is it then so hard for a hell-bound person to say, at the request of the King's Son: Yes, Lord Jesus, all the fullness in You, I want to

choose for myself, and now embrace with heart and soul, and declare it! Is it now so hard to look to the bronze serpent, to hunger and thirst for righteousness, to show a lame hand and a slow foot, or whether the Son of David might have mercy on you? Will you not willingly go to hell with a convinced mind if you remain stubborn? Today, while you hear the voice of the Lord, do not harden your heart.

3. Christians, is it then such a hard thing to kiss your Bridegroom, daily as you once did? Indeed, the bride judged that this suited her well, that the daughters of Jerusalem would not despise her. Is it so hard to complain to your Bridegroom about your need, that your soul's enemies are after your honor and virtue, to daily renew His promise in you, which you received at the time of your betrothal? Would this now be a valley of Achor, a door of hope, if the Savior wanted to grace you with it? Wouldn't darkness, lifelessness, sinfulness wonderfully disappear if your light would go ahead, and your life would come forth like a river? Thus would the broken city be rebuilt; believe then, and be established.
4. You will then no longer hurry, says the Lord. What haste you now have for the trivialities that glitter in your eyes, for your sense, desire, pleasure, money, clothing; your heart races and flies without rest. You have hardly satisfied one desire, or another has work for you, and this is still called just fashion, pastime, custom, and decency. But see how much time and effort sins take away. Will you not be forced to weep your loss with hot tears, here or in hell? And perhaps God is calling for the last time. Do you not often stand amazed at yourself, that things deceive and mislead you so much? When you have obtained them, you do not possess what you thought was in them. And

then the desire is immediately for something else, for there is no rest, John 8:42, 2 Peter 2:19.

And you, O children of God! Though you may be pursued by your enemies, and especially by your unbelief, which under the guise of prudence and desire to be holy through faith, has made you so disheartened and driven you away from God; and there you now lie, gasping like a defeated one for breath, weeping and moaning, not knowing how you will continue. Would it not be much better to let yourself be carried by faith in Jesus, rather than wallow in your own unbelief, while in the Lord is all your strength and haste? Say then like David, Psalms 119: "I made haste, and delayed not to keep your commandments." What excuse will you have for your transgressions if you do not listen now? Not only is the godless announced that he will perish, but the believer, that his way does not please God, while he has experience of something better: life and walking in faith with God, enjoying the indwelling of the Most High in your soul. Yes, while both were offered to you in faith, Hosea 2:18-19; Revelation 3:18. Look, you will have nothing for your pretext, while this blessed walking with God has been presented to you so pleasingly, in contrast to hastening in evil.

Yet if someone says: I have often tried to believe in Jesus, but I don't know if it is right. We will then give guidance.

1. If you ever found faith such a great matter in your eyes, that it was impossible for you to believe without help, and meanwhile your unbelieving heart was hurrying to make you disheartened, Mark 9:24.
2. If you have become aware of a heart to accept and choose the whole Jesus in permanence, with the intention to have Him

entirely, with all His blessings, both for reconciliation with God and for purification, without taking anything, Matthew 11:28.

3. That you seek to rest heartily on Christ so that it is not enough for you to do that work once, and then wander away again, but you strive to be content in Jesus as your portion, so that your difficulty is not that you must have something outside of Jesus, but only that you do not know if you have Him, and find yourself restless as long as you have not found Him. At least that you become aware of much love for Jesus, and if you have any hope of a share, it increases all the more.

May all and everyone who have no faith follow these ways and means to obtain it.

1. Acknowledge your iniquities, by which you have transgressed against the Lord, and seek to see so much of your misery and God's righteousness that, in despair in yourself, you submit to God's righteousness. Also, see the impossibility of being saved by yourself, because only the Lord gives and works faith.
2. Turn to Jesus' calling, in all means of religion, to the Lord as powerless, whether it pleases Him to regard your misery and heal your soul, as He is free, and you can impose no obligation on Him.

You who seek the Lord, and to that end seek to live daily by faith in Him, do not hurry, lest your old evil breaks out again.

1. Yet do not fail to hasten and strive in a believing, submissive manner after the promised promises of eternal life, 2 Peter 3:12; Hebrews 12:1; Philippians 3:8-10. So that you, not having neglected what serves to demonstrate and confirm your faith, do not risk suffering shipwreck on the other hand.

2. Seek to know and feel the emptiness of the creature, and the fullness of the Lord Jesus, along with the offering to that empty creature, which God chooses, according to the choice He has made.
3. Strive to understand the way God keeps, and on which He leads those who have chosen this way. Do you understand something of the experiences that God's favorites may encounter on this way? Of the laboriousness of a soul that has chosen Jesus and of the wrong foundations that are to be removed in such a state? Let us now open our hearts and eyes to the Lord, eager to be transferred and to be fit to be partakers of this grace.
4. As for the emptiness of the soul, know that by nature we are of one blood, with others, who lack the glory of God. We are deprived of all light and life, deprived of the truth and holiness, of that purity and of God's glory, Romans 3:10. It is not enough that we understand this with our minds, we must elevate our hearts and give our seal to that truth and to all truth. Do not say: I have no faith, for I see no fruits. If you find no fruits, you still find your enemy, who lies against faith; for by hurrying, there appear to be two parties here.

You might say: I have sought so long for the fulfillment of God's promises, but nothing comes of it.

1. Know that this is the haste, wanting to force God. Submit to God. He who believes always uses all means and waits for Him with patience. Also, it is not always equally bad when God's hand changes. You might, desiring all your life, not receive and be lost, as you think and say. But this is the first beginning of haste, not to believe that he who seeks also finds, and that he who believes will not be put to shame. Thus, this will be the

trodden path to comfort and sanctification for him who does not throw away his boldness.

2. Make known to the Lord that you know no counsel with all your haste, so that He may give you more faith, not to hurry too much, because Jesus is your Rock, on which you are built, and who will one day cause you to stand firm. 3. Meanwhile, He is already approaching to take you up with Him. Where one no longer complains of unbelief; for no faith nor haste are found there. For here one lives by faith and there by sight. Say then with David, Psalm 31:23-25: "I said in my haste, I am cut off from before your eyes; yet You heard the voice of my supplications when I cried unto You. O love the Lord, all ye His saints; for the Lord preserves the faithful, and plentifully rewards the proud doer. Be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the Lord! Amen."

Second Sermon on Psalm 45:8

You love righteousness and hate wickedness; therefore, O God, Your God has anointed You with the oil of gladness above Your companions.

These words are added here as an explanation of the preceding verse 7, just as in Hebrews 1:8, 9. For this reason, the scepter of Christ's kingdom is a straight scepter, or a scepter of righteousness because He faithfully exercises and administers righteousness in His kingdom, protecting the righteous and destroying the wicked. He does this out of love for righteousness and a hatred for

unrighteousness. The Lord preserves the faithful and abundantly repays those who act arrogantly (Psalm 31:24).

Righteousness and wickedness, which are abstractly presented here, are taken by some interpreters to mean righteous and wicked people, as it is the characteristic of a righteous king to protect one and punish the other, to love one and hate the other. However, if we consider the words in the abstract, as they are translated here, they have a greater emphasis, indicating that Christ is both inherently righteous in Himself and the Author and Giver of righteousness to others.

A scepter; Christ is a straight Scepter because He is a righteous King, righteousness Himself, loving it and abhorring all ungodliness. These two necessarily go hand in hand. Thus, we see that the words encompass the positive and negative aspects of sanctification, namely:

1. Firstly, a heartfelt love for and adherence to righteousness and holiness.
2. Secondly, a hatred of and denial of all sins and unrighteousness; both are attributed to Christ here, who loves righteousness entirely. His life and actions have perfectly conformed to its standard, and He is too pure of eyes to see evil (Habakkuk 1:3).

Learn from this:

1. Righteousness and holiness are so natural and essential to Christ that He cannot do otherwise than love righteousness and hate wickedness. Wickedness cannot dwell in Him, nor can unrighteousness approach His throne (Psalm 94:20). Christ is the Holy and Righteous One (Acts 3:14 and 22:14), as warned in a dream to Pilate's wife (Matthew 27:19), and because of the day

that will come when the world will be convinced that He is holy and righteous (John 16:8). And He is:

2. In His conception and birth; being born without sin, a Lamb without spot or blemish, typified under the law. Such a High Priest suits us (Hebrews 7:26, 27).
3. In the entire course of His life and deeds: He has fulfilled all righteousness (Matthew 3:15; Hebrews 4:15; John 14:30). In His mouth, there was no deceit found. And it was necessary that it be so, so that He might impart righteousness to us and work it in us. Had He been the least bit tainted, He could not have presented us blameless before God (Colossians 1:22).

Objection: Yes, but since Christ was born of a woman (Galatians 4:4), He must necessarily be descended from the first Adam and therefore could not be completely righteous and without sin.

Answer: Undoubtedly, all those who have descended from Adam by natural birth are sinners, and being generated from human nature, they inherit its sins and corruption. And it would have truly been the case with Christ as well if He had descended by the natural procreation of Adam. However, the incarnation of Christ was formed or arranged by the extraordinary working of the Holy Spirit, without natural procreation. For although Christ was made from the substance (or essence) of the woman according to the flesh, He was not obtained through human means. Therefore, He did not receive the corruption of human nature, being conceived in the womb of the blessed virgin by the Holy Spirit, sanctified and overshadowed beyond nature.

No matter how one may describe righteousness or justice, it will clearly be evident that Christ is a righteous Person, a Lover of

righteousness, and a Hater of wickedness in four ways.

1. If one derives the word righteousness from the Greek "dixa," meaning the division of something into two equal parts, for a righteous person gives each their due and rightful share, this is undoubtedly Christ's nature, as He gives each person their rightful share: to the emperor what belongs to the emperor, and to the Pharisees what belongs to them, as well as to His children what is promised to them.
2. If one takes righteousness from the Latin "jus," which means law or right, and thus regards as righteous those who observe or obey the rules or prescriptions of a just law, we may conclude that Christ is righteous and loves righteousness. For who is more in conformity with the holy law of God than He? Who has more right over us? Who has more authority to command us than He, who is the righteous Lawgiver and its Fulfiller?
3. If one takes righteousness in the sense that some do, as signifying a convergence of all virtues and excellences, with each virtue being contained within righteousness just as each sin is contained within unrighteousness, who can better attribute this general righteousness and convergence of all virtues than Christ? Is He not fully God and righteous in Himself in general, imparting goodness and righteousness to others? In Him, all virtues and excellences are united as in a central point.
4. If one considers righteousness as truth and faithfulness in fulfilling promises, as a righteous person is one who keeps their word, and we see in Scripture that truth or faithfulness is generally associated with righteousness (Psalm 85:11, 12) and that God is said to be faithful and righteous in forgiving sins (1 John 1:9), then we can rightfully attribute righteousness to

Christ in this respect. He fulfills everything He has spoken, not one jot or tittle of His Word can fail until all is fulfilled (Matthew 5:18; Revelation 15:3). God is true, but every man is a liar (Romans 3:4). Although people may break and violate their promises, Christ will not. This shows that Christ loves righteousness and hates wickedness. Indeed, He loves righteousness for the sake of righteousness. All righteous persons and things are beloved and pleasing to Him, as He is the righteous God Himself, as well as a righteous Man.

Question: How is it evident that Christ loves holy individuals and righteousness?

Answer: 1. The Scriptures make it known to us that the righteous are the objects of the Lord's delight and pleasure (1 John 1:6, 7; Proverbs 11:20). He knows the way of the righteous to approve and endorse it (Psalm 1:6). His eyes are always upon them for good, not for harm (Psalm 84:15; 1 Peter 1:12).

2. He reveals Himself to them: "The secret of the Lord is with those who fear Him, and He will show them His covenant" (Psalm 25:14). What other eyes have not seen and ears have not heard, He reveals to them (Proverbs 3:23; 1 Corinthians 2:9, 10).

3. He makes their path well-trodden, so that they may have it smooth and easy (Isaiah 26:7; Proverbs 15:19). They have light while others are in darkness: "Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart" (Psalm 97:11, 12). This leads to the righteous being bold as a young lion (Proverbs 28:1).

4. Such individuals are recognized and protected in a special way by the Lord (2 Peter 2:8; Proverbs 11:8). The righteous is more excellent than his neighbor (Proverbs 12:26). Therefore, the

wicked are given as a ransom for the righteous, so that the righteous may be preserved and sanctified (Proverbs 21:18; Isaiah 41:2).

5. The Lord extends His blessings to their descendants (Proverbs 11:21). He blesses the dwellings of the righteous, and the voice of salvation is in their tents (Proverbs 8:33; Psalm 118:15).
6. The righteous will prosper on the last day (Isaiah 3:10, 25:46). The Lord Jesus will gather them like a shepherd gathers his flock, and like a jeweler collects his jewels, not wanting to lose a single speck (Malachi 3:17). "They shall be Mine," says the Lord, "on the day that I make them My jewels." He who walks uprightly and works righteousness will dwell in His holy hill (Psalm 15:2, 3).

Question: How is it evident that Christ hates unrighteousness, indeed, all unrighteousness?

Answer: In five particular considerations:

1. That is the only thing over which the Lord (as a just Judge) will exercise eternal punishment; there is nothing that is truly the object of His hatred except sin and ungodliness.
2. Although Christ assumed human nature, it was done without the sin of humanity (Hebrews 4:15).
3. In order to abolish and eliminate the sins of the elect, He Himself endured the pains of hell for them and cried out, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" (Matthew 27:46). For this reason, God made Him sin for us (2 Corinthians 5:21). This is why He became a curse for us (Galatians 3:13).

4. Christ will not have fellowship with us until our sins are no more, but His righteousness is imputed to us (2 Corinthians 5:19; Romans 4:11). Justification by God precedes communion with God; reconciliation flourishes as a fruit of imputed righteousness.
5. He will not cease until He has completely purified the remnants of sin and corruption from His own people and made them wholly holy, as He is holy. Indeed, Christ was numbered with the transgressors (Isaiah 53:12). And Luther had the boldness to say that He was the greatest sinner in the world.

The meaning is not that Christ was a sinner by attachment, for then He could not have redeemed us from sin, but as our Substitute, sin was imputed to Him: "The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:6). In this case, the scapegoat (which carried away the sins of the people, Leviticus 16:21, 22) was a living example of Christ; having all our iniquities accounted to Him, He was arrested by God as the debtor and imprisoned, and we, for whom He acted as Surety, were set free. Yet it must always be acknowledged that in His own Person, He remained entirely free from the slightest contamination of sin, while we still have remnants of the old self within us.

Teachings:

1. Is the righteousness of Christ so natural and essential that He can do nothing but love and practice it? Even though the armies and followers of the Lamb (Revelation 19:19) are commanded to seize the children of Babylon and dash them against the rock (Psalm 137:9), and wade through the blood of the followers of the Antichrist up to the horses' bridles (as it will happen during the destruction of the city of Rome, Revelation 14:20), it is still our duty to sing the song of the Lamb, saying: "Great and

marvelous are Your works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are Your ways, O King of the saints" (Revelation 15:3). We may rightfully question our understanding, which is subject to errors and mistakes. However, when it comes to Christ's works and actions, there is no cruelty or unrighteousness in them; only pure streams flow from that pure fountain: "You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness."

2. Therefore, rulers and authorities are admonished to follow Christ and learn from Him. Authorities, in particular, should love and administer righteousness, for whatever is not done for the sake of righteousness (even though it may be good in itself but done for the sake of human approval, and other worldly purposes) is not true righteousness. Just as magistrates should love righteousness, they should also hate unrighteousness with a deadly hatred and avoid even the appearance of oppression, political ambitions, partiality, injustice, bribery, and so on. Let them learn from Christ, who does not delay but is prompt in righteousness (Isaiah 16:5). Why should there be any crying in our streets (Psalm 145:14)? It is due to a lack and delay in righteousness.

When the oppressed woman pleaded with the Roman emperor for justice, and he replied that he had no time for it, she responded by saying that he should then stop being emperor. Authorities and judges are called gods in the Scriptures (Psalm 82:6; John 10:34, 35). Just as:

1. In their singleness (God being a pure, unmixed being); and
2. Their compassion and benevolence, for "steadfast love upholds the throne" (Proverbs 20:28); and:

3. Their knowledge and wisdom, as well as
4. In their love for righteousness and hatred of unrighteousness, which establishes the throne and majesty of the government (Isaiah 9:6; Proverbs 16:12). It was repeated by two Roman pagans that it was as easy to pluck the sun from the firmament as to separate them from righteousness and fairness. And how? Is there not more power in grace than in moral philosophy or ethics? Will pagans excel Christians in righteousness? Therefore, let rulers and authorities primarily take pleasure in righteousness. A ruler over men must be righteous, ruling in the fear of God (2 Samuel 23:3). Holiness gives to God what is His, and righteousness gives to humanity what belongs to them, even to all people without distinction. Judging with truth will teach the magistrate to practice righteousness to every person as a human being: the wicked as well as the righteous, and the righteous as well as the wicked; to those who differ in religion as well as others who are in the same judgment with him.

Let all Christians also observe this doctrine well and learn to be righteous as Christ is righteous. It is not enough, in a negative sense, to refrain from being ungodly or from doing unjust things; but Christians should practice righteousness out of love for it (Isaiah 64:5). David esteemed all of God's commandments and precepts (Psalm 119:5, 88). True saints, who are virgins, follow the Lamb wherever It goes (Revelation 14:5). Grace teaches us both to avoid sin and to abound in righteousness and holy practice (Luke 1:74, 75; Titus 2:12). To hate what is evil with as great aversion as one has towards hell (as the Hebrew word 'mideon' means 'completely hate'), to be as unwilling to sin as to be tormented in hell, clinging to and being firmly attached to what is good (Romans 12:9). To turn away from evil and do good (Psalm 34:15). It is a Papist blasphemy that

Protestants teach that no one is righteous with an internal righteousness, but only what is external and imputed. For although the internal within us is imperfect and therefore cannot justify us before God's judgment seat, yet in its nature, it is a true personal righteousness (Luke 1:6). Among all people, the saints are the most righteous, both externally and internally, in heart and conduct. The love of righteousness and the hatred of ungodliness are implanted in them by the Spirit of God and made as natural (2 Peter 1:4; Ephesians 2:10; Ephesians 4:24). Through this, they are made conformable to Christ, in Whose heart the law of righteousness and holiness is inscribed with an indelible character.

Question: What are the duties required of us from this doctrine?

Answer: The duties are varied, as follows:

1. Firstly, it is the duty of a Christian to mourn over the flood of unrighteousness that is in the land. "Yet they seek me daily, and delight to know my ways, as if they were a nation that did righteousness and did not forsake the judgment of their God; they ask of me righteous judgments; they delight to draw near to God. 'Why have we fasted, and you see it not? Why have we humbled ourselves, and you take no knowledge of it?' Behold, in the day of your fast you seek your own pleasure, and oppress all your workers. Behold, you fast only to quarrel and to fight and to hit with a wicked fist. Fasting like yours this day will not make your voice to be heard on high." (Isaiah 58:2, 6). "He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" (Micah 6:8). Alas! "No one enters suit justly; no one goes to law honestly; they rely on empty pleas, they speak lies, they conceive mischief and give birth to iniquity. They hatch

adders' eggs; they weave the spider's web; he who eats their eggs dies, and from one that is crushed a viper is hatched. Their webs will not serve as clothing; men will not cover themselves with what they make. Their works are works of iniquity, and deeds of violence are in their hands." (Isaiah 59:4, 6, 14, 15). Is there not cause for lamentation and supplication to the Lord that His own arm may bring salvation and His righteousness break forth in these lands? God has bound Himself to do so on this account, considering the loudly proclaimed sins and wickedness of the times, especially since there has been such a great outcry for a complete reformation, both in the church and the civil state. Shall we now sit down and gather riches while neglecting the great work of the Lord? Surely, the Lord will visit on this matter. Let us, therefore, be diligent and turn, beginning with the first works!

2. Secondly, it is our duty, each in our place, to pursue righteousness. Those who pursue righteousness are those who seek it by believing in Christ (Romans 9:31, 32) and continue in the practice of righteousness and holiness (Proverbs 21:21). These will find comfort and support on the day of trouble. "Listen to me, you who pursue righteousness, you who seek the LORD: look to the rock from which you were hewn, and to the quarry from which you were dug." (Isaiah 51:1). It is a saying taken from worldly people who eagerly pursue earthly things as if they could never be satisfied with them or from hunters who chase deer or warriors who vigorously pursue their enemies. In this way, we should pursue righteousness.
3. Thirdly, it is our duty, in sincerity, to unite with and adhere to those who are righteous in the land and who take their greatest delight in the ways of righteousness without partiality or

rebellion. "Far be it from you to do such a thing, to put the righteous to death with the wicked, so that the righteous fare as the wicked! Far be that from you! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just?" (Genesis 18:25, 32). They will remain hidden in the inner chambers until the Lord has utterly consumed His enemies in His wrath. If there are but ten righteous persons in the land, those who uphold and advocate impartial righteousness, may they be our companions since the Lord has undertaken to visit the nations because of their unrighteousness.

4. Fourthly, when we find ourselves burdened with our own unrighteousness (for there is none among us who perfectly loves righteousness and absolutely hates ungodliness), it is our duty to rely on the righteousness of Christ and find comfort in it. Though we are not perfectly righteous, Christ is. Though we are conceived in sin and sin against God daily, Christ was born and lived without sin and died without sin. In Him, our righteousness is found. When this is proclaimed to us (as Elihu says) by an Interpreter, one of a thousand, our downcast spirits are refreshed, and we are thereby comforted (Job 33:23-25).

Now follows: Therefore, O God, Your God has anointed You. The interpretation of this is presented by some as follows: You love righteousness and hate wickedness. That is to say, all Your conduct and practice tend towards this because You have anointed God; as if this were the cause and the other the effect. And so they want it to refer to the time of the incarnation of Christ when the Divinity assumed humanity. And it is true that for this reason, Christ, being a Man, received the spiritual anointing so that He might love righteousness, etc. Isaiah 61:1, 2. Others indicate that this anointing of Christ relates to His baptism when the Spirit of the Lord

descended upon Him. Still, others want it to refer to His exaltation after His suffering, when He rose from the dead and ascended in glory, thus being declared the Lord and King of heaven and earth. This seems to best accord with this wedding psalm, which deals with the royal office and rule of Christ, and with what the Apostle says in Philippians 2. Where, after speaking of the humiliation and obedience of Christ in verse 6, he adds these words in verse 9: Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, corresponding to this text. Therefore, although it is true that Christ, in and through the union of the two natures, received the spiritual anointing so that He might love righteousness, etc., here He seems to have been granted this anointing as a reward, and consequently, it relates to the solemn consecration that happened to Him, being invested with His Royal dignity after His suffering. And thus, one can explain it: because Christ loves righteousness and hates wickedness, therefore God has exalted Him in reward, above angels and men in dignity, and anointed Him with the oil of gladness above His companions. Not that Christ was actually anointed for Himself, but for us; His righteousness and obedience being the meritorious cause of our spiritual anointing, joy, and glory. I will briefly analyze the words and proceed to the observations. God, your God. God has been the God of Christ in covenant, being in our nature, our Redeemer, and Pledge. He has anointed You. That is, not with what is material or physical but with spiritual oil. Being oil, figuratively speaking, for anointing; and concerning that anointing, the Lord Jesus is called in Hebrew: Messiah, and in Greek: Christ, the Anointed of the Lord. Above your companions. That is: above all the chosen ones of God, who share in the spiritual anointing, 1 John 2:27. Christ has the preeminence and is first above them all. Therefore, O God, Your God, etc. Learn from this: That God has been the God of Christ in covenant, being our Redeemer, who ventured it for us. Or thus:

Christ, as Man in the work of redemption, entered into alliance with the eternal God.

Question: But why did God want to be the God of Christ? And what are His gracious marks in this regard towards us?

Answer:

1. God has been the God of Christ so that He might be honorably taken off the stage and delivered from the debt that lay upon Him as our Surety. The Divine almighty power was demonstrated in raising Christ from the grave, Ephesians 1:19, 20. Through this, He was powerfully shown to be the Son of God, Romans 1:4. He was indeed put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit, 1 Peter 3:18. Our Surety, in His resurrection, has been delivered from prison and received an honorable discharge and forgiveness of all our sins, and He will be seen again without sin, Hebrews 9:28. Therefore, it is said that He was raised for our justification, Romans 4:25. And if He had not been raised, we would still be in our sins, 1 Corinthians 15:17. But now no one can bring charges against the elect of God because Christ has been raised, Romans 3:33, 34.
2. God has been in covenant with Christ so that He might also be our God in covenant, for in His performance, the whole Christ, Head and members, is considered. Galatians 3:19; 1 Corinthians 12:12. The covenant was first dealt with the Head (who was also given to us as a covenant, Isaiah 42:6). And then with the members, with Him for and concerning us. Just as God did not forsake our Surety but supported Him in His great struggle and temptations when He cried out from the depths, so He will not forsake us in time of need, Hebrews 4:16, 18:5, 6.

3. So that our faith regarding the resurrection of our bodies might be confirmed and strengthened. For just as the almighty power of the Divine nature was employed and extended in raising Christ from the grave, so it will also be put to work in its proper time to raise us up, each in its order: first the Head and then the members. Now Christ lives by the power of God, who was crucified in weakness, and we, who are weak, will also live with Him by the power of God, 2 Corinthians 18:4, 5. The Spirit who raised Christ from the dead, dwelling in us, will also raise us up, Romans 8:11.

Objection: But Christ (who is called God in this psalm) is said to be anointed by God, which implies that He is lesser than the one who anointed Him, and that even though He is God, He is just 'an anointed God.'

Answer: This, when compared with other similar texts, does not actually refer to the Godhead but to the humanity of Christ. However, concerning the personal union, that which is proper to one of the natures is attributed to the Person. Christ, who is also God, has obtained the church with His own blood, Acts 20:28. Yet, the Godhead does not have the ability to shed blood. Just as that which properly belongs to a part, namely the body, is often ascribed to the soul, the other part of the union, in Scripture, or to the whole person, Psalms 16:10; Isaiah 10:18. So it is here: Christ, being anointed, is not considered alone or essentially as He is God, but as He is God-Man. And it can also be said with safety that Christ was anointed as Mediator by God because, although Christ is naturally God, there is in Him a subjection to God concerning His office as Mediator.

Lessons:

1. Let us magnify the Lord our God as the God and Father of Christ, in which respect He has blessed us with every spiritual blessing, and consequently, we should praise and bless Him. He has truly blessed us as the God and Father of Christ, and we should bless Him in this relation passively, Ephesians 1:3, 17. Hence, He has become our God and Father in the covenant: "I ascend to my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God," John 20:17. If God had not been for us the God of Christ and had not covered our Head on the day of battle, He would have failed in the great work of our redemption, and we would have remained eternally miserable. But the Lord has strengthened Him for Himself, Psalms 30:18. He has appointed help from a Hero, Psalms 89:20, Isaiah 63:1.
2. Learn to follow Christ, who in His greatest distress had a special triumphant faith in God, Matthew 27:46. These were His words: "He is near who justifies me; who will contend with me?" Isaiah 50:8. If He relied on God when He was burdened with all the sins of the elect at once, Isaiah 58:6, why should we not rely on Him in the hour of temptation, since all our sins are shifted from us to our Surety? And here let us not be content with a general lifeless faith but promote this important interest we have in God as the God and Father of Christ and as our God and Father through Him.

To continue: God has anointed You with the oil of joy above Your fellows.

Here the Spirit of the Lord (who is the Comforter, John 14:16) is called the oil of joy because He produces joy and gladness, Galatians 5:22. In the typology of the sacrifices under the law, oil was often used to represent the anointing of the Spirit; see Psalms 133:2, Isaiah

61:1; 1 John 2:20, 27; Luke 4:18, 2 Corinthians 1:21, 22; Revelation 3:18. Among the Jews, oil was also commonly used on their feast days. Therefore, after the preparation of the table in Psalms 23:5, it follows: "You anoint my head with oil." Furthermore, wine makes the heart glad, bread strengthens man, and oil makes their faces cheerful. Some learned men believe that the oil of joy mentioned here and in Hebrews 1:9 is related to what was used on feast days. Christ, by His Father, was royally entertained, having more of the oil of the Spirit poured out on Him than on any of the other guests, indeed, more than all of them together.

Question: Why are the Spirit of God and its fruits compared to oil?

We will see why:

1. Just as oil emits a sweet and pleasant fragrance, Exodus 30:23, 25, so does the Spirit of God in those in whom He dwells, Song of Solomon 1:3; 4:10; 2 Corinthians 2:14.
2. Just as oil imparts a shine to the face and makes it glow, Psalms 104:15, so it is with the holy anointing of the Spirit, which sets a spiritual radiance on the heart, life, and countenance of a Christian. Communion with God through the Spirit makes the face shine, just as Moses' face shone when he spoke with God, Exodus 34:29; 2 Corinthians 3:9, 18.
3. Just as oil is pliable, softens, and heals, Isaiah 1:6, Luke 10:34, so does the Spirit of God soften the hard and calloused heart and heals the wounded conscience by applying the blood of Christ.
4. Just as oil refreshes the body and makes the limbs agile and nimble, so does the Spirit refresh the soul, making it lively and agile in the work of the Lord.

5. Just as oil purifies the stomach from the harm it has suffered, so does the Spirit purify the heart from corruption through faith in Christ's blood, Romans 8:13; Hebrews 9:14.
6. Just as oil was used in inaugurating and consecrating men to the kingly, priestly, and prophetic office, so by the Spirit of God (anointing the elect and bringing them into communion with Christ), they are also made priests to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Christ; prophets to whom the secrets of the Lord are revealed; kings to rule over sin and Satan and conquer the peoples of the world, 1 Peter 2:5; Psalms 25:14; Matthew 13:11; Psalms 105:15; Revelation 1:5, 6; 2:26; 3:32; 1 Corinthians 6:2.

God has anointed Christ above His fellows. Learn from this: That Christ (on our behalf and for our benefit) received the anointing of the Holy Spirit without measure, John 3:34, and above all His fellow participants and allies in the covenant.

The kings, priests, and prophets among the Jews who were anointed, 1 Samuel 10:1; Exodus 29:7; 1 Kings 16, in their anointing, were but types of Christ, who is the great King, Priest, and Prophet of His church, anointed above them all, even above all the prophets, apostles, evangelists, teachers, and believers under the ministry of the New Testament (which, however, has been much more spiritual and glorious than that of the old), 2 Corinthians 8:11. And therefore, He is emphatically called the Anointed of the Lord, John 12:15, Luke 1:32, 33, Acts 3:22, 23. Christ received grace without measure.

1. Grace is found in Him as in its own subject, just as light is in the sun: the humanity of Christ is the repository or dwelling place of grace.

2. In Christ, there is every kind of grace, and in Him, it is in its highest and utmost degree.
3. He has the power and ability to make us partakers of grace.

The reasons why Christ received the anointing of the Spirit are:

1. So that He might have the ability to fulfill the work and office for which God called Him, primarily that of His kingdom in truth and righteousness. God filled Him with His Spirit so that He would bring forth justice to the Gentiles and bring judgment to victory, Isaiah 42:1-7; 49:1-3; Matthew 12:20. The Lord has anointed Him to bring good news to the meek, etc., Isaiah 61:1-3.
2. So that from Him, as a Person, the Holy Spirit with His gifts might be communicated to us. He has received gifts to give to men, even to the rebellious, that the Lord God might dwell among them, or (according to the English translation) that the Lord God might dwell with them, Psalm 68:19; Ephesians 4:8. From His fullness, we have all received, grace upon grace, John 1:16. The first man Adam became a living soul, the last Adam a life-giving spirit, 1 Corinthians 15:45. Just as the stomach digests food, the liver produces blood, and the head is the seat of the senses and spirits for the whole body, so Christ is also a spiritual food. He sanctified Himself for us, John 17:19.
1. It shows us that Christ as a Man has the preeminence, Colossians 1:18, Hebrews 2:8. His human nature, being filled with the Spirit of God and raised to a substantial union with the Godhead, and therefore, though believers have a high spiritual union with God through Christ, it is not as high as the union Christ has with God. Not only is the essential but also the

Personal union of a higher nature and kind than that hidden union which exists between Christ and His church.

2. Let us highly esteem the grace and wisdom of our Father who has devised this common way; a Way and Means according to our abilities; namely, that through the human nature of Christ, our Elder Brother, who is also flesh of our flesh and bone of our bone, Ephesians 5:30. Grace and glory might be distributed to us. Through Christ, our anointed Savior, the Holy Spirit comes upon us. Through the blood of Jesus, we have boldness to enter the sanctuary by the new and living way that He opened for us through the curtain, that is, through His flesh, Hebrews 10:19, 20. In the Man Christ Jesus, there is a treasury and fullness of grace and glory for us. He is the Lord, the Keeper of all our virtues, the high Treasurer of all our spiritual riches. Through the fall of the first Adam, we lost our old capital, and God will not trust us anymore, lest we fail Him again; but He has put a new capital of grace and honor in the hands of Christ, who is a truly virtuous and prosperous Person, in Whom all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden, Colossians 2:3.
3. Approach continually to Christ through faith and to God through Him; in Whom there is the fullness of the Spirit, depicted in the anointing of the High Priest, upon whose head precious oil was poured, flowing down to the beard, even to the hem of his garments, Psalm 133:2. Thus it is with the spiritual anointing, which Christ, as our Head, has received for us. He is the Fountain of joy, letting His streams flow to refresh our dry hearts, Song of Solomon 4:15, John 4:14, 7:37. "In Him are all our springs," Psalm 87:7. Therefore, use Him (O my soul), if you lack righteousness, wisdom, strength, peace, joy. Go to Him, who has been anointed with joyous oil above His companions.

This heavenly Elisha does not pour out His oil into empty vessels, 2 Kings 4:4. You are not as empty as He is full. Oh, draw from this fullness; suck the milk that is in these spiritual breasts, Isaiah 66:11. You have no reason to complain about Him, yet do not give Him reason to complain about your sluggishness: "You refuse to come to Me, that you may have life," John 5:40. Let us not deprive Christ of the glory and honor of His fullness by magnifying and elevating our sins and misery above the fullness of His grace and mercy. As sin increases, grace abounds much more, Romans 5:20.

4. If Christ has a fullness of grace, seek to be conformed to Him and to increase in all spiritual fruits, especially in love, humility, and meekness. Learn from Him, for He is meek and lowly in heart, Matthew 11:29. When He was filled with thoughts of His own glory and exaltation, He washed the feet of His disciples, thereby setting us an example, John 13:15. Oh, that there were more of this spirit! Gifts and knowledge increase, but alas! love wanes. The love of many has grown cold, Matthew 24:12. It is true that we should desire spiritual gifts so that we may edify one another, but love is still a more excellent way, 1 Corinthians 12:31, 13:13. Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up, 1 Corinthians 8:1. Oh, that we were filled with the spirit of love! And rooted and grounded in it, that we may be able to comprehend fully the love of Christ, which surpasses knowledge, and be filled with all the fullness of God, Ephesians 3:17-19. Let those who have received the spiritual anointing willingly share it and use it for the glory of Christ; this is the way or means to increase their supply; just as in the temporal realm, Ecclesiastes 11:13, so also in the spiritual realm, as illustrated in the parable. Those who put their talents to the most profitable use also received the most, Matthew 25:28. The most liberal and sharing

Christians are also the most acceptable and growing Christians. God abundantly imparts to those who also abundantly share with others. Therefore, guard your soul so that this oil may not be lacking in your lamp. Christ will not acknowledge anyone except those who are His anointed ones. If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him, Romans 8:9.

Question: But since Christ possesses such an abundance of the Spirit, why are we so dry and empty?

Answer:

1. Often, Christians grow spiritually without realizing it; they become so sensitive to their shortcomings that they do not pay attention to their growth. The more spiritual light they receive, the more ignorance and corruption they see in themselves. Light reveals darkness; the increase in spiritual anointing is a great mystery; this gold is hidden beneath much rough, impure metal, Colossians 3:3. It also does not consist so much in the increase of gifts and abilities for prayer, discourse, etc., but also in the elevation and expansion of affections or inclinations, as well as in the hidden growth in humility, self-denial, love, etc. Although it is not easy to grasp through the senses, it deserves to be preferred above the others.
2. The fullness of Christ is not used to our benefit and advantage. If someone has a good capital and does not use it well, he will not become rich. Likewise, if a thirsty person does not come to the fountain to drink, even though it is nearby, his thirst cannot be quenched, Isaiah 55:1, 2; Matthew 11:28; Revelation 22:17. It is one thing to hunger and thirst for salvation, another to eat and drink spiritually the flesh and blood of Christ, which, if a person does not do, he has no life in himself, John 6:53. Christ is a

universal or general cause, which is not accustomed to producing its fruits without the influx of particular means; it is true: He can work without our faith; indeed, He reveals Himself to us before we believe and is found by those who do not seek Him, Isaiah 65:1, 2. However, He usually works in a believer by drawing out faith in its exercise on Him, as the sole object of it.

3. Christ imparts to us from His fullness as we need it. If trials and afflictions increase upon us (for we have not yet resisted to blood, Hebrews 12:4), then the Lord will pour out more of the spiritual anointing upon us. As our afflictions abound, so our consolation abounds much more, 2 Corinthians 1:5. His grace is sufficient for us, and His power is perfected in our weakness, 2 Corinthians 12:8, 9.
4. Just as in natural bodies, the members have their various positions or places and functions; some are higher and more excellent than others, so it is in the mystical or hidden bodies, 1 Corinthians 12:14-16, etc. To each one of us grace has been given according to the measure of Christ's gift, Ephesians 4:7. There is a fullness in the hidden body (the church), which is the fullness of Him who fills all in all, Ephesians 1:23. Yet not every member has the same.
5. For the most part, we will be empty and dry during the imperfection of our sanctification so that we may be humbled by the awareness of it and only boast in the fullness of Christ, 1 Corinthians 1:30; Galatians 6:14; Jeremiah 9:23, 24. If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself in his mind, Ephesians 6:3. God wants to hide our pride, Job 33:17. We are indebted to grace for everything; not what adheres and is at work within us, but that which is in Christ for us. By the

grace of God (says the Apostle), I am what I am; I have labored more abundantly than all the apostles, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me, 1 Corinthians 15:10. I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me, Galatians 2:20. We must stand amazed at ourselves so that we may be found in Christ, Philippians 3:8. This blessed a man, making him say that he gained more from his shortcomings than from his virtues and accomplishments. The Apostle preferred to boast in his weakness rather than in his raptures, 1 Corinthians 12:9.

What remains is that I would speak a little about the last words of this verse: "Above Your companions." That is, above all the chosen ones, who are His brothers, Hebrews 2:11, 12.

Christ being the Firstborn, or eldest Brother in the family, to whom the greatest blessing and the principal share of the marital inheritance is entrusted, Romans 8:29, Colossians 1:15. Nevertheless, the saints are also allotted with Him in the spiritual anointing. Learn from this that all true believers are Christ's companions.

- Christ is God's Companion, concerning the Divine nature. "Awake, O sword, against the Man who is My Companion," says the Lord of hosts, Zechariah 13:7, Philippians 2:6. And the saints are His companions, inasmuch as He is human, members of His body, Ephesians 5:30. Heirs, yes, fellow heirs with Him, Romans 8:17. Being anointed with the same Spirit (though not to the same degree), having the likeness of union and glory with Christ, as a Man, in terms of quality, but not in magnitude. The glory that the Father has given Him, He has also given to them, so that they may be one as the Father and He are one, John 17:21-23. As He is, so are we in this world, 1 John 4:17. He as the Head, and we as the members; thus completing a body of the

mystical or hidden Christ, 1 Corinthians 12:12. He as the Vine, we as the branches, forming a spiritual tree. He as the Foundation, we as the building, 1 Corinthians 3:9-11, completing a spiritual house or temple in the Lord, Ephesians 2:20-22.

- Let people beware of offending the anointed ones of the Lord, who are Christ's companions; do not touch them (to grieve them). It would be better to leave them in peace, Psalm 105:14, 15. Whoever causes one of these little ones to stumble, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea, Matthew 8:6.
- Therefore, behold and marvel at the love that God has given to His own people, 1 John 3:1. That they would be companions of Christ; partakers with Him in spiritual privileges; the world does not know them, just as it did not know Him when He was in the world, 1 Corinthians 2:8. Great and glorious are the privileges of the saints. Truly (says the Apostle), our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ, 1 John 1:3. God abides in them, and they abide in God, 1 John 4:15, 16. They have communion with Christ in His anointing, death, resurrection, ascension, victory, glory; being crucified with Him, they will also be glorified with Him, Romans 8:17. If they suffer (or endure) with Him, they will also reign with Him, 2 Timothy 2:12. Being anointed with His Spirit here, they will also be filled with His glory hereafter.
- Therefore, let Christians conduct themselves, in their dealings and behavior, in accordance with the Anointed One of the Lord, as those who have communion with Him. Companions of princes live on a higher level than other people; so should the saints. I am speaking of living according to the Spirit or in a

spiritual manner. For the confessors of religion, in a worldly sense, usually live at too high a level and rely too much on their fleshly, external titles and privileges (which they have condemned in others). What are all these external things but loss and dung when compared to Christ and the privileges we have obtained through Him? Just as He is the Anointed One of the Lord, so are the saints; and just as the humanity of Christ is the dwelling place of God, so are the saints, 2 Corinthians 1:21; 1 Corinthians 6:1, 17, 19; Ephesians 2:20, 21.

- The righteousness by which we are now justified and the union we have with the Lord are of a much higher and more excellent nature and kind than what Adam had. Our nature is now united with God through an unbreakable bond of substantial union in the second Person, and we in our persons are united with God through the mystical unbreakable bond of the Spirit, who is the third Person. Our union with the Lord is so close and glorious that it makes us one Spirit with Him. In substantial union, the attributes of the Divine nature are spoken of and attributed to the human nature, and in this hidden union, there is such a sharing of attributes that what belongs to Christ, the Head, is also ascribed and shared with His members, 2 Corinthians 12:12; Jeremiah 33:16.
- In this union, the saints are not only attached to the virtues and blessings that flow from Christ, but to Christ's Person Himself, namely, Christ who was first given up for and to us, and then, with Him, all other spiritual blessings, Romans 8:32; 1 Corinthians 3:21, 23. Just as a man first gives himself to the woman in marriage and then endows her with his possessions. We are blessed with every spiritual blessing in Christ, the Anointed One of God, Ephesians 1:3. He was not given to us first

because we believe, love, etc. But, therefore, we fulfill these spiritual acts because Christ was first given to us by the Father and unites Himself to us through His Spirit. And this Spirit, or the holy anointing of God, dwells and remains in the saints, 1 John 2:27. Not only the gifts, works, and fruits of the Spirit, but the Spirit Himself.

Question: But how does it become evident that not only the gifts or fruits of the Spirit of God, but the Person of the Spirit, or the Holy Spirit Himself, dwells and remains in every true believer?

It could easily be proven from Scripture that the Holy Spirit Himself, as well as His grace, dwells in the saints, and that for several reasons or arguments.

1. The Comforter, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, is the Person of the Spirit, or the Holy Spirit Himself. For when it is said that the Spirit Himself dwells in us, it is the same as saying that the Person of the Holy Spirit dwells in us. For He is Himself a Personal designation. Now, Scripture makes it clear that this Comforter, who is sent from the Father and the Son, dwells and remains in the saints, John 14:16, 17, 26; 15:26.
2. He who keeps and sustains the good gifts of grace dwells in us, 2 Timothy 1:14. This must necessarily be understood of the Holy Spirit Himself, as distinct from His gifts. For it would be very absurd to say that the good things or spiritual gifts imparted to us are preserved by those spiritual gifts that dwell within us. One represents the root or principle, the other the effects or fruits that blossom from it.
3. The same Spirit who raised Christ from the dead dwells in us, Romans 8:11. It was not the gifts or fruits of the Spirit but the

Holy Spirit Himself who raised Christ from the dead.

4. In the new covenant, God has promised in Ezekiel 36:26 - which promise is absolute and without condition or stipulation - that He will give His Spirit in the hearts or innermost being of the elect. And this Spirit will accomplish His effect and operation in teaching them and making them know the Lord. This is something that the Spirit Himself, or the Person of the Spirit, alone can do. "We have received the Spirit who is from God," says the Apostle, "that we may know the things freely given to us by God," 1 Corinthians 2:12. It is not the fruits of the Spirit (or produced gifts) but the Spirit Himself who truly teaches the elect and reveals the mysteries of salvation, Ephesians 1:17. And this Spirit, God has given in their hearts.
5. Again: God has given His people the Spirit of grace and adoption to dwell in them, making them able to cry out, "Abba, Father," Galatians 4:6, Romans 8:15. To call out "Abba, Father," or to pray faithfully to God, is a fruit that flows from and is caused by the Spirit Himself. By that same Spirit, the love of God is poured out in our hearts, Romans 5:5.
6. The Person of the Holy Spirit, or the Spirit Himself, bears witness with our spirit, Romans 8:16. Here, there is a double testimony:
7. The testimony of the Spirit Himself.
8. The testimony of our renewed hearts and consciences. Now, we have the latter not only as an effect or fruit of the Spirit but also the former as the cause and principle of the latter, dwelling in us and bearing witness to us that we are adopted. We have not only the testimony of the blood and water, that is, justification and

sanctification, but also of the Spirit Himself, distinct from, though in agreement with, the testimony of the blood and water, 1 John 5:8.

9. The Spirit of God Himself, being the efficient cause of faith, love, and other Christian virtues, must necessarily be given to us first and dwell in us before these virtues or gifts of grace can be wrought in us. The root is in the ground before it produces fruit. The Holy Spirit Himself is the spiritual Root or Principle, and faith, love, etc., are the fruits produced by the Spirit, Galatians 5:22. And the fruits are distinct from the Root; both Root and fruit are in the saints. Or, love and other gifts of grace are in the soul simultaneously with faith, and we need not doubt this. But we are assured that none of these fruits can be produced or worked in us before the Spirit of God, who is the Root of them, is sent into our hearts. The new creature is not formed until the Creator Himself comes to dwell in us.
10. Scripture is abundant in evidence of this; if only we had the light, love, and humility to accept the truth. "The Spirit," says Christ, "abides with you and will be in you," John 14:16, 17. When He has come, namely, the Spirit of truth, He will guide you into all truth, John 16:13. The saints are the temple of the Holy Spirit, in whom He dwells, 1 Corinthians 3:16; 6:19. Being built together into a dwelling place for God in the Spirit, Ephesians 2:22. Whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him, 1 John 4:16. This is not an old error revived, smelling of the opinions of Montanus or the Spiritualists (as some, out of lack of love, have infected it with), but a precious truth of God that is comforting, confirmed by several excellent godly and learned men, both Lutherans and Calvinists. Such as Luther himself, Chemnitz, Gerardus, Zanchius, Perkins, Sibbes,

Bayne, Cotton, Owen, Bridge, and others, whose writings are not unknown to the studious reader, as they have been openly published.

Thus, it appears that the union we have with God, through the indwelling of the Spirit Himself in us, is of a higher nature and kind than what Adam had in the state of innocence or what a hypocrite might possess. A hypocrite may have a kind of union with God (at least with His ordinances and gifts, participating in some remote workings of the Spirit), but they are not one spirit with the Lord, as every true believer is. Neither does the heavenly anointing, or the Spirit Himself, dwell in them as He does in the saints; and therefore, they wither and perish into nothingness. Oh! Let us have many serious, wondering thoughts of this Object and privilege, and cherish the movements of that Spirit, which is the bond of this blessed union.

To prevent misunderstandings that may arise from this great mystery, I consider it my duty to add some remarks here for warning and caution.

1. The Holy Spirit, being Jehovah, the eternal God, with respect to His omnipresence and the immensity of His nature and Being, fills all places and things. "Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence?" (Psalm 139:7). In Him, all creatures live, move, and have their being. Thus, He does not dwell in the saints more than in the ungodly. The essence of God is not more in the one than in the other. The Spirit of the Lord, with regard to the infinity of His Being, encompasses all creatures, but He Himself is not encompassed by any. Therefore, the abiding or indwelling of the Spirit in the saints is of a different nature and in a more exceptional manner. They are the

temples or dwelling places of the Holy Spirit, and He graces them with His gracious presence.

2. The Spirit does not remain in us to make us one person with Himself or to make us partakers of His personal attributes. It is not a consequence of the Spirit Himself dwelling in us that we would, therefore, be one person with the Spirit or elevated into the personality of the Spirit. The human nature of Christ was truly not a person before it was united with the divine nature (although He assumed human nature, yet He did not assume the person of man), but all His members were persons before and remain so after their union. Although the Spirit Himself dwells in the saints, yet He may unite Himself as far as it pleases Him. For this union is not a necessary or natural one but a voluntary act. Therefore, it cannot be truthfully said that a believer is Christ or the Holy Spirit or that Christ or the Holy Spirit is the believer. The soul is in every part of the body, yet the body is not the soul, nor the soul the body. Our union with the Spirit is not by means of composition or mixture, like mixing wine and water together. This is crude and material; our union is spiritual and hidden. Although it is very close and glorious, it is still between two distinct persons, namely, the Spirit and the believers. Therefore, to say that a believer loses their own life and personality and is elevated into the nature and Person of the Spirit or the Son of God would be to make the creature into a god, making it equal to God. From this would truly follow those blasphemous consequences (with which the doctrine of some pious and godly men has been unjustly defamed), namely, that a believer is perfect and without sin, experiencing the eternal uncreated life of God, and that they should be honored and worshiped, etc.

3. Although the saints have a very high union with God and the same Spirit and anointing that Christ has, is in them (John 17:22; 1 John 2:20), yet the fullness of the Godhead does not dwell in them as it does in Christ. Nor do they deserve the same worship, honor, throne, and glory that belong to Christ. This would divide the Godhead and tear it apart. It is true that the saints sit with Christ on His throne (Revelation 3:21), but Christ sits with His Father on His throne. We will sit with Christ as He is a glorified Man on His throne, but He alone, as the Lord of glory, God by nature, sits with His Father on His throne.
4. The Holy Spirit does not dwell in the saints in such a way that He works in them immediately without their cooperation. It is not the Holy Spirit Himself who actually and truly believes, confesses, prays, etc. It is not John, Thomas, etc. Although the power or ability to perform these spiritual exercises properly is the work of the Holy Spirit, yet these are the formal exercises of the creature itself. To assert that the Spirit works in us immediately, without any consent from us, and that we are completely passive, and the Spirit does everything; this is as if one would charge the sins and shortcomings of the believers to the Spirit of God. For who could be accused and blamed if He alone is the executor? May such blasphemy be far from us. It has been the opinion of Lombard (which is accepted today) that the love in us is God Himself because God is called Love (1 John 4:16, 17). This is a great misunderstanding. We must distinguish between God the Creator and His created gifts or those holy dispositions that He works in us. Faith, love, etc., are created gifts or fruits of the Spirit. See 1 Peter 1:57; Galatians 5:22, 23; Colossians 2:12; Psalm 51:10; 2 Timothy 1:7; 2 Corinthians 4:13; Isaiah 11:2.

That there are such created gifts and holy dispositions wrought in the soul could be proven by several reasons, such as:

1. Because the Scriptures make an explicit distinction between the Holy Spirit and His gifts in us (2 Timothy 1:5, 6). Verse 5 makes it clear that He speaks not only of excellent gifts of ministry but of those gifts that accompany salvation.
2. If there were no created gifts, and if the Spirit were to work entirely and immediately in us, then Christ would be united to the natural, not the spiritual man because without spiritual disposition, there is nothing in us but natural principles.
3. Another reason is drawn from the nature of regeneration, in which the substance or essence of the soul is not recreated, but there is a spiritual renewal of the faculties of the soul. The will, understanding, and affections are renewed (Ezekiel 36:26, 27; Psalm 51:10, 11; Ephesians 1:18; 4:23, 24).
4. If there were no created gifts in the saints, they would live the uncreated life of God. This would destroy the immortality of the soul and the resurrection of the body. The soul and the body and everything would be absorbed into the essence of God, and then God alone would be glorified, not man.
5. Although the Holy Spirit Himself dwells in all the saints, being free and voluntary in His actions, not working by necessity of nature, it can be said that a believer is more spiritual than another. The Spirit may work in us, and He does, when, how, and to what extent He pleases. Just as the wind blows where it wishes, so it is with the Spirit (John 3:8). Yet, in such a way that the seed of God remains in even the weakest saints (1 John 3:9), preserving them from total apostasy. The Spirit of God works

more powerfully and consistently in some believers than in others and in the same person more at one time than another. There is a diversity of gifts and ministries, yet it is the same Spirit who works all things in all, distributing to each one individually as He wills (1 Corinthians 12:4, 5, 6, 11). The indwelling of the Spirit Himself in all the saints does not prevent one saint from surpassing another in spiritual acts and workings.

6. Finally and lastly, although a Christian cannot distinctly explain how and in what manner the Spirit dwells and works in him, he should not be offended by this truth since God has told him in His Word that it is so. The inward motions and workings of the Holy Spirit are exceedingly hidden. Who could explain how the body is provided with action and made capable of receiving an immortal soul, or through which window the soul enters and how, and in what way it works? Yet, we are assured that we have a living and active soul within us. The mysteries of nature and the old creation are great, but the mysteries of grace and the new creation are greater. Shall we doubt a truth, whether it is so or not, when we do not know how it comes to pass? "As you do not know the way of the wind, or how the bones grow in the womb of her who is with child, so you do not know the works of God who makes everything" (Ecclesiastes 11:5). Let us acknowledge with gratitude what God has revealed to us, even though we cannot understand what is hidden from us.

Objection: If you say that the saints do not have the same fullness and high union with God as Christ has, is this not contradictory to the words of Christ in John 17:5, 21, 22, where He seems to pray that the same fullness and glory that He has may be given to the saints so that they may be one with Him, just as He and the Father are one?

Answer:

1. If one were to interpret these words in the sense to which they are urged, but being a prayer, - as also the words of the Apostle in Ephesians 3:18, 19, where he prays for the Ephesians to comprehend the height, depth, length, and breadth of the love of Christ, and to be filled with the fullness of God, - it does not follow that the saints have already obtained this fullness and perfection of glory. Or that it is to be obtained in this life, but rather that it is reserved for the life to come.
2. There are various godly men who do not understand this text in Christ's prayer to refer to the union of the saints with God, but rather to their union with one another; that they may preserve the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace (Ephesians 4:3). And indeed, the latter part of John 17:21 and 23 seems to favor this interpretation, as the world has gained no small advantage against the saints from their disagreements and divisions.
3. If one were to interpret those words in John 17:21, "That they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You, that they also may be one in Us," as referring to the unity of the saints with God, it would still not follow that this union is as high as the union between the Father and the Son, because:
 1. Firstly, the word "as" does not always mean an equality but often denotes the truth of a matter in its nature and kind, or the likeness and correspondence with the presented pattern. For example, "Be perfect as your Father who is in heaven is perfect" (Matthew 5:48). This means to be truly and sincerely perfect,

and in a way of likeness and correspondence, though not in an equality. "As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me (or believes in Me) will live because of Me" (John 6:57). This means he will truly and indeed live a spiritual life, though not to the same degree and equality as Christ.

2. Secondly, the intention cannot be regarding equality, for then one might say that it is not robbery (or unjust plunder) for a believer to be equal to God, and it would follow that just as God is worshiped, so it may truly happen to a believer.
3. Thirdly, if it were so translated, in the very sense and degree, that Christ and the Father are one, then Christ would have prayed for something that is impossible, namely, that a believer would be essentially and substantially one with God from all eternity, for this is how Christ is; and therefore, He desires that the Father would glorify Him with the glory He had with Him before the world was, and consequently:
4. In the fourth place: These words, "as the Father and I are one," must be understood by way of comparison, that as Christ is one with the Father in a manner consistent with His nature and corresponding to Him (being the eternal Son of God), so the believers may be one with Christ, their Head, in a way that corresponds to them. For Christ has the pre-eminence and excellency, not only as God but also as Man. Therefore, He is said to be anointed above His fellows.

Third sermon

(given after the Holy Communion) from Ephesians 4:30.

"And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption."

The work of the Holy Spirit, which He devotes to the Father's elect and the Son's redeemed, is very great and excellent, for by grace He brings them to glory. He powerfully applies to them all that the Father ordained for them from eternity and that the Son earned and obtained in due time, so that they see and taste that the Lord is good. Thus, the work of regeneration and renewal according to God's image is attributed to Him, John 3:6, which is why the people of the Lord are said to be born of the Spirit, verse 8. He is the Sanctifier who brings the initial work of renewal to its completeness in His people, 1 Corinthians 6:11. Yes, if ever there is observed in them a cry, "Abba Father, my Father," with full assurance of the soul, the cause is that they have received the Spirit of adoption, who thus calls in them, Romans 8:15. And above all, if they are to be comforted on their way, if they are to persevere without falling from their state, this Holy Spirit is the active cause of it, for He seals them until the day of redemption. Indeed, He Himself desires to be the pledge that everything will have a blessed outcome. Thus it is written in Ephesians 1:14: "who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory."

What could be more unjust than to displease this blessed Spirit, to behave in a way that saddens Him by our actions, and causes Him to withdraw? This is recorded as a great sin of the Israelites in Isaiah 63:10: "But they rebelled and grieved his Holy Spirit." Paul exhorts the believers in 1 Thessalonians 5:19: "Do not quench the Spirit." His

words in our text are explicit. For starting from verse 25, he is engaged in reproofing specific sins and warning them against them, and among others, he speaks of not grieving the Holy Spirit of God. He takes a reason for his exhortation from the work of the Holy Spirit, who works for the good of the elect in them. For though He does not completely depart from the hearts of those who grieve Him, yet He diminishes His favors as a sign of His displeasure.

Even on this day, God's Spirit has performed an external sealing through the Lord's Supper. If it is accompanied by the internal, what could be more reasonable than not to grieve Him?

In these words, Paul gives a certain admonition to the believing Ephesians: do not grieve the Holy Spirit, urging this with a reason taken from His work concerning them, namely, they were sealed by Him until the day of redemption.

Just as the holy Apostle said: among all the admonitions (dear Ephesians) that I have given you, one of particular importance is this: take care not to commit anything that would grieve the Holy Spirit; do not give Him a reason for displeasure. For a servant takes care not to anger the one to whom he belongs and who has stamped His mark on him; how much more should you, since the Holy Spirit has set His seal upon you, and you are His until the day of the general redemption! In these words, two main points are presented:

1. The command or exhortation of Paul: Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, etc.
2. The reason for the urging: by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

The admonition mentions (1) the subject, namely: the Holy Spirit of God, etc. (2) The action that should not take place: Do not grieve.

(1.) It is about the Holy Spirit of God, concerning whom something is forbidden that should not happen. a. This can be considered in the abstract sense, as God, like the Father and the Son, being the third Person in the Divine Being. Thus, all sins, even those of unbelievers, are committed against the Holy Spirit, just as they are against the Father and the Son. b. Or as God, the third Person who has a special dispensation over the church and the elect, applying to believers everything that the Father has ordained from eternity and the Son has acquired, and also bestowing some common blessings on the believers themselves. In this sense, specifically in the latter way, the Holy Spirit is taken here because, although He does nothing without the Father and the Son, He has a special dispensation over the church. Consequently, it is attributed to Him in an exceptional way to be grieved, to suffer sorrow, etc., because He is wronged in His administration and stewardship.

So, for clarity, it should be understood that the Holy Spirit, according to His administration, is active concerning the believers by enlightening, sanctifying, convicting, comforting, etc., applying what Christ has obtained for His own. Ephesians 5:25; Titus 2:14; John 16:7: "Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you." Concerning unbelievers, He works in a common way, convicting in the conscience, admonishing through the Word and ministers, etc.

Now, in a figurative sense, He is said to be grieved, quenched, etc., when He is opposed by humans in these operations. Actually, the Holy Spirit cannot be grieved because, being the independent God, He is not subject to change or shadow of turning.

He is called God's Spirit, not only because He proceeds from the Father and the Son in an eternal and incomprehensible manner, John 15:26; namely, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, and is God Himself, Acts 5:4; but also because He is sent by the Father and the Son to apply to the church what was promised to her from eternity by the Father and merited by the Son in due time, John 14:26: "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you." And verse 15, 16: "If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever." Galatians 4:6.

Holy Spirit of God. Not only because He is essentially holy, along with the Father and the Son, Isaiah 6:3; but also because He is the source of all holiness in the godly, 1 Corinthians 6:11. For although He does more than sanctify the saints, comforting and strengthening them, nevertheless, this can be taken as His primary title, since the comfort and joy He works ultimately lead to holiness and encourage humans in that direction, Psalm 130:4.

2. Now, do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, is Paul's admonition.
 - a. First, what it means to grieve the Holy Spirit, b. Second, when it will become evident that He is not grieved.
3. It has already been said that grieving here should not be taken in the literal sense but figuratively, in the sense that it means doing things that displease the Holy Spirit or behaving in a way that leads to such treatment of the Holy Spirit, making one aware of His displeasure with one's actions.

God's Spirit operates, as mentioned earlier, in two kinds of people.

1. In unbelievers and the unconverted, through ordinary workings of conviction in their consciences, admonition through the Word and teachers. These are said to grieve the Spirit of God when they dull their convictions, resist and despise admonitions, both within themselves and from others who try to correct them or with whom they associate. Isaiah 63:10: "But they rebelled and grieved his Holy Spirit; therefore he turned to be their enemy, and himself fought against them." However, our text does not deal with this because the last part does not apply to them.
2. He produces righteousness, peace, and joy in the elect, Romans 14:17. These can also sin against the Holy Spirit and grieve Him. The passage is actually about them because it applies to them: "by whom you were sealed, etc."

Since the Spirit is in all true believers, God's people can grieve the Spirit, whether doubly or singly. A. Doubly, when they live and act in a way that not only obstructs and hinders the Holy Spirit within them in His blessed work but also hinders Him in others. This happens when others are offended, led into sin, or grieved, and the Spirit of the Lord is opposed and hindered in them as far as it depends on us. 1 Corinthians 8:12: "Thus, sinning against your brothers and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ." See also Psalm 51:12, 13. B. Singly, when our sins are mostly internal, and the Holy Spirit of God in us alone is grieved, as often happens when we live in a very sinful state without causing offense to others. This admonition is likely aimed primarily at this latter situation, although it does not exclude the former. We will primarily discuss this latter situation.

1. The Holy Spirit is grieved when we neglect the comfort that the Holy Spirit works internally or do not make use of the

seriousness, desire, and joy that He works in our hearts. We do not pray, do not draw near to the Lord, and do not diligently preserve the grace through all means available to us. The Spirit is the Author of this good disposition, as seen in Romans 14:10. This can be observed in the bride in the Song of Solomon 5:2, 8: "I slept, but my heart was awake. A sound! My beloved is knocking. 'Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my perfect one, for my head is wet with dew, my locks with the drops of the night.' I had put off my garment; how could I put it on? I had bathed my feet; how could I soil them?"

2. When we resist His guidance and oppose the way He deals with us, we grieve the Holy Spirit. We want to be sad when God speaks of joy, and we want joy when He calls us to sorrow. We want to rest when He speaks of struggle, and we want to cause chaos when He says, "Soul, return to your rest." Generally, we want the opposite of what He desires, just as it happened with Israel when God called them to move forward, and they turned back. When the Lord said they would lie still, they wanted to move forward, Isaiah 63:10, Numbers 14, Jeremiah 2:17. The Holy Spirit leads God's children, as seen in Romans 8:14. What Jesus accused the Jews of, as recorded in Matthew 11:17 and Luke 7:32, has not been entirely eradicated from the hearts of God's children. "We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not mourn." This was also the case with John's disciples in Matthew 9:14 when they wanted the sons of the bride-chamber to fast while the Bridegroom was still with them. Thus, they often cast away the children's bread with indignation.
3. By living in sin in such a way that the Holy Spirit cannot help but be grieved by our actions. We give precedence to filthy sins, which are His enemies, rather than to the Holy Spirit. This includes all sins against the convictions and enlightenment of

the Spirit in our consciences and against the many obligations we have placed upon ourselves. It does not matter what sins these are; just look at some preceding and following verses from our text, and you will quickly find where you have often grieved the Holy Spirit. This was the case with David, as seen in Psalm 51:12, which is why he says, "Cast me not away from your presence." Because the Holy Spirit sanctifies the heart, it must necessarily lead to sorrow when we allow impurity to take root in our hearts and thereby give Him the freedom to depart, Isaiah 57:15, 17.

4. Just as a father lets an disobedient child see and feel his displeasure, so does the Holy Spirit. When He is grieved by the actions of His people, He also shows His displeasure to a great degree. This mainly consists of the following:
 1. He withholds the rays of His love and comfort, causing them to become dry, dark, and troubled about their state. They begin to doubt their condition. Thus, in Song of Solomon 5:4, 7, it says, "My beloved put his hand to the latch, and my heart was thrilled within me. I arose to open to my beloved, and my hands dripped with myrrh, my fingers with liquid myrrh, on the handles of the bolt." Although this passage refers to Christ and not the Holy Spirit, these actions are carried out by the Spirit, who works in Jesus' name, as seen in Psalm 32:3, 4.
 2. He withdraws His powerful and sanctifying grace, causing them to become insensible to seriousness, desire, and courage (even though there is still grace in the soul that they cannot see). In Isaiah 63:17, they lament: "O Lord, why do you make us wander from your ways and harden our heart, so that we fear you not?" They become hardened in their prayers and good deeds, growing

increasingly sinful. This torments and grieves them, even as their souls endure it.

3. To demonstrate His sadness and displeasure, the Holy Spirit withdraws somewhat and does not immediately answer their prayers, making it seem as if He has abandoned them, as in Lamentations 3:8: "though I call and cry for help, he shuts out my prayer." Song of Solomon 5:6, 7 says, "I opened to my beloved, but my beloved had turned and gone. My soul failed me when he spoke. I sought him, but found him not; I called him, but he gave no answer. The watchmen found me as they went about in the city; they beat me, they bruised me, they took away my veil." So, all means appear to be in vain. Just as a friend who is poorly received withdraws for a time, suspending and ceasing the signs of friendship, the Holy Spirit does the same. Although His person remains unchanging and abiding, He changes His work and ways only concerning human beings.

Therefore, this passage should not be used by the Socinians to establish that the Holy Spirit is not God because it only appears this way in His dealings with believers, while He Himself remains the Unchangeable One.

(2.) Now naturally follows what it means not to grieve the Holy Spirit of God. Namely:

1. Guarding against all those evil actions mentioned above, so that we never give the Holy Spirit the opportunity for such harsh treatment towards us, as we have described.
2. Striving to please Him by highly valuing and welcoming His acts of grace and expressions of love. Surrendering ourselves entirely to His guidance and resisting all sins of which He convicts us.

For there can be no cohabitation between Him and a life characterized by known sins and transgressions. Thus, Paul's admonition will be applicable to us.

II. The reason for the apostle's admonition is: "By whom you were sealed for the day of redemption." This same Spirit, of which we have spoken, is attributed in God's Word to the sealing of believers. As in Ephesians 1:13, "In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit." Also, 2 Corinthians 1:22, "who has also put his seal on us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee." Likewise, in our text, it states: "In whom," expressing the close union between the Holy Spirit and the believers. Here, there is (1) the sealing itself, attributed to the Holy Spirit, and (2) their elevation to the day of redemption.

Regarding the sealing itself that the Holy Spirit performs, it is

- (1) internal and
- (2) external.

1. Internally, the Holy Spirit seals, as masters usually do concerning their possessions, slaves, or servants.
2. He dedicates us to God and makes us the Lord's own, so that we become His property and inheritance. He grants them His grace, which regenerates them, continually sanctifies them, separates them from the world, and works faith in their souls. He makes us surrender ourselves entirely to God with our soul and body, as seen in Isaiah 44:5: "One will say, 'I am the Lord's,' another will call himself by the name of Jacob." Song of Solomon 8:6: "Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm." In our text, the expression is taken from the custom of masters who

distinguish their servants from others by a certain mark and from merchants who mark their goods and merchandise.

3. Sealing signifies impressing one's mark on something; just as in sealing a letter, it not only shows who the letter is from, but it also expresses something by the seal, such as one's emblem. Thus, the Holy Spirit, who restores to some extent the image of God lost through sin through regeneration and increasingly renews it through sanctification, does the same. He imparts divine light, purity, holiness, righteousness, goodness, joy, and salvation. Ephesians 4:22, Colossians 3:10, and 2 Peter 1:4 confirm this: "By which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature." The Holy Spirit is their Seal.
4. To be sealed means to be assured. For when one desires a matter to be certain, they put their seal and signet on it. In His counsel, the Lord has determined and revealed in His Word certain great blessings that He promises and assures to His people: that He and all the benefits of the Covenant of Grace belong to a believer because He has loved them from eternity, as in 1 John 5:6-7. That they are believers and have already been transferred into the state of grace, having communion with the Triune God, as in 2 Corinthians 1:20-22: "For all the promises of God find their Yes in him. That is why it is through him that we utter our Amen to God for his glory. And it is God who establishes us with you in Christ, and has anointed us, and who has also put his seal on us and given us his Spirit in our hearts." Lastly, He assures them that they will never fall from that state, for God is faithful and unchanging, and He will make them faithful before Him to inherit eternal life, as in Romans 8:23 and John 14:16. "I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you

forever." Romans 8:16 says, "The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit, that we are children of God."

5. Sealing the believers means that the Holy Spirit confirms them in the state of grace. Despite the adversities they may face, He sustains them in their state, preserving the good that is already in them and continually strengthening and preserving them, as in 2 Corinthians 1:21-22, 1 Peter 1:6, and 2 Timothy 2:19. This strengthening and confirmation by the Holy Spirit is the reason why believers never completely fall away or decline from their state of grace and salvation.

See, all of this is encompassed in the internal sealing of the Spirit, which is done only for believers. Therefore, Paul attributes this to those who are Christians, for the day of redemption belongs to them alone.

2. The external sealing that He performs for the believers is through the Sacraments, both Holy Baptism and the Holy Communion. One serves as the Sacrament and seal of incorporation, and the other as the seal of confirmation, which is why they are also called seals, as in Romans 4:11. Just as they were intended for the believers in the Ephesian church, similar to how circumcision and the Passover were given to the believing Jews. Acts 10:44 says, "While Peter was still saying these things, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word," and in verse 47, "Can anyone withhold water for baptizing these people, who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?"

Paul further elevates this blessing by indicating the power and lasting nature of this sealing: "until the day of redemption." A Christian has several days of redemption: • It was a day of redemption for the entire church when Jesus, through suffering and

obedience, redeemed His people from God's wrath and their enemies (Galatians 3:13; Hebrews 2:14-17). • As they participate in and are entitled to redemption through rebirth and conversion (1 Peter 1:18). • A day of redemption can also be called when God's children, in death, are released from their sinful bodies (Romans 7). • But, above all, a day of redemption is called the day of judgment or the last day of the world (Luke 21:18). Ephesians 1:5 says, "he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will."

(1) On that day, the entire creation will be liberated from the vanity and sin it is subjected to because the wicked misuse all of God's creations (Romans 8:19-21). "For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God." (2) It is especially a day of redemption for God's children because their bodies, being freed from all sin, infirmity, death, etc., will enjoy the most perfect level and state of redemption that Christ has acquired for His people (Romans 8:23). "And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies." Therefore, redemption begins here in death and is completed on the last day.

It is said, "until the day of redemption," not implying that the Spirit will cease to do good to God's children at that time. No, the opposite is evident (Revelation 6:17). It simply expresses what He does here, namely: (1) He is the one who comforts them here in this life, until they reach a place where there is no more suffering or strife, only joy. (2) He sanctifies and preserves them here until they reach a place

where there is no danger of falling away. This shows us what He does here on earth, sealing them until no seal is needed anymore, without excluding heaven.

What stronger reason could be given to admonish the Ephesians not to grieve the Holy Spirit, considering the excellent blessings He bestowed upon them? Truly a compelling word!

Application: We have now heard the duty of the Ephesians, not to grieve the Holy Spirit of God because He sealed them until the day of their complete redemption. But today, in the days of the New Testament, this is still useful for our instruction and exhortation.

- This clearly refutes the error of the Socinians, who denied the divinity of the Holy Spirit and sought to make Him a mere gift. Here are clear proofs that He is a Person since He can be grieved and that He is God because such a great work is attributed to Him, namely, sealing God's children, which cannot be done by a mere creature. • Let the Arminians also be silent about the falling away of the saints, as He is such an almighty Spirit who strengthens, comforts, and preserves God's children in the state of grace, as has been shown.

It is therefore fitting for those who have partaken in the Lord's Supper and claim to be sealed to consider this word as directed to them: "Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God!" Indeed, this was the right lesson for them. We will now bring it to some use. Our heartfelt wish is that we could say to all of you: the Holy Spirit of God has sealed you; do not grieve Him!

1. In all likelihood, there are some here to whom this admonition does not apply because they have not been effectively wrought by the Holy Spirit of God and, consequently, have not been sealed by Him until the day of redemption. Their condition is

such that they have experienced only some general workings of God's Spirit, which could even take place in all unbelievers (verse 9). They are convicted of sins, and the Spirit always externally admonishes them through the Word so that they somewhat know their duty now. Their sin against the Holy Spirit is embittering (not so much grieving), as they go against convictions and admonitions, extinguishing God's work. These people have indeed received signs in the morning hours, which are seals for the believers, but they are not seals for them because they have never received the signified thing, nor the internal sealing of the Holy Spirit. It is easy to see that this admonition does not affect them in its full force. They can indeed sin heavily against the Spirit, but their condition is that they have never received His special grace. If anyone is eager to know who we are speaking of, we answer: it is those:

A. Who are ignorant of the internal sealing of the Holy Spirit and do not understand what it means to be appropriated to God by grace, to be increasingly sanctified, to experience the internal consolation of the Spirit assuring them of their sonship, and to be confirmed and preserved by God in that state. I say that those who do not understand it miss it. 1 Corinthians 2:12: "Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God." For the Spirit always makes His own see what He bestows upon them, if not always, at least sometimes. Those who have no experience of these matters in their soul and have no desire for them are not inclined to such things. This is proof that they are not among the hungry and thirsty for righteousness, Matthew 5:6.

B. The careless and unconcerned about their state, who do not care about missing such things and believe that one can still be a good

Christian and go to the Lord's Supper without it being a big deal. They have never been very concerned about their state, and they hope that everything will be fine anyway.

C. These are those who easily grieve the Spirit of God in others, drawing others into sin, giving them reasons for sorrow with their careless, loose, ungodly lives, as the Jews are accused of in Acts 7:51. And all of this is of no importance to them, not even worth the name of sin. For with them, only what goes against the light of nature is evil.

2. God's children are the ones who possess both the internal and external sealing of the Holy Spirit. We will now describe their present condition after the Lord's Supper.

3. They have had some taste and experience of the internal sealing of the Holy Spirit in previous days, but now, going to and having been at the Lord's Supper, they have perceived nothing but an external sealing. The internal workings of God's Spirit have done nothing special for comfort, sanctification, strengthening, etc. This makes them downcast, despondent, and very sad, even peevish, for they had set their hearts on something else. They also wonder if their improper preparation, etc., might be the cause.

• Know, Christians, this is already a beginning of grieving the Spirit, for you show yourselves dissatisfied with His guidance here. Even if you have made very good preparations, He is not obliged to do your will. • It could also be that you were too focused on having the internal sealing at this exact time. Therefore, be content with the external sealing (although you may desire the internal without murmuring), seeing that God, through His providence, says to you: "My grace is sufficient for you" (1 Corinthians 12:9). And perhaps He

has already given you something internal that you do not immediately see.

2. Others have perceived something of this internal sealing; they notice that their hearts are more believing, more encouraged, more comforted than before, and they feel themselves earnestly strengthened and surrendered to the battle, consequently sealed internally and externally. But there come little foxes that want to spoil the vineyard; something appears as a man's hand to grieve the Holy Spirit, causing them to neglect the internal movements of God's Spirit, encouraging them to pray, to closely watch their hearts, etc. They indulge in lesser sins, with eyes, ears, and mouth, and if they do not wake up, this will strike them. Thus, they gradually come to grieving the Spirit of God.
3. There may also be some who are needlessly troubled; they think that every sin grieves the Holy Spirit, and this makes them so concerned about what is present and the future that they drive out love through excessive fear (1 John 4:18) and disturb the peace of the heart with unnecessary worry. We can bring in Isaiah 30:15 here: "For thus said the Lord GOD, the Holy One of Israel, 'In returning and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and in trust shall be your strength.'" One must be precise about sins but should not be overly distressed with unnecessary worry; it would be better to rely more on the Holy Spirit.
4. Finally, there will be those who cannot find this internal sealing of the Holy Spirit within themselves and, therefore, are very concerned whether they have participated in the external sealing at all. If not, their conscience will strongly accuse them of having eaten judgment upon themselves! It will also seem to them that they can only relate to the Holy Spirit in an ordinary way.

Therefore, they are not yet able to begin this virtue with joy because they doubt whether they possess the Spirit for salvation.

To test and instruct your soul, we present these signs:

1. Ask your soul if it has any insight into these matters, so that its glory and holiness enlighten you, and you can see that the one who is sealed in this way is blessed, and that everyone should strive for it. If yes, consider if this is not the anointing of the Spirit that has already taught you this, 1 John 2:10, 1 Corinthians 2:12.
2. See if you have any love and desire for this matter because you perceive such peace and holiness in it. You may wish to seek these matters all your days if you could obtain them. And your great sorrow would be to know that you lack this sealing. On the contrary, no one would be more joyful than you if you could possess it. If yes, we dare to say that you are already among those who are sealed, Revelation 7:3 because you hunger and thirst for righteousness, Matthew 5:6.

So if there is still a heart in you that heeds the admonition of Paul to you, then take care not to grieve the Holy Spirit of God, neither within nor outside you, but rather welcome Him kindly, knowing that the Lord has sealed you, both inwardly and outwardly, according to 1 John 3:24: "Whoever keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in them. And by this we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us." So let the words of Paul enter your soul with joy: "Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God."

- a. Do nothing that would grieve Him, by not obeying His comfort, those movements toward holiness, by rejecting and neglecting such great grace, by resisting and disputing His guidance in your soul.

Much less should you go against the light of God's Spirit, willfully indulging in sin and neglecting what is good, as these matters have been explained in more detail above.

b. Do what you can to please and satisfy Him, by always following His promptings and nurturing them. Always submitting to His guidance. Opposed to sin. Devoted to virtue. So that He may seal and strengthen you more and more in your soul, even at this Supper. Our admonition should please you. It is God from heaven who now, through His providence, makes you encounter this lesson; Paul was only the writer and messenger of it. Do not focus on my insignificance; rather, think of God's greatness, sovereignty, holiness, etc. Indeed, the Holy Spirit Himself, who dictated this Word, commands it to you. Who would want to have the God of heaven as an enemy? When even the greatest servant of the lowest earthly lord takes such care to perform everything to the lord's satisfaction.

Let your thoughts dwell on what grieving the Holy Spirit is and then consider the opposite good.

1. Grieving itself. Whom would you grieve? Is it not the Holy Spirit of God, as stated in our text? The Spirit, who is not only God, infinitely high and perfect, the origin of everything with the Father and the Son, but who has brought to God's children everything they possess, such as rebirth, sanctification, adoption as children, confirmation in the state they are in, etc. Not one good movement, thought, purpose, deed, or act is wrought except by Him; no truth, no holiness, etc., exists in you, except from Him. God's Spirit, who, besides His eternal procession, was sent into your heart to prepare you by grace for glory. The Holy Spirit, who, being essentially holy, firmly prepares and equips you as a temple and dwelling place of God. Indeed, Christians,

He is the nearest to you in nature and in grace, for the Father and the Son want to accomplish everything through Him.

Grieving itself is something that should cause alarm. Is it good when we cause displeasure in such a sinful way? Despising and neglecting His drawings, knockings, awakenings, consolations, etc. When we do not let Him lead us through the deserts and uncultivated lands, under promises to make amends in the end, even against His convictions, etc., persisting in our sins? Surely, if one were to treat a king in such a way that one did not consider his favor, scorned his rule, and did everything against him that one could, without him ever having wronged us, would we not say that it was the greatest wickedness?

2. Think about how bitter it is for God's children to find a displeased Spirit who withholds His love and favor, allowing sorrow to come upon them. Withdrawing His sanctifying grace, letting them fall into sin, so that the foundations shake and the soul is almost in despair due to unbelief, and even though they cry and lament for grace, they receive no hearing, as we have seen from the example of the bride, Song of Solomon 5. Consider how such a person feels, who is almost perishing from want and then finds a closed heaven! In summary, here both the Spirit and the believers are grieved. Also, think about how glorious that state is when one guards against all these sins with great care. When one waits for His movements, paying close attention, following His guidance, hearing His voice, and thus living in close friendship with the Spirit, perceiving His comfort, love, and strength. Yes, that He helps us in our greatest difficulties in prayer, Romans 8:23.

3. The Lord wants to make you capable of not grieving the Spirit; for this purpose, He has made promises in His Covenant of Grace and said He wants to put His fear in your heart, Jeremiah 32:40. He has also hung His seal on this word today. So, you only need to show your willingness. There is no stronger motivation than that of Paul himself: "By Whom you are sealed," etc. a. Internally by the Spirit of the Lord, who has appropriated you to God through rebirth. Yes, God's image, imprinted in you by the seal of His holiness, assuring you of God's covenant, of your state of grace, and of God's eternal faithfulness, making you faithful to the end because He confirms and preserves you in this state. b. Externally, He has sealed you today, giving you the visible proof of the invisible, so that the truth is established by the mouth of more than one witness.

And this until the day of redemption. Let all the enemies rage, all the adversities oppress, yet the sure foundation of God remains unwavering; and so you will be placed among the sealed ones. Not only in your death, but especially in your resurrection when the body, being redeemed and glorified, will forever enjoy God.

4. You have affirmed this today in the Supper, that you will not grieve the Holy Spirit of God. For you have declared there, according to the covenant's content, that you want to live according to God's will in everything. Consequently, you are also bound here to fulfill His will, Deuteronomy 27:17-19. Thus, Moses argued: "Today you have caused the Lord to say that He will be a God to you, and you will walk in His ways and keep His statutes and His commandments and His judgments, and that you will obey His voice. And the Lord has made you say today that you will be His people, as He has spoken to you, and that you will keep all His commandments, so that He may set you

high above all the nations He has made, for praise and for a name, and for glory, and so that you may be a holy people to the Lord your God, as He has spoken."

For those who may still be willing to be sealed, even if they are not yet sealed, we advise:

1. To consider themselves as condemned people who cannot please God in any way. Yes, even their participation in the Lord's Supper does not please God but seals the curse. Jude 19: "Natural people, not having the Spirit." Rom. 8:9: "But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him." You should be troubled and deeply burdened by this because no one receives Him without being troubled. On the other hand, you should observe if any glory appears in the state of being sealed, to kindle your heart.
2. Do not rest until you are sealed by the Spirit of God, but seek first rebirth, a change of heart, faith. For those who obtain these things will also obtain the other. Ephesians 1:13. By striving for sealing, you will be able to avoid grieving the Holy Spirit unto salvation.
3. Follow His general workings, as He convicts, exhorts, etc., for if you use them well, you will leave many great sins and do many external virtues. And if possible, apply them to seek and obtain the supernatural virtues.

And you, who are sealed by the Spirit, if you have resolved not to grieve the Spirit, this will help you:

1. Pay close attention to the Spirit and His workings so that you may know exactly what He does. God's Word will be a good help

in this regard to discern whether it is the Spirit of God, as it informs us that everything that brings us closer to the Lord is the Spirit of God. It is known that one is easily offended by someone they do not know, 2 Corinthians 13:5. So, by paying close attention, your heart will become tender towards Him.

2. Keep in mind Paul's motivation, namely that you are sealed internally and externally, through the sacraments; even today through the Lord's Supper. Where you have also committed yourself to the exercises of this virtue, although you have not deliberately thought of Him in this way. And this will make you say with David: Psalms 56:13: "For You have delivered my soul from death. Have You not kept my feet from falling, that I may walk before God in the light of life?"
3. If you lack grace and strength, turn to God's promises, renewed to you in the Lord's Supper today. Apply them to yourself so that you may become partakers of the divine nature, 2 Peter 1:4.

The Lord will also bless the means that are set up for His glory, and you will receive the ability to guard yourself against these sins, while the Holy Spirit will shower His favors upon you, covering you with love, grace, comfort, and holiness. Yes, He will increasingly imprint His seal upon you, so that it becomes evident through the rays of His image that you are a blessed seed of the Lord.

And if it so happens that you grieve Him, immediately run to Him for forgiveness and grace! And He, who seals His own until the great day of redemption, will restore you until the day dawns in which all sin and weakness come to an end, and you will be perfect among that multitude of the sealed ones who will be with the Lamb on Mount Zion.

Amen!

Fourth sermon, on Job 8:13

The hope of the hypocrite shall perish.

There are two kinds of hypocrites, gross and refined. The gross ones are those who play the hypocrite so openly that even in their hearts, they know well that they are hypocrites and deceivers. But the refined hypocrites are those who are indeed hypocrites but so cleverly feign it that they not only deceive others with their religiosity and appearance of godliness but even themselves because they judge themselves to be true godly people.

As for the first kind, they are hypocrites who, in all the religion they practice, seek only their own advantage, Matthew 23:5. They do all their works to be seen by people, to be honored or praised by them, or to gain some temporal benefit. Such a gross hypocrite was Simon the Sorcerer, Acts 8. But we do not want to speak of such gross hypocrites now, but of the refined ones who do not consider themselves hypocrites and yet can be recognized by these marks:

1. They are hypocrites who, despite their outward display of godliness, have some sin in which they live and from which they do not want to be turned away by the means of salvation that are used around them, Ezekiel 33:30.
2. They content themselves with the external and are satisfied with the external performance of religion without being concerned about serving God internally with their hearts, Isaiah 28:13.
3. They make a fair show of godliness but are enemies of the power of godliness, so that they cannot endure strict and genuine

godliness, whereby a person acknowledges God in all his ways, according to Solomon's teaching, Proverbs 3:6, and seeks to order everything he does according to God's commandments. Those who cannot stand being urged in this way and teach that it depends only on the internal power of godliness. They also cannot appreciate those who are strict in their ways and would not willingly do anything against God's commandment. They condemn such people and call them hypocrites and pretenders. These are rightly the people of whom Paul says in 2 Timothy 3:5 that their state is miserable. Of whom my text says that the hope of the hypocrite shall perish. For they expect eternal life after this life, but hell will be their dwelling place. They promise themselves salvation on false grounds, namely

1. On the observances they perform.
2. On those saving gifts which they claim to have within them.
3. From the actions and workings of God towards them.

Regarding the first point, the works and endeavors they engage in, from which they conclude that they are saved, are of three kinds:

1. Works of righteousness.
2. Works of mercy and love.
3. Religious works. But from none of these can anyone conclude that they are saved, as we will demonstrate.
4. Concerning the works of righteousness, such as not wronging anyone, giving everyone their due, obeying parents and authorities, living in peace with neighbors, these virtues have even been found among the blind heathens. This is merely a civil

virtue that can be found even in the unregenerate, and therefore, it is not proof of salvation. For would one think that God would grant someone heaven merely because they have given their neighbors their due while they have stolen from God? These two things must go together: render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's. But many of these people do not give God His due; they often spend a part of the Lord's day on their own work, whether it is their worldly occupation or engage in leisure activities. They do not fully dedicate themselves to God with body and soul to serve God both externally and internally. Even if you give to God what is God's in external acts of worship, you still do not give God everything that you owe Him concerning the parts. They do not give Him their souls, as we will further demonstrate concerning the works of religiousness.

5. Now, concerning the works of mercy and love. They say, as Christ says in Matthew 5:7, "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy." And what is written in Matthew 25. But it must be known that practicing works of mercy arising from natural compassion is not enough; only those that arise from supernatural compassion are evidence of salvation, and they do nothing from this supernatural compassion.

Firstly, because they do not practice acts of mercy in obedience to God's command. So, if God might command them to do something contrary to natural compassion, they seek, by the power of God's command, to perform that deed, setting aside all natural compassion and not being disobedient to God, as we see in the case of Abraham, Genesis 22:2.

Secondly, it also appears because they practice mercy toward those to whom their desires and natural love and compassion extend, and no further. Or, if they do so, they do not do it with love, and they do not even try to exercise acts of mercy towards such individuals with a heart of goodwill, as Matthew 5:44 teaches.

Thirdly, it also becomes apparent because they only exercise acts of mercy toward their neighbors, without regard for godliness or the fear of God in the individuals toward whom they perform these acts. And even if they do it for godly people, they do not do it with regard to godliness, so godliness does not move them to the work of love. Christ will not grant them salvation on the last day for showing mercy to Christ; those are the believers because they are members of Christ.

Fourthly, their love extends only to bodies, not to souls. Supernatural love is mostly concerned with the soul, especially desiring that God might cause the physical affliction of their neighbors to prosper for the salvation of their souls. In contrast, hypocrites, even when they appear to care for others through admonition and instruction, do not have a heartfelt affection for the salvation of their neighbor's souls.

Fifthly, it becomes apparent because hypocrites are content with the outward practice of acts of mercy without concern for the soul, that they might perform them in a way that pleases God. Instead, they perform acts of mercy as they see fit.

3. Now, concerning religious works, because they are members of the church, attend diligently to church and partake in the Lord's Supper, pray to God daily, read God's Word in their homes, and so on. It must be known that the performance of external religious duties is by no means evidence of salvation. For who were more abundant in religious duties than the scribes and

Pharisees? In Matthew 5:20, Christ says, "For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven."

Some do it to be seen by others, others for some temporal benefit; some to cover their sins before people, others out of habit. But as long as the performance of religious duties does not arise from a holy cause, it cannot be proof of a person's salvation. Even if they sometimes hear the Word of God with joy when something to their liking is preached, it still does not come from a holy cause. They should take pleasure in the entire Word of God. But when they are taught their duty and it is strongly impressed upon their minds, when their specific sins are revealed, and when the hell and righteousness of God are presented before them, they take no pleasure in it. Just as Felix, when Paul spoke about faith in Christ, it was acceptable. But when he began to speak about righteousness and temperance and the future judgment, he had had enough, Acts 24:24.

But children of God find it particularly pleasing when their specific sins are revealed. Even if they suffer reproach and disgrace for the sake of religion, even if they give their bodies to be burned, it is not out of love. But they have their own interests, and it shows that they do not do it for the sake of Christ; otherwise, they would also strive to fulfill those other things that please Christ. They will diligently attend church on the Lord's day and would not want to do the least work. But to meditate on and apply the preaching to their souls after the sermon, they have no inclination to do so. They are not eager to perform their taught duties, which they are bound to do. Herod also did many things, but there always remained something that he did not want to submit to. But the will of the believers is good in all respects. The hypocrite seeks his own honor in this. Or, if they do it

for God's honor, it is to secure salvation through it. But believers do not serve God only for the reward of salvation but also from the consideration of the inappropriateness, ugliness, and heinousness of this sin that in the practice of religion, they serve not so much God as themselves.

- The hypocrites do not practice religion in the Spirit of truth; they only engage in external religious acts, without delving into the internal aspects of religion, which should be worked out sincerely with heart and soul. These internal aspects include holy soliloquies, meditation, self-examination, and examination of our souls' states. Even if they still engage in religious practices, at best, it is done with some intellectual effort, without the will participating as it should. They do not exercise religion with the submission and surrender of their will to God's will.

- They do not use religion for the purpose for which God commands it, which is sanctification. They do not have the intention that when they engage in religious practices, they desire in their hearts that the power of godliness may be wrought in them through it. Believers wish that godliness and holiness may be increased in them through every duty. Even if the wicked occasionally wish for this, it is not out of affection for godliness but for their own salvation. Even if they hear God's Word, they do not care to be sanctified by it; they do not urge it on their minds to have their hearts wrought upon for sanctification. They live and die by their religions, considering them as the foundation of their salvation. These religions should not drive us from Christ to ourselves, but to Christ. When we hear or learn about any sins we are guilty of from God's Word, they should drive us to Christ for forgiveness. When we hear about virtues we have practiced, they should drive us to Christ to thank Him that we have practiced them through His Spirit. For our religions to be good,

Christ must increase, and we must see more of our own faults and the glorious excellence of Christ.

2. Secondly, they conclude that they will be saved through the saving gifts they claim to possess: faith and conversion.

1. They claim to have faith, but it is only imaginary faith, as evidenced by their imagination mixed with knowledge and ignorance. True faith must have profound knowledge. See Isaiah 53:11, where faith is expressed through knowledge. Many do not know Jesus regarding His Person, nature, and offices. They cannot bring forward one proof of their communion with Christ from God's Word. They are ignorant of His Word. They do not really know Christ because if they did, they would not promise themselves salvation through Christ because He is not such a Savior who merely justifies but also sanctifies, Habakkuk 2:11; Titus 2:14. So, that faith is not genuine; it is built on ignorance.

2. Their faith is imaginary because they obtained it so easily. It required them so little effort and labor. True saving faith is obtained with great difficulty. If you ask them whether they have had this faith for a long time, they would say they have had it since their youth. Since it is a difficult work, it is called God's work, John 6:20. By nature, people are sluggish to believe, Luke 24. No wonder, because true faith makes a person cast away all their self-righteousness and completely deny themselves to seek their entire salvation in Christ alone. This contradicts human nature. It is as if it goes beyond human nature that God, who is so just and abhors sin, would show His grace and mercy to such wicked and sinful people. Therefore, believing this is extremely difficult, but it is easy for the false believer.

3. Thirdly, it is also evident that the hypocrite's faith is only a false belief because it is rarely challenged by doubt, while true faith is often contested by doubt, Galatians 5:17. Even if the devil sometimes opposes the hypocrite's faith, he does it only to establish his work more firmly, for Satan transforms himself into an angel of light. But when he opposes false faith, he does not oppose it as true faith, for that is serious to him. However, with the hypocrite, it is just a joke, and he does not even mean it. Therefore, it is easy to distinguish between them.

1. Like those who engage in jest, if one were to accidentally knock down another, they would not attack to harm but rather help them up, indicating that it is not serious. Similarly, when the devil introduces doubts into the minds of false believers, he does not press them strongly on their souls. He does, however, do so with the children of God, not only introducing doubts about their faith but also pressing them so strongly that they hardly know what to do, for he seeks to devour them (1 Peter 5:8).

2. Just as those who jest only spar with each other; if one were to knock the other down, they would not attack to harm but rather help them up, which shows it is not serious. Likewise, when the devil has introduced doubts into the minds of false believers, and if the hypocrite ponders these doubts more than intended, the devil does not feed those doubts in them, making them more restless. Instead, he reassures them, saying that God is merciful and we are all weak human beings, and that no one is perfect. This shows that he does not seriously oppose their faith. However, he seeks to take away everything by which true believers seek to hold fast. Sometimes it happens that the false faith in God's Word is contested by the general working of the Spirit, and it goes like this: when the hypocrite hears the

preaching about the condition of hypocrites from God's Word, and then God's Spirit begins to convict him through a general operation, convincing him that he is such a hypocrite, it often happens that the hypocrite becomes afraid, fearing that his affairs are not going well. We see this in Felix (Acts 24:25). To make a further distinction here, it consists especially in this:

3. When hypocrites are troubled by the preaching, they reject that preaching from such preachers, as happened with Felix. But true believers, when their hearts are struck and troubled by the preaching of God's Word, seek advice and examine the state of their souls more closely, as we read in Acts 2:37.
4. It also happens that those false believers who are sometimes so afraid and troubled by the preaching, quickly forget that preaching and divert themselves with worldly matters and thus become calm again without further instruction from that preaching. But true believers are not truly at peace until they receive further instruction.

Question: But is it not genuine faith that does not doubt but firmly trusts in Christ? We acknowledge that strong believers are found who are not easily weakened in their faith even if doubts are cast upon them. For there are not only children but also young men, fathers (1 John 2:13). However, it must be understood that those false believers who are not troubled by doubts are not strong believers. There is a distinction here:

1. Strong believers were previously weak; there was a time when they could not trust that Jesus was their Savior.
2. Strong believers stand so firmly in faith, not because their faith is not contested by doubts, or because the devil does not

strongly seek to press those doubts on their souls, but because they are so well-armed against those doubts that they do not significantly affect their souls. Hypocrites are confident in their faith because there are few doubts against their false faith or because they are not strongly pressed upon their souls. If that were to happen, they would not stand for long but rather fall into despair.

3. Strong believers are also strong against sin and zealous for the work of the Lord. For someone who has advanced in faith has also made progress in sanctification. For the new creation is not a monster where one part is much larger than the other. But because faith is like the heart, where the power of spiritual life is actually found, it affects the whole spiritual life according to the condition of faith (Galatians 2:20). Therefore, strong believers are also strong in sanctification, while false believers are men in faith (as they claim) but dwarfs in godliness.
4. The faith of hypocrites has no basis in God's Word, and it has no foundation in the promises of the gospel; they cannot bring forward any evidence. However, true believers, even if they often cannot present evidence, as long as they are weak, still have the marks of grace in them. Someone may have bought a house, paid for it, and have a deed to it, but they may have misplaced the deed. Yet there is still a difference between a false believer who has no evidence or proof and a true believer who cannot produce evidence for a while.
5. When a true believer cannot present evidence and hears that evidence of communion between man and Christ should be proven from God's Word, they will do everything possible to find evidence from God's Word. They will ask others what the

evidence is of a person's communion with Christ so that they may examine the state of their soul accordingly.

6. Even if a true believer cannot present evidence, they still recognize God's Word as the judge and ruler of the state of their soul (Hebrews 4:12). However, the false believer does not recognize God's Word as the judge because even if they do not have anything to say against it, they remain confident in their own judgment.
3. From the actions and workings of God concerning them. Now, concerning conversion. Many hypocrites conclude from it that they will be saved because Ezekiel 18:21 states, "But if a wicked person turns away from all his sins that he has committed and keeps all my statutes and does what is just and right, he shall surely live; he shall not die." But to examine this matter of conversion more closely, one must know that through conversion, a complete change occurs in a person, both in their understanding and their will.
4. The person's understanding, which was previously darkened, becomes enlightened in the Lord (Ephesians 2:8).
5. And the will, which was previously opposed to the will of God, is rectified (Romans 7:13): "So that you may not do what you want."

Regarding enlightenment, hypocrites can be enlightened to a certain extent:

1. They can have knowledge of the doctrine of salvation, understanding the foundations of religion, speaking about them, distinguishing truth from falsehood, and being convinced in

their understanding of the truth of divine things to the extent that they cannot be diverted from it. They may even teach the truth of divine doctrine to others, as we see in Simon the sorcerer (Acts 8:13), who believed and was baptized, or in those who prophesied in the name of Christ (Matthew 7:22).

2. They can to some degree see the heinousness of sin and God's righteousness against it, applying it to themselves. They may somewhat realize that they are grievous sinners and that they are condemned before God, with no hope of salvation unless God extends His special grace to them. This is evident in the cases of Cain and Judas.
3. They can also perceive to some extent the sufficiency of Christ's atonement to reconcile even the greatest sinners with God and the willingness of the Lord Jesus to pay for the sins of all repentant individuals. They may be convinced that the Lord Jesus will not deny them His grace if they take refuge in Him with a contrite heart. This prevents them from falling into despair, even if they recognize themselves as great sinners and acknowledge God's righteousness against sin, to the extent that He promises salvation through Christ. This is akin to tasting the heavenly gifts (Hebrews 6:4).
4. They may also have a glimpse of the glorious and excellent state of God's children and the heavenly blessedness. This can create in them a desire or longing to share in that glorious state, as seen in the case of Balaam (Numbers 24:5) and (Numbers 23:10).
5. Through contemplating the glorious blessedness prepared by God for His children, they may experience a special joy and happiness, so that they can taste to some extent the foretaste of

eternal blessedness. A hypocrite can achieve all of this and go much further in it than many of God's children. Because it is certain that there are many true children of God who, for a time, may see little heinousness in sin and little glory in heaven. However, in our enlightenment, we should not judge by quantity or size but by quality. Therefore, God's children should not draw a false conclusion about themselves.

The distinction between the enlightenment of hypocrites and true believers lies in the following aspects:

1. The enlightenment of hypocrites pertains only to some things, while the enlightenment of true believers encompasses all matters related to salvation (John 16:13). Hypocrites may often be greatly enlightened regarding the enormity of their sins but may lack enlightenment in everything related to God's grace, leading them to despair. Another may be enlightened about God's grace in Christ but remain completely blind concerning the heinousness of sins. Some may appear to be enlightened about both but be as blind as a mole when it comes to gratitude and the inner aspects of religion. In contrast, when a believer is enlightened, they discern all things (1 Corinthians 2:15). While there may be God's children who are not enlightened about all spiritual matters, they are nonetheless enlightened about all things essential to salvation. Thus, these verses should be understood (1 Corinthians 2:15, John 16:13). It is also the case that God's children are further enlightened in one aspect than another, but they are not completely blind in any part necessary for salvation. They still possess some enlightenment in these areas, which prevents them from falling into complete despair. They always maintain some hope that, perhaps through Christ,

they may find salvation, which motivates them to seek Christ for their salvation.

2. Another notable distinction is that the enlightenment of hypocrites can be entirely extinguished, while that of believers cannot. The enlightenment of hypocrites sometimes endures for a brief time (John 5:35). God's children may fall so far that they do not see heavenly things as clearly as before, not because their enlightenment has been extinguished but because something hinders them from seeing spiritual things clearly. It is similar to someone going from a very brightly lit place into a darker one where most doors and windows are closed. They will not see things as clearly there, not because their vision has deteriorated, but because the sunlight does not reach them. Similarly, the Sun of Righteousness, Christ, must shine upon our souls so that God's light can shine on our eyes. Hence, God's children may sometimes seem very blind concerning things they were previously enlightened about, but this happens because they are walking in darkness and lack light (Isaiah 50:10). However, when God shines upon their souls again, they see everything more clearly.
3. Another distinction is that the enlightenment of hypocrites does not sanctify them. This enlightenment has no effect on their hearts towards sanctification because they continue to walk in darkness. In contrast, God's children walk in the light (1 John 1:6-7). This is the most apparent distinction. God's children are not satisfied with mere enlightenment and knowledge; they seek to put them into practice. They believe in God's providence concerning all things in such a way that they strive for willing submission to God's will in everything. They seek to refrain from sin through the acceptance of God's righteousness and to kindle

love for God in their souls through the consideration of His grace. If a hypocrite is somewhat enlightened about the heinousness of his sin and God's righteousness against it, it does not make him holier; rather, he falls into despair, or he resists this enlightenment. But when God's children are enlightened in this regard, they seek to work in their hearts a genuine sense of brokenness and loathing for themselves. They strive to become more humble and meek, thereby progressing in sanctification. If a hypocrite is enlightened about God's grace in Christ, it does not make him holier; rather, he becomes more careless. In contrast, true children of God cry out, "What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits to me?" They desire and seek to offer themselves as a thank offering to God, living a holier life before Him. If a hypocrite is enlightened about the glorious state of God's children, it does not make him holier because even though he may desire to share in their blessedness, he has no delight in their godliness. But God's children, when enlightened in this regard, seek to rouse their souls to proclaim the virtues of God, who has called them to such a glorious state. They aim to walk worthily of such a heavenly calling. Likewise, if a hypocrite is enlightened about the blessedness, leading to joy in his soul, it does not make him holier; he rejoices only in the freedom from all evil that he imagines he will enjoy after this life. However, he does not see the glory in what will be most glorious in heaven, namely, that humanity will serve God in perfection. Therefore, this joy does not sanctify him. But when God's children taste the foretaste of eternal life, they are prompted to live on earth as citizens of heaven, engaging more and more in God's work and commencing it in this life. Thus, it becomes evident that ordinary enlightenment does not sanctify people. However, it is also true that even salvific enlightenment in God's children is not always equally effective in sanctification. Nevertheless, it

stirs their hearts to a greater or lesser extent with a heartfelt desire and inclination toward sanctification. By these and similar signs, such as their high regard for heavenly things, people can determine whether the enlightenment they have in their minds is ordinary or salvific enlightenment.

Having spoken about the change that comes through conversion in the understanding of a person, let us now also show the change that occurs in the will through conversion. This change can be considered twofold:

I. As consisting in the death of the old man. II. And in the quickening of the new man. For through this conversion, the old corrupt will is put to death, and a renewed holy will is given to the person. We read this in Romans 7:19, where it says: "For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing." This represents the renewed will, and "the evil I do not want" represents the death of the corrupt will. Now, the death of the old and corrupt will, inclined towards and pleased with evil, specifically relates to past sins:

A. It leads to sorrow over past sins. B. Or particularly over present and future sins, leading to a hatred of sins.

I. Regarding sorrow over sin, there are two kinds: worldly and Divine. A hypocrite can reach a point of sorrow over sins:

1. He may have repentance and regret, wishing he had not committed those sins. This is evident in the cases of Esau and Judas, and most people, with some knowledge, experience such repentance when death approaches. At that time, the pleasure of sin is gone, and the pain of sin is imminent.

2. Sometimes, they may experience a profound disturbance in their hearts over their sins, feeling the sin they have committed against God as a pain and distress in their hearts, which is much more than mere remorse over sin. This is also evident in Judas, who not only had remorse for his crime but was also profoundly disturbed and distressed in his heart, to the extent that he went to the gallows.
3. They can be so disturbed by their sins that it compels them to make a public confession without anyone urging them to do so. This is also seen in Judas. They can also be driven by their sins to try to rid themselves of the wrongdoing they have done and to repair the harm caused by sin, if possible. Just as we see in Judas, he returned the thirty pieces of silver and declared his Master, whom he had unjustly betrayed, as innocent. Thus, we see that the hypocrite can go far in sorrow over sins. Therefore, we should not base our salvation on such sorrow but must examine ourselves in light of the distinction between Divine and worldly sorrow.
1. The sorrow in the hypocrite is actually and only about the punishment and the evil that comes with sin. But Divine sorrow also encompasses the heinousness, ugliness, and sinfulness of sin. This is evident in the case of David in Psalm 51:6 and in the contrast with Pharaoh in Exodus 10:16, 17.
- The hypocrite may still be somewhat saddened by considering some ugliness and heinousness he sees in sin, but it is not the exact and particular heinousness that sin carries because it is committed against God, causing God to be angered and grieved. Instead, it is a lesser ugliness in sin, such as its conflict with natural love that people owe to their neighbor or its opposition

to good and honorable conduct, which even many heathens have followed. For example, a person who is chaste, when they fall into unchastity, will abhor the fact that they, who have always been chaste, have engaged in the sin of unchastity, even though no one had knowledge of it, because that sin goes against an honorable life that they highly value. However, this sorrow is not about having broken God's law and having provoked God, as Divine sorrow would be.

- A hypocrite may be saddened because he has provoked God when he considers the attributes of God's avenging justice (Nahum 1:2) and the terrifying nature of His wrath (Deuteronomy 32:22). But Divine sorrow makes a person grieve because they have provoked a God who is so gracious and merciful. This Divine sorrow is most kindled in a person's soul when they contemplate the manifold and glorious grace that God has shown them.
 - And this may also occur to a hypocrite when he thinks, "How terrible will my judgment be since I have also sinned against so many of God's blessings and repaid good with evil." However, if our sorrow arises from contemplating God's goodness without particularly taking into account God's righteousness, it is not true Divine sorrow. We now see the first distinction.
2. The sorrow that is sometimes found in hypocrites is only for major and outstanding sins, sins through which a person loses their good reputation among people, and sins against which God's judgments have been specifically threatened. But Divine sorrow also extends to lesser sins, which many do not consider as sins. It concerns inherited and actual sins, greater and lesser sins, as we see in the case of David (Psalm 51:7). He grieved over

his inherited sin, and his heart smote him for cutting off the hem of Saul's garment (1 Samuel 10:24, 26). Divine sorrow makes a person grieve over daily stumbling, weaknesses, imperfections, and clinging corruptions, from which even the best of God's children in this life are never completely free (Romans 7:24). A hypocrite cannot come to the point of being troubled and distressed in his soul about his daily stumbling. Although it is necessary for him to know that it would be sin and that he is also guilty of grieving over it because a hypocrite cannot come to the point of knowing all that is necessary for his salvation. Otherwise, some hypocrites could have everything found in God's children by reading God's Word from beginning to end. Yet, we will not find a single example of a hypocrite who has been troubled and distressed in his heart over his daily stumbling, which even the best of God's children are not free from. They are not grieved about those sins from which they know that God will not exclude a person from heaven.

3. The sorrow of hypocrites only concerns the sins they commit, but Divine sorrow also concerns the sins committed by others. So, when they see others trampling on God's law and provoking God through their sins, it grieves their hearts, which those others do not care about. This is exemplified by David in Psalm 119:136 and 2 Peter 2:8. In Ezekiel 9:4, believers are described as crying out over all the abominations done in their midst. This is truly evidence of a genuine child of God.
- However, hypocrites may still be sad about the sins of others, but not in a way that God is provoked by those sins. Rather, it is because they fear that they will also have to bear the punishments that others face due to those sins.

- They may also be sad about the sins of others because they believe that those sins diminish their own standing, for instance, if they have previously admonished people about those sins or if they have used their authority, given by God, against those sins. In such cases, they may be saddened because they see that their warnings and authority are being disregarded.
- A hypocrite may be sad about the sins of others out of natural love. However, it is characteristic of true believers to be saddened by the sins of others because they recognize that God is grieved by those sins.

B. Now, regarding the hatred for sins, which is the other part of putting sins to death.

1. The hypocrite can have an internal aversion to sins, yes, such an aversion that he will dissuade others from sins and even use his influence over others to deter sin, if possible. Many heathens have advised their disciples in this manner, and some have even written treatises on this topic, as seen in Jeremiah 29:22: "And of him shall be taken up a curse." He may also distance himself from those he sees inclined towards sins. Thus, he may have such aversion to those sins that neither promises nor threats could persuade him otherwise, as seen in Numbers 22:18. The distinctions in the hatred for sins are primarily these:
2. The hatred that the hypocrite has for sin is only directed towards some sins, not all. But the children of God hate all sins, as in Psalm 119:128. There may be sins against which the hatred of God's children does not go, but those are unknown sins. They hate all sins of which they are strongly convinced in their hearts that they are sins. Even though the children of God may still have strong inclinations towards some sins due to the

incomplete nature of their conversion in this life, and the old sinful will in them being only partially put to death, they still hate those sins according to their renewed will. The desires of the old sinful will in God's children are often so strong that the hatred of the renewed will towards those sins can hardly be felt.

3. There is also a distinction between the hatred for sins in the children of God and in hypocrites, as it arises from different reasons and causes. The hypocrites' hatred for sins arises from the sad consequences that sins bring with them. On the other hand, the hatred of true believers for sins arises from an awareness of the ugliness of sin because it is a transgression of God's holy law. They hate sin because sin breaks the just and holy ordinances and commands of that glorious God. They hate sin because God hates it and is an enemy of sin.

But one might ask, doesn't the hatred in the children of God also arise from the sad consequences that sins bring?

Yes, indeed, because sin is also hateful due to the sad fruits it produces. However, there is still a significant difference between the children of God and hypocrites.

- On one hand, the hatred of sins in God's children arises not only from the sad consequences of sins but also from the wicked nature and essence of sin, which is not the case with hypocrites. It does not arise solely from those consequences, as it does in hypocrites, such as shame in the world and temporal judgments of God, such as sickness, poverty, persecution, eternal death, and damnation in hell. It also arises particularly from these two evil consequences: because sin separates a person from their God (Isaiah 59:2), withholding not only the comforting

influences of God's Spirit in the soul but also the help and assistance of God's Spirit for the promotion of sanctification.

- On the other hand, it also arises from the hardening and stubbornness that sin brings upon the heart, according to Hebrews 3:13, making the hearts of men unfit for the service of God. But a hypocrite does not hate sins for this reason, for even if a sinner may hate a particular sin and would not commit it, knowing that God would not punish him for it, nor would it bring shame upon him in the world, his aversion is not because it is sin. He does not have a true aversion to it, but his aversion is because it conflicts with his nature or with another sin to which he is inclined. For example, a prodigal person may hate the sin of covetousness because it conflicts with his prodigality, to which he is particularly inclined.

II. Having now discussed the change that comes over a person's will through conversion, concerning the putting to death of the wrong will, let us now take a closer look at the change that occurs in a person through conversion concerning the infusion of a new and holy will, not concerning its substance and essence, but concerning its qualities.

Through this infusion of a new will, a love and inclination toward goodness is worked in the person through true repentance. In Amos 5:15, it is said that repentance consists of these two things. Some hypocrites, when they find in themselves some liking and inclination towards what is good, conclude from it that they are surely converted and will be saved. However, even hypocrites can have love and inclinations for civic virtues like justice, moderation, and fidelity, and even a desire and inclination toward salvation and eternal glory. One of these was found in the heathens, and the other in Balaam.

B. He may also have a love for true religion and the doctrine of salvation, but such love was present in Paul for the Jewish religion, which had been the true religion before, and still was, as far as Paul knew (Philippians 3:16). The hypocrite may also have a desire and inclination towards godliness and holiness of life, and it can go so far in him that the following things can be found in him:

Firstly, a desire for holiness and godliness, and a determination to live a holy life henceforth, as in Deuteronomy 5:27, where they say to Moses: "You speak to us, and we will hear, and we will do all that the Lord our God will speak unto you." And Jeremiah 42:5, 6.

Secondly, he may also pray for the Spirit of sanctification because he knows he cannot do it on his own.

Thirdly, he may also use external means, such as reading and studying God's Word, like the young man who came to Christ asking what he should do to inherit eternal life (Matthew 19:16).

Fourthly, in order to partake of sanctification, he may also separate himself from what he sees directly opposes sanctification, as in 2 Peter 2:2. They may even outwardly conform to a life of holiness that is seen as pious and holy, but the distinction lies in the following:

1. The affection of hypocrites does not extend to holiness itself; they only have an inclination towards holiness for the sake of God's glory. But the children of God take pleasure in godliness because they delight in the sanctity of life (Romans 7:22). Hypocrites take pleasure in bitter medicine only because it is necessary for their health; thus, if a hypocrite could be saved without godliness, he would prefer it that way. However, a child of God, even if he could be saved without godliness, would still prefer to be godly. While the children of God love godliness for

the sake of salvation, they also love the means, which is godliness and holiness of life.

Question: How can a child of God know that he loves godliness and not just salvation? A child of God can know this:

1. If he feels a desire to live a holy and godly life because he recognizes that it is worthy of God to be served in holiness. This thought makes him wish, "Oh, could I serve that glorious God rightly because He deserves it." This is evidence that he has more than a hypocrite and that he has progressed further in a love for sanctification.
2. If he also finds a desire within him to live a godly life because he experiences a unique love and sweetness in godly living, so that it is especially pleasant to him. He truly lives rightly and joyfully when he pays close attention to his ways. If this sweetness kindles an inclination towards holiness, it is evidence that the person loves holiness itself, which a hypocrite does not do.
3. If a person finds within himself that if he desires to live a holy life to be saved, he also desires to be saved to live holy forever. He not only desires to be saved to enjoy the bliss of heaven but specifically to serve God in holiness eternally. This is also evidence that he loves holiness itself.

A. There is also a notable distinction here: the desire that hypocrites seem to have for holiness is weak in them; they are willing to have holiness but do not possess it. They do not overly concern themselves with it. In contrast, the desires and inclinations of the children of God are strong and powerful; they cannot live well without them. This is always true with respect to the root, so that in their hearts, by God's grace, there is a great power of desire for godliness and

holiness. However, they are not always strong in their implementation and feeling, yet a child of God can still know:

1. If he had to choose between two options: an active, powerful, and breakthrough in holiness of life or the riches and pleasures of this world, his soul would still choose holiness over the pleasures of the world. Just as a hungry person would desire bread over great treasures of gold in a besieged city where there is no bread to be obtained.
2. That he loves nothing so much that he is willing to give it up for holiness. He is even inclined to forsake his dearest and most cherished sins to partake more and more of holiness, just as Jacob allowed Benjamin to go along to obtain food and as compassionate mothers ate their children in times of hunger (Lamentations 4:10).
3. Because they are willing to use all means to become more and more partakers of holiness, even if the means are very difficult, though the sluggard dies in his desire, because his hands refuse to work (Proverbs 21:25). It is true that God's children are often found to be negligent in observing the means of sanctification, but it is not because they are unwilling but because they are hindered by their corruptions.
4. Now we must also consider what evidence of salvation hypocrites take from the workings of God that they claim are happening to them. They sometimes derive these proofs from prosperity or adversity or from some other appearances and visions they think they see.

Firstly, let us take a closer look at what they consider the most important, namely, that they say: "The Spirit of God bears witness

with their spirit." However, it should be known that not every testimony is true, and there is also a lying spirit, a testimony from the devil. But the testimony of God's Spirit always agrees with the Word; it must be in accordance with it. Hypocrites say that their testimonies agree with God's Word. They say: "It is written that those who believe in Christ, mourn, hunger, and thirst will be blessed." But we have demonstrated that there is a false faith, worldly sorrow, a false hunger, and thirst. Some conclude that if their internal testimony is accompanied by a passage from Holy Scripture, for example, if they are sad about their sins, a thought comes to their heart: "Blessed are those who mourn." But this is not sufficient; even though God generally testifies in His Word, the devil can imitate this.

This is the clearest Scripture passage by which we should examine our internal testimony, Matthew 5:20: "For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." But the hypocrite will find that his righteousness does not exceed it. Even if they claim to have greater holiness and righteousness from Christ, it is false because they partially seek it in themselves, rely on their own works, do not renounce their own righteousness, highly esteem it, and think that God would be unjust if He denied them heaven. However, one who truly shares in Christ denies his own works. Hypocrites also do not partake of Christ's righteousness because they are entirely devoid of the infused righteousness, which is holiness. Justification must always go hand in hand with sanctification (1 Corinthians 6:11). And because they do not possess true holiness, they also do not share in Christ's righteousness. Their righteousness is no greater than that of the scribes and Pharisees. However, the righteousness of the children of God is greater than that of the scribes and Pharisees because:

1. They have the imputed righteousness of Christ, which is perfect, for they deny their own righteousness, look outside themselves, and seek their complete salvation only in Christ.
2. They also have the Spirit of sanctification, an infused righteousness, and seek to conform their lives to all of God's commandments, not only externally but also internally. Thus, their righteousness is greater than that of the Pharisees, even if they may sometimes be less in external righteousness. One ounce of genuine gold is worth more than a pound of counterfeit gold. Similarly, a small measure of true righteousness is greater than a large measure of external righteousness; such righteousness goes against God's Word, and therefore, it is not a testimony of God's Spirit.

Furthermore, this is also a notable distinction between the testimony of the Spirit of God and a false spirit: the Spirit of God not only testifies to a person's conscience that they are a child of God but also, through that testimony, stirs the soul to love God and obey His commands. So, the work of God's Spirit does not end with the testimony; it works within the heart to make the person love God and obey Him (Romans 8:16, 17; Psalms 116:7-9). In contrast, the testimony of a false spirit ends with the testimony itself, and it does not lead to an inflamed love but rather produces carelessness and negligence. Therefore, when the Spirit of God testifies to us, we should see if it increases our affections for the service of God. A hypocrite can come to believe, through the testimony of a false spirit and the reasoning of his understanding, that he is obligated to love God and obey His commands because he judges himself to be a child of God. However, even if he is convinced of his duty, he has no desire or inclination to fulfill that duty. On the other hand, in the children of God, during the time when the testimony of God's Spirit is

powerful, there is an active love for God and an inclination to obey His commands. However, it can happen that this love and inclination weaken shortly after the testimony of God's Spirit (Song of Solomon 5:1, 2). But when such souls come back to themselves, they loathe themselves (Song of Solomon 5:6). Those who have the testimony of a false spirit are not concerned or are very little concerned about their lukewarmness and slothfulness. And here are two notable distinctions between the testimony of God's Spirit and a false spirit.

Application: The lesson we draw from this is an exhortation for all of us to be careful not to entertain false hopes of salvation. The causes of why many deceive themselves are as follows:

Firstly, pride of the heart, which causes a person to have a high opinion of themselves and their works. Such a person regards their religious deeds very highly and their sins very lightly. According to their own judgment, they believe that heaven is surely theirs, if not according to the law, then at least according to the Gospel. However, the children of God consider their sins to be great and abominable and their religious deeds to be small. Even when we have a low opinion of our works, we should not consider the work of God within us as small because when the children of God practice any religion in the Spirit and truth by the work of God's Spirit, or when they mourn over their sins with a divine sorrow, they, by humility, turn their eyes to the deficiency of their works so that they do not notice the work of God's Spirit working in them concerning those exercises of religion or sorrow for their sins. This is a great mistake and hinders a person from having a well-grounded hope of salvation. Therefore, we must learn to strike a balance here: have a very low opinion of the religious deeds and good works that come from us but not for the works of God's Spirit working in us, for they should be esteemed highly.

The second cause is having a wrong perception of God's mercy. We must know that God's grace in mercy for salvation does not extend to all people but only to those who are united with the Lord Christ and in whose hearts the true fear of God has been planted by God's Spirit, as is evident from Psalms 104:11, Romans 8:1, and Ephesians 2:12. So, no one can comfort themselves with the mercy of God unless they have solid evidence of their union with Christ.

The third cause is the stubbornness of people. They have believed this for a long time, and they cannot be dissuaded from it but stick to their own judgment. However, one must submit their judgment to the judgment of God's Word to see if it aligns with it.

The fourth cause is that many compare themselves to those who are not as good as they perceive themselves to be. However, one should not compare themselves to someone worse or better but to God's Word. To this end, I will present the means that should be used to avoid deception.

1. Find out if you have grounds and reasons from God's Word to promise yourself salvation, 2 Corinthians 13:5. Learn what marks are presented in God's Word for those who are promised salvation and what distinguishes true grace from mere appearance. You must gain knowledge of this, primarily through diligent reading of God's Word. Pay close attention to the kind of people to whom salvation is promised and also to the people to whom God threatens hell and damnation.
2. Pay attention to what is preached on this matter from God's Word, what marks of salvation are presented, remember them, and write them down. If you come across someone experienced in such marks and distinctions, ask them about it.

3. Pray fervently to God the Lord that He may open your understanding, sanctify your thoughts so that you can rightly comprehend and remember everything.
4. Since the human heart is deceitful, a person should not only examine their soul within but examine it thoroughly (Lamentations 3:40). Paul used two words about this in 2 Corinthians 13:5, saying: examine and test yourself. And if we still cannot figure it out, we should make the state of our souls known to the most experienced people, make all our doubts known to them to receive guidance from them, and persistently pray to God, saying with David, Psalms 139:23: "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

The motivations are as follows:

1. Because the expectation of the hypocrite will perish.
2. The false hope of salvation is a denial of God's truth in His Word.
3. We should also be moved by the fact that for an unregenerate person who promises themselves salvation, the first step towards salvation is to be convinced that they are outside the path of salvation (John 9:41: "If you were blind, you would have no sin; but now you say, 'We see.' Therefore your sin remains"). Therefore, if we desire to be saved, we must be careful not to deceive ourselves with false hope of salvation like the hypocrites. May God grant us His grace for this purpose! Amen.

Fifth sermon on Job 35:10

"But no one says, 'Where is God my Maker, Who gives songs in the night?'"

In the Word of the Lord, it is ascribed as a special honor to God that He is the one who works redemption from the ends of the earth. By this, it is expressed that God alone is the cause of all deliverances and rescues that happen under heaven, whether in nature or in grace. However, this does not prevent humans from doing their part to meet God in a proper manner if they want to have any grounds to expect something good from God, either for their soul or their body. They must conform to the way established by God, where they will encounter the righteous. Therefore, it is necessary that they seek the Lord in prayer to be blessed by Him (Psalm 50:15). Even if they sought God to be reconciled with Him and to have the Lord on their side, God's blessings and redemption would not benefit them if they do not grasp God's strength and make peace with Him (Isaiah 27:4). This is why the Lord does not listen to the voice of wicked children because one was separated from the other (Isaiah 1:15). Likewise, Hosea 11:7. But when these two are combined, it is the right path to healing, as Eliphaz shows in Job 22:23, 26, and David in Psalm 84.

The same is also found in the words of Elihu before, during, and after our text. As it is known, Job's three friends concluded their speeches at the end of chapter 31, and Elihu began speaking again in chapter 32, which continues to our verse. In this chapter, Elihu points out until verse 8 that God is self-sufficient and exalted, so whether Job is good or bad, God gains neither benefit nor harm from it. In verse 8, he shows that there was an advantage or disadvantage for man. In verse 9, he mentions that in his days, there were wicked oppressors

who oppressed their neighbors. But the reason why they were not rescued from their plight is stated in this 10th verse.

Elihu's words provide a reason why many oppressed ones are not delivered from their difficulties and from the hand of their oppressors, which is that they do not seek God, who is their Maker, mighty to give songs even in the night, so that Job might learn his duty from it. Elihu means to say: Is it a wonder that there are many miserable people who miss the help and deliverance from the midst of their distress when they do not turn to their first origin and to the Fountain of all salvation and joy? Do not blame God when the main fault is found in humans.

The text provides two main points:

1. A duty, presented in the form of a question: where is God my Maker, who gives songs in the night?
2. A testimony of Eliphaz about human negligence in this regard: but no one says such things.

The duty presented in the form of a question leads to:

1. (That we consider this truth more closely) that God is the Maker of man, who gives songs in the night.
2. The significance of the question, what does it mean to ask, "where is God?" etc.

In the description of God, we will consider: • First: That He is the Maker. • Second: That He gives songs in the night.

1. God is the Maker of man, indeed, of every man, so that every person can say: God is my Maker. This teaches us, if we pay attention: A. Nature, for reason teaches that nothing belongs to

itself, that there must be an end in the second cause, and therefore, there is One who, as the first Cause, must be the beginning of everything. Which can be no one else but God alone. If we just rationally consider the works of God, we will agree with the heathen philosophers: we are also God's offspring (Acts 17:28). He who made me, also made all the multitude of His creatures. Before the word "make," something of God must have preceded, being a Spirit, infinitely perfect, self-sufficient, and the source of everything beyond Him, both in nature and in grace.

B. The Scripture abundantly testifies to this when it presents Adam and Eve in their initial creation (Genesis 1 and 2). The Lord created the first heads and parents of the human race. And it shows us that while the body is generated, God still has His hand in it (Psalm 139:13-16). The soul is given by God, and it will eventually return to Him (Ecclesiastes 12:7). The word "Makers" is found here, as in Job 30:22. The reason for this may be that God is called so:

1. To express the excellence of God because it was the custom of the Hebrews to use the plural form to express something significant and worthy.
2. It could also be a sign of the plurality of persons in the Divine Being, as the Lord showed in creation (Genesis 1:26).
3. Or because of the many works of God concerning man. He not only created but also continually sustains, continuing the work of creation. Indeed, things are the truth, and perhaps these are the reasons for God's name.

Elihu is speaking rightly of God when he calls Him the Maker of man. For it is in accordance with the Word of God and with reason: who gives songs in the night. Now, do not think that Elihu is

referring to David's psalms because they had not yet been written at that time. Instead, understand it as a spiritual song that a person, awakened by the Spirit of God, produces himself or learns from others. The word "night" does not need to be taken metaphorically here as oppression or as the state of being unregenerate, where it is spiritually dark. Just as in 1 Thessalonians 5:5. There is no need to take it metaphorically when the literal sense can still apply.

So, to come to the explanation of the words, take both aspects literally. Some understand "songs in the night" as referring to subjects for songs, such as the moon and stars because they provide a spiritual soul with material for singing. Like David said in Psalm 8:3-4: "When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have set in place." Also, the sounds of birds heard at night, such as roosters and other birds, etc. Especially since the following verse, verse 11, mentions the birds of the sky.

While we are happy to admit that these things can greatly inspire a godly person to sing a song to the Lord, and to some extent, this may be included, we believe that there is something higher and more excellent that these words intend to convey.

1. God indeed gives psalms in the night, even when one sees no moon or stars, even when one hears no birds, as God's children who live intimately with Jehovah will testify.
2. When we consider God's creation, it is much better than a psalm in the morning or during the day when everything is adorned with light and appears more glorious, as David shows in Psalm 19. Elihu would have mentioned the day instead.
3. The night becomes a burden for the afflicted and sorrowful as long as there is no psalm within them. Elihu here indicates an inappropriate time, namely a sad, sinful, personal night, in

which God, the All-Sufficient One, gave psalms as evidence that the night is as light to Him as the day.

We prefer to take it for what David intended in Psalm 42:9: "But the Lord will command His lovingkindness in the daytime, and in the night His song shall be with me—a prayer to the God of my life." Namely, that spiritual and holy joy in God and in His dealings that He makes His people experience in the night, either within their bed or outside of it, however it may be, whether in sleep or not.

1. In those days when Elihu lived, God spoke to His own through visions and dreams at night (Job 33:14-15): "For God may speak in one way, or in another, yet man does not perceive it. In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falls upon men, while slumbering on their beds." In these moments, God granted them so much sweetness in Himself that their hearts rejoiced and woke up as if singing. God now also comes in sleep and allows souls to see and hear something of Him so vividly that their hearts wake up in love and joy, so intimately and closely with God that they hardly ever experienced it so awake and in prayer. Sometimes, it seems so marvelous to them that they did not taste or see such things during the day. Thus, Acts 2:17 seems to be fulfilled: "And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, that I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions, your old men shall dream dreams."
2. When He delights them so that they sing, causing certain words of a hymn or psalm to come forth so vividly that they are applied to their soul and become their own, without much activity of the soul itself in this regard, yet entirely fitting and consistent with their condition. This can be applied to Psalm 16:7: "I will bless

the Lord who has given me counsel; my heart also instructs me in the night seasons." It also fits well with the nature of the Hebrew word, which means to apply.

3. The Lord gives a psalm in the night when He gives a person the ability to consider and contemplate with a believing eye how they have been constantly delivered from all their troubles, both physical and spiritual, and how God has preserved them even the previous day and continues to show them His favor in the night, preserving them, granting health, comforting and strengthening their soul in the path of godliness (Psalm 63:7-8): "Because You have been my help, therefore in the shadow of Your wings I will rejoice. My soul follows close behind You; Your right hand upholds me."
4. A psalm is given when the Lord grants them new grace in the night, not only preserving them from sinful thoughts and dreams but also giving them more light to consider God as their own, increasing their faith to walk with Him, filling them with love for God, and intensifying their hope so that their bed is like a garden of spices where all kinds of flowers bloom. They long to be stripped of all sin, laid in the grave, and be with the Lord forever. Through this new revelation of truths, through the new experience of God's favor, they are filled with joy to sing to God with gladness in their hearts. Thus, Psalm 51:8 is fulfilled: "Make me hear joy and gladness, that the bones You have broken may rejoice." Also, Psalm 119:62 and Psalm 42:9 apply.
5. Is it not a psalm in the night when they not only pray in their inner room but also find their hearts engaged on their bed? When the Lord answers them on their earnest prayer, granting them peace in their hearts, renewing their peace, assuring them

of the answer to their prayers so that they sing joyfully in the shadow of the Almighty, whereas before, they used to go to rest vain, empty, and sinful. In such a way that when they wake up, their hearts are inwardly joyful, turning to God in delight over great peace. Look at these two aspects together in Psalm 12:9 and Isaiah 26:9: "With my soul I have desired You in the night, yes, by my spirit within me I will seek You early."

And who else but the Lord is the One who grants all these blessings to the soul, as the Origin of all joy, who says in Isaiah 30:29: "You shall have a song as in the night when a holy festival is kept, and gladness of heart as when one goes with a flute, to come into the mountain of the Lord, to the Mighty One of Israel." Therefore, Elihu speaks the truth.

But because Elihu attributes this as a wondrous name of God, that He is a God who gives psalms in the night, it will be necessary to show that it is something magnificent when God does this.

1. The night is much sadder for nature than the day; nevertheless, even though the darkness seems to present us with the first unformed lump, God still gives a psalm of joy. However, it was quite different for Asaph (Psalm 77) and Job. Indeed, there is almost nothing that appears more lovely than this.
2. Humans are subjected to more physical dangers at night than during the day since they cannot protect themselves as effectively with the help of their senses. Nevertheless, the Lord is a God who preserves His own and also gives them psalms.
3. The night is much more frightening to nature because it is much quieter and lonelier. We see this in Song of Solomon 8:8, where a terror of the night is mentioned. Nevertheless, the Lord provides a constant joy in the soul that overcomes the fear.

4. The night is generally spent with little benefit for the soul; the body claims it through sleep. Often, sins have the upper hand during the night, which is when they are most active. Those who kept themselves during the day often indulged at night, whether in dreams or while awake. This aligns with what David says about the wicked, that they do not sleep until they have done evil. It is fitting to sing in the Evening Prayer (vers 8):

"Drive away the heavy sleep, Lord Christ, That the enemy's cunning does not harm us, That the flesh may remain pure in desires, Thus, we are free from many harms."

Then, to be full of God and His praise is something magnificent!

2. Now is the time to demonstrate the power of the question, or the duty about which Elihu complains of neglect. Namely, to say: Where is God, my Maker? and so on. Not as if this word "say" was sufficient with the mouth, but as Holy Scripture often takes it, namely, for saying, speaking with the heart, so that the heart is disposed as the mouth speaks, as stated in 1 Corinthians 12:3. Because through this outward saying, God could not be glorified, nor could the oppressed be saved. So, we take it for speaking with the heart. Where is God? This word should not be taken as doubting but desiring; such a person knows that God is somewhere, but they wish to have Him.

3. This indicates a perplexity of the heart about missing God and His gracious help for the soul and body, which one needs, which one realizes one must have, if they are to be helped, please God, and succeed in their actions. Just as Elisa's question was (2 Kings 2:4): Where is the Lord God of Elijah? Yes, the same!

4. This speaking with the heart expresses a consulting in the heart about how to obtain God and His favor for the portion of the soul and for the rescue from a fallen state. Thus, a person speaks within themselves, as before God's presence, contemplating how to best have God on their side. Such consultation was in David, with his soul, Psalms 42:6, and with God, verse 10: "I will say to God, my Rock! Why have You forgotten me? Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?" And in Psalm 4:5: "Meditate within your heart on your bed, and be still."
5. Where is God? Expresses that internal desire of the heart to have God and to be redeemed by Him for the soul and body. Because it signifies a serious inquiry, as also with the bride in Song of Solomon, chapter 5. Yes, this is expressed in prayer, in faith, in hunger, etc.
6. It indicates an inquiry and a search that continues until one has found the Lord and perceives His favor through the way of prayer for the soul and body. Thus, it went with the bride concerning Jesus in Song of Solomon 3:4. Therefore, this saying, "Where is God, my Maker, who gives psalms in the night?"

Although this questioning is still so reasonable and so glorious, Elihu nevertheless testifies that there was no one who asked this question, not only with the mouth but also inwardly with the heart. Perhaps even in those days, there were those who made much of God with their mouths while their hearts had no good thoughts of Him, as is still not uncommon. We have now shown what this saying implies: where is God, my Maker?

Someone might think: how can it be true that in Elihu's days no one would say: Where is God? etc. For in all times, there are surely the

godly who seek God, as Psalm 24:6 says. But in response to this, it must be understood that Elihu was not speaking here about all people in his time but only about the multitude of those who were oppressed by the great and powerful on earth. He says of these oppressed people that they cried out because of the arm of the great without, however, being delivered because they did not ask for God, nor sought to be reconciled with Him.

So, if someone objects, how could it be that no one turned to God among all the oppressed? The answer is that most of the people in those times may have been heathens who did not know God and, therefore, could not or would not turn to God. And even if they did, it may have been done externally, without an internal transformation, merely as a work without truth. Elihu could also have spoken primarily of the whole group, so he says it of no one, because the number of the righteous was so small that it was hardly worth mentioning. Nevertheless, however one takes it, here we see the state of humans by nature as they are born and naturally find themselves. Elihu now presented this as evidence that this was the reason they were not delivered.

APPLICATION

This truth, now heard, should have its use and application among us. We are among those whom this word concerns, for God is still the same, He who is our Maker, He who also gives psalms in the night. So, we are obligated to seek the Lord, that we may find Him, Acts 17. Not one of us is without enemies who seek to oppress us, whether we feel it or not. Let us then consider whether we all follow the language of Elihu concerning both the ungodly and the godly.

Regarding, first, the entirely unconverted, who do not answer these questions correctly, it now comes down to whether you are asking

after God, your Maker.

1. Could those be people who ask after God, who do not know Him, who still do not understand how God is? Who do not believe with their practice that He is their Maker? Indeed, ask what that means: that God gives psalms in the night? It is still an unknown language to them, as they have no knowledge, understanding, or experience of these things. Know that, even if you profess to know God, you deny Him through your works, Titus 1:16. For this same thing, that God gives psalms in the night, is hateful to you as long as you remain in your current state. Tell me: who is God? What is His name, or what is the name of His Son? Proverbs 30.
2. Why would many people inquire after God, simply because He gives them psalms in the night? They can achieve their goals in other ways. Go to the tavern in the evening; there they will be a psalm to themselves. Let them continue in their revelry, their desires for pride, excess, lewdness, falsehood, etc., profaning the Sabbath, profaning God's name and day; that will be their psalm, even at night. Surely, your own conscience condemns you. But we tell you that this leads straight to hell, and your oppressors have not harmed you yet, I mean your spiritual enemies. You are still a servant of the world, the devil, and sin, 2 Peter 2:19.
3. Another may think: no, I am not so gross; I hope things will go somewhat better for me. But when they turn to the depths of their hearts, tell me, do you possess the qualities of a true seeker after God? If not, there is no understanding, no desire, no activity for it. Indeed, it does not seem lovely to you to have God as a psalm in the night, as has been shown. Oh, do not deceive

yourself; you are still a stranger to God and to the life of God! You have neither God nor His fellowship. May the Lord become stronger in you; otherwise, nothing will come of it. Some rely on their sorrow and unbelief.

4. Another imagines that he truly seeks after God. For when he is in trouble and suffering, he prays, loves going to church, partakes in the Lord's Supper, reads, sings, and so on. But know that if you have all this, you may be observing God's ordinances without seeking God Himself. Put it alongside the matters presented, and you will see that all of this can be, while the heart remains a stranger to the love and fellowship of God. Oh, do not be at ease with this; it is still a lie in your right hand, Isaiah 44:20.

Now, can we not, like Elihu, pass this judgment on the entire multitude, that there is no one who says: "Where is God, my Maker," etc.? Go into the church councils, into the congregations, go to authorities and subjects; who do you see with such a desire to seek God and inquire after the Holy One of Israel, to have Him as their Portion, and through Him, all salvation and blessedness? Truly, the entire body is sick, from head to toe, there is nothing sound, Isaiah 1:6, Jeremiah 5:4, 5.

Let us now bring this word into the hearts of the believers or lay it upon them.

1. Here is a kind of people who used to seek after God earnestly at the beginning; they could not live without His favor and communion, He who gives psalms in the night. But now they are without seriousness and have no desire for God; their initial zeal to be with God, even at night, has vanished; they grow lean. For:

- It has been so long since they last felt the favor of God upon their souls that they cannot remember it. They also have no sorrow about it; they have become accustomed to their illness, for they have forgotten Him without number of days, Isaiah 2.
- Indeed, instead of this, unrighteous things now prevail at night; nature and nighttime sins have the upper hand everywhere. It even goes so far that they incite others to do the same.
- All these people are now without seriousness, without heart to return; they cannot come to this questioning, they cannot sincerely say: "Where is God?" etc., as if they had resolved to die in this manner. Oh, children of God, if He is no longer your Maker, then go away! But if He still is, then it is fitting for you to awaken.

1. Others are wasting away; death is already in their bones, and they say: "Where is God, my Maker?" It is but a moment, and thus they sink down powerless. And where else does this come from if not from a lack of seriousness, from not examining their souls, from neglecting the communion with God? And so their strength is small, while they are weak in the day of trouble; not constantly asking, for through asking, one becomes stronger.

2. There are others who are even more miserable. Instead of serving God even at night, there is neither night nor day time for God; all their time is sold to pleasure, desire, laziness, honor, wealth, lust, etc. And one might say: what difference is there between them and a worldling, except that sometimes they make it even worse. Oh, is this seeking after God? How can you live in such great death, while He, who would comfort your soul, is far away, and you cling not to God, but to the dust and filth of sin and creatures? These questions seek something other than God.

3. There are also those who always doubt when God makes them inquire after Him, when they are wonderfully comforted and guided in the night; they doubt whether it is not nature, for this is something peculiar to God alone. It is not natural for man to give a psalm when nature tends towards sin. Indeed, Elihu explicitly attributes this to God here.
4. But another might say: I dare not ask the Lord, for I am assured that He will not be favorable to me, for I see that it will oppose my soul all my days; therefore, I say with Job 28:13-15: "But He is in one mind, and who can turn Him? And what His soul desireth, even that He doeth. For He performeth the thing that is appointed for me; and many such things are with Him. Therefore am I troubled at His presence; when I consider, I am afraid of Him." However, we will hear the objections and briefly answer each one.

Objection: I cannot pray; I have no heart, earnestness, desire, faith, etc. I cannot unite with God. Answer: He is a God who gives psalms in the night; if no effort is made.

Objection: I am full of sins, and I am firmly held by them, so I do not know what to do with myself. Answer: We have shown that the night is often the womb of sins, yet He gives psalms.

Objection: But my soul is dripping with sorrow, and I cannot lift my head from my troubles. Answer: There is nothing sadder than the night, yet the Lord still gives psalms.

Objection: I am terrified of God; I would like to flee from His presence like Cain. Answer: The night is terrifying for nature too, yet the Lord still gives psalms. If you want to see the truth of your heart, ask yourself these questions:

1. Is the reason for your sorrow not that you lack these things, that you do not ask for God? That you cannot sanctify and glorify your God day and night?
2. If you do not have communion with God and His comfort, would you not be healed by it? Would it not be a refreshment to you to keep asking continually? If yes, the root of the matter is there. God will answer your inquiries. Be strong and very courageous.

Besides these, there are those who ask daily in their hearts, to the Lord, through means, etc. "Where is God, my Maker?" etc. They also sometimes experience that His song is with them at night, Psalms 42.

Now then, each and every one of you, whether you have been mute concerning God until now, but had a mouth full of desire for creatures. Whether you have been lifeless, unbelieving, etc. until now. Even if you are alive but can become dead, take this exhortation from the words of the text: Ask for God your Maker, who gives psalms in the night. We have explained what this means, namely:

1. Being sad about the lack of God, whether in possession or in feeling.
2. Consulting with God and yourself to obtain Him.
3. Sincere desire.
4. Continuously seeking God until you find Him in love and union.

Let us try to clarify these points a little.

1. Elihu shows in the previous verse that this was the reason why they were not delivered from the hand of their oppressors. O children of God! this is the reason you are not delivered from your pressing difficulties, because you do not take notice of them. For sin and sorrow, etc., would significantly decrease if this increased, Psalms 34:5-7: "I sought the Lord, and He

answered me, and delivered me from all my fears," etc. Although David here might refer to physical deliverance, it will be just as certain with spiritual deliverance. Indeed, if you, O unconverted one, were to reach this state, death, devil, hell, and curse would vanish in a moment; it would be like scorched threads, John 8:36.

2. Look at Who you would be asking! A. God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, possessing so many infinite perfections, all of which are as many blessings to creatures, as the multitude of God's children can testify. Yes, He presents Himself in the works of nature and redemption as seeking and desiring what is good for creatures. Therefore, He is the Rock of Israel, whom the heathen will seek after. B. Your Maker, who formed you in body and soul, who still provides everything for you, down to the breath of your nostrils, who has cared for and followed you for so long. This should be a motive, Deuteronomy 32:6: "Do ye thus requite the Lord, O foolish people and unwise? Is not He thy Father that hath bought thee? Hath He not made thee, and established thee?" Also, see Malachi 2:10: "Have we not all one father? Hath not one God created us? Why do we deal treacherously every man against his brother, by profaning the covenant of our fathers?" Yes, to you, O children of God, we say: He has made you twice. Once you were born again from God, John 2:13. Your Maker is your Husband, etc. Would you not ask Him then? After all, everyone wants to know where they came from. C. A God who gives psalms in the night. Truly a marvelous thing! Because:
3. We have shown before how often the night is incapable of doing anything good. It seems as if it would rather bring evil; neither an angel nor a human is able to bring the soul to such a state, for it is not a work of nature.

4. What a joy it is! He not only gives psalms through means, through hearing and seeing creatures, but also immediately, as these matters are relevant here in the explanation. See the fulfillment in Acts 2 and Isaiah 30.
5. God's children have a lot to do with it, Psalms 42:9, 63, and 139.
6. How delightful and full of sweetness is the act of seeking itself! Here one constantly thinks of God, consults how to obtain Him. Here are spiritual desires, hunger and thirst, for which blessedness is promised, Matthew 5. That earnestness in praying, in entreating, until one finds Him. This was predicted long ago concerning believers, Isaiah 11:10: "And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious." Compare this to seeking other desires. Because one of the two must necessarily be done: either one must seek God or seek the creature to surrender one's heart to it. You cannot serve two masters here.
7. The number of those who seek the Lord is very small, as can be easily inferred from Elihu's words. It must be a prophet, taught by God, one of His children who does it (the rest abstain from it); therefore, God takes great pleasure in them.
8. Seeking God is continually commanded and praised in the Word of the Lord, Psalms 24:6, and Isaiah 55:6. "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near," Psalms 105:4. That is why God's people have so much to do with it, Psalms 34:37, Song of Solomon 3 and 5.
9. Your seeking God is a sign that God asks and has asked for you in favor and will never ask for you in wrath. For His love is the

cause of our love, His asking of our asking, 1 John 4:19. Meanwhile, those who do not ask can apply the opposite to themselves. Moreover, He still asks for you in His Gospel.

But for your affairs to prosper:

1. You must hurry, for you do not know the time of your finding.
2. Contemplate much the glory of God, as presented here, and the excellence of the question: "Where is God, my Maker?" Let this occupy your thoughts frequently.
3. Now cast away all notions of your goodness without these things. Do not think it is mere lip service. Let this be your work in using the means, in church and at home: "Where is God, my Maker?" Oh, if only I could have Him! Yes, join these questioners as well.
4. Present yourself to Jesus in your weakness, blindness, etc. Show that you earnestly want to seek God here and sing psalms to Him in your life, etc. And do this until it is given to you.

He, who never says to the seed of Jacob, "seek me in vain," you will experience that He will meet you as a seeker. First, He will give you a share in Himself, and then He will make it fulfilled in you, Psalms 104:33-34: "I will sing unto the Lord as long as I live: I will sing praise to my God while I have my being. My meditation of him shall be sweet: I will be glad in the Lord." And when a sinful, sorrowful night comes, wait for Him, for He gives psalms in the night, fulfilling His promise, Psalms 30:5: "For his anger endureth but a moment; in his favour is life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." Until you come to what you read in Revelation 22:5: "And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither

light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever. Amen."

Sixth Sermon, on 1 Corinthians 8:1

Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up.

The reason the Apostle speaks these words is that they (namely, the church of Corinth) had written to him about certain matters, such as marriage and eating meat sacrificed to idols. Therefore, he warns them about knowledge, which carries much danger and can make people proud if it is not accompanied by love.

Two things are presented in these words:

1. Knowledge and its work.
2. Love and its work.

The apostle wants to convey that the true knowledge that holds in Christianity does not puff up. This knowledge is born out of the love of God in their hearts, which leads them into a union with Him and into a marriage covenant, acknowledging that their sins are forgiven. But the Apostle is not speaking of this knowledge here. To better understand these words, we will demonstrate that sometimes there is knowledge in true churches and Christians that does not go hand in hand with love. We will describe the characteristics of this knowledge.

1. It is an ability in the soul to conceive, comprehend, and then have the competence to perceive, weigh, and judge it. After judging, they can speak about it with dignity to convey to others what they have understood.
2. This knowledge also involves gaining wisdom through listening and reading, accumulating a treasure that they can use when needed.
3. It can also refer to having a solid understanding of how to know and utilize one's freedom in the Lord Jesus Christ.
4. There is knowledge that is, in reality, a mere semblance of knowledge, driven by imagination and solely by human intellect.
5. There is knowledge that does not truly comprehend what it ought to know.
6. Then there is knowledge that puffs up, which does not originate from God because it is not serving God. For the knowledge that does not puff up is found in the disciples who are taught by God: "Bind up the testimony; seal the teaching among my disciples," Isaiah 8:16.

We will discuss a bit about what the Apostle intends by making this distinction between knowledge and love, namely:

1. That this knowledge does not originate from love.
2. Because it is separated from love and is not a companion of love, they are not one.
3. True Christian knowledge that does not puff up is surrounded and enveloped by love, which keeps it humble.
4. It is also a knowledge that is not carried out by love; otherwise, love is the soul of knowledge, driving it, sustaining it, and governing it.
5. It is a knowledge that is not love.

But how can knowledge be called love?

1. Because love is its root; for as the root is, so will the tree be love.
2. Love belongs to it. As the Apostle says, they have not received the love of the truth, 2 Thessalonians 2. They do not enter into love; they must be in love as in a garment in which they continually move, and all their affairs are continually carried out.
3. It must also be a knowledge for love, through which it practices everything that love can build and sustain.

Now, let's see what kind of knowledge it is that, separated from love, puffs up. So that we, seeing its ugliness and repulsiveness, may despise it.

1. It is carnal and of the flesh, 1 Corinthians 3, James 3.
2. It is often a knowledge that is only instruction received from parents, teachers, or pastors and has not passed through God's school.
3. It is knowledge acquired through study and diligence.
4. It is knowledge that has not died and been transformed; it must first die and be changed, revived in Christ, and sanctified. We must be united with Christ in conformity to His death.
5. It is also a knowledge that is not purified or tested; the least tested Christian is the most troublesome Christian.

A. This teaches us that the best Christians are not always those with the most knowledge, but those who have love, making them submissive to love.

B. It also teaches us the pitiable state of so-called Christianity, where there is hatred, envy, anger against one's neighbors, with insults and threats. What is most distressing is that this is prevalent among the

learned, who preach not through love but solely through knowledge and lead souls, seeking to rule over the Lord's heritage.

Now let us examine ourselves to see if this knowledge exists within us. To have an aversion to it, we will set forth some characteristics of this knowledge when separated from love.

1. It is dead knowledge without the life of God in the soul.
2. It is a knowledge that puffs up, causing one to have great thoughts about what they know.
3. It is raw, unpruned, and unrefined knowledge, which acts harshly and inappropriately toward others.
4. It is knowledge filled with passions and desires, leading to sinful actions, like a wild horse full of fire.
5. It is boastful knowledge, where one boasts excessively about what they are and have, 2 Corinthians 10.
6. It is also knowledge with prejudices against people and things.
7. It is full of distrust, evil thoughts, and suspicion.
8. Knowledge that exists separately from love harms others, 1 Corinthians 8. This harm manifests primarily in the following ways:

(1) By bringing up accusations and digging up past matters, which severs even close friendships.

(2) By provoking one another through our knowledge, Galatians 5.

(3) It is an embittering knowledge; Moses spoke rash words and unadvisedly due to the provocation they caused him.

(4) It is harmful when it diminishes and injures others in the honor that is due to them.

(5) It is destructive knowledge when it hinders the work of God for the sake of mere food.

Now, let every soul (I implore you) introspect and observe by these fruits what knowledge it possesses. If your knowledge is right, it will not puff you up. And if you find within you such knowledge that stands apart from love, I have a word for you:

1. You have reason to be ashamed and to humble yourself in dust and ashes.
2. Abandon and detest such knowledge; if you think you are something, you have not yet known as you ought to know.

To better understand these words, let us briefly discuss what this puffiness is and how it manifests.

Puffiness is a matter that has its likeness in something that is enlarged and swelled up by the wind, standing stiff like a sail, or that is elevated and inflated by yeast, like a small amount of leaven leavens and makes the entire dough rise. In this way, it displays grandeur and elevation. But the pride of men will be brought low on the day when the Lord is glorified over the earth. But let us see what this knowledge does.

1. It fosters great thoughts of oneself and goes hand in hand with contempt for others, like the Pharisee. But when knowledge is right, it esteems others more than itself through humility. But thinking highly of oneself in this way is the work of the Antichrist.
2. Knowledge that puffs up tends to be rash; it wants to be first and foremost everywhere, like that spiteful Diotrephes, who spoke evil words against the apostles (3 John 1).

3. It is seen in seeking one's own gain; people learn for profit, and likewise, the Gospel is preached for profit, whereas love teaches us not to seek our advantage but the advantage of many.
4. This knowledge that puffs up makes us self-absorbed and content with what we are because it does not humble us enough in love and humility.
5. It works in us a spirit of envy towards the gifts and graces of others, as well as their works. Just as Tobiah and Sanballat could not bear that Nehemiah sought the good of Jerusalem, and as the chief priests were filled with envy against the Apostles because of the miracles they performed, casting them into prison. It also manifested in the case of the holy Stephen when the glory of God shone so brightly upon him; they gnashed their teeth in rage.
6. It makes us puffed up when, out of envy, we seek to hinder someone or make them hateful. As the Apostle says, some preach Christ out of envy.
7. It shows itself when one stands on their rights and makes a fair path for themselves.
8. This knowledge exhibits itself in outbursts against one's neighbor, like the waves of the sea colliding and churning up foam.
9. When someone seeks to dominate their neighbor through this knowledge, making themselves lord over their conscience (Colossians 2): "Why do you pass judgment on your brother?"
10. It is particularly evident in the harsh cruelty of immediately condemning someone for a sin they have fallen into, labeling them as hypocrites.

Having reflected on these matters, it teaches us that all disturbances and difficulties arise from envy. Therefore, wherever you find this knowledge, however great it may appear, it is not good. • Therefore,

we pray once again: examine yourselves, and if you find this puffed-up knowledge within you, despise it, humble yourself in dust and ashes, and pray to God to send a fire of judgment and purification to cleanse you. • Seek also that other beneficial knowledge we spoke of at the beginning, which has its origin in Christ, who is Love itself.

II. We will now move on to the last part: but love builds up. In this last part, two things come before us:

1. That there is a love that stands apart from this knowledge, which the Apostle calls in Galatians 5:22: "The fruit of the Spirit is love." Therefore, we will speak a little about love, what it is, being the head of all virtues, the fruits of the Spirit.
2. And also that love is the principal movement in our hearts, which flows into our understanding, purifying it, and into our will and works, and into all our affairs. This love is directed toward God and also toward the saints, all people, and even our enemies. It is one love, just as God is one, but distinct in its operation.

But let us now consider what love the Apostle is speaking of here, although its truth applies to all love. The Apostle here looks only at the love between true Christians. To better understand what this love is and how it operates, we will provide a description of it and where it manifests itself.

Love is a holy movement of the soul, wrought by God, having its origin in Him, through His Spirit of grace, in regeneration. It is wrought in the hearts of Christians, existing through the Lord Jesus Christ, whom it esteems worthy of all its love. It is ignited by contemplating His love shown to it in Christ, which reconciles it to Him and kindles reciprocal love, even towards fellow Christians. This love produces inner movements and emanations from the heart,

along with a willing benevolence, pleasure, and delight in them, as well as a heartfelt longing for them.

To understand it better, let us discuss its various aspects.

1. It is a holy movement of the soul, arising from the ground of God, wrought in the souls of Christians through regeneration. It is the movement of the human spirit, poured out into our hearts by the Holy Spirit. Therefore, love from a pure heart is called such. This love flows into all our deeds, into our understanding and will, where it governs us. The Apostle calls it a fruit of the Spirit.
2. Its origin is from God. Beloved, says John, love is from God. And not just any love but love par excellence, for God is Love. Its existence is through Jesus Christ, who is Love itself. The love in the new creation must be like the love in Him, through being grafted into Him, rooted in Jesus, receiving sap from Him, and being nourished by Him to be conformed to His divine nature.
3. This love is also revealed in an outpouring and extension of the heart. "Tell Him I am lovesick," says the bride. And when this love is strong, there are many outpourings, leading to a willingness for their good: "For the sake of my brothers and friends, I will say, 'Peace be within you.'" All the wishes the Apostle extends to the congregations arise from this love.
4. It continues in acts of benevolence, just as God is good and does good. The Apostle also urges not to neglect doing good.
5. It is also manifested in the delight and satisfaction one finds in each other, delighting in seeing each other, reflecting on the virtues of the Lord Jesus—His simplicity, faith, strength, courage, and patience—creating a heartfelt longing to see and enjoy each other.

And this love springs forth:

1. From a consideration of the dignity of God, through which it recognizes Him as worthy of all love. It is kindled by this love to show love to His children.
2. Through the contemplation of God's love shown to them in Christ, that they have been reconciled to the Father through Him; that He became sin for them to free them from sin. Seeing the Savior and Redeemer Jesus suffer in the garden, die on the cross for them, and be glorified for them, all those who truly love God in the Lord Jesus Christ are obliged, considering this love, to show love to their fellow Christians. There is no greater evidence of this than the statement: "See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God" (1 John 3).
3. It also creates an obligation in them to belong wholly to Jesus, with everything they possess, to use it all for His service.
4. It is also born through a reflection of the image of Christ in the soul of their fellow Christians, which is manifest in them. Love judges truly.

But what is the purpose of this love?

1. Nothing other than the edification and building up of our neighbor, for love builds.
2. The continuation of the interest of the Lord Jesus: "By this all people will know that you are my disciples if you have love for one another" (John 13).
3. The glorification of God, so that others, seeing many good works, may glorify God in you. And this love stands opposed to the knowledge that puffs up, having no communion with it.

To understand this better, let us briefly discuss the distinction between the knowledge that puffs up and the love that builds.

1. They are distinct in their origin because this knowledge is (says the Apostle) earthly and devilish. But this love is from God through regeneration: "Whoever loves has been born of God" (1 John 4).
2. They are distinct in their seat; love is poured out into our hearts, but this knowledge is in the mind and head, which is why it is inflated and arrogant.
3. They are distinct in nature: love is humble, sincere, and true, while knowledge is prideful, deceitful, double-hearted, and unstable; you cannot rely on it. In this aspect, knowledge is also distinguished: it is passionate and hasty, while love is patient and kind, bearing all things. Love is also peaceful, but knowledge is harsh.
4. Where this knowledge exists, there is much selfishness and self-interest. But love is for others; just as Paul sought the benefit of many.
5. This knowledge also seeks to dominate others, wanting to be first everywhere, like Diotrephes. But love is for submission and servitude. Paul was free from all, but he made himself a servant to all out of love. Likewise, the Lord Jesus, who came to serve.
6. Love builds and edifies, while knowledge that puffs up breaks down, as the Apostle demonstrates in the following.

Let us now examine ourselves and see if we truly possess this love and if we are capable of serving for the interest of God. For this purpose, everything that has been said about this love should be considered. If that is not enough, consider 1 Corinthians 13, where the Apostle provides a description of this love. To help us further, let us see where this love manifests itself.

1. This love makes itself subject to others to win them and bring them to God. The Apostle sets a good example for this that should be followed (2 Corinthians 11).
2. Where this love is present, it is servile; they arrange themselves as the household of Stephanus, devoted to serving the saints. Serve one another through love (Galatians 5).
3. There is a great concern and care for fellow Christians, like a nurse for her child.
4. There is also forgiveness in this love (1 Thessalonians 2:8). "I will most gladly spend and be spent for your souls" (2 Corinthians 12). "By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers" (1 John 3). Let us now examine our own hearts and see if we possess this love. If we find this foundation in our hearts, we have reason to thank God, for it comes from Him. "Walk in this love and abound in it more and more."

Application But let us now say a few words to those who have knowledge without this love:

1. Your condition is still wretched; Solomon says, "A soul without knowledge is not good." We may also say here: a soul without this love is not good because it is evidence that they are not yet in love; he who loves is loved by God.
2. They are not yet in regeneration but are estranged from it.
3. They are still strangers to the knowledge of God. For God is Love, and he who loves knows God, and this is eternal life, that they may know You. Therefore, people without love are miserable.

4. They are also outside of God, and God is outside of them, which shows us the great necessity of this love. Now, let us be particularly encouraged to this. To help us in this, take note of these few things:
5. Renounce and deny yourself, that is, we must come to hate ourselves and be conformed to the Lord Jesus, who became hatred of Himself to bring us to God.
6. You must also renounce everything that is contrary to love, namely, your passions and desires, your hatred and envy, Titus 3. Pleasing oneself, etc.
7. You must also come into faith in Jesus Christ, and this faith is an outgoing from oneself and an entry into Him, allowing Him and His Spirit to govern and rule you. And where will Christ direct the soul if not in the love of the one He loves?
8. You must also come more into regeneration. But someone might ask, how can I enter into it? You must come more into a strong love for God because he who loves the one who is born of Him also loves the one who is born of Him.

Having now discussed what this love is, let us move on to the final point and see its work: love builds. This word, used by the Apostle here, is taken from building, which is the nature of this love.

1. It builds, it lays the foundation and the ground, which is Christ Jesus, for no other foundation can be laid. Thus, love in Christianity loves Jesus in the soul, as well as the truths, such as Christ in them, His virtues, His image, and His works.
2. It also lays itself as a foundation. By constantly remaining in love and in close union with Jesus, it lays itself as a foundation

to bring others to Him. It also lays itself as a foundation when it opens itself to receive everything that this love entails.

3. Building also involves assembling and bringing together everything that can serve as a building material. A particular aspect of love that builds is that it prunes, hews, and prepares itself and others without causing offense, which is the purification the Apostle speaks of, making one a vessel fit for every good work.
4. It also unites those who have been so worked upon, not bringing them together until this purification has taken place, so that they become a dwelling in the Spirit, joined together in Christ.
5. This love continues and multiplies until it reaches, if possible, a perfect man in Christ.
6. Building also includes confirming and securing what it has built so that it attains stability through this love, which has Christ as its foundation.
7. Love is perfect and works toward perfection (Ephesians 4).

But it is time to show by what means love accomplishes this building.

1. It does so by getting rid of all self-seeking, which is very contrary to this love, acting as a hindrance to this union. It involves eliminating self-understanding, which desires to be first everywhere, and also the removal of self-interest.
2. Love does it by embracing those who are weak so that they help bear their burdens.
3. It also manifests itself in covering the transgressions of others, for he who raises matters separates the best of friends.
4. It is also evident in the correction of a fallen sinner; here a distinction must be made, and the spiritually minded must correct them with a spirit of gentleness.

5. It is also shown in bearing each other's burdens, including the burdens of sins (Galatians 6).
6. It does it with gentleness and tolerance, placing everything gently aside to prevent discomfort.
7. It does this with all signs of respect and honor, letting each one go before the other in honor.
8. It accomplishes this by applying all their abilities to the edification of others.

Let us now make good use of this.

1. Let us highly commend the excellence of love, which is so much more praiseworthy than knowledge.
2. Let it teach us that all the divisions in Christianity arise from a lack of this love.
3. He who is most devoted to love is the most useful to Christianity, and he who is most devoted to knowledge is the most inclined to division, no matter how much he may give it a fair appearance.
4. Let us now examine ourselves and measure the greatness and purity of our love by what has been said, etc.

Let us also consider the nature of this love a little.

1. This love must be divine and pure, coming from a pure heart.
2. It must be sincere, not in words only but in deed and in truth.
3. It must be fervent so that it kindles love in others. Have fervent love for one another, which consumes many vices.
4. It must be a modest and confidential love, and in it, we must be silent.
5. It must also be a constant love, not now and then but always, even if held in check, it will produce more peace and give us an opportunity to gain profit for God. For it will be a means by

which the Lord will gain more honor, as He will also honor us again, and thus, conducting ourselves well, God will show us His salvation, here in grace, and hereafter in blessed glory.

Amen!

Seventh Sermon on Ephesians 2:4, 5

But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, has made us alive with Christ.

In the previous chapter, Paul has recounted and summed up all the spiritual and heavenly blessings with which the Lord had crowned the Ephesians, and all of them were priceless. He had:

A. Chosen them before the foundation of the world, that they should be holy and without blame before Him in love. B. He also ordained them to be adopted as children through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of His will. C. God had redeemed and set them free through His Son; in Whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins. D. God had powerfully called and transferred them from the kingdom of darkness into His marvelous light, for He had abounded toward them in all wisdom and prudence, making known to them the mystery of His will. E. God had also given them the true saving faith, for which Paul did not cease to give thanks for them. F. God had assured them of their salvation, and He

had given them, after they believed, the Holy Spirit, who was the guarantee of their inheritance.

All of this were great and invaluable blessings, well worthy to be weighed in the balance of a fair judgment. For this, God also expected great gratitude. Therefore, Paul wishes them that the God of glory may give them the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, namely, the eyes of their understanding being enlightened, that they may know what is the hope of His calling, and what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance, and the exceeding greatness of His power, all to make them understand the greatness of these blessings.

But wishing was not enough here; something more necessary had to be done. Thus, Paul now lifts up their miserable state so that they would value their happiness more highly and be led to genuine repentance. Therefore, he says:

But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, has made us alive with Christ.

These are indeed words worthy of our contemplation, especially on this day of our humiliation. We have gathered here so that we may hear what serves for our peace, so that evil may be taken away from us and good may be brought to us. For this purpose, the causes had to be removed, and those are sins, which had to be removed both through the forgiveness of sins and by purification through spiritual grace, so that the dead works, departing, might also make way for the judgments of God to depart. Thus, Paul gives rise to this in our text.

Consider then these five following things contained in the words of the text:

1. The Person spoken of here; he speaks of God, of Whom it is described that He is rich in mercy.
2. What is said of this God: that He made us alive.
3. How and in what state those who received this life-giving grace were: when they were dead.
4. What is the inner moving cause of God, not a foreseen faith or any fitness, but His pure love.
5. Who the exemplary Cause has been: in Christ.

1. To begin with the first point, we need to focus on the One who is being spoken of here: he speaks of God, of whom it is written that He is rich in mercy. God alone is the Originator, Initiator, and Completer of salvation; therefore, Paul says in Philippians 1:6, "He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion." David also says, "The Lord will fulfill his purpose for me," in Psalm 138. So, the work of salvation should not be started or obtained from our own strength but solely from God. Thus, Paul says that He has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace.

This God, who is the Originator, Initiator, and Completer of salvation, is described as being rich in mercy. He is rich in all His attributes, in His self-sufficiency; He gives life, breath, and all things to everything, Acts 17:25. Rich in eternity and perpetuity, both from the beginning to the end; everything will perish and change, but He remains the same, Psalm 102. Rich in knowledge and wisdom, knowing all things, present and future. Rich in omnipotence, capable of working not only according to the course of nature but also in ways that exceed what one can ask or think, Ephesians 3. Rich in love, for God is called Love in 1 John 4:8.

Here, He is described as being rich in mercy.

The theologians distinguish God's mercy into general and particular. General mercy is when God helps all creatures, giving bread to the hungry, drink to the thirsty, clothing to the naked, strength to the weak, etc. The Lord is good to all, and His mercy is over all His works, Psalm 145. Particular mercy is when He embraces His children to impart all spiritual gifts, prepared for them in Christ from eternity. This is what the Apostle had in mind, not the general mercy but the particular mercy from which true saving faith arises. If this distinction exists regarding God's mercy, then let it serve as a lesson for us to also distinguish our mercy, both general and particular, doing good to all but especially to the household of faith, Galatians 6. In this, we see God's image reflected, showing kindness to one more than another. Blessed is the one who acts wisely towards the afflicted, Psalm 41:1. Therefore, it is said here that God is rich in mercy.

II. Now, what is said about this God? That He makes us alive. God makes alive through regeneration, justification, the comfort of the Spirit, and glorification.

1. Through regeneration, as He infuses the beginning of spiritual grace into us.
2. In justification, by removing the punishment of sin so that there is no condemnation for them, Romans 8:1. So that they may henceforth live a life of faith; for the righteous shall live by faith, and Paul exclaims that he lived by the faith of the Son of God, Galatians 2.
3. Also through the comfort of the Holy Spirit, for when God leaves us in spiritual desolation for a long time, we become like the dead, as Heman complains in Psalm 88, feeling like one who

descends into the pit and is cut off from the living. But then He makes the sun of His grace rise upon those by the Spirit of comfort.

4. Also through glorification, both in the soul and when the soul and body are separated and then clothed with glory. As Paul says in Romans 8: "But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you."

Here, the making alive primarily refers to the spiritual life of grace, especially in regeneration, to purify the soul from the stain of sin and to restore God's image in it. As previously mentioned, Paul said they were dead in sins and transgressions, and in these, He pours out spiritual life, so that all the faculties of the soul are transformed: the understanding is enlightened for spiritual matters, the will is sanctified to choose these things, and all the affections are moved to submit to these spiritual matters, so that they may live to the glory of God and Christ.

III. Now, we must consider in what state God finds man when He gives him His life-giving Spirit. In a state of spiritual death. We see that here as well: when we were dead, as they were guilty of the curse of the law and various calamities, and when they were unfit for any truly saving good. This state is compared to death because there is no good disposition, fitness, or preparation in us for this spiritual state. Even if there was some enlightening or restraining grace, it is still of another order, given by God, and it does not sanctify. We see this in Balaam, who received some enlightening grace, Numbers 23. In Abimelech, he received restraining grace; God kept him from sinning against Him, Genesis 20. Yet, they remained unregenerate, and man cannot prepare himself for this. A body that has just died more

closely resembles a living body than one that has been dead for a long time and partly decayed, yet they can both achieve the same results. It is the same with grace: although one may seem to have more preparation than another, they can both work equally regarding regeneration. Almighty power is required for this. Therefore, Paul wished that they might see the exceeding greatness of God's power in those who believe. What preparation was there in Abraham, an idolatrous man, in Matthew, in Zacchaeus, a tax collector and sinner, and even in Paul, who was a persecutor of God's church? In the height of his rage, Jesus called out to him from the clouds, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" Immediately, Saul heard and said, "Lord, what will you have me do?" He went from being a wolf to a sheep and from a persecutor to a confessing believer in the truth. Thus, we see that God does not find good dispositions in man when He comes to make them alive.

IV. What is now the internal moving Cause by which God is improperly moved? For God cannot be truly moved. It is, says Paul, His love. Love is distinguished into a love of benevolence or of delight. The former is by which something is bestowed, and the latter is by which something is received. God showed His love of benevolence to humanity when He found them lying naked and helpless, repulsive in their own blood. When no eye had pity, God said, "Live, yes, live," in Ezekiel 16. And He adorned them with everything. Then came the love of delight when the Lord had adorned them so that a name went forth for her because of her beauty; for she was perfect through the glory that I had put upon her, says the Lord. King Jesus also says in Psalm 45: "Forget your people and your father's house, then the King will desire your beauty."

In our text, we must attribute it not to the love of delight but to the love of benevolence. Because God also found nothing in us, for we

were dead in sins and transgressions. Thus, God imparts grace to the soul, and this is great love and great kindness.

1. Great is this love in relation to the Lord, who loved us. He is the true God.
2. Also great in relation to us; for what were we? Nothing more than prey for hell.
3. Great was also this love in the manner, so gratuitous.
4. Great also in its durability, both from the beginning and from the end. From the beginning, we see in Jeremiah 31: "I have loved you with an everlasting love." And from the end, John 13: "Having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end." So, it is a great love with which God has loved us.

V. Now, pay attention to the Pledge or excellent Origin and meritorious Cause, which is Christ. God loved us in Christ, as far as Christ was also God with the Father; so they were one in the moving cause of salvation. But with respect to the meritorious cause, Jesus could also say, "I have other sheep that I will bring." And they are also called His sheep, in John 10. This was also promised to Him, that when He set His soul as a guilt offering, He would see offspring, in Isaiah 53. And He would drink from the brook by the way and then lift up His head, in Psalm 110. So, Christ is the exemplary and meritorious Cause of our regeneration. He had to precede us in this, and we receive this grace from Him. And because the Father raised Him from the dead, it was evident that He had also earned life for His own. Therefore, the Father said to Him, in Psalm 2: "Ask of me, and I will make the nations your inheritance." He not only earned victory over temporal death through His resurrection, 1 Corinthians 15, but also over eternal death, and especially spiritual death. So, Paul says in Romans 6: "Do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? We were

buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."

And that is why Christ is the exemplary and meritorious Cause, not only so that we would walk in newness of life, but also because He has obtained the full right to give His Holy Spirit. This is summed up by Peter in 1 Peter 1: "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."

Now, take note of this lesson: namely, that the spiritual life of grace is the most excellent life a Christian can have. Because the life-giving Spirit, by which we are brought to the life of grace, comes from the living God, who thereby demonstrates His love. Therefore, the life-giving Spirit must rest in a Christian because it is the most excellent life that is poured into a Christian. Paul says that God made us alive. And those who do not have this life are still in the midst of death, for God made us alive when we were dead in sins and transgressions. Therefore, the spiritual life of grace is the most excellent life. The reasons for this may be:

1. Because only those who are partakers of the spiritual life of grace have forgiveness of sins. For only they have the faith to accept Jesus. So it is said that there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. For the Spirit of life, who is in Christ Jesus, has set them free from the law of sin and death, Romans 8:1, 2.
2. Because those have God's favor and are loved by God with a love of delight, as Moses says, in Deuteronomy 30:20: "He is your life and the length of your days."

3. Only those have God's life-giving Spirit. Paul says, in 1 Corinthians 3: "Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?" And those who do not have the Spirit of Christ do not belong to Him, Romans 8.
4. Only they have spiritual movement in their minds and complain about the remnants of their corruption, as Paul did, in Romans 7:23, 24. He saw another law in his members, warring against the law of his mind, and therefore cried out: "O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?" From these reasons, we see that the spiritual life is the most excellent life.

And to express this more clearly and place it higher on the summit, we must know that by this life alone, a Christian is what he is, namely, a Christian. For this life surpasses all lives of earthly things, whether vegetative, sensitive, or philosophical life. If it were the vegetative life, how tall and strong the cedar trees would rise. If it were sensitive life, many animals would excel Christians: an eagle in speed, a falcon in sight, a dog in smell. If philosophical life were the best, many pagans would surpass Christians, excelling them in virtues, so that they would have to lower the flags of virtues before their virtues. But this spiritual life surpasses all lives. For this life is considered a work of God's love and mercy.

Application Is this so? This should serve us (especially on this day of humiliation) to discover many wretched souls who, though living under this grace, are still spiritually dead. Now, if this spiritual life is the most excellent life, then the life without it must be the most miserable. To illustrate this more clearly, we will make a comparison between a natural dead and a spiritual dead.

1. A natural dead is dead because it has no life, and so it is with an unregenerate person, who is spiritually dead. For the Spirit gives life, John 3. An unregenerate person is just an "animal" man, not having the Spirit, as in Jude 19. When God first created man and had not yet breathed in the spirit, he had eyes but could not see, hands and could not touch, ears and could not hear, feet and could not walk. So it is with an unregenerate person: everything he does is nothing because he has no spiritual life.
2. A dead body is cold and stiff; when one touches it, they recoil from it. So it is with an unregenerate person; he is cold in his prayer, in the hearing of God's Word, in the use of the sacraments, and in all religious duties because he does not have the Spirit.
3. A dead person is insensitive in the use of all his senses, and so is an unregenerate person; in his hearing, their ears are closed like adders, stopping their ears so they do not hear the voice of the charmer, no matter how skillful he is in charming, as in Psalm 58. They refuse to pay attention and make their ears heavy so that they will not hear, as in Zechariah 7:11. They are also insensitive in their sight regarding God's things, for the natural man does not understand the things of the Spirit of God, as in 1 Corinthians 2. For the god of this world has blinded their minds, 2 Corinthians 4. They are also insensitive in their smell; not following the footsteps of the bride to follow the footsteps of the saints. The Word is like an odor of death to them. They are also insensitive in their taste for the spiritual. "Is there any taste in the white of an egg?" Job asks. "My soul refuses to touch them; they are like loathsome food to me." So he speaks concerning his friends who judge him wrongly, in Job 6. But so it is with the wicked concerning the good; they have a taste for sin. Therefore, they say, "Stolen water is sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant," in Proverbs 9:16. And God pronounces woe upon

those who call evil good and good evil, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter, in Ezra 5:20. Even if they taste God's Word, it is only with the outer lips, so that their taste is not united with the taster. They are also insensitive in their feeling, both in their sense of touch; they do not touch Jesus to believe in Him. Instead of touching the hem of Jesus' garment and believing in Him, they would rather crowd Him with the multitude, as in Luke 8. Because they are so insensitive, they do not feel the wrong done to God's children. So Haman was cheerful and well when the Jews were in such distress.

4. A dead body is very heavy and weighty, and so it is with the unregenerate; they are too heavy for themselves, causing them to stagger. In Isaiah 24, it is said that the whole earth will stagger like a drunken man. But that the earth did not open its mouth and swallow them alive with Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, in Numbers 16, is a wonder.
5. A dead body is full of stench. So also is the unregenerate before God; they stink in God's nostrils. God says of them: "I cannot endure your solemn assemblies," in Isaiah 1. "He who slaughters an ox is like one who kills a man; he who sacrifices a lamb is like one who breaks a dog's neck," says God in Isaiah 66. Oh, the wretched and deplorable state of the unregenerate, who are so repulsive in the eyes of God. A dead body does not see its filth, and so it is with the unregenerate; they think they are something special, and they thank God that they are not like others, as the Pharisees did in Luke 18. They think they are rich, like the Laodiceans in Revelation 3, and they are lacking in all things. Oh, wretched ones!

Yes, three times. Wretched people, if you can hear, do you not know that you are dead to God and all your works? And as long as you remain like this, everything is unto death for you: those who are in

the flesh cannot please God, Rom. 8. Do not deceive yourselves, nor try to persist with destructive fallacies.

For you may say, like an unregenerate: I hear God's Word, should I not have spiritual life then? Herod also heard God's Word.

Yes, I am baptized, so should I not have spiritual life? Simon the sorcerer was also baptized, Acts 8, and he was like bitter gall and a bond of iniquity.

But I go to the Lord's Supper, do I not have spiritual life then? Yes, Judas the traitor also attended the Lord's Supper, at least he used the Passover.

Yes, I give alms, an unregenerate might say, would it not be right? Pharisees and scribes also gave alms, but the Lord Jesus proclaimed woe upon them, Matthew 23. So do not deceive yourselves, for many will realize that there is a way that seems right in the eyes, but its end is the way of death, Proverbs 14.

But not to argue wildly, I will show you without reproach how it is evident that there are still many spiritual dead, gently instructing them that God may grant them repentance and they may awaken from the snares of the devil, 2 Timothy 2:25, 26. Oh, if only I had the ability to proclaim the sin and a tongue of the learned to speak rightly. I am full of words, as I would say here with Job, I will speak that I may find relief. Oh, that I would not show partiality to anyone or use nicknames for people; for I do not know how to use nicknames; in short, my Maker would take me away, Job 32:18-22.

I will not speak of the cruelty of the French, under whom we lived in 1672 and 1673. Of the countless number of Popish priests, luring the simple to the Babylonian whore. Nor will I dwell on the reckless

minds, so that one might also say with Melanchthon: Woe to the Netherlands because of the recklessness of the minds! I will also not dwell on the stream of wickedness; how many atheists are found, who also say: The Lord does not see it, and the God of Jacob does not consider it, Psalm 14. Look at the pride in clothing, even in the gatherings of God, even on the day of humiliation. Look at the clothes, just like the fashion of France, which oppressed us for so long. Look at the filth and immorality that is committed, see the excess in food and drink, so that they make their belly their god and their kitchen their church. See the insatiable greed that even blinds the eyes of the judges so that they love bribes. And what about the godless lawyers who handle unjust cases for that reason. Look at the misuse of God's name and the desecration of the Lord's Day, which everyone can see who walks the streets. While John was in the Spirit of the Lord on that day, Revelation 1, many are in the spirit of the devil on that day. Look at the hatred and envy among many! Is that not evidence that they are not partakers of that spiritual life? Oh, awake, you who sleep, and arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light, Ephesians 5.

But why do I stand and call to the dead who cannot hear? And why do I not rather say: Awake, O arm of the Lord! So that people may awaken and be strengthened in spiritual life.

This should serve us as an encouragement and admonition to strive for this spiritual life.

- Therefore, reflect, O corrupt children of Adam! on the previous matters, so that you may obtain spiritual life, for there is also no life of glory to be obtained. For if anyone is not born again by water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God, John 3. Blessed are those who have a share in the first resurrection;

over these the second death has no power, Revelation 20:4. By way of contrast, we should take this: blessed are those who have much of that spiritual life, and wretched are those who do not have it.

- This spiritual life of grace is also a source of joy for the holy angels. They rejoice more over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance, Luke 15. Great was the joy of the Shunammite woman, 2 Kings 4, when she received her dead son back to life, but even greater is the joy of the angels when a sinner is added to the life of Christ, as those are drawn from the realm of Satan and transferred to the kingdom of Christ.
- This spiritual life is the most desired and contented life; it is an honorable life, next to God's life. A profitable life, for godliness has great gain, 1 Timothy 4. It is a delightful and enjoyable life; all lives are enjoyable, but especially this spiritual life of grace. The kingdom of heaven is not eating and drinking, but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit, Romans 14:17. A peaceful and restful life, also a life that will last forever, as long as God will be. For the righteous will not be moved forever, Proverbs 10.
- So, should one not seek after this life? Otherwise, you lie in the midst of death. And therefore, some of the ancients have counted their age from their reborn state, for only then does one live the true life. Therefore, seek after this life. The means serving for this is the hearing of God's Word. We rejoice when we see a godless person in the church because God has sanctified the hearing of His Word as a means of spiritual life, and one does not know if the Lord may draw him there. The

Lord Jesus says, John 5: "He who hears My word and believes Him who sent Me has eternal life. And the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear will live." Therefore, listen to the Word of Truth, for by it we are born again, James 1. Listen to that Gospel, where Jesus alone is the spiritual Head, for from that alone must the spiritual life descend, Ephesians 4.

- We read of the prophet Elisha, when he was to bring the Shunammite woman's son back to life, he lay over the child, his eyes on the child's eyes, and his mouth on the child's mouth, and stretched himself out over the child. Likewise, the teachers must do, extend themselves over the entire Word and present it to the people in that way. And one should not easily despair, but persevere in the hearing of God's Word. Who knows when that blessed hour may also come for you, that you will be awakened from spiritual death. We read of three kinds of people who rose: Jairus' daughter, Mark 5, a young man, Luke 7, and Lazarus, John 11. Of these, one had been dead for an hour, another for a day, and the third for three or four days. And this represents three kinds of sinners to us. The first are those who sin in their hearts through desires. The second are those who sin with deeds. But the last are those who sin by habit. Nevertheless, Lazarus was made alive just as well as the others. Therefore, if you have held onto sins, do not despair, but look to the living Jesus and listen to His word. For when He called to Lazarus, He also gave him the power to hear. That Jesus is mighty to make you alive; He is the Resurrection and the Life Himself, John 6.
- Therefore, persist and receive with meekness the Word that has been taught to you. Perhaps, while I am speaking now, the Holy Spirit may have descended into someone's heart and made them

ask: What must we do to draw our feet away from the death of sins and go to that spiritual life? Because the question is twofold, I will also provide a twofold answer.

O

n one hand, you must:

1. Compare your entire life with the law, from command to command, and it will be a clear mirror for you.
2. You must be convinced that you have violated the entire law, condemn yourself, and consider yourself guilty: the curse of the law and condemnation.
3. Must despair concerning your own strength and cry out like the prodigal son: I perish, not knowing how to save myself.
4. Seek to awaken your humility by making an open confession to God.

On the other hand, to increase in spiritual life, you must:

1. Realize that there is difficulty in making you spiritually alive. For if God is able to graft wild olive branches, how much more are these natural branches! Rom. 11.
2. Stir up a desire within you for spiritual life. Hunger and thirst for righteousness and contemplate the glory that is attached to that life.
3. Embrace the Lord Jesus, who is the Head of spiritual life, in faith, to become fruitful in Him. Just as branches cannot bear fruit unless they remain in the root, we also cannot bear fruit unless we abide in the Lord Jesus. For without Him, we can do nothing, John 15.
4. You must firmly resist all sins and surrender to God and Christ, seeking nothing in your own strength but in God's strength. Do

it this way. And I wish with the Apostle, 1 Thessalonians 5: May the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. And Hebrews 13: Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight.

Finally, let this serve as a test to determine if you have become spiritually alive. This must be known from the characteristics of that life. For when you take away the characteristics of a thing, you take away the whole thing; a thing is what it is because of its characteristics.

1. One characteristic of life is an internal ability to work, and it is the same in this life. Thus, Paul says, Rom. 6: Consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus, and present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. And just as those movements are ready to awaken, so must the willingness be ready. Now, there are two kinds of movements: one that is created by art, and one that arises from life itself. It is the same in this spiritual life: the ungodly may sometimes have an inclination to work in religious matters, but since it is obtained through art, they give it up. But in the believer, it lives because it arises from an inward life.
2. Another characteristic of a living believer is an expelling action, which consists in resisting what hinders life, just as nature does: if it has something in it or that harms it, it casts it out and relieves itself. So it is in the spiritual realm: you seek to expel the

corruptions that arise in the soul and fight against them. Thus, the Spirit opposes the flesh, and the flesh opposes the Spirit, and these are in opposition to each other, Gal. 5. Thus, the spiritual life of grace comes about.

But someone may say, "Even in the ungodly, there is an internal struggle. How can I know that my struggle is a good one?"

That is true, but there is a great difference in the internal struggle of a God-fearing person or an ungodly person. This difference exists in the causes, objects, description, and addition.

1. In the causes. The struggle of the ungodly arises from fear and dread of the threatened punishments, while that of the God-fearing arises from the power of the new creature, 2 Corinthians 5. It arises from the delight they have in the law of their mind, Romans 7, and from the hatred they have for sin.
2. In the objects. The struggle of the ungodly is against great sins that are also offensive in their eyes. But the struggle in the God-fearing is also against the very least sins. As David says, Psalms 119: I have considered all Your precepts to be right; I hate every false way.
3. In the description, as shown in the explanation where the essence of this spiritual life lies.
4. In addition. The struggle of the ungodly is temporary, but that of the God-fearing, because they have spiritual life, they continue in it. The ungodly struggle is ultimately to remain in sin, but the God-fearing are drawn away from their sins by their struggle.

5. In the effects or results. The self-struggle of the ungodly does not prevent them from walking contentedly in sin. But the God-fearing humble themselves through self-struggle, before, during, and after committing sins, and are thereby trained in virtue. If you find this in yourself, then your struggle is a good one.

That is also a characteristic of natural life, that there is an appetite for food, and so it is in the spiritual realm: there should be a desire for spiritual food, such as the spiritual application of God's Word. One should seek to hear that Word, not to tickle the ears but eagerly desiring to partake of its power, not just for contemplative knowledge but to be nourished in spiritual life. Peter says: "As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby," 1 Peter 2:2. David says: "One thing I have desired of the Lord, that will I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life," Psalms 27. Just as a young child constantly nurses, even while asleep, so should a child of God constantly draw strength from God's Word. If we find this in ourselves, we can conclude that we have become partakers of spiritual life.

Finally, let this serve as an encouragement to maintain the spiritual life of grace. It is true that God's gracious callings are unchangeable, Romans 11, but those who have received grace can still grow weak in the life of grace, and therefore, we must continually seek to be strengthened. To preserve this spiritual life, we must use these means:

1. Consume spiritual food. Just as natural life must be sustained by food, so must spiritual life be nourished, not only by God's Word but also by the Lord's Supper, through the blood of Jesus Christ, for His flesh is true food, and His blood is true drink. "Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life," John 6.

2. Seek spiritual joy. Just as in natural life, when the means work well, it should lead to happiness, so it should be in the spiritual life. Therefore, Paul urges us to exhort one another with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, Colossians 3. And James says, "Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms," James 5.
3. Engage in spiritual exercises. Just as it is in natural life, it should also be in the spiritual realm. To prevent our spiritual condition from declining, we must exercise ourselves daily, in prayers, in examining God's law, in repentance, and in maintaining a blameless conscience before God and others, Acts 24.
4. Use spiritual remedies, just as one does in physical health. When the body is not well, one may take a purgative to expel the evil. So, we must cast out evil from our souls through honest confession before God, and we must also accept God's discipline with joy. Paul says, "Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness," Hebrews 12. Let us use these means so that God, who is rich in mercy, may make us alive by His Spirit, and may the Lord change His hand for good, giving us desired peace, both inward and outward. Now, may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after we have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle us. To Him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Eighth Sermon, on Hebrews 2:1

Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it.

After the Lord has been pleased in His love, through His grace, to prepare my heart and give me strength and inclination in soul and body to present to you various essential matters from the preceding first chapter of this epistle to the believing Hebrews, which we have discussed by God's goodness, we now begin the second chapter with such necessary and useful text words. The Lord allows us to consider this as a true and necessary rule for us on how to behave regarding what we have heard, so that we are not found to have heard in vain. Indeed, the reason why many in these days drift away so much is that they could not hold fast to what they have heard, just as the Apostle Paul found in his time. Therefore, he begins this chapter so emphatically with a faithful warning, saying, "Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away."

In our text, there are two main parts:

1. The exhortation of the Apostle, with its extension, regarding what has been presented in the previous chapter, namely the excellence of the Person who has spoken to us. Therefore, the Apostle says, "Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard."
2. The danger if we do not hold fast to it, of drifting away at any time.

But before we get to the matter itself, we must briefly discuss two things that are contained in these words:

1. That there is a speaking of God and Christ through the Spirit to the souls of people in the preaching of the Gospel.
2. That there is also a hearing from God's Word.
3. It is abundantly shown to us that there is a speaking of God and Christ through the Spirit to the souls of people in the preaching of the Word. In 2 Corinthians 5, the Apostle says, "God has put the word of reconciliation in us, so we implore you on Christ's behalf: be reconciled to God." And so, in the initial presentation of His Gospel, Christ spoke in many ways, as He heard and saw from the Father, John 8. Thus, Jesus spoke to them through a way of teaching. He spoke of Himself as the Way, the True Vine, and the Light that came into the world to teach, lead, and enlighten them. Sometimes, He spoke through rebuke: "Woe to you, Chorazin," and so on. For if the miracles done in Tyre and Sidon had been done in them, they would have repented long ago. Or through lament: "Jerusalem, how often I wanted to gather your children," and so on. Also through admonitions and exhortations, or by presenting parables about the kingdom. Yes, even through a way of friendly invitation: "Turn to Me, and be saved, all you ends of the earth," Isaiah 45, and Isaiah 55: "Ho! Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters," and so on. Revelation 3: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him." He also strengthens the soul and gives it courage: "I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you."

And all of this He still does daily where there is a true spiritual ministry. Do we not have reason to humbly acknowledge this and be grateful, we who are so unworthy? It is a great blessing to be taught

by Jesus' Spirit. Therefore, let us seize the time of grace so that God's Word is not spoken to us in judgment.

2. It is assumed that they hear it, Heb. 4, which is a great salvation for the soul, that it may hear and that it has been given to understand, is a great grace. For there is indeed a spiritual service where ambassadors of Jesus Christ, through an inner work on the heart, by imparting His Spirit and grace, giving a love for God, are driven for the sake of Christ to use their talents in the service of His children, not for money or any other gain but solely out of love, must be gratefully acknowledged, just as the speaking itself. For to sit at the feet of Jesus and hear Jesus Himself through His Spirit in His children, that is a great grace.

But we will proceed to the exhortation itself. 1. That we must hold fast to what we have heard. 2. How we should do that. 3. The requirement and necessity of it. 4. The usefulness of this matter.

1. Holding on to that Word means: 1. Valuing it highly, with proper esteem and reverence. One who does not value it greatly cannot hold on to it well. How highly did David value it when he called it his inheritance, and Job considered it more than his necessary portion. It has been brought to us by the Son Himself and is therefore worthy. Do not think that praising it with words will suffice if you do not hold onto it in your practice. If you do not eat the Word and find delight in it, you are not holding on to it, Ezekiel 33.
2. Paying attention to it with observation, not loosely, but grasping it in the heart, just as the Lord commanded Ezekiel when He wanted to reveal to him about the temple. And thus, we must listen with an attentive and serious mind, so that everyone in their own way becomes proclaimers of the Gospel.

3. It is also to unite and connect one's heart with it, for if it remains in us, it cannot be taken away. It must be received in a good, honest heart, so that it takes root, like seed in good soil, and as it grows, it bears much fruit. But one who does not hear it in this way with the heart and unite with it is not holding on to it.
4. It is also to store the Word away and keep it locked up. Job said, "I have laid up Your word in my heart, more than my necessary portion." And David, in Psalm 119:11, said, "I have hidden Your word in my heart, that I might not sin against You." Mary kept the words of the angel in her heart, Luke 2.
5. To be surrendered to God's Word. Psalm 119: "I have sworn and confirmed that I will keep Your righteous judgments," and so on. It is lamentable that in our days, some treat the Word so freely. Some by establishing human inventions that oppose the Word, and others by setting up their fantasies and imaginations, so that they rule the Word, and the Word does not rule them.
6. It is also to abide by it and not deviate, neither to the right nor to the left, as in Psalm 17:4-5: "Concerning the works of men, by the word of Your lips, I have kept away from the paths of the destroyer. Uphold my steps in Your paths, that my footsteps may not slip." But those whose hearts are not with God's Word are vain hearers and in danger of going astray. However, those who understand and do it are blessed in their deeds.
7. You must hear it for your benefit and advantage, to become more cleansed, strengthened, sanctified, and conformed to God through it. Is the Spirit of God limited, O you who are called the children of Jacob, does it not profit them who walk uprightly? Experience teaches us that souls who do not hold on to the Word in this way will drift away.

Now follows the manner in which we must hold on to it: 1. Truly, not like Naphtali who gives fair words, but genuinely and sincerely. 2. It must be done in its entirety, not with the head alone but also with the heart, with all our soul, and with all our strength, with all our abilities and effort in all our movements. 3. It must also be done consistently, not now and then but consistently, in their usual course, both in prosperity and adversity. 4. We must not let ourselves be hindered by ourselves or by the world, and let the seed be sown by the wayside.

1. Let us now consider the necessity, because it is the Word of life and for great salvation. 2. It is necessary in relation to the One who spoke it: it is Christ Jesus who proclaimed it. 3. Because God has placed so much glory in its proclamation and confirmed it with so many signs and wonders, Hebrews 2:2. It is also the great purpose for which God has sent it, for just as all things are from God, they are also unto God.

What useful lessons are contained in this?

1. It teaches us that we should not rest in anything else but in this Word. "Blessed are those who hear My words and do them," Revelation 1. There should be no rest in the intellect, even if they understand it quickly, even though they understand it with their natural understanding. There is also a rest in having a good memory and being able to speak much, but this is nothing. Not everyone listens to it with pleasure and delight, Hebrews 6. Many taste it like those who taste wine and then spit it out. But it must be tasted, as Jeremiah says, "Your words were found, and I ate them," Jeremiah 15. Nor should one be content to speak much and reason about it, or even to speak and stand up

for it, without holding fast to it much and well. You run the risk of drifting away.

2. If it is so necessary that the Apostle places such emphasis on it, how much reason for complaint is there in these days! Where is that holy respect and reverence for it? Are there not now souls who despise it and loathe that heavenly manna? This happens for several reasons:

1. Due to ignorance of its worth. David, who truly knew the preciousness of God's Word, esteemed it above all treasures, and it was his meditation day and night.
2. Due to the natural inclination of our hearts to turn away from the truth. Therefore, souls that do not watch over their own hearts will easily drift away.
3. Due to self-love, for if we are not mortified in this regard, we cannot hold on to it.
4. Due to excessive attachment to creatures, love for earthly things, being too set on money and possessions, spouse, children, or friends. We must pursue an honest calling but with a detached heart.
5. It also comes from listening too much to what this or that person says, but this is carnal and worldly. The Word must be heard in a godly manner.

3. Let it also serve as an examination of whether we practice this:

1. If we hold on to this, it is not something opposed to the Gospel or to the world, creatures, or even the law contrary to the Gospel.
2. It becomes the rule of one's life, and over them will be peace and mercy, regulating their actions with God, with their neighbors, and with themselves.

3. They judge and allow themselves to be judged by the Gospel. They come to the light so that their works may be revealed.
4. They reform and improve everything by the Gospel.
5. The soul that holds fast to this is grieved to see others choosing their own way. For many, the misuse of this precious pledge, the freedom in Christ, is often a cover for our desires and leads to the commission of things contrary to the Gospel.
6. They also have a desire that others may be brought to and continue in the truth of the Gospel, so that they do not drift away.

II. Shall we now proceed to the last part, which is the danger if we do not hold fast to it that we might at some time drift away? But let us first understand the conclusion that the Apostle draws, which relates to the first chapter. Starting from verse 1, in which the glory of Christ is presented and demonstrated, that in these last days God has now spoken to us through Him, and therefore we should hold fast to it all the more. He being so much more excellent than all the prophets and angels. He is the Son of God Himself. And those who have drifted away are those who have not heard Moses and the prophets, how much more severe will the judgment be for those who do not hear Christ? Here again, everything that has been said about holding fast comes into play. But to understand this properly, we must see:

1. Whether in the days of the New Testament there is such speaking.
2. The manner in which.
3. The reason why.

4. Christ speaks to us:

1. When He has given us His Gospel and grants us the grace to hear, read, and understand it. Thus, we have a real speaking of Jesus to our soul, each one individually.
2. There is a word when He speaks through His messengers, whom He truly sends, giving them His Spirit, love, grace, and qualifications for His service, showing His presence among His chosen children through His Spirit, according to His promise that He is with them. Jesus says, "I have spoken through you, just as My Father spoke through Me." And the Apostle, 2 Corinthians 5: "We are ambassadors for Christ." Doesn't the King speak through His ambassadors?
3. There is also a speaking of Christ through His Spirit. Paul says, "You seek proof that Christ is speaking in me." It is not weak but strong.
4. When any word comes to us, whether this one or that one speaks it, that captures your conscience and leads you to obedience to Christ. Then there is true speaking of Jesus Christ.

II. The manner in which. Therefore, we must hold fast to it all the more, and that with more heart, better, precisely, and truly, reducing its imperfections, with more diligence and effort, and with our entire strength. "He who does not serve God with fervor does not do it well." It must also be done more abundantly, steadfastly, and unmovably.

III. The reason why we must hold fast to what we have heard:

1. Because there is no greater word than this Word, in which God has revealed Himself visibly in Christ. He who said to Philip, "He who has seen Me has seen the Father." He surpasses all who

came before Him. He is greater than Moses and Solomon. There is a greater than Jonah here, so those of Nineveh will rise up against this generation. Compare Him to all the prophets who preceded Him; they all spoke by His Spirit, and therefore, He is greater than all of them. Yes, He is greater than the angels, for to which of the angels did He ever say, "Sit at My right hand?" Hebrews 1.

2. There is also no one more ordained by the Father, so wisely and excellently.
3. No one has sincerely meant to deliver people from destruction more than Christ. Therefore, He says, Luke 9, when the disciples want fire from heaven to destroy the people: "You do not know what manner of spirit you are of."
4. It is also a spiritual ministry, much more glorious than that of the letter of the law. And since this ministry is in the Spirit, there is a ministry in freedom compared to the old, although it is still veiled regarding the future. Nevertheless, God's secrets have been revealed to the saints, Psalms 25, Ephesians 3.
5. We must also do it because the judgment will be heavier otherwise. Hebrews 2:3: "How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?" And in chapter 10:28: "Anyone who has rejected Moses' law dies without mercy." Pay attention to the manner of this judgment. He will come in a way of vengeance and wrath against the transgressors.

We must be strongly encouraged for this purpose. Consider the following:

1. Who is the one speaking. To fully grasp His glory, read the previous first chapter attentively.
2. Reflect on His excellence: here is One greater than Jonah, so those of Nineveh will rise up against this generation. Compare

Him to all the prophets who came before Him; they all spoke by His Spirit, and therefore, He is greater than all of them. Yes, He is greater than the angels, for to which of the angels did He ever say, "Sit at My right hand?" Hebrews 1.

3. Consider what Jesus Christ speaks to you: it is Spirit and life, John 6. It is life for your soul, and it will bring you to God.
4. See how He speaks in a very amiable and well-meaning way.
5. The goal is to deliver you from sins and escape the coming wrath, unite you with God, and give you the glory that was given to Him by the Father.
6. It is given to them so that they do not drift away.

Now, this leads us to the last part. The danger if we do not hold fast to it is that we might at some time drift away.

Some take this to mean a drifting away from the Word itself, becoming vain hearers who are like a sieve that cannot hold water and broken vessels. That is also true. But in essence, it means that they themselves will drift away, consisting of not properly observing that particular time and not paying attention to what they have heard, and if they do not hold fast to it, they will drift away. This happens when:

1. They fall short: we lack or fall short of the glory of God, Romans 3. Similarly, here, lest we fall short of grace, like the foolish virgins. They thought they would enter with the Bridegroom, but for lack of oil, they had to stay outside. Therefore, the Apostle says that God is able to make all grace abound toward you, 1 Corinthians 8. For souls who think this, they must have sufficient grace.
2. They drift away, and therefore, they falter on the way. They slow down and weaken. As Paul says, Hebrews 12: "Lest anyone fall

short of the grace of God." The Israelites who did not enter Canaan drifted away; they did not hold fast to what they heard. Therefore, Christ commands them to count the cost well first, Luke 13.

3. It is also a matter that, being powerless, spreads and melts away like snow before the sun or like wax before fire. One who lacks strength and falters cannot stand. Can you accomplish anything with such souls? You cannot do anything with them; it is a letter you cannot read.
4. It is wasteful and leaking; it evaporates, and there is no benefit to waiting for it, neither for their own good works nor for the good of others.
5. It is also a passing and going beyond of souls. Paul had good confidence in Demas at first, but when he wanted to use him, he complained that Demas had forsaken him and loved the present world. He had not held fast to what he had heard.
6. It also implies being corrupted; Jesus' word is like salt that preserves us from corruption and foulness. One who does not hold fast to what they have heard builds on this foundation with hay and straw and suffers loss and shipwreck, 1 Corinthians 3:7.
7. It also means going backward and turning backward, as the Apostle says: "I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel," Galatians 1:8.
8. It is such a drifting away that they are excluded: they did not enter because of their unbelief. Therefore, the Lord says, "I swore in My wrath, 'They shall not enter My rest.'" Hebrews 3:9.
9. They also drift in such a way that they are in danger of completely disappearing and melting away. For the Word is the constant food that must keep us alive.

But the Apostle says: at any time. This shows us that souls can indeed stand, but there are cases where they cannot and should not stand.

1. When there are many temptations and Satan appears as an angel of light, seeking, if possible, to deceive the elect. Then, due to their itching ears, they are led astray by every wind of doctrine.
2. Also, in times of luxury and prosperity, there is an opportunity to become a great person in the world. If one does not hold onto this, they are in great danger of drifting away.
3. When there is a time of temptation and affliction. As long as Jesus rides on a donkey, and people shout "Hosanna," all is well. But when Jesus is brought before the judges to be condemned and crucified, they fall away, even though they had made a great show beforehand, as expressed in the seed sown by the wayside.
4. When there is a time when people like Moses rise up and say, "Whoever belongs to the Lord, come to me." Those who do not hold fast may easily drift away and fall short, as happened in the time of Ezra when they did not hold onto their faith, and some were left behind, as Nehemiah says, "Their nobles did not put their shoulder to the work."
5. Also, when there is some stumbling block in the matter of God, even though there is no stumbling block in the way itself. But because they do not hold fast to what they have heard, they do not understand God's way and depart.
6. When God deals with His children in strange ways, ways of testing, as the Israelites did. They expected a full Canaan but

had to wander in the wilderness. Therefore, God says in Psalm 95: "They do not understand My ways, and therefore I swore that they would not enter My rest." God's ways are wonderful, and His people must first be tested and then comforted.

7. If the devil shoots his cunning arrows to deceive them, as in Ephesians 6:8. Also, when Christ is revealed, whether in general or to the soul in particular.

The truth of this lies in this reason: The word of Christ is the strength of the soul, as John says, "You are strong, and the word of Christ abides in you." This is true for God's children.

Let us consider the usefulness of this matter, which shows us:

1. The reason for our weakness is that we do not hold fast to what we have heard and think, as is easily said: "The Lord has taken such a path for me."
2. It should serve as self-examination to see if we are found drifting away, which will be evident when:
 1. The world still has too much influence on us, and we are easily swayed by its flattery or threats, like the foolish young man led astray by the adulterous woman.
 2. There is a limited awareness of sin, and we have made little progress in overcoming it.
 3. We withdraw and shrink in the work of God, for withdrawing leads to destruction. But, as the Apostle says, "We are not of those who draw back." Even the best can experience a weakening, but it is usually lukewarm and feeble. You are in danger of drifting away and losing your

strength while you are so active in worldly matters but weak in the work of God and His service.

4. There is a work of God to be done for them, and they are quickly distracted by a small matter. If a maidservant comes and says to Peter, "You were also with Him," he immediately denies his Lord.
5. When souls are fickle and full of change, those who seek and examine too much are the first in danger of drifting away.

Therefore, seek to strengthen your heart against this:

1. It is necessary to be well-prepared when you hear the Word of God.
2. Rid yourself of all wickedness to receive it in meekness and humility.
3. Seek to come closer to Christ in the power of His Spirit.
4. Strive to have your hearts more suitable and well-prepared, strengthened in grace.
5. Live in this, continually practice it, and meditate on it. Those who are not just hearers but doers will not hear in vain and will be blessed in their deeds. Indeed, this word of salvation that we have heard so many times must dwell richly in us because it is the Word of the Gospel of Christ, rooted and grounded in Him, and it looks to Him, for the continuation of His glory.

Let us now consider this heard word of the gospel in relation to God:

1. That He is Light and not darkness; that God is one Being, pure and sincere, who cannot have communion with what opposes His nature. Therefore, those who want to be united with Him must come into the same nature of this pure Being, for God hates all workers of iniquity.

2. That God cannot deny Himself without His majesty being wounded. He must be satisfied in His love, power, and righteousness. Therefore, Jesus Christ had to suffer in the flesh to provide satisfaction for His righteousness and not be offended in the least.
 3. It shows us that God, as a Father, is the source of all blessedness. Not as God outside of Christ, but as the Father of our Lord Jesus, and thus, in Him, the God of the covenant, rich in mercy (Colossians 1). We thank the Father who has made us partakers of the inheritance of the saints.
 4. It shows us what God does in a way of love and free grace, through His mercy when He chose us, redeemed us, preserved us, and sealed us according to His free pleasure, to the praise of His glory (Ephesians 1).
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2. This heard Word of the gospel can also be considered in relation to humanity.
 3. In it, man's incapacity is presented, and therefore, he must come to Christ, recognizing that everything comes from God.
 4. It points out a way for man, even though he is wretched, through which he can come to God through faith and repentance, upon hearing the Word of grace.
 5. Although there is a way to come to God, it is not for everyone but only for those who receive Him through faith, without distinction. Romans 3: Righteousness is for those who believe.
 6. Regarding Christ Jesus:
 7. That He is the only natural Son of God, the expressed image of His substance (John 1:2).

8. That He is the only Mediator between God and man, the Advocate of the new covenant. He is our Peace, the only redemption and reconciliation (Isaiah 53). The High Priest ordained by the Father to take care of everything.
9. He is sent to save the world. He was born and came into the world to save sinners, of whom our Apostle Paul considered himself the chief (2 Timothy 1:15).
10. He is the Foundation on which all truth is established. The First of all and the Beginning of all things (Revelation 2:5). He is ordained by the Father to be Lord and Head, the Chief Leader and Finisher of salvation (Hebrews 12) and the Ruler of nations (Isaiah 55:6).
11. God will also subject everything to Christ (Acts 10). He is a Judge of the living and the dead, at whose feet all things are subjected (Psalm 8).

Consider this heard Word of the gospel in relation to Christianity:

1. This must be from God in Christ; the Gospel recognizes no other. Only those who are in Christ are a new creation.
2. In Jesus Christ, there is neither Jew nor Greek, but a new creation (Galatians 6). We no longer know anyone according to the flesh.
3. In the state of the new creation, nothing matters except Christ and what bears His character. A Christian's desire should be to walk as Christ walked, possessing knowledge, love, humility, patience, and faith that are of Christ, motivated by Him, and bear His image.

4. It teaches us that the only way to approach God through Christ is through true imitation of Christ—His birth, life, suffering, death, burial, and even His glory.
5. It also teaches us that whatever a person desires in Christianity, they must seek it through opposite means. If someone wants to be exalted, it must be through humility. If they want to be rich, it must be sought in poverty of spirit. If someone wants to save their life, they must first lose it.
6. Everything must also be done according to and through the will of God, through Christ and His Spirit, and all to the glory of God.

The reason for this is:

1. There is no other Word of the Gospel than what God revealed through Christ at that time and had proclaimed.
2. There is no other ordained to be a standard for what we should believe and how we should conduct ourselves to be saved.
3. There is no other that Christ proclaimed and taught, and He directed everything according to the will of His Father. Therefore, anyone who teaches another Gospel is cursed.
4. There is no other that the saints ever accepted, for we will be judged according to this heard Word of the gospel (Romans 2).
5. There can be no other, for it is perfect and contains all that we need for this life and the life to come. Therefore, a curse is pronounced on those who preach anything other than this.

APPLICATION

Having now considered these matters in their truth, let us also understand them for our benefit.

1. Consider its great dignity, that it is so excellent that no other is needed. It is perfect, and everything added to it is of no value, mere self-willed religion.
2. Let us all strive to have this Gospel, and not gather other words for ourselves. Seek it not so much from men, the learned and great of the earth, but this Word of the gospel of Christ must be sought from Him alone. Enter His school and heavenly academy through true imitation of Him.
3. Seek it in the Spirit, not in our understanding, but from people who have inwardly died to themselves and labor to be more lost, possessing a wisdom that is from above.
4. Look to Christ's example much, to walk as He walked, and be imitators of God as beloved children.
5. Let it serve as an encouragement and true gratitude because He dignifies us with such pleasant words of the gospel, as He gives them in Spirit and power, in genuine simplicity and purity. Everything must be tested against it, and what does not conform to it is of human origin, and if we do not reject it, it will make us reprehensible.

Let us examine ourselves through this, whether we have this written in our hearts by God's Spirit and have received it through faith and possess it in love, satisfaction, and delight.

1. If it is present, it remains in the heart, occupies it, and teaches inwardly so that one feels its operation: (a) It separates you from

yourself and sets you apart for God. (b) It draws people out of the world and continually points them to Christ. (c) The heart is purified (1 Peter 2:32). According to Jesus' words (John 15): "You are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you." Yes, it purifies the mind and will. (d) It also transforms the soul so that it is like the image of God and Christ. (e) It will make us averse to everything that goes against this Gospel and does not conform to it.

2. If there is no other, we must hold on to it and follow the example of sound words and take care to preserve God's Word in its purity. Let us live it out well, through sanctified knowledge, faith, and love, standing for it and expressing it in our lives. Philippians 1: "Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel."
3. Indeed, this Word of the gospel is a perfect law of liberty and faith, yes, the law of the Spirit of life in Christ, Romans 8. According to this rule, we must walk, etc., so it strongly binds us to obedience. This perfect law has its fullness, so that nothing is lacking for the soul's salvation.
4. It is pure and clean and entirely straightforward without any distortion.
5. It is also perfect, so that nothing can be added to it, nor may anything be taken away from it.
6. It leads man to perfection and is perfect in its origin, coming from God, who is perfection itself. It has Christ Jesus as its root,

who must be everything in the Gospel, by which we must stand and contend for the faith that is holy and delivered. Through this law of liberty, we can be made free and wise for salvation.

Let us then be taught by this Word of the gospel how to perceive in that law of liberty.

1. It is to bow to it and incline the heart to understand its depth, turning away from all that is outside of God, as David says in Psalm 119: "I have inclined my heart to perform your statutes."
2. It is also to enter into it, to see it from within, in the depths of the heart as power and Spirit. Jesus promised in John 16: "I will send the Spirit who will guide you into all truth, to walk in it."
3. It is also a thorough knowledge, inclination, and examination of it, and thus it is combined in Proverbs: "If you seek it like silver and gold, with humility through the Spirit of meekness, testing what is pleasing to the Lord."
4. When one notices it to see it in its splendor, paying attention to it, and proclaiming what one has seen, heard, and learned from the Lord.
5. After seeing it, reflecting on it in one's heart and learning to discern or combine spiritual things with others, comparing the Gospel with Christ or the new creation, and what it contains of the glory of the kingdom. Then one sees that the Gospel contains all of that.
6. To come to a holy wonderment, so that by it, one is carried away and enraptured, as in Psalm 119: "Your testimonies are

wonderful; therefore my soul keeps them." And the bride says: "You have taken my heart with one of your eyes."

7. It is also a surrender of oneself, so that the Gospel governs us. And those who perceive it in this way, letting it take them away, will be blessed hereafter.

But because mere perception is not enough, it will be necessary to show how this should be done.

1. In a true self-denial and of everything that is outside of it.
2. In deep humility and with the right childlike disposition, combined with holy awe and humility.
3. In love for God and our neighbors, practicing the truth in love so that we may grow in Him who is our Head, Ephesians 4. Yes, in the Spirit, sincerely, without deceit, with all diligence and continuously.
4. Also, with a particular purpose and intention to be able to edify others by it and through this means to be more regenerated and to express the image of Jesus and obey Him carefully.

The reason why this is necessary.

1. The Gospel is a mirror to see and take note of the blemishes and stains that do not suit us. Having seen them, we must wash and cleanse them before the Lord.
2. It is a depth of mystery that is not known except by those who incline their hearts, surrender to it, and let it rule over them.
3. If we do not see it, we are not true hearers; we must have a true knowledge of it, pay attention, contemplate it, be enraptured and surrendered to it entirely.

4. To better put into practice that nothing can be done without seeing it and inclining the heart to it, for even the angels desire to understand these things.

But let us now proceed to the usefulness of this matter, learning that it is not enough to hear the Gospel if we do not perceive it, and those who do not perceive it will become very guilty and vain hearers.

1. How many reasons do we find to lament the lack of perception in this Gospel, from which so many errors, misconceptions, superstitions, etc., arise.
2. From here also comes the great deceit of the heart, thinking it is wise when it must become foolish to become wise. But if one rightly understands the Gospel, it teaches that we are nothing and that we must not think ourselves to be anything.
3. From here also come all the mistakes and stumbles in our walk, so that we fall into many extremes. But David hid God's Word and law in his heart so that he would not sin.
4. It also hinders our growth and progress in Christianity, so that we are not built into a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

The reason for this is:

1. It is not known or valued according to its worth, not seeing the necessity of it. Instead, people seek after what is strange and worthy.
2. Due to a lack of love for the Gospel.
3. It also comes from the curiosity of people, who are always looking for something new and different. They will gather

teachers according to their own desires, being tickled by hearing new things.

4. It comes from the self-love of humans because the Gospel is a mirror that does not flatter or deceive but shows the true face of man.
5. Then there is the deceit of the heart, thinking that one does not need the Gospel and that they are wise in their own eyes. But soul, be warned, you are in great deception.
6. It also comes from a lack of the Spirit, which would otherwise lead us into all truth.

Examine yourselves now according to these markers:

1. A soul that values the Gospel above all treasures of the world, considering it more precious than much fine gold.
2. It has a heartfelt consent and acceptance of everything it finds in the Gospel, even if it condemns and goes against it.
3. It continuously makes it the rule of its life and shows that it is always surrendered to it.
4. It has a view of the Gospel in everything it does, whether it will be to the advantage or disadvantage of it, and is tender-hearted about it.
5. It is also capable of offering everything it is and has to God.
6. It grieves to see people who make so little of it and treat it lightly. Oh, how few are found like this? But the Lord knows His own, and those who sigh over this.

Perhaps there are souls here who are still found in these matters only to be vain hearers, who have reason to humble themselves and pray to God for enlightened eyes to be able to behold and understand the wonders of His law, and that He may lead them into it.

But you believing souls, who are in this, give glory to God and be encouraged to do it more and better than you ever have. To this end, often consider the words of Paul, 1 Corinthians 15:2: "By which you are also saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you unless you believed in vain." Oh, let us seek to rightly understand this great work.

I wish in conclusion that in you may be found that disposition of the heart and virtues that the Apostle Peter recommends to us in 2 Peter 1:5-11: "But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, 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 if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins. Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things, you will never stumble; for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen."

Ninth sermon, on 1 Corinthians 15:2

By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you unless ye have believed in vain.

Valued and beloved listeners!

You are aware that in the discussion of this letter from Paul to the faithful Corinthians (which we have thus far treated under God's blessing), we often, instead of an introduction to our sermons, prefer to show and explain the context of the words. The purpose of our Apostle in this chapter, which excellently demonstrates the resurrection of the bodies, which some denied, is to confirm it. This great article of the Christian faith is here confirmed by various arguments, the objections are answered, and the Christian's steadfastness in faith and diligence in the work of Christ are urged until the end of the chapter.

The last time, I explained and impressed upon your hearts the Christian community in the first verse and how you and I must truly find ourselves there with that holy and enlightened servant Paul and say, "Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand." In it, we saw the Object of the gospel that the Apostle preached to the Corinthians. "I declare to you the gospel which I preached," especially the doctrine of the resurrection of the body, which is a crucial point of that Gospel, was made known and delivered to them. Many of them were obedient to it, heard it, believed it, and embraced it as the truth of God, which you received, and in which you stand. In our text, we have the blessed consequence that the Gospel had on those who believed and accepted it: "by which also ye are saved," that

is, placed in a saving state, brought onto the right and only path that leads to salvation.

The Gospel reveals the Object of salvation as it points out and reveals the blessed way of salvation to the lost sinner, to make them inclined and encourage them to earnestly strive to attain it, to come to the full assurance that they are already saved in hope. For it includes, "if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you." If you do not steadfastly adhere to the Gospel and its great teaching, the resurrection, our hearing is in vain, our faith is empty, our hope of salvation is not useful. If we do not make it effective and keep it in the manner in which it was preached to us, we will find that we believed in vain.

1. The Apostle Paul wrote these words to impress the previous ones, as well as the following ones, more deeply on the hearts of the Corinthians when he argues that there will be a resurrection of the dead. This Gospel, from them, was embraced and accepted. So they were firmly founded in it, having a revelation of man's highest blessedness in it. "You are saved," that is not only from your heathen state or whether you are in a good state to be saved, but you are already saved because you have the beginning of heaven on earth. Because every saint is already here a citizen of heaven, of the Jerusalem that is above, Hebrews 12.
2. The only means to promote their salvation is the Gospel. For it reveals the Object of salvation, and it directs the lost sinner to the path he must take to attain eternal life. Yes, it assures us that there is access to heaven opened, encourages us, and makes us inclined to earnestly pursue it in order to attain that desired salvation.

3. Another reason, taken from the particular grace required in relation to this Gospel, is faith, by which we expect what is revealed and embrace what is offered and promised to all who expect the Lord Jesus, our Savior, for salvation. Without this act of faith, the Gospel means nothing to us, and it will not benefit us in any way. For without the hearing that brings faith into us, our preaching and your faith would be in vain, verse 14.
4. Concerning the particular disposition of the soul required for this purpose, namely memory and remembrance: "if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you." For although the mentioned things are designed to keep in your heart a continually active faith in the Gospel, especially the article of the resurrection, it is still necessary to keep in your memory a form of sound words, in such a way as I have preached them to you.
5. The relation or influence of the things by which our salvation can be promoted is to remember and keep in our hearts the words we hear. Without the Gospel, there is no salvation, and without faith, we gain no benefit from the Gospel, and without keeping the words we hear, there is no saving faith or any blessing. For then you would have heard in vain, and your faith would be in vain if you do not steadfastly adhere to the Gospel and keep in your memory what I preached to you concerning the resurrection and eternal life.

So we clearly see the meaning and intention of the apostle's words. I will pass over what was mentioned in the previous verse and now comes up again, as I do not like to say the same thing twice. But since this is often heard and little pondered, my intention now will be to make you good listeners and to show you what are the obstacles and aids conducive to a good memory of spiritual things, according to the

admonition of the apostle: "By which also ye are saved if ye keep it in memory, unless you have believed in vain."

There is no more common deficiency among religious people than the weakness of their memory, which nevertheless makes them guilty due to carelessness and inattention. And yet, if a person is to be saved by the Gospel, they must retain in their memory what they heard preached. Since this is such an important matter, I will present to you your deficiency and the remedy for a poor memory in order:

1. What memory is.
2. The excellence of this attribute.
3. Its corruption.
4. Its restoration or sanctification.
5. The common hindrances.
6. The suitable aids for it.

I. Memory is the faculty of the soul in which the things we know are stored. It serves as the storehouse for what is brought into it through our eyes and ears. Through these two senses, sight and hearing, our understanding is reached and sealed, to imprint the truths we hear in our hearts and to preserve what is imparted to it. Therefore, the ancients called it the "belly of the soul." There is a small kingdom in the soul of a person: the king or ruler is the will, the secret council is the understanding, the judge is the conscience, and the great treasury is the memory.

II. The excellence of this attribute of the human soul is a remarkable subject, and nothing in it is more wonderful than memory, which can preserve countless images of things and restore what appears to be lost, with a miraculous capacity. It has the power to represent absent and past things. Through the aid of memory, we retain what we have read in books or heard in sermons, as well as examples of God's

mercy or judgments for our encouragement and warning. Thus, the soul would be poor without memory. Those who have lost it and cannot answer even small or great questions are well aware of this. It is reported that the orator Massaba Corvinus forgot his own name, and Atticus could never remember the names of the letters of the alphabet. All that has passed in a person's life is lost to them if they have no memory, and so is the comfort of the soul, which becomes impoverished in knowledge and gifts. Memory was fortunate in its original state, like a crystal glass in which everything was seen and correctly contained. Now it is broken and stained. Back then, it was like an iron chest, and now it is like a sieve or pierced pouch. Its neighbors were a clear understanding and a holy will. Thus, Adam remembered his Creator in his youthful state and knew, served, loved, and praised Jehovah.

III. The corruptions of memory. Because of Adam's fall, all the faculties of the soul have been miserably corrupted. When a fine watch falls to the ground, its gears and pins can break or get misaligned. Our fall was like that of a precious glass, which shatters into pieces and is destroyed. The same happened with reason and memory in the soul; they must be renewed. Its defects consist in:

a. That it remembers things it should forget, which are unprofitable. There are thousands of things that are unnecessary and of no use, cluttering up memory and pushing better things out. It fails to notice that it needs to grasp and remember what is necessary and retains harmful things, such as remembering insults when someone has spoken ill of you or done you harm. We can remember old songs, capriciousness, and grievances suffered, claiming to want to forgive but being unable to forget, which is very harmful to us, just like sinful things. So, we can remember a story from seven years ago while forgetting a sermon after seven hours. Memory often recalls

the sins of youth, as in Ezekiel 23. It presents the cleverest and worst things to the sinful and vain heart, renews what it knows, takes pleasure in remembering it, and thus deepens the evil and doubles the guilt. A damaged memory can be aptly compared to a sieve, allowing good grain to pass through but retaining the chaff, so it is not lost but poisoned. b. The corruption of memory consists in forgetting things that we should remember, even though they are extremely numerous, important, and beneficial. I will only present a few.

1. We should remember our Creator, etc. Ecclesiastes 12:1, and all that He has done for us. Yet, we forget Him countless days, as Jeremiah 2:32 says. Although we constantly see, feel, and experience Him since He is not far from us, in whom we live, move, and have our being. Also, we forget with Him the great things He has done for us in the work of creation and providence, especially for His church. Thus, we should remember the wonders God has done of old, as in Psalm 77. And also for us, His mercy and redemption, which every good Christian should keep in their heart and mind as a record. Deuteronomy 8:2 says, "You shall remember all the way which the Lord your God has led you, these forty years," etc.
2. Our Redeemer and what He has suffered for us. Christ's love in giving Himself as a ransom and offering for sins. That's why He instituted the Holy Communion for His remembrance, putting to work all our graces, faith, love, repentance, and thanksgiving, etc. And especially the constant use of this ordinance, if it can be enjoyed; otherwise, all these good things are hindered. We should remember His love, His sacrifice, and His benefits, which should be as familiar to us as our own name. Yet, how many are

there who hear God's Word for years and cannot describe the faith by which the soul lives.

3. The truths of religion, especially those of the utmost importance. Malachi 4:4 says, "Remember the law of Moses, His statutes, and His judgments," etc. So Peter wanted to bring to remembrance the truth of the saints, even though they knew it, as long as he lived, 2 Peter 1:12, 13. The knowledge and doctrine of God and His Son Jesus Christ, of creation and fall, of the covenant of redemption and grace, of faith and repentance, of resurrection and the coming judgment. These things should be so deeply impressed on the hearts of Christians that they know them like their own names. Yet, how many are there who, after hearing God's Word, cannot describe the faith by which the soul lives?
4. The duties of religion. The Scriptures often demand us to remember them because we easily forget. What is the meaning of Exodus 20:8, "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy"? And Hebrews 13, which some call a chapter of remembrance, verses 2, 3, 16: "Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some have unwittingly entertained angels," etc. Thus, they indicate our duties with a memento since we easily forget them. It is as unreasonable as forgetting to eat and sleep. As Christians, we live by faith and breathe through prayers. To forget these and other duties toward God or our neighbors is to forget the Christian religion itself.
5. Our sins. We must necessarily remember them, not to renew our love for them, which is damnable, but to abandon and hate them, which is saving. Ezekiel 36:31 says, "Then you will remember your evil ways and your deeds that were not good,

and you will loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and your abominations." How many sins do wrongdoers not forget? They forget their lies, oaths, corrupt morals, curses, fights, drunkenness, fornication, and all wickedness. Until God, in His mercy or wrath, awakens their conscience, and then everything is orderly presented before their eyes, either for their conversion or terror and destruction, as in Deuteronomy 9:7, "Remember! Do not forget how you provoked the Lord your God to wrath in the wilderness," etc.

6. Our promises and commitments to God. The corruption of our memory is evident in this: we promised in baptism that we would sincerely forsake the world, the flesh, and the devil, and pay to our Lord and Savior strict obedience to all His commandments. This is rarely remembered by us, but many behave in direct opposition in their conduct. Remember your sickbed promises when your life was in danger, what your condition was then, and what it is now. You were either a great hypocrite then, or you are now a true apostate. But do not deceive yourself; God is not mocked. He has various ways by which He will make you remember this one day.
7. The Church of God. The entire general Christian Church implores every day, "O remember me in your prayers." The holy David says in Psalm 137, "If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget its skill! If I do not remember you, let my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth— if I do not exalt Jerusalem above my chief joy." There is no greater sign of our adoption than to have a deep sense and constant remembrance of Zion, the people of the Lord, which almost no one inquires about. Although it is in great persecution and distress, it cries out to us: "Does this not concern you? Behold my sorrow!" If

people examined our household prayers and everyone's secret prayer, it would become clear that our memory in this regard is very poor.

8. Remember your last end. Oh, how little is this in the thoughts of people? As the prophet said to the people of his time in Isaiah 47:7, "You did not think of these things," etc. And another laments it in Lamentations 1:9, "She did not consider her destiny; therefore her collapse was awesome." Whatever is about to happen to us, we should think about it wisely, including death and judgment, hell and heaven, these four extremes. A heart dead to the world, sick of sin, and with a heavenly disposition of the soul, which is restless here and sighs, wishing and praying that this mortal state might be swallowed up. All of this is intended to show you and explain that your memory is corrupted and does more harm than good.

IV. The restoration or sanctification of memory to its previous state. For when a person's corrupted nature is changed, all the workings of the soul are changed, and the mind is renewed. There is a new creation of understanding, will, and memory, which now thinks of suitable objects. This is done:

1. Through purification, which begins with conversion, Ps. 22:27: All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the Lord. For one who remembers what the state of humanity was in creation now experiences a negative change and the need for restoration. The same method is described after the second fall, Revelation 2:6: Remember from where you have fallen, and repent, etc. For when the Holy Spirit drives out the impurities of the soul's faculties, the dregs of sinful impressions that were within are expelled.

2. Through strengthening. Just as sin weakens, grace strengthens and has an effect not only on the understanding and will but also on memory. Many who forgot entire chapters and sermons before their conversion can now retain them after their renewal and conversion. God's Spirit assists them in this, as promised by our Savior in John 14:26: He will bring it to your remembrance. Grace mends the gap created by sin.
3. By inclining memory toward good things and resisting evil. Before the heart is reborn, memory hates good things like a corrupt body loathes healthy food and takes pleasure in impure and evil things, unable to retain anything good. This is true of us: all good things are like fire in green wet wood, quickly extinguished. But when grace comes to change the disposition of the heart, memory begins to make room for spiritual things, and the heart takes pleasure in good things, as in Psalm 119:15: I will meditate on your precepts and fix my eyes on your ways. When God makes everything new from within, the memory of sins becomes bitter, and the humbled soul remembers them with sorrow.
4. Memory is filled with good things because the new creation is reborn. No newborn child desires milk more than a soul desires wisdom and knowledge. Indeed, memory is filled with truths from Scripture, promises, rules, and aids, which the sanctified mind contains and the will embraces, and they dwell in memory, as in Matthew 12:35: The good person out of his good treasure brings forth good things. Just as worldly people manifest what they possess inside through their foolish, carnal, sinful conversations, so the wise, religious, and godly interactions of the saints clearly demonstrate the beautiful things within them. It is gold, not copper.

5. Through proper application and utilization of everything for good use, which is God's work through His grace. Having a lot of money in the safe is not as good as having a little in the purse when it is needed. The tassels that the children of Israel were to make on the corners of their garments, as in Numbers 15:39-40, served as a reminder to look at them and remember all the commandments of the Lord. You shall not go after your own heart and your own eyes, which you are inclined to whore after. And the eternal mercy of God is promised in Psalm 103:18 to those who remember His commandments to do them. One must think of the right time for all the good things that we understand and thus progress towards perfection.

V. Fifthly, I will show you the general hindrances of a good memory, or the causes of a bad one that obstruct a good memory.

1. A weak and unclear understanding. One can have a strong but not a healthy memory. For unless a thing is clearly understood, it cannot be properly remembered, especially when reason is weak and understanding is poor. What good can there be in memory if the natural person does not understand spiritual things, as in Matthew 13:19: When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, etc. Words will be brought with little benefit when the things are not understood. Therefore, seek more knowledge and clearer comprehension, pray for good understanding from God, and use all means to increase it.
2. A carnal and careless heart that is negligent about good things. Things we value little will never be remembered. The impression in our heart corresponds to the importance in memory. Some passages of Scripture, heard or read, may be neglected and

forgotten at one time but noticed and remembered at another when the heart is in the right condition. Hard wax receives no impression, but when softened by fire, it takes the seal. Therefore, those who complain of a poor memory have more reason to lament their old, dead, and hard hearts and not rest until they are renewed.

3. A beloved sin that dwells in your bosom weakens and corrupts all the workings of the soul, waging war against their faculties and disturbing them. This particularly weakens memory, as it is pressed to take sides and serve the stronger party. When their desires and evil lusts wage war against the soul, it has no inclination for spiritual matters. Therefore, if your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away, as in Matthew 5:29. Otherwise, your memory will never be healed. Indeed, your memory book, which is full of writing and scribbles, must be erased before you can write anything new on it. Thus, the marks and dark letters of your beloved sins must be washed away by complete mortification before any good thing will remain in your memory.
4. Worldly cares are detrimental to memory. Our Savior has clearly said that no one can serve both God and Mammon. Memory is finite, though capable of worldly things and sinful thoughts within, rejecting the one necessary good that should be there. It is found that young people, who have fewer worldly cares, have better memories than others whose life's cares occupy all their thoughts, taking away their attention from the good they read or hear. Matthew 18:22 says, "The cares of this world choke the word." Therefore, if you want to enhance your memory, reduce your concern and preoccupation with earthly matters. God curses your useless labor and care so that the good is withheld

from you and does you no good. You do not want to overload your horse, so why burden your own mind? Pay close attention to and fix your spiritual matters in your understanding and heart before they become disordered and disarranged due to worldly concerns and earthly occupations.

5. Gluttony and drunkenness are great enemies of memory; they cloud your brain, and being disturbed, it cannot use its faculties correctly. Excess of food or drink numbs the mind. A full stomach rarely leads to a clear mind, which is dulled by excessive drinking, as in Proverbs 31:4-5: It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine, or for rulers to take strong drink, lest they drink and forget what has been decreed and pervert the rights of all the afflicted. It is clear that a drunk person forgets what they have done or said, as there is ample evidence of those who have not only drowned their wealth and reason but also their erudition and health, their souls, brains, and everything, so that they become like fools. Hosea 4:11 says, "Whoredom and wine and new wine take away the understanding." Therefore, keep a close watch over yourself.
6. Intense and strong passions such as anger, sorrow, love, and fear, corrupt memory. We must have passions, but reason moderates them, and grace directs them in the godly. Where these reins are lacking, they shake all the workings and faculties of the soul like an earthquake shaking the land. For instance, raging anger inflames and agitates the blood, causing the entire spirit to melt, erasing the impressions made by the seal, just as wax melts before the fire, so that the imprints made by the seal are lost. The same goes for sorrow, fear, and love, which you may find in yourself and others, affecting your poor memory. Therefore, labor to subdue your iniquities through God's

strengthening grace, which is as necessary for our strong passions as a stubborn horse needs a strong bridle. For you will find that not only does sin lie heavily in them, but much evil comes from them. Seek, therefore, to heal and save your soul, etc.

7. Mixing and confusing numerous and contradictory things together disrupts memory, so that the good is lost among the bad and hindered. This happens through excessive reading without reflection, not storing the words in our hearts like Mary. Therefore, be careful how you hear. Strive to understand what you read and hear, and do not read beyond your comprehension and memory, or else you will always be learning and never come to a knowledge of the truth, as in 2 Timothy 3:7. Therefore, make sure you understand things through meditation. Do not rush. Those who travel by post cannot give an accurate and detailed account of the land. Spend time focusing on one thing with your thoughts. When one thing is thoroughly studied and clearly understood, it will be remembered much better. Thus, I have shown you the hindrances to memory, or what the general causes of a poor memory are.

What should be particularly discussed now are the effective aids for a good memory. Such as:

1. Natural.
2. Artful and external.
3. Spiritual.
4. For natural use and assistance of memory, it is somewhat necessary to have a learned physician and useful things for the

healing of a bad memory. Cold brains are a cause of forgetfulness. Adequate warmth and dryness are great aids in strengthening memory, as it allows one to comprehend and retain information more quickly. I recommend the following: A. A modest diet, as excessive food and drink can harm the brain and consequently weaken memory. Moderation in eating maintains the blood and spirit in order, and good air also helps. Luke 21:34 says, "Take care that your hearts may not be weighed down." The heathens often surpass many Christians in moderation. Oh, what a sinful deed it is to destroy our reason by satisfying our sinful desires and inclinations. B. A peaceful mind is beneficial. For all strong and disorderly passions weaken memory, but a composed demeanor strengthens it. It is true that man is born to trouble, as sparks fly upward, Job 5:7. And if we do not submit our minds, our souls become like a turbulent sea, and memory becomes confused. In clear water, you can see fish, but when it is disturbed, it becomes impossible to see anything in it. The same applies to reason and memory. As long as the mind is at peace, everything is clear and accessible to our memory. But when it is not, everything is hidden from us. Therefore, faith must be active and trust in the almighty God and His promises. Isaiah 26:3 says, "You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you because he trusts in you."

5. Artful or external aids include: A. Repetition of the things one wishes to remember, continuously contemplating and storing them in one's mind; this deepens the impression. Deuteronomy 11:18, 19 states, "You shall lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul; you shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall teach them to your children." Some orators have often repeated their speeches to remember them well. Pythagoras, for instance,

instructed his students to reflect on and repeat everything they had heard, read, or done each evening before going to bed. How much more should you reflect on what you heard during the Sabbath, speak of it with your family, and repeat it to strengthen your memory. B. It is also necessary to write a lot and place essential things in a book before your eyes. However, memory and books are insufficient and too weak to retain the things we should remember. The Holy Spirit teaches us better. Deuteronomy 11:20 says, "You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates." Even the king himself, as in Deuteronomy 17:18, had to write the words of the law in a book to remember them better. Writing deeply engraves divine truths in our hearts. Therefore, I recommend that you write down sermons, not only as an aid to your memory but also to help you stay attentive to God's ordinances and avoid idleness or wandering thoughts that distract you from what you should be thinking about. Alas, how many excellent teachings, instructions, and lessons have you heard that are quickly forgotten because they should have been remembered. C. Learn to use your memory correctly and cultivate the habit of continuous contemplation. Many wise people burden their memory by constantly reflecting on weighty matters. When they return home after hearing, reading, or learning something, they take notes to retain everything through meditative engagement. Encourage your children or servants to recite something from the sermon or catechism. You will find that such use and habit will help them remember more. Engage your intellect in fruitful thinking and fix your thoughts on useful and necessary subjects so that they become lovely to you, stored in your memory until they are firmly established there.

6. The spiritual aids are as follows: A. Lament your forgetfulness. The Jews say that when Adam, looking at paradise, remembered his fall, he had to weep. But we have a reason to mourn and remember it, not only because of the great guilt but also because of the evil consequences of that fall, to which we all stand guilty. Our poor memory is a result, cause, and sign of the fall and much evil. Idolatry, considered the greatest sin in Scripture, is deemed as forgetting God, Psalm 9:17. This leads to a failure to acknowledge Him. We have even more reason to humble ourselves before God. B. Prayer is also necessary. Every good and perfect gift, including memory, comes from above, from the Father of lights, James 1:17. Therefore, it must be sought through continual earnest prayers, which are the golden key to unlock the heavenly treasure for needy souls. Pray to the Lord not only to sanctify your soul but also everything that pertains to it. You have a foundation for your prayer in John 14:26, where our Savior said that the Father will send the Holy Spirit to teach and remind you of everything. He will give it to all who ask, Luke 11:13. Such earnest prayer brings a blessing. Pray to the Lord to deeply engrave His truths in your heart and trust that He will hear the inspiration and supplication of His own Spirit, granting you a memory useful for His glory and your well-being. C. Paying attention is crucial. If the mind is not active while listening, memory will be weak in retaining information. Therefore, direct your thoughts toward the holy work you are doing. Remember that the almighty God is speaking to you through every sermon or good book you read or hear. Each chapter or sermon is a letter from the God of heaven sent to you. The Gospel is our Savior's will and testament, which, when diligently examined, will be remembered better. The more effort you put into studying, the deeper the impression it will make. The holy David could say, "I will never forget your precepts, for

by them you have given me life," Psalm 119:93. The words of Scripture that brought us to life are not easily forgotten. When the heart is engaged, the mind is also active. It is no wonder that people remember so little when they listen so carelessly, allowing their wandering eyes to reveal their wandering thoughts.

D. Proper esteem. The more we love and cherish something, the better we remember it. Children remember every new thing they have never seen before, while the elderly remember things they care about. When we have affection and regard for something, it influences the mind, being the instrument of memory, and impresses upon it the things that are dear to us. Therefore, our affection for good things should prevent us from forgetting them. The best art or means for memory is to humble ourselves before God's threats and take comfort in His promises. Great sorrow or joy leaves a deep impression in our hearts. Therefore, understand that spiritual things are excellent, receive the truth in love, and you will remember it better, Psalm 119:16: "I will delight in your statutes; I will not forget your word."

E. Serious meditations. If you read or hear and immediately turn to other activities, you will quickly forget, as in James 1:24, 25. It is like looking in a mirror and then immediately forgetting your appearance. However, those who look attentively and thoughtfully will not be vain readers or hearers but doers of the word, blessed in everything they do. They make good use of everything they read or hear, applying it to their minds and benefiting from it, Psalm 119:11: "I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you." When there is a truth, duty, or promise for a particular time or situation that resides in our thoughts, it remains there and becomes familiar to our soul when we give good things a place in our hearts and let our thoughts dwell on them again. Close your book after reading a little and meditate on it; it will

stay with you. A slow rain penetrates deep into the ground, while a downpour flows away. Similarly, listeners are very forgetful, and that is why they forget what they read or hear because they do not contemplate it. In this way, both their and your labor are lost.

1. But you may object and say: the Scripture teaches us to fear God and keep His commandments, as it is the whole duty of man; why is so much meditation necessary then? I answer that meditation is also required for this, as without it, you cannot keep or obey God's commandments. There are 10 commandments, but there are around 1000 duties related to these commandments and prohibitions. How can these be done or avoided unless we constantly think about them? Just as with the commandments and ordinances of the Lord, so it is with the promises of the covenant and the teachings of life and salvation.
2. Objection: but it is impossible to remember so many Scripture passages, along with so many teachings and practices that we have heard. Answer: if you cannot do it perfectly, try your best. We cannot perfectly fulfill all the commandments in this life, but we must strive to do what we can, and then our Heavenly Father will help us and accept us. But if you have a strong memory for worldly matters and a weak one for God and godliness, you are close to being cursed, according to Malachi 1:13.
3. Objection: Yes, but we have as good hearts as the best, even if we do not have such a strong memory. Answer: This is vain boasting and reveals the pride of your heart because no humble, modest person would flatter themselves in this way. You boast of the renewal and holiness of your hearts, as if you were innocent and leading a well-ordered life. But do not deceive yourself,

thinking you are spiritually rich when you are poor, blind, miserable, and naked.

4. But a weak Christian may easily say: if there is no faith or salvation to be obtained without remembering spiritual things, then I certainly have no grace, for I hear and read a lot, but nothing sticks with me. I will believe in vain. Answer: To answer and alleviate your doubt, know that there is historical and practical memory. The former is a great natural attribute or a special gift, and although it is a good help to grace, it is not absolutely necessary. What profit is it for a person's salvation if they can recite 2000 names in order like Cyrus and Scipio, or if they can recite 200 verses like Seneca if they cannot remember the instructions and promises that serve for their practice and comfort? But a practical memory is sanctifying, in which good things are received, which are sweet and holy, ready for use. If you can remember God's commandments to do them and notice that you will not forget them and hear the voice behind you saying, "This is the way, walk in it," when you turn to the right or to the left, then thank God for the timely and preemptive grace that He imparts to His troubled children.
5. But a poor soul says: my misery is that one thing excludes the other. If I think about the second, I lose the first in the meantime, and while pondering over it, I lose both. Answer: But know that even if they have gone out of your head, you have not necessarily lost them. They may still be stored in your heart. Just because you have shifted one thing does not mean it is lost. Every forgotten truth you seek will be counted as yours. Although some of them may be forgotten by you, if you have stored a good matter within you, pray to God to keep it and return it at the right time, as needed. God will do what is

necessary when the time comes. At first, Jesus' disciples did not understand what He said to them about being betrayed, killed, and rising on the third day, as mentioned in Matthew 17:22-23. But later, it was said in Luke 24:8 that they remembered His words. By God's grace, the same will happen with you.

6. Another may object and say: I can't remember anything; I want to, but my memory is gone. Answer: It is possible that it has weakened, causing you to forget other things such as shapes, names, or natural matters, as well as Scripture passages, teachings, and spiritual matters. If you struggle with your physical tasks due to forgetfulness, you may be saddened by it because it is a fault and a consequence or fruit of sin, both actual and original. In the spiritual realm, you should also be grieved by your weaknesses. But for the things you still remember, try to contemplate them properly. This is where most people fall short. Strive to make good use of what you retain; your efforts will not be in vain. A sieve appears to be full when submerged in water, but once removed, the water flows out, leaving it empty. Similarly, when a poor Christian reads or listens, they may feel filled with heavenly matters, but when they pause, they find their heart quickly empty again. However, this emptiness purifies and cleanses them. When the Roman Senate condemned Cassius Severus's book to be burned, he said, "You may as well burn me, for I have written it in my heart." If the book of your memory is gone, but you have written God's will in your heart, He will accept it as healthy and sincere, even if your memory fails and your thoughts falter.

Application

Finally, I come to the appropriation of all this.

1. Raise and thank God for your memories, especially those of you who have a good and strong memory. Do not be proud of it, but be very grateful. I have read about a Simon Tharvey who boasted so much about his knowledge of theology and philosophy that he could instantly answer any questions about them. But history tells us that his memory was so affected that he couldn't recite the Lord's Prayer or even remember the ABCs. Alas, one crack shatters them. Oh, give God the credit for this attribute and say: I am fearfully and wonderfully made. And if your memory has some strength that remains faithful, thank the Lord all the more, for you have a great advantage over others who lack such a treasure. Yes, poor Christians would gladly forget all their earthly concerns if they could only remember the things of eternal life. So be genuinely thankful for it.
2. Let all of the Lord's servants who preach or write strive to assist people's memory and use a suitable method for that purpose. A confused preaching or writing style confuses the memory, and an abundance of disjointed parts overwhelms it. But a clear structure and an effective method greatly help understanding and retention. The Holy Spirit condescends to use this method in various Scripture passages, Psalms, Proverbs, and Lamentations, to aid the weak memory through the alphabet. These habits and methods should also be used by us to enlighten the people's understanding, persuade their wills, and awaken their consciences by what has the most impact on their hearts as they leave us. Because conviction, conversion, and comfort mostly come when they thoughtfully consider what they have heard from us.
3. Strive to improve, heal, and strengthen your memory. Do not be content with joyful or fruitless memories. Many have, with God's

help, remembered more and better than before when they put the prescribed means into practice. If your body is weak, you use means to strengthen it. Why not do the same for the noblest part, which can also be healed through this? A ship, even when leaking and sunk, is not immediately discarded but raised and sealed. It is reasonable that your memory, sunk by sins, should become a help to heaven, for which all our gifts are given. Is it not reasonable for them to be strengthened for this purpose? Perhaps your memory has been corrupted by sin, and just as you once set it to serve impurity and unrighteousness, you should now set it to be a weapon of righteousness and holiness (Romans 6:19). Since God has given us such noble power of the soul, should we neglect or despise it? Can others think about the world and their desires, and will we not think about holy things that concern a better world? Indeed, can we remember a thousand unprofitable and sinful things and not remember the things that concern us and are of the highest importance: the salvation of our precious immortal souls?

4. This is necessary and an undeniable duty, presented as a fundamental law in the Old Testament (Deuteronomy 6:5,9) and reiterated in the New Testament (Matthew 22). "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength." This binds us to apply every faculty to this purpose. We all too often experience the corruption of our weak memory, and therefore, it is necessary to improve it as much as we can.
5. A good memory is helpful and of great use.
 - It is a means to increase knowledge because what good is your reading or hearing if you remember nothing? It is not

just eating or drinking but digesting it well that keeps you alive. And just as it is in the natural, so it is in the spiritual. Proverbs 4:20-21 says, "My son, be attentive to my words; incline your ear to my sayings. Let them not escape from your sight; keep them within your heart."

- It is a means to faith, as evident in our text. "Unless you believed in vain." Though faith rests on God's Word, we should still pray. When God's works are forgotten, faith weakens. That's why the Savior said in Matthew 16:9, "O you of little faith, do you not yet perceive? Do you not remember the five loaves for the five thousand?" God's Word is the sword of the Spirit by which Satan is defeated. But if this sword is missed due to forgetfulness, how will we stand against our enemies?
 - It is a means of consolation. If a poor Christian could think of God's promises in times of distress, he would be strengthened with new life. But when these promises are forgotten, his spirit sinks. Our path to heaven is through valleys and hills, and when we stand on them, we no longer think we will descend into the depths or that God has established our mountain. But in such moments, a faithful memory is of great help. Psalm 77:10-11 says, "Then I said, 'I will appeal to this, to the years of the right hand of the Most High.' I will remember the deeds of the Lord; yes, I will remember your wonders of old."
4. It is a means of gratitude, a duty in which we all fall short, and forgetfulness of God's blessings is the cause of it. Unmerciful people are said to have bad memories. If we thought more about God's grace and mercy, what abundant material we would have to praise and thank God, with David's heart and words, Psalm 103: "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits!"

5. It is a means of hope because experience fosters hope, and memory is the treasury in which we store God's goodness previously experienced so often. Lamentations 3:20-21: "My soul continually remembers it and is bowed down within me. But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope." Those who do not trust in the Lord are said to forget Him. The reason for people's impatience and discontent in adversity is shown in Hebrews 12:5: "And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? 'My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord.'"
6. It is a means of repentance because how can we have remorse or mourn for what we have quickly forgotten? How should we think with sorrow and abhorrence of our sins? Ezekiel 16:63: "That you may remember and be confounded, and never open your mouth again because of your shame." But alas, we write our sins in the sand and foolishly imagine that the eternal God forgets as quickly as we do, even though He has said and sworn, Amos 1:7: "I will never forget any of their deeds."
7. It is a means to be useful and helpful to ourselves and others. When a spark of grace kindles the heart, it will also warm others, give them advice, and be helpful. In this, a good memory is exceedingly useful, to bring forth old and new things from the treasure of the heart. Such people can say, "We have heard with our ears, O God; our fathers have told us." Such remarks as these can be very beneficial for many souls, as 1 John 1:3 states: "That which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you."
8. The lack of memory is a great deficiency and loss. When we cannot remember what we read or hear, our time is wasted with our chapter or sermon. I hope you do not read just to pass the

time when God's Word is considered. Wherever you go, it will guide you; when you sleep, it will watch over you, and when you awake, it will talk with you (Proverbs 6:22). But a broken memory has heard of God's well-known providential acts but has forgotten them. We have read of rare examples of God's mercy, justice, power, and goodness, but they have been forgotten and lost. Just as your memory fails, so does your meditation. Therefore, we must hold fast to what we have heard from us, so that we may not drift away at any time.

My exhortation is to young people: "Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth." Your memories are fresh and strong now, but later your thoughts will be occupied with cares and responsibilities. A new ship is free from leaks, but over time, it will become leaky. Thus, your cares and sorrows will wear out the powers of your soul afterward. Therefore, equip yourself now with the Bible and books, the Catechism, and collections of fine passages. Good lessons will not take up much space or make you sleep too much or too little. Therefore, parents should have such things in their hearts and diligently teach them to their children to help them gain and grow in understanding and grace.

Oh, let us all strive for more holiness, for it elevates all our gifts, bringing them to a right faith and making them fit objects. The more grace we have, the more and better things we will remember. Grace strengthens memory for practice, even though it does not always lead to many words. Some have such great memories that they can recite everything, but when it comes to doing and implementing, they are great dwarfs. An ounce of grace is worth more than a hundred pounds of gifts because it makes us love the truth and duties better, and it is easy to remember what we love. Therefore, let our daily prayer be that the God of peace may sanctify us entirely, soul and

body. Christians should not inquire about how little grace is necessary for their salvation but should rather strive to obtain more and glorify God.

Finally, put into practice what you know and remember, for this is the end of all true knowledge: "Remember God's commandments to do them." Let all truths and teachings that you read or hear flow into your heart. If it is a duty presented to you, set it before you immediately. If it is sin, root it out. If it is sincerity or hypocrisy, lay your soul alongside it and do not be like those who disturb much and hope for nothing. They want to discuss and dispute all the points of religion before they sincerely accept and do them. Remember to fear, love, serve, and trust in God. Remember your neighbors by loving them and doing good to them in every way. Remember yourself to always exercise yourself unto godliness, to have a blameless conscience before God and people. And remember your end as one who always keeps your lamps burning and oil in your vessels, so that when your Master comes, He may find you doing so and you, as a faithful servant, may enter into your Lord's joy. To this end, may God bless this word and make you fit for everything. Thus, I will achieve my goal, God the glory, and you the comfort, here in grace, and in the hereafter, in eternal glory. Amen.

Tenth sermon,

The parable or similitude of the ten virgins, from Matthew 25:1-14.

Then the kingdom of heaven shall be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom, etc.

The emphasized words, which we will explain briefly and clearly in sequence, are part of the answers given by our Savior to two important questions posed by His disciples in Chapter 24 of Matthew.

The first question was regarding the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem, likely prompted by Christ's statement in Chapter 24, verse 2. The second question was about the signs of His coming and the end of the world, likely prompted by His discourse in Chapter 23, verse 39.

He then proceeded to inform them of some things that would happen before His coming. Namely, strong temptation mixed with severe adversities and persecutions, especially during the time of the Antichrist's rule. Additionally, there would be great confusion in the hearts and churches throughout the world after the calamities of those days. Then, as He says in verse 33, the sign of the Son of Man will appear when He comes in power and great glory.

But if you desire to know the day and hour when this will happen, it is such a mystery that My Father reveals it to no one, not even to the angels in heaven. Therefore, you need not be eager to know this. It is enough for you to understand that before My coming, there will be sorrowful and distressing times. But when things are at their worst, when the sun and moon (through the distress of human hearts and the general upheaval in the world) appear to be darkened, then it will be time for Me to come and set all things in order, as mentioned earlier in Chapter 14, verses 23-27.

Our blessed Savior had thus exhorted all Christians to the great duty of watchfulness, to be prepared and eagerly awaiting His coming. This duty He continues to emphasize in this chapter, where He illustrates its necessity through two parables. The first outstanding parable of the five wise and five foolish virgins is what we are about to discuss, as found in verses 1-3.

Verse 1, 2: "Then the kingdom of heaven shall be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were wise, and five were foolish."

Verses 3, 4: "Those who were foolish took their lamps but took no oil with them. But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps."

By these lamps, external profession of faith and holiness is meant. The oil in their lamps represents the confession of repentance and faith that all Christians make in Baptism and the Lord's Supper. By the oil in their vessels, we understand the sanctifying and saving grace of the Holy Spirit, its growth, and its fullness.

Note here how the wise and foolish virgins both have similarities and differences. They agree in this much that they both took their lamps and lights. They both had oil in their lamps. The distinction lies not in the fact that the wise had oil and the foolish did not but in this: the wise took care to be provided with oil for the future, to replenish their lamps when the initial oil was consumed. Some confessors, like the foolish virgins, content themselves with the empty lamp of external profession, without caring to secure and ensure an inward principle of grace and love to keep that confession alive, just as oil keeps the lamps burning. Just as a lamp refuses to burn any longer without being supplied with sufficient oil, so too, a profession of religion, even if it is splendid, will not endure or grow without the foundation of faith and love in the hearts, to support and sustain it.

Therefore, the true wisdom of a genuine Christian lies in ensuring that not only the lamp of their life may burn through external confession but also that the vessel of their heart may be filled with the grace of the Holy Spirit.

Verse 5: "While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept."

That is, while Christ delays His coming, whether through death or judgment, instead of remaining watchful, they all fall into slumber. Not only external confessors but even the holiest and best Christians tend to spiritual slumber. When the bridegroom tarried, they all fell asleep. Spiritual slumber occurs when grace is not lively and not exercised, especially faith, hope, and love. Then our zeal, care, and vigilance grow weak. However, the slumber of the saints is not quite like a deathly sleep; it is not evident in all the activities of the soul. Even if there is lethargy in affections, there is no insensibility in conscience. As the Church says, "I slept, but my heart was awake" (Song of Solomon 5:2). There is always a principle in the soul that chooses God's side, while a true Christian sighs under the burden of his drowsy heart. But the greatest wisdom lies in maintaining a constant vigilance so that we are not caught off guard by the Bridegroom's coming, terrified and ashamed when death and judgment befall us. Blessed are those virgins whose lamps always burn brightly!

Verse 6: "And at midnight there was a cry: 'Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!'"

At midnight, which is the darkest and most untimely hour, while the virgins were deep in slumber and, when they awakened, confused and perplexed, not immediately able to discern what to do. This is the state of those who postpone and neglect their repentance and

preparation for another world until death and judgment catch them unawares. Oh, how terrifying will that midnight cry of the Bridegroom's arrival be for the unprepared soul! What a dreadful word it will be: "Behold, the bridegroom is coming!" Indeed, the Bridegroom will surely come at His own time when all, both the prepared and the unprepared, will be called to go out and meet Him. The reason is that there is a just God who will reward everyone according to their works and recompense both soul and body for all the services they have rendered to God. The body will not always remain like a forsaken widow in the dust but will be reunited with its old companion, the soul. As reason says, "He may come." Faith says, "He will come," according to Christ's promise in John 14:3: "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also." This also results from Christ's merits and His love for us and our love for Him. Faith has seen Him on the cross and will see Him coming on the clouds. Happy, then, are those who love His appearance, preparing themselves to meet Him worthily.

Verses 7, 8: "Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.'"

The virgins arose and trimmed their lamps, demonstrating their genuine readiness for Christ's coming and appearance and their willingness to receive Him. So, a believing understanding of the certainty and imminence of the Lord's coming and appearance will motivate us to rise from our spiritual slumber and prepare ourselves with joy and assurance to meet Him.

The foolish virgins request oil from the wise to replenish their dying lamps. There will come a time when those who neglect grace will be

made aware of its value through its absence. Those who now esteem it lightly, even despise God's grace, will hear themselves say, "Oh, give us some of your oil!"

Note the reason for their request: "For our lamps are going out." From this, we must learn that the lamp of confession, which is only external, will indeed go out, having no sufficient oil of faith and divine grace to keep it burning.

Verse 9: "But the wise answered, saying, 'No, lest there should not be enough for us and you; but go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves.'"

Consider the following:

1. The wise virgins' denial and refusal when they say, "No, lest there should not be enough for us and you." They do not want to part with their oil. It is everyone's responsibility to obtain grace for themselves because concern for the grace of others will not benefit them. It is not what others have done or what Christ Himself has done that will save us without our own earnest effort and endeavor.
2. The reason for their refusal: "Lest there should not be enough for us and you." Christians who have a great measure of grace cannot afford to be without it when it comes to their state before the glory of heaven.
3. Thirdly, note the advice given to them: "Go to the sellers and buy for yourselves." Some take this as an admonition, while others see it as a rebuke and rejection. They are told to go to the sellers in the market, the ordinances and institutions where grace can be obtained. Indeed, those who desire grace must diligently observe the means of grace in this spiritual marketplace to obtain that oil of grace. You must buy it or obtain it for yourself

if you know where to find it. It is the greatest folly to think that one should buy oil when it is needed to burn. To seek our grace when we should be exercising it is not the right time. It is not the time to seek grace when the Bridegroom has come, and the day of grace is over.

Verse 10: "And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut."

1. Christ will come in the great day to His people as a Bridegroom and to the wicked as the Judge. The relationship that begins here between Christ and His church will then be openly displayed.
2. The qualification of those who will go with the Bridegroom to heaven is that they were ready. This readiness is twofold:
 1. It consists specifically in the person being justified and freed from sins.
 2. Or in the disposition of the heart, sanctified, renewed, and in the course of life, entirely holy and righteous, consisting in our practical preparation.
3. The wandering state of those who were unprepared. The door is closed to them, the door of repentance and hope of salvation. All such doors are forever closed by Him who shuts, and no one can open. It is impossible to change our state when the day of grace and salvation is past. Woe to those who, through their foolish procrastination and delay, make the door of repentance and forgiveness forever closed to their souls!

Verses 11, 12: "Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open to us!' But he answered and said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.'"

Consider the following:

1. The virgins' request and plea.
2. Then the Bridegroom's response and rejection.
3. The plea is: "Lord, Lord, open to us!" How indifferent people can be about heaven and salvation here, yet there will come a time when they will earnestly desire them in the hereafter, but it will be too late.
4. Note also the Bridegroom's rejection of their request, saying, "I do not know you," meaning: I do not acknowledge or recognize you. There are two kinds of knowledge that Christ has: a knowledge of simple observation and a knowledge of special approval and appropriation. The first knowledge Christ has of all people, but the latter only of good people. Oh, what a terrible calamity it will be for any person, especially for those who have been outstanding confessors, to be denied and rejected by Christ in His coming, and then to hear that dreadful word from His mouth: "Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you. Depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!"

Verse 13: "Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming."

Here we have the application or appropriation by the Lord Jesus of the preceding parable: to always be on guard, constantly on our post to meet the Bridegroom in death and judgment because we do not know the time of His coming and imminent revelation.

The posture of watchfulness and preparatory expectation of the Lord Jesus is the great duty that lies on all who believe and look forward

to the coming of Christ. Blessed are the souls who are found in a vigilant, watchful readiness at the appearance of the Bridegroom, standing ready with well-burning lamps, as with girded loins, while they let their light shine in practicing grace, increasing in all the fruits of the Spirit, and in all the essential virtues of a good life. Only such, and such alone, will have a spacious and abundant entrance into the eternal kingdom.

Truly, this is an exceedingly great parable, especially applicable to everyone who approaches God in Christ through the confession of the Gospel, which also includes the name of virgins. For all those who are favored with true grace and united with Christ. This is a great state of blessedness that well suits the wise virgins, as they are brought to the King in embroidered garments (Psalm 45). Paul says that he presents the pure virgins to Christ as a man and betroths himself to Him. It is said of the 144,000 sealed on Mount Zion with the Lamb: "These are the ones who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins" (Revelation 14:4). Therefore, the more we consider ourselves as Christians of the true stamp, the more careful we must be not to be found foolish virgins. Just as it was said of Ahithophel, whose counsel God changed into foolishness, and whose wise advice was considered as oracles and divine utterances, which now all failed. When the virginity of spiritual wisdom changes into foolishness, it is a great judgment, and this expression should awaken us and stir our spirit to holy jealousy, not to accept base metal for good, nor false pearls for real ones, and not to think ourselves wise when we are still foolish.

It is, therefore, a point of great vigilance to live and die as we desire to rise and appear before the judgment seat of Christ. Oh, how this should oblige us and bind us to pray, watch, and labor to be found in Christ, justified by His blood, sanctified by His Spirit, full of faith,

repentance, and every grace, to die and fall asleep in and through Jesus! To this end, search the Scriptures to see if these things are so. I desire no other Judge than the Scripture. Oh, how we should desire to see what is called in God's Word, "one of the days of the Son of Man." Oh, what a change that day will bring to the world when it is transformed by the coming of the Bridegroom. Many converts will come forth from the womb of the morning, Psalm 110. That is the dew of Christ's youth. Then the eyes of the blind will see, and the ears of the deaf will be unstopped, and the tongues of the stammerers will speak plainly, Isaiah 29:18 and 32:3, 4. The lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the dumb shall sing on the highway of holiness, where the unclean shall not pass over it, but it shall be for others. Oh, that the Spirit from on high might be poured out to awaken us and enable us to store up oil in our vessels and thus, united with Christ our Head, wait for His coming, of which I still have something to say.

He concludes His address by describing His coming, revealing the state of those times of His coming, from Matthew 24:37 to Matthew 25:31.

1. To persuade them to watch and pray because people at that time would be wicked and worldly, as in the days of Noah. He explains this through two parables to encourage them to be vigilant, leading to the end of Matthew 24.
2. Or there will be great indifference in other places among people, but not given over to sensuality, as in the days of Noah. These will be like chaste virgins, a pure church in the world, not tainted with her harlotries, which our Savior explains in this parable.

3. Some who will be awake and looking for Christ's coming but will have a mistaken view of Him will be willfully careless and not use their talents according to the will and purpose of the Lord Jesus. This is explained in the following parable of the ten talents.

In the parable we are about to discuss regarding the ten virgins, we are encouraged to persevere in vigilance, waiting for Jesus' coming with wise prudence. This parable corresponds to the customs of those times in which our Savior lived when they celebrated their weddings at night. The bride, accompanied by several virgins, went to meet the bridegroom, and since it was dark at night, the virgins each took their lamps.

Those who were ready and met the bridegroom were admitted to the wedding. But those who came later, when the doors were closed, were kept outside, although they knocked hard to enter. These customs are known to all who are experienced in Jewish history. We should pay attention to this because it sheds much light on the true meaning and natural interpretation of this parable, in which two parts can be observed: A. The preparation of the church to meet Christ, from verse 1 to 5. B. The arrival of the Bridegroom to meet Him, from verse 5 to 12.

A. In the first part of the parable, we see the church's preparation to meet Christ. In this, three things can be noted:

1. The place where this preparation takes place, namely in the kingdom of heaven.
2. The time when it will happen, in the opening words: "Then."
3. The individuals who are preparing, not corrupted members of degenerate and apostate churches where human confession has become defiled, but confessors of a certain superior nature who

are truly sincere. However, others are false and secretly insincere, although they outwardly conform in some things, they also differ significantly in other aspects. The things they all have in common are three:

4. They are all virgins and confessors.
5. They were all alert and active or prepared for a time to meet the bridegroom, for which it is said that they all took their lamps.
6. They all had enough faith to go out to meet the bridegroom. The things in which they differed are:
7. In general, five were wise, and five were foolish.
8. Specifically, the foolish ones took their lamps but no oil, while the wise ones did both, as stated in verse 8 and 4.

This is the rough outline of the first part of this parable, the outcome of which is that the condition of the members of some churches concerning the time of Christ's coming will be as follows: they will not be openly ungodly, corrupt, and scandalous, but virgin confessors. Some time awake and arisen from their worldly carelessness, living as Christians, not preserving their pure chastity merely in works but waiting for Christ in a covenant of grace. Only some of them, and a significant portion of these, will indeed be wise, filled with spiritual truth, and empowered by grace. However, others among them, and also a large portion, will be found foolish at the coming of Christ.

I, therefore, come to discuss this first part, namely, God's visible church.

1. The place where this preparation to meet Christ will take place. This is not in the kingdom of this world or earthly kingdoms but in the kingdom of heaven. This is understood in various ways in Scripture. Here, it does not refer to the kingdom of glory in the

third heaven because there will be no foolish virgins there. Nothing unclean will enter there. Nor does it refer to the Head of this kingdom, the Lord Jesus, for how can He be compared to the ten virgins? Nor does it refer to the Gospel, which in Matthew 13 is called the kingdom of heaven, likened to a dragnet. Nor does it refer to the internal kingdom of grace, established in the heart of every believer, which is called a mustard seed in Matthew 13. For there can be no foolish virgins there, and they have no part in it.

Therefore, I believe that here the kingdom of heaven refers to the external kingdom of Christ in this world, namely, the visible church, which is often called the kingdom of heaven in Scripture, as seen in Matthew 10:12 and 21:48. In this kingdom, some are wise, others foolish. All confess Christ and look to Him for salvation, waiting for His coming. The condition of this visible church will be similar to that of the ten virgins.

God's visible church on earth is especially in the Gospel called the kingdom of heaven on earth. For consider the appearance of the entire earth, where you can see the kingdoms of men or of Satan, sin, and death, of which Paul says, "who has delivered us from the power of darkness" (Colossians 1:13), which is a kind of hell. And why not similarly under God's kingdom on earth, which is a kind of heaven?

Especially now under the Gospel, in which the Lord began to fulfill what was promised in the Old Testament and was to be fulfilled in the fourth and final monarchy, Daniel 2:44, in the time of the New Testament, in the state of Christ's visible church, which would gradually overthrow all other earthly kingdoms. For the following reasons:

1. Because the same King who reigns in heaven also reigns here, being present, Psalm 2:6. The saints are commanded to rejoice, be glad, and be joyful with their whole heart because of the presence of their King among them, Zephaniah 3:14, 15. He is indeed King over the whole world, for the immediate execution of God's general and special providences is entrusted to this King Jesus. But over His enemies and other creatures, He reigns as a King of power, but He does not reign over them as a King of grace and love. For He thus reigns among His people in His church, Deuteronomy 33:26, 27. The Lord is present with each of His people individually, but much more with them collectively when they are gathered in His Name.
2. Because here are the laws of heaven. Paul says in Hebrews 12:25, speaking of the ministry of the Gospel in the church: "See that you do not refuse Him who speaks. For if they did not escape who refused Him who spoke on earth, much more shall we not escape if we turn away from Him who speaks from heaven." These laws are not only proclaimed here but also accepted. Without these laws, there could be no kingdom. Christ's reign in this world is not tyrannical or lawless. For He, our King, is also our Lawgiver, Isaiah 33:22. The same laws by which we will be governed in heaven, we have here and are under them. The patriarchs had no written word until the time of Moses and the flood. Although in heaven, the external letter and script of both the law and the Gospel will be abolished, as they will not be needed when the morning star rises, 2 Peter 1:19, the living rule of their content will remain. The end of the ministry is to bring us to the unity of faith in a perfect state, Ephesians 2:13. Therefore, faith will not cease when Christ's ministers die. Our faith will no longer see Christ through such mirrors or cling to Him through such means of promises and

ordinances as we do now. But without these, we will see Him and cling to Him as our King. Although the law is abolished as a covenant of life, it will always endure as a rule of our life and perfect obedience to it, which is the blessedness of the saints in heaven, John 1. But a heart opposed to it is the greatest misery of the saints on earth, Romans 7:24: "O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?"

3. Because here are the subjects of heaven, Ephesians 2:19: "Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God." Not only on earth but as Paul says: "For our citizenship is in heaven," Philippians 3:20. God Himself has placed all the true members of the visible church in the number of the saints throughout the New Testament, being great heirs of heaven, who are possessors of it by faith, as others are by feeling. They are just as near and dear to God in a certain sense as those who are already in heaven because the same reason that loves them also loves these, although they are poor outcasts and exiles of the world. There is only a paper wall of their bodies between them and heaven. The only difference is that they are subjects in their own land above, and those here are indeed the same fellow citizens but strangers for a time on earth. A kingdom is described as the rule of a king over a people subject to him. If King Jesus were present and made His laws known, but there was no people to be subject to Him, then there could be no kingdom. But when the King, laws, and subjects of heaven come together in the visible church, then the kingdom of heaven is there.
4. Because even the glory of heaven has begun here, just as the sun, which fills the stars with glory, whose rays also touch the earth.

So the same glory that shines in heaven also shines in the poor church here on earth. 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." Those whom Christ justified, He also glorified, Romans 8:30. That is, He began it here in a special way, in the presence of the angels in heaven, Ephesians 3:10. The pure in heart see God here in a heavenly way, Psalm 63:2: "So I have looked for You in the sanctuary, To see Your power and Your glory."

I. From this flow the following practices:

1. Behold the honor and blessedness of those whom God has called out of the world and planted in His church. The Lord has opened the way to the Tree of Life and has readmitted you into Paradise and received you into the kingdom of heaven itself, where the Lord of glory is your King to make known to you the laws of heaven. His heart is opened, and you have the heirs of heaven as your companions, and the angels of heaven are your bodyguards. They desire to see those things that your eyes see and your hearts feel, 1 Peter 1:12. You have the love of a Father and the Son of God dwelling in you, and the Spirit of heaven comforting you. Oh, what is man, that the Lord remembers him so, visits him, and sets His heart on him? When it is not yet fitting for God to take you from this world to heaven, He causes heaven to come down to you on earth, and in those who were once enemies of His kingdom and confined in the kingdom of the darkness of death, strangers to the citizenship of Israel, without God and Christ in the world, without promise and hope. I do not call the temple of the Lord or the order of the church an idol, but I speak and show your privileges and God's goodness in it. I know well that the world neither sees nor feels such a

heaven on earth. Instead, it secretly despises all ordinances, which, even if they were in heaven with their carnal hearts, they would not be able to endure and would find no satisfaction there. Nevertheless, truly heaven has come here and has become present, through God's hidden will. The portion of His people, containing such things that no eye has seen, nor ear heard. And if you do not know any of these things by experience, then accuse yourself and mourn even more because you are in the midst of the light yet still in darkness, and what has begun as heaven for some may be called a little hell for you.

2. Take care not to defile God's church secretly. For what do you do by this but pollute the kingdom of heaven itself? The better and purer something is, the greater the filth and contamination thrown upon it. It is said in 1 Peter 1:4 that "the kingdom of heaven above is an undefiled inheritance." Sin is never committed in that place, which is part of its glory. Oh, take care that you do not enter into a church fellowship with defiled hearts, thus defiling God's holy things. Do you know where you are? I know it is not in that heaven where you cannot sin. But nevertheless, it is in such a heaven on earth where you should not sin and should by no means defile God's church. It was one of God's heavy accusations against the Jewish church that when the Lord had brought them from a land of pits into a fruitful land, yet they defiled His land. Neither the priests nor the people said, "Where is the Lord?" Jeremiah 2:7, 8. It will also be severe for you, who associate with God's people in His church, if you are found guilty of defiling the kingdom of heaven, which you should carefully preserve as an undefiled inheritance, to experience this heaven on earth in your own life.

3. Let all members of Christ's church also learn to have their conversation and walk in heaven and to behave as people who have come down from heaven to earth and are returning there, as if they were already in heaven. Paul practiced this and thought that there were many people who did not do so but were earthly-minded, as people without the Spirit. Philippians 3:19, 20. Oh, leave and forget your homeland and your father's house, then the King of glory will delight in your beauty, Psalm 45:10, 11. Let the reproach of earthly-mindedness, cast upon the faces of Christians, be wiped away by your behavior, being holy and heavenly, yes, detached from all things under the sun. Or are you in heaven with an earthly heart? Is heaven not good enough for you? Can that great good not satisfy you? Many have desired to see and cannot see, so little is the Lord Jesus, the King of glory, seen in His beauty in the gatherings of His saints.
4. Take care not to help overthrow this Kingdom. Faithful subjects would rather lose their lives than their King should lose His kingdom. Do not fear enemies from outside but fear yourself at home. The enemies of the church have never damaged it, but the sins of the church, which God wants to banish from it, Zechariah 7:14. Consider the grace that the Lord entrusts to us. If He took us up to heaven itself on the wings of angels, He could not have done us a greater favor outwardly in this world than to bring us to this kingdom of heaven on earth, in His church, to be written among the living in Jerusalem. I confess: one day of fellowship with a number of tender, humble, and sanctified Christians who rejoice in their King and delight in God the All-sufficient, surpasses the many long years of the glory of the whole world.

II. Now the things that overthrow and betray this kingdom are as follows:

1. Ignorance of the sins that can harm and destroy it. There are general weaknesses that all believers share, over which the Lord has mercy. But there are those that are individual and personal, concerning particular individuals, Ps. 18:23, for which the Lord is angry, even with His own people. There are also some sins that are general church weaknesses, for which the Lord does not want to reject His people, but sometimes in various churches, there are specific church sins that are not seen, lamented, or removed, yet for which the Lord is angry, even though they do not know what damages them. These sins will devour the roots like cancer and blow away the most flourishing churches. Ephesus and Sardis had their sins, Revelation 1:4 and 2:1. And Laodicea, Revelation 3:16. What a sad consequence came when they did not know their sins or have repentance for them; then the candlestick of Ephesus had to be taken away. Oh, this has been the downfall of many churches while enjoying their liberties. They could neither recognize nor want to recognize their sickness on the day of Christ's visit. And from here came their destruction because they did not see. To the remnant that had escaped, the Lord showed grace. They could read their sins in their afflictions. It is a pitiful spectacle to witness the devastation of other countries after great slaughter and bloodshed.

2. Self-seeking through a spirit of self-interest. Just as it is in a kingdom: if there is no common bond and in the army that must fight for them, then everyone is concerned about how to preserve their own tent, instead of fighting with the military for the commonwealth. Now, such a land and people will be easily overcome. Or as it is with a body: if each member seeks only to preserve itself and not the head, which preserves them all, then the body will fall and die shortly. Christ Jesus is the Head of His

body, the church. If you now seek to preserve your own name more than Christ and are given over to your own desires more than to the will and demand of Christ. If you are more careful to gather feathers for your own nest and only take care of yourself without observing each in his place, the commonwealth of the church, be assured that God will abandon you and let everything serve for your destruction, 2 Chronicles 15:1, 2.

3. Making a covenant and friendship with the enemies of Christ's kingdom or making peace with our desires, having a secret peace with sins and a hidden complacency in sins, which undermines Christ's kingdom. The Canaanites who were left alive because they did not want to drive them out entirely tormented and pricked the people of God. The sins that one does not forsake or repent of will destroy the church. God's wrath went out against Jehoshaphat because he loved those whom the Lord hated, 2 Chronicles 19:2.
4. When the church lays down its weapons. No kingdom can be safely kept in the ordinary way when all the weapons are taken away from the people or not used by them when their enemies are at their borders. When the church puts aside the shield of faith, with which we protect ourselves, and neglects prayer with which we harm and drive away our enemies, what safety is there in the church? When Joshua went out to that great service, the Lord said to him: "Only be strong," Joshua 1:7. There is no greater sign of the church's downfall than when the Spirit of prayer fails. Expect, therefore, such a shaking of trembling hearts that it will make tongues, knees, and ears return, if the Lord will dwell among you any longer.

5. Not bearing fruit for the kingdom, Matthew 21:43. Then that fig tree is cut down, which for many years has occupied the earth in vain and bears no fruit after much pruning and watering. A country or kingdom where there is consumption but no significant profit will soon consume itself and die of itself. The fruit is the end of the tree. All duties that you do, in which you do not aim or seek your own end and purpose, that is a good fruit that refreshes others who taste it. When a Christian does not walk as an example, others are not made better or refreshed by him but are hardened by a dry and sapless example. There is no fruit, and this calls for the axe to cut down the tree.

6. Discord can overthrow kingdoms without the help of foreign enemies. If the swords of the people pierce each other's entrails and consume them, this will soon kill them. When the Jesuits cannot conquer by the power of weapons, they seek to make their plot succeed through secret divisions. Satan sought to overcome Christ as he advised Him to cast Himself down from the pinnacle of the temple. It is the delight of hell to cause divisions in churches, and he first attempts this in the best church, and it is usually most successful when the watchmen slumber and are themselves divided and fearful instead of watchful. A little cause of offense over a word or a look, a garment or a trivial matter often does much harm. It is strange to see how such small things sting and bite when Satan's head is in them and his horns are set on them. It is wonderful to see what a fire a secret spark can kindle. Oh, take good care of this, Galatians 5:15: "But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another." Do not quickly adopt an opinion, and fear the thought of feeding discord. The first sin that erupted in the early Christian church was murmuring, Acts 6:1. This was followed by the stoning of Stephen, an earthly

angel, full of the Holy Spirit, and the church was then taken from him, Acts 7, and afterward the whole church was scattered and persecuted, Acts 8 and 9. Oh, preserve the peace of the church and do not tear it apart over small matters. Love one another sincerely and heartily, then you will live together in peace and the God of love and peace will be with you.

7. Having described the place, let us now consider the time when this preparation takes place, as contained in that word: "then." Which refers to the 37th verse of chapter 24, namely, "until the days when the Son of Man, Jesus Christ, comes." We read in the Prophetic and Apostolic Scriptures that the entire time from the Ascension to the Second Coming of Christ is called "the last days," Acts 2:17, 18. This should cause us to live in daily expectation of Jesus' coming, just as the wise virgins did, and it especially applies to us, who live in the last days, even more so than those who lived long before us, 1 Thessalonians 1:10, 1 Corinthians 1:7. I think that here it refers particularly to the latter part of the last days. For our Savior, having foretold many things that would happen before His Second Coming, says: "Then the kingdom of heaven shall be like ten virgins," etc.

There is a double coming of Christ.

1. To call the Jews and gather with them the fullness of the Gentiles, which is called "the appearance of His coming," 2 Thessalonians 2:8. When there will be such a radiance of truth shining in the world, armed with instruments that will utterly destroy the Antichrist, Revelation 19:19, 20.
2. His coming for judgment, Hebrews 9:28. 1 Corinthians 15:23, 24. When there will be a general resurrection of the righteous and the wicked, 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17. Although it is true that

at the time of Christ's coming to call the Jews, the churches will be waiting as chaste virgins and preparing themselves for the marriage supper of the Lamb, Revelation 19:7. Nevertheless, the second coming of Christ appears to be the time indicated here. The churches will then be virgin churches, waiting for the coming of Christ as a glorious Bridegroom, for the comfort and salvation of those who wait for His judgment, which will be in power and great glory, on the clouds of heaven, Matthew 24:30. When He will separate the sheep from the goats: placing these with the devils, and granting the others to possess and inherit a kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world, Matthew 25:34. This is the third heaven, where God's face is seen, and around His throne stands an innumerable host of glorious angels who serve Him as His subjects. Christ wanted to go to prepare this place for His chosen inheritance, as Abraham's faith expected, yes, a city that was not earthly but heavenly, a city that has foundations, whose Artist and Builder is God, Hebrews 11:10, 11.

From this, we can learn that in those days of Christ's coming, the entire Church and the confessors of the Gospel are virgin confessors, visible saints, and all members seem to be betrothed to Christ. Yet, among some, there will be found reckless foolishness, and great carelessness will fall upon many. Some think that the days in which we now live are the days of the Son of Man, a part of His coming in which the churches are virgin confessors. Our judgment holds it to be so, but our practice denies it. All church members must be visible saints, true believers, virgins betrothed to Christ, fleeing from the contamination of idolatry and worldly splendor. But where does it resemble a well-ordered church of Christ? Would the Lord now not find many foolish virgins? Oh, take care not to become careless among their number. You have the pillow of peace to lay your head

on and the cares of the world to dream away your time. You have no pressing persecution to awaken you. But where there is no inward struggle, there is carelessness. Folly will be the death and destruction of some, and a lethargy the ailment of others.

3. The persons who prepare themselves. For the soul that wants to enjoy communion with Christ, it must be separated from all other things, especially from the law and desires. The way of our betrothal to Christ.

1. The entire church can be called the bride of Christ, and each member considered a virgin, awaiting this Bridegroom, Psalm 45. Paul calls the whole church a virgin, 2 Corinthians 11:2. So, these virgins are the entire individual church, along with its various members. Now, virgins are those who are fit for marriage, not defiled by a man, as Rebekah is said to be. By virgins, I mean those who are not defiled inside or outside with the evil of the world, Revelation 14:4. But when the marriage comes, they cease to be virgins and become wives. However, being betrothed to Christ, they are spiritual virgins. Yes, such churches or members who are separated from all other lovers and betrothed only to Christ and closely united with Him. These alone look forward to Jesus' coming and have communion with Him, who is their Head and Husband.

2. All who expect eternal communion with Jesus Christ, the Bridegroom of His church, must be virgins, separated from all others and betrothed only to Christ. There were indeed foolish virgins among the wise. Yet, as foolish as they were, they saw that this was the way to be like the wise, to be virgins as well. See Psalm 45:10, 11. Jeremiah 3:19, 20: "But I said, How shall I put thee among the children, and give thee a pleasant land, a goodly

heritage of the hosts of nations? and I said, Thou shalt call me, My father; and shalt not turn away from me." There is their communion. Therefore, the Lord will take away the names of Baal and betroth them to Himself in faith and loving-kindness, etc.

3. One must be separated from all other lovers. Idolatry is called adultery in Scripture. The soul must be separated from all foreign things before it is united to the Lord, Hosea 2:2. There are two things that every man does before he is betrothed to the Lord Jesus:
4. He departs and commits adultery through unlawful desires towards the creature, Psalm 73:27, James 4:4.
5. He thinks he is legally married to the law, Romans 7:3, 4. The law is there compared to a husband from whom Christ has redeemed His people. Yet, some want to adhere to it, or the soul takes more pleasure in some creatures than in Christ, or rests more in some self-righteousness than in the Lord Jesus. Now, to be separated from all other things is necessary for the heart to be drawn away from all worldly contentment. Then one should not be satisfied with one's own work and righteousness. And this must be found in all those who expect communion with the Lord Jesus.
6. The heart must be separated from desires for and delights in any creature. Know:
7. The soul of every man must have something to satisfy and comfort it before it rests on a good support.

8. There is nothing that can refresh or comfort the thirsty heart. One is satisfied and rests in the Fountain or cistern, the Spring or bottles, in God or the creature.
9. Man, having lost God and all true good, seeks it in the creature. Because he does not find enough in one, he also digs in another and hews out broken cisterns that hold no water while abandoning the Fountain of living waters, exclaiming, "Who will show us any good?" Psalm 4. Because the soul has never found that infinite sweetness in God, it longs for and delights in the creature, loving it more than the Creator. It has turned the creature into a god in which it never finds contentment. That is why man's soul clings day and night to the dust, committing spiritual adultery before God. Now, if a soul ever has communion with Christ, it must be separated from all creatures, without desire or pleasure in the creature.

The reasons are as follows:

1. Because while the heart is in a covenant with any creature other than the Lord, it is in deadly enmity with Him, James 4:4. If a person has a precious merchandise, and someone offers him half its value, he considers it contemptuous, as if it were worthless. So, if the Lord is worthy of all our love, life, and soul, even though we had thousands, and a person does not abandon their desires for God, they have considered themselves small and scorned. If a person does not fully surrender their love to God, then the creature is placed in the place of God and as the human goal, which belongs to God alone, as the first Origin and Alpha of everything. That is why God becomes angry when one is satiated with creatures while missing and forsaking the Creator, who alone is to be praised for all eternity.

2. As long as souls do not see or come to Jesus through the eye and feet of faith, they neither think nor know that Christ is better than everything. Birds tied to a cord may fly high but must soon come down. Even though the soul flies to Christ when it finally decides to leave everything, it sometimes falls away from Christ. Healthy people have no desire for doctors and pharmacists when all their members are strong and fresh; there is no desire for plasters, drinks, and physicians. So, as long as something satisfies the heart, there is no desire for Christ. Hosea 4:11: "Whoredom and wine take away the heart."
3. As long as Christ does not come into the heart, it cannot stay with Christ or do anything for Him, Matthew 6:24: "No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money." Two masters each have their occupation and constant work, so one must leave the other and cleave to one. People on their sickbeds are as meek and sweet as lambs and promise everything because their delight in creatures has passed. Many people, after their pleasure in worldly things, are choked by the earthly thorns and sharp pricks of oppression.
4. Because the soul is ignorant of the abundant love that the Lord Jesus shows to those who have communion with Him. From those whom we show much love, we also expect much love in return. All love is too little for Christ, whose love compels us to love in return. When the Lord Jesus asked His disciples if they also wanted to leave, Peter replied, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life," John 6.

5. The soul must be separated from the law and not comfort itself with self-righteousness. Therefore, consider these things:
6. That the Lord does not always give people satisfaction in their sins and desires but wounds the conscience through them, and then no creature can satisfy or comfort the person. A broken spirit, who can lift it up? Judas threw away his silver pieces, and Belshazzar, seeing the writing on the wall, trembled in his drunkenness. If a person has broken bones or even a toothache, what can comfort them?
7. The law falls on a person when they meet it and see that they have broken it. But their concern is how to keep it again: "What shall I do to be saved?" When a person is arrested or imprisoned for guilt, everything is revealed. The law, as a stern prosecutor:
 - a. Urges love and obedience.
 - b. Promises a rich portion: eternal life, if you can keep it. If not, you will be damned. Therefore, abandon your sins, etc. The soul, not knowing a better way, agrees and consents to adhere to it, Deuteronomy 5: "All that the Lord our God commands we will do." In this, the soul is comforted and contented, Romans 10:2. Rejoicing in the oath, 2 Chronicles 15, Isaiah 58:1, 2. But finding no perfect comfort because of imperfect work, it unites with Christ to make up everything piecemeal, Galatians 5:1. And now it is comforted in what it has and rests in its deeds.
8. The soul must be separated from the law:
 1. Because loving it erects another Christ and makes itself a personal Savior. Can the Lord Jesus take such a soul into His communion? Though duties may be good, Christ alone must be exalted above all and not torn from His throne.
 2. Such people resist Christ, mostly in a way of faith, through

their actions. They have something to say and possess stronger fortifications. The scribes and Pharisees rejected God's counsel against their souls. Such people fall into deep abandonment unless God shows them His grace. 3. In this way, a person conspires against God to thwart His great purpose, to promote His free grace. Galatians 5:4: "You are severed from Christ; you who would be justified by the law; you have fallen away from grace." Nothing makes a person more inclined to boast than works and relying on one's own merit. Sin makes a person ashamed. There is no communion between the Lord Jesus and a work-righteous person relying on their own merit. No, the Lord wants to overthrow these false foundations as the soul cries out: "I am guilty, O God, be merciful to me, a poor sinner!" And then the soul is betrothed to the Lord Jesus.

1. The soul, contemplating the glory of Christ, chooses Him. In all marital bonds, a choice is made, and when love is great, there is little insistence on conditions. The soul says, "Let me have Him, even if I have to beg with Him." So, if the soul sees such overwhelming beauty in the Lord Jesus that it does not want, nor can stand on conditions. Oh, may I partake of Him, let me have Him and go with Him in prison, in the garden, and in the agonies of death, even if it were on the cross, in abandonment with Him, whose grace is sufficient, and His strength is perfected in weakness. Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures of the world, and considering the deprivation of their goods with joy as did the believing Hebrews and Moses, Hebrews 11:26. When Peter saw Jesus walking on the sea, he attempted to come to Him. The soul chooses the entire Christ and that forever, Psalm 73:25, 26: "Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire

besides you." You must make this choice from God before you can ever expect communion with Him. Rejoice if you may have Him on any condition. Oh, great grace! I cannot comprehend it. Would I, a lowly person, have Him, the Lord of glory, the Prince of life and peace? Peter asked, "Master, what will we have, we who have left everything and followed You?" To which the Lord said, "You shall sit with Me on thrones." Many are willing to choose and gladly have Christ in their dying but not in their life, above external blessings. They are not concerned with spiritual blessings, God's favor, and life, John 6:26, 27.

2. The soul gives itself, like a betrothed virgin, to her Man, the Lord Jesus, Song of Solomon 2:16: "I am my beloved's." Servants give work for their wages, and masters give wages for their work. But married men and women give themselves to each other. Servants in the church work for God, hoping for a reward, and the Lord blesses those who are faithful. The one betrothed to Christ gives himself to the Lord, even though he can do nothing for Him. But God must work in and through him, Romans 6:13. Those who give themselves up to the Lord in this way and live in friendship with Him may continually exercise communion with God and say like David: "I am Yours; save me," Psalm 119. "What do I wait for? My hope is in You," Psalm 39. Some suffer shipwreck in their faith because they are not the Lord's. He knows who are His, 2 Timothy 2:18, 19. You have little love for Christ if you do not give yourself to Him, and without that, there is no union or communion with the Lord to be one spirit with Him.
3. The soul finds full satisfaction in the Lord Jesus, like a bride who has enough and does not want to change for any worldly good. When Peter had a glimpse of Christ's glory, he said, "Lord,

it is good for us to be here." Simeon, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and now that he had Jesus in his arms, said, "Lord, now let your servant depart in peace, for my eyes have seen your salvation," and "I have had enough; now let me die," so he would not sin against God anymore. If you cannot be content with the God of heaven alone, you will never come to Him afterward and not be troubled by His absence. People make little effort to bask their hearts in that Sun and rejoice in what they have or expect. The Lord may have withdrawn and departed, but you neither mourn nor weep because other things possess your heart. There can be no communion in the future with that highest Good which you now despise and hold in low regard.

Use

1. This serves to reveal the great and most common and dangerous error in the Christian world, thinking that they may embrace and love the world as well as the Lord Jesus and still hope to be saved through Him, even though they commit spiritual adultery, like foolish virgins, by going after the world's desires, and yet pretend to have a part in Him and His grace. They want to lay hold of Jesus, eat their own bread, live according to their own lusts, and wear their own clothing and rags, yet they want to be called by God's name (Isaiah 4). It is a shame not to believe in Christ. Some think and say, "All men are sinners, and I am one of the greatest. Who can say, 'My heart is pure, and I know myself free from sin'? I cannot do it, but I look to Christ for salvation." Although sin is dormant in them. But what satisfies you: is it the love and communion of Jesus? Has He ever revealed Himself to you and assured you of His favor and love? But can you have the Lord and still satisfy yourself with other

things and delight in filthy wickedness? You cannot serve the Lord and other gods (Joshua 24). Oh, how few will be saved.

2. From this, we learn who they are that will never have eternal communion with God in Christ, those who were never betrothed to Him but cherish their lusts and beloved sins, which they promised never to abandon. Most people think they are virgins and betrothed to Christ, expecting communion with Him, although they have not separated themselves from all other wicked lovers and are married to the law or in a covenant with creatures.

Marks by which the soul can know whether it is in love and a covenant of friendship with any lust and creatures or married to the law:

1. Those who have never been in bitter sorrow for the loss of God. For these things are as clear as the light of the sun, that to miss God is the greatest loss, yes, the ultimate last plague of the damned in hell, lamenting: my friends, means, and creatures, yes, God and heaven, have departed. If God were mine, I would be comforted. Saul was very fearful and full of anguish because God had departed. All men have lost God (Isaiah 59:1, 2; Psalm 58:3). Yet people feel no harm, nor do they recognize any loss in the absence of God. Or if they do, they do not have as much grace as the damned in hell to mourn bitterly over it, so that nothing can comfort them because they have something else to rely on and lean on in the absence and loss of God (Jeremiah 2:13, 14). People need water, but they do not go to the fountain because they have wells and cisterns at their own doors. Many who lived with convicted consciences, when they come to die, then they are in anguish of soul and in the agonies of the heart,

so that their sweat flows from them like water. Then one hears the lamentable crying and wailing over the loss of their time. They cast down the hearts of all who come near them. Ah! God is gone, for now all the comforts that were their gods are leaving them. Therefore, examine your hearts; have you ever been troubled? You may say: I have lost my health, my husband, child, property, and blood, which has tormented me. But have you never felt the loss of God, who is eternally blessed? Do you miss His light and sweetness, His love and communion, His presence and favor? Is this an unbearable burden for you? Or, if you have felt this, have you sought and found Him? No, but you are joyful in that state and content with the creatures to which your heart is united, which give your heart peace in the absence of God. These creatures are instead of God and as your God, whether it is your wife, child, house, property, clothing, or money. But if you die in this state, you will never have communion with the Lord Jesus.

2. For those for whom the Lord is not a stranger in all His ordinances but who at times sweetly reveals Himself. But in the unconverted, the heart dries up, and that without much distress in religion, while you are in a covenant with your lust. But where is the sight of God and the delight in God? The Father who sees in secret, is He a witness to your secret life? The King's daughter is all glorious within (Psalm 45). And her life is hidden with Christ in God. They have seen God in the sanctuary, seeing His strength and His glory (Psalm 68:13). But when He hides His face, are you not alarmed? Is it enough to have ordinances, the ark, and the temple of the Lord? Do you find God in them? Man and wife, if there is love, will meet each other often and be together at meals, etc. But do you miss Christ? Do you have dead prayers, dry sermons, sapless suppers, and are you worse than

before? If you are the Lord's, He will purify you through tribulations, but if you persist in this way, do not expect communion in heaven.

3. Do you find no rest in anything you have? Surely nothing can give rest to the soul except the all-sufficient God, who is great and full, and good enough to fill all our lack in glory. And if you do not rest in Him and your soul does not cling to Him, it is certain that your heart is glued to the creature. You wanted the Lord, but also the creatures at the same time. And for this reason, God does not want it, and the creatures cannot give complete rest. Thus, it was with Solomon (Ecclesiastes 2:3): "My heart still guided me with wisdom." Nevertheless, it is vanity and grasping after the wind. A holy person sees and feels emptiness in earthly things, but fullness in heavenly things, having better food from which the world has no knowledge. Oh, has the Lord swallowed you up in Himself, in the clouds of His glory, so that in His favor and presence, you find life? Some feel the empty creature but do not seek to rest in God, who is all-sufficient to fill all our lack in glory.

Marks serving to discover whether we are married to the law or not.

1. After you are in Christ, you are not exempted from obedience to the law. But if the law has never been killed in you, you are married to the law (Romans 7:12). The life of the law is a comfort and support that the law gives for a time. People seek to have righteousness in themselves that reassures them. But the Lord wants to save His own and have them seek their righteousness in Him alone (Isaiah 45:22). Now the marriage is concluded between the Lord Jesus and the poor soul who will never come to Christ as long as they have the least good. It was

thus with the prodigal son because he could fill his belly with the husks that the swine ate. Or as it was with the woman who had an issue of blood: as long as they have any money to spend on other physicians, they will never try what Christ can do. Many souls complain that they have no righteousness. But if they had Christ, all their complaints about sins and shortcomings would soon cease, and being helped, they would say with Paul: "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:13). It is with many as with the young man in the Gospel who asked Jesus what he should do to inherit eternal life. Christ pleased him, but he felt no lack of Him. Your heart is not in love with Christ, but with something else. The joy of the saints lies in that promise: "In your seed, all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (Genesis 22:18). And Isaiah 45:24, 25: "Surely, shall one say, in the Lord I have righteousness and strength. To Him men shall come, and all who are incensed against Him shall be ashamed." Be comforted and rejoice in dark paths of trials. Although the stream goes away, the Lord remains. When the bottles are empty, the Fountain is full.

2. He who performs any duty to pacify his conscience, he is still married to the law because there are two kinds of duties of the law.
3. Some are directed to satisfy Christ when he unburdens his heart by seeing God's love in Christ, that love being poured out, the heart pours it out again on Christ. And so the Apostle says: "I am dead to the law through the law" (Galatians 2:19).
4. Some are directed to give rest to the soul: it sees its sins and fears that it must die and lie down without ever waking up again, thinking, "No grace, but threats belong to me, for lack of peace

of conscience." So she wants to perform duties and takes them as signs of love. In a person who is married to the law, his fig leaves cover the nakedness; all his duties always brood some desire. There is some sin in which the person lives, being like whitewashed tombs (Matthew 23). Paul was blameless, but serving various lusts and pleasures (Ephesians 2:3; Titus 3:3). Because the law was not a ministry of the Spirit (2 Corinthians 3:8, 9). There is no law that can give life (Galatians 3:21). Many people have strong intentions and break everything again. They sin and mourn and pray again, and then they go on more easily in their sins. If there is any lively lust in your righteousness, it is a righteousness of the law to which you are married, and you have never been joined to Christ while resting in your duties. If you are still under the power of a proud and unclean heart, never speak of Christ, although you still want to trust in Him.

5. He who has righteousness in Christ does not only bring it to people but also to God Himself for testing. Oh, how sad it is to lose communion with Christ. The disciples were grieved when He left them in His humiliation. Give the Lord honor and let your eyes be full of tears. Pray that Christ may overcome you and draw your soul with love and betroth you to Himself forever in faith and loving-kindness.

Now follow some motives and arguments to persuade us to love Christ and to be betrothed to Him.

If there is no communion with the Lord Jesus, then you are not among the virgins betrothed to Him. Therefore, you must give yourself in marriage to Him; choose Him with an inclined heart, and place your dearest affections on Him alone. For it is not dead faith but faith working through love that betroths you to Him (Galatians

5:6). Just as you have loved creatures, so love the Lord Jesus for His sake, and set your dearest affections on Him alone. John was the friend of the Bridegroom, to speak for Him (John 3:29). It is the chief work of the ministry to labor for Christ and to present pure virgins to Christ. This will now be my work and is necessary in these evil times of decline. So I will turn my address to:

1. Those who have never loved Christ, although they outwardly confess Him with their mouths.
2. Those who have sought it but cannot come to it to their own feeling.
3. Those who have loved Christ so, but their affections and love have vanished, their unrighteousness has multiplied; to you, I will present motives.

I. Consider the glory of the Person for whom I plead love. What can you love besides Him? Where can you find anyone like Him? I know the glory of the Lord is not revealed because the grass does not wither, the flower does not fade, the creature does not appear in its fading vanity (Isaiah 40). But if the Lord would open your eyes to see Him, this would win your heart for Him alone. Oh, could I give you a glimpse of His glory! Lift up your heart and say, "Lord, do not hide your face from me now." Consider:

A. He is the Ruler of the kings of the earth (Revelation 1:5). The glory of the world is a kingdom, and the glorious diamond of that kingdom is a prince in his glory. Now, for a poor beggar to have an offer of love from the greatest prince in the world, would it not delight her, and she would leave her lovers and set her heart on Him? As great as the difference is between the poorest peasant and the highest King, so poor and a thousand times more so are all the princes of the world

compared to Christ, whose dominion is from sea to sea, who exalts and humbles kings, who rules their courts, kingdoms, and their hearts. They do not and cannot do what He desires. Other kings are princes and rulers of men, Christ is the Prince of kings. Now, who would not be glad to have His love? He who, having tasted death, is seated at the right hand of God, clothed with endless glory. He who has kings in His chains, whose favor is not for a day but is eternal. Christ lives and reigns as a Lord in glory, on His throne at the right hand of God. Your foolish affections have corrupted you if you do not love Him.

B. He is ordained by the Father to be the Judge of the living and the dead in the end (John 5:22, 23), as well as to rule over all now, so that if you maintain enmity against Him, He may leave you alone. You may live in health and die in peace in the sight of men and your own eyes. Yet there comes a day when He will break forth from heaven with rejoicing and appear on the clouds in the terrifying glory of His Father, with all His mighty angels. All the dead will hear His voice, and you will appear before Him with these bodies when the heavens will burn around Him and the earth will tremble beneath Him, and all guilty eyes will weep and mourn. Then you will know what it is to despise Him and say, "Oh, that I had loved Him who is the Desire of the saints" (Revelation 1:7). You who say you love Him and yet pierce Him with an impenitent heart, you will lament. Men neither see the end of these things nor the glory of the Lord on that great day. Therefore, they love creatures and despise the Creator, the Lord of glory. A great prince is not highly regarded until he appears in state. Prisoners will gladly give their money and love for the favor of the Judge.

C. God alone is the source of all the good you have ever received from creatures, although you have not known Him or been grateful to

Him. The Lord Jesus is called the Savior of all men, especially of the believers (1 Timothy 4:10). In His days, people will sit under their vine and fig tree (Micah 4:4). If any creature has done you good, it was Jesus who placed sweetness in it, from His full Fountain of Goodness, which He sent to you and bestowed on you for your good. You would never have sinned, but blasphemed God and lived in sin without ever hearing the Gospel if it were not for Christ's sake. Was it not for Christ's sake, and do you not want to love Him? Oh, ungrateful world! Unnatural race of men, why do you love any creature? It is for its usefulness and the good in it. But if there is so much in the creature, what is there in Christ, who has given it and through whom all good is? Psalm 116: I love the Lord because He has heard my supplication, I will call on Him as long as I live. Much more when the Lord has redeemed you, since you did not seek Him, and when you asked Him, He said, "Here I am."

D. He is the eternal wonder of the saints in heaven. The queen of Sheba had heard of Solomon, which made her come from afar to see him, but she had only imagined what she now saw with her own eyes, and it ravished her in wonder. Here we hear of the Lord Jesus, of His beauty and glory, which draws the souls of the saints to Himself! And when He has come, they see what they have never seen before, especially in heaven. Then they fall into eternal wonder because of this mystery, for the happiness of the saints is to see Christ in His glory (John 17:24). Then the eyes of the saints will penetrate deeper and farther into this mystery, yes, they will see more and more, but never everything. And this is their joy and glory in heaven. What do you think of this? Is Christ your love or not? Look at all the glory of the field of this world; you will see an end to all perfection, but never to the love of Christ.

E. He is the delight and darling of God Himself (Proverbs 8:30). That is why John said, when he came to praise Jesus Christ, "The Father loves the Son" (John 3:35). Have you never seen this well and tasted it? Would you not be glad that this dear and sweet Lord Jesus would look at you, a miserable little creature, and embrace such a poor leper? Go to Him, however unclean you are, that He may heal you.

II. Consider that He calls you. Oh, that you would be betrothed to Him! He came to His own, but they did not receive Him. What the secret purpose of Christ is, I do not know, but in this Gospel dispensation of grace, He calls all, John 1:12. It is clear, Matthew 22:2, 3. Wherever there is a Gospel in the world, there is this love of Christ, having compassion on all to whom this Gospel of peace is sent, Luke 2:10. It is good news for all nations. This offer of Christ is based on His own worthiness and glory, and therefore, He also demands love. As far as I know, He has loved you, so you are not so contemptible, but Jesus' heart and eyes are on you out of love. It is not all, but the only love that overcomes. It is true, fervent, constant, pure love that He bears to you.

A. It is true love when the Gospel and the ministers seek love. The Lord is sincere in His desire; there is no deceit or hypocrisy, 2 Corinthians 5:20: "We implore you on Christ's behalf, etc." He says, "He who receives you, receives Me." You may think that the Lord does not ask for you or desire you. The Lord is angry at the rejection of His love and is wrathful because you do not kiss Him, Psalm 2:12. He swears in His wrath, Psalm 95:11. He opens His heart to you to rest in, but you do not want to. What do you think, do you want to love the Lord, or despise Him?

B. Just consider God's dealings with you. Have you not often thought that some in hell are better than you? Yet the destruction of

hundreds of thousands of people is to gain your love, Jeremiah 38:9, 10. Has the Lord not sent you many mercies to win you? Psalm 81:10-12. What gifts has God not withheld from you in this wilderness of the world, Jeremiah 3:3, 4? Has the Lord not often persuaded and moved your heart with arguments that have the power to win the heart and draw you as with the cords of men? Has your heart never melted because of God's love and mercies? Truly, you may feel His love toward you because it is great. He sends His simple Gospel to you, which you would listen to, and He seizes suitable opportunities to speak to you in the time of your health. And does He not visit you well when you are alone and His thoughts are sweet to your soul? Psalm 139.

C. It is fervent, earnest, and powerful love. Sometimes a lover is sincere but not earnest. Now, the Lord pleads for this, Jeremiah 2:5: "What injustice have your fathers found in Me?" He longs for that time of love, Jeremiah 13:27: "Jerusalem refuses to be cleansed; how long will it be then?" He grieves when He notices this, Ezekiel 6:9. He is broken because of their adulterous hearts. He is willing to give up everything for this. All the love of Christ is based on this, and if you do not come immediately, He is willing to wait so that He may be gracious to you.

D. This love is constant and continual. There is no moment, and you do not breathe so often, but you may see and taste God's love, Isaiah 27:3 and 65:2, after all your adulterous departures from God.

1. If a man were to do so, no one would consider him, yet He says, "Return to Me," though you loved the creature more than Christ.
2. When God threatens most terribly and sets His wrath in motion, He still intends nothing but love in it, Jeremiah 36:2, 3.

3. When no one else recognizes you and has compassion on you, since you are so contemptible and miserable, then the Lord says, "Live in your blood." In that time of love, the Lord speaks to them of peace, Ezekiel 16:2, 3.
4. When you have cast yourself away as a forsaken creature, yet He says, Hosea 14:4: "I will have mercy on him who had no mercy."
5. When He had you in His arms and was ready to give you up, He says, "How can I give you up, Ephraim?" Hosea 11:8. E. It is a pure love. Others seek love for themselves, but the Lord does not need you or your love. He could raise up children from stones to praise Him or go to others and draw His glory from your destruction. He was blessed before the world existed. Through all your sins, you only throw stones at the wind, and snowballs at the sun, yet He has pity on you as on Jerusalem and wants to spare you, etc.

III. It is nothing but love that the Lord seeks and asks for. Love seeks nothing but love, Proverbs 8:17. The end of your election is to be holy for Him in love. Oh, wonderful love! If it were your possessions, or your Isaac to be sacrificed, yes, even your body to be burned, it would be nothing. But He desires only love and your heart, which has committed so much wickedness against Him. If He is not worthy of this, let Him never be invoked or confessed. He does not ask for dowry but for love, and with this alone, He is satisfied. Oh angels, wonder at this!

IV. Consider what He is willing to do for you and love you if you will love Him.

A. He will set you beside Himself in glory, Psalm 45:9. Just as the Lord Jesus is beside God and sits at His right hand, so it is here. That

is an honor greater than what the angels have, who are never called Christ's bride; they have never had such a union, and therefore, they will never share in the honor of the saints. B. He will enrich you. Everything the man has also belongs to the woman. So, Himself and all His glory, His God and Father, yes, His kingdom, are yours, Proverbs 8:21. Those who love Him inherit something, while others inherit nothing, or only a semblance of God, which they will find upon awakening. But if you are poor in outward or inward man, if you are rich in God, you will be an heir of all things through Him. C. He will counsel you, Psalm 73: You will guide me with Your counsel. There is no greater curse than for a person to be left to their own counsel. But here, there will be no distress, and the Lord will show you a way out through His wisdom or providence. Christ will reveal all His secrets to you, saying, "You are My friend and bride." All the actions of your life will be arranged by His infinite prudence, wisdom, and love. Sometimes we are lost in our own plans and left to them to teach us to depend more on God, and good will come out of it, as it was with Joseph's brothers who sought his harm but it turned out for his good. D. He will dwell with you, as a man lives together with his wife, John 14:23. Oh, the great Mediator, who passes by kings and princes without looking at them, would come under your roof to dwell with you! This is better than having the presence of kings or the guard of angels, even better than heaven itself. He will dwell where there is nothing to entertain Him, but enough to grieve Him. Yet, He will stay with them through His Spirit and grace, where there is any movement, sighing, and longing for Christ. If their flesh and heart fail, God is their rock and portion forever, Psalm 73. The Lord may depart and leave the soul for a short while, but when His presence is missed a little, He will return with everlasting kindness. E. He will rejoice in you and over you, just as a bridegroom does over his bride. Not because of any beauty in you, which you do not possess, but because you were given to Him by the Father in

marriage, and for the sake of His own name and glory. As soon as you set your heart on Christ, He falls in love with you and will joyfully accept you. He will not be angry if you love Him and desire to unite with Him. No, it will be the joy of heaven and of Jesus Christ Himself. F. He will comfort you. Faithful men cannot bear their wives to be always downcast but mostly comfort them when their sadness is greatest. The Lord does not always comfort but does so in times of need. God appeared to the old fathers when they were on the worst and most distressing paths with His abundant consolations, 2 Corinthians 1:35. G. He will cover all transgressions and endure with you. Many think that when God has sealed His love to them and they commit some small sins, they are rejected by Him. No, it could be under the law, but when the soul is betrothed to Jesus Christ, no weakness or disobedience will cause you to be rejected by the Lord. Psalm 89:33: "My lovingkindness I will not utterly take from him." He will forgive their willful stubbornness, Luke 7:47. "Her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much." Yes, your transgressions will provide an opportunity to love Him more and more, Romans 5: Where sin abounded, grace abounded much more. H. He will never separate from you, Hosea 2:19. Love Him once, and He will never lose you.

1. No sin will separate Him from you. For when Christ enters into a marriage covenant, He does not measure our grace, love, and holiness by the measure of His love. Then He would have to leave us soon, but His own grace is enough to wash away our impurity, Ephesians 5:35, 36. God's covenant of grace is so established that it can never be broken but will endure forever.
2. No adversity or tribulation, hunger or danger, can separate us from the love of Christ, Romans 8:35-37. People may leave us, but not Christ. Although father and mother forsake you, the Lord will take you up, Psalm 27. 3. Not even death can separate.

It may separate husband and wife, even though they loved each other greatly. But not here. He Himself will come and take you, John 14:13, and take your soul to the bridal chamber to be with Him for all eternity. He will not lose a single particle of your blessed body but will raise it on the last day. Then, lifting up your head with joy, you will say, "Behold, my Bridegroom comes to comfort me and crown me with joy as I dwell with Him. Oh, what a blessed day that will be for you! And when the judgment is over, you will ascend with your beloved through the air to heaven, with joyful shouts, and live in His love and dearest embrace. And He will do this for you, who are so poor and lowly in your own eyes.

VII. Now I want to show that humans have no power in themselves to do any spiritual work but must receive everything from Christ.

A. If we ever expect to have communion with Christ to perform all spiritual work through His mighty power, life, and Spirit, then everything must be through Him and unto Him. If a woman bears illegitimate children, she has lost her chastity. When a person produces the fruit of obedience other than through Christ, they lose their virginity and chastity, without which there can be no communion with Christ.

1. The soul places its primary affections solely on Christ, Song of Solomon 6:3: "I am my Beloved's."
2. The soul bears fruits of love for Christ, from and for Christ, just as in marriage, a wife bears fruit for her husband, as in Romans 7:4: "Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another—to Him who was raised from the dead."

Every living person, considered in themselves, has lost all power to do any good thing, Romans 3:12. There is none who does good.

1. Their light is completely extinguished, and their eyes are entirely closed, so they sit in darkness and the shadow of death, Matthew 4:16. Now, a shadow is a deprivation of any light, and this is of all light. Hence, it is called darkness itself. A "blind" Indian is a witness to this truth and a true image of a soul fallen from God. Because they cannot see anything, they can do nothing, 1 Corinthians 2:14.
2. All the life they had for doing good is also lost, Ephesians 2:1: "And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins." They cannot breathe, speak, think, or do anything that is good, so they are considered spiritually dead in themselves.

B. When God plants grace in the soul, then it can fast and pray. God's gifts are for the good of His people, Micah 4:5: "For all people walk each in the name of his god, but we will walk in the name of the Lord our God forever and ever." The reason is:

1. Because every person is under the control of the first and second covenants and under the power of one or the other. Some unregenerate people can do many good things, but by themselves, whatever God works in them when He grants them the power. It is most in accordance with human nature, as it is most pleasing to them, to do everything by themselves. This was the case with the prodigal son, who wanted to have his share of the inheritance in his own hands and did not want to come home as long as he had anything left. Hence the question in John 6:28, "What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?" And when Christ spoke of faith, many were offended, so that several of them left Him. Confession of religion may be a

person's trade, which they pursue for their own end and gain, desiring to excel and progress in various gifts, although they do everything and work for themselves, as in Romans 1:14.

2. Because by nature, a person does not know how to draw strength from Christ and heaven, Romans 10:3. It is like a child rejected by the father and placed under a harsh master. Then they must live and do the best they can. A person may pray, but they do not know how to draw strength from Christ. Still, they pray as well as they can. It is hard to live on someone else. It is sweet and easy for a spiritual heart to serve, love, and praise God. But for a fleshly heart, it is very difficult. Christ said to them, in John 6:53, "Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you." And they said, "Who can understand this?" And many left. People would rather dig wells and keep water in their own house than fetch it from afar and draw it with effort.
3. Humans think that the one who loves and cares for themselves the most is the best, and they do not see God or Christ caring for them or loving them. Therefore, they live for themselves. Nature and Satan have always imitated God, making their fictions appear as true grace. Many have been deceived by their spiritual and hidden soul prostitution. People may seem sad while they possess little true sorrow towards God, etc.

C. These works, although good in themselves, are nonetheless very abhorrent to the Lord, as Christ speaks of the Pharisees in Luke 16:15: "What is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God."

1. Because by doing these works, the soul robs Christ of the purpose of His coming. For all people have lost the capital and power to live, and the Lord does not want to entrust it to any

person again. Therefore, He establishes that it is better and safer in His hands so that poor, blind, and dead creatures may flee to Him for life, and when they have come, they may live as bees on honey, John 6:27 and 17:23. He would never have looked upon you, so will you now despise Him? What folly and unfriendliness is this, that when your wells are dry, your bottles empty, and your souls miserable, you still do not want to drink when water is flowing past your door? Everything a person does by themselves will make them proud, Ephesians 2:9: "not a result of works, so that no one may boast." When Joab had captured the city, he sent for David to take possession of it and wear the crown. Selfishness robs Christ of His glory.

2. Because everything that comes from oneself is always for oneself. A person can do nothing of themselves, but their highest aim is themselves. Waterworks do not rise higher than the source, Genesis 11:4. Look at Daniel 4:30: "Is not this great Babylon, which I have built?" A person who only has common grace has strength or gifts from God through it. They may do something for God because it came from God, but nature and sins are stronger than that grace, so they never do as much for God as for themselves, as with Jehu. Thus, they become their own gods.
3. Because any work not done by the power of glory is a dead work, which abhors the living God and the Spirit of Christ, Hebrews 9:13: "For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctify for the purification of the flesh," Christ's blood must cleanse your consciences from dead works that are sins and are not done by the principle of the life of faith but by the life of nature, according to the dictates of conscience. Thus, Christ is the principle of a Christian's life, Colossians 3:1, John 5:10-12. Sanctification is not the principle of life; rather, it is the life that

flows from it, just as life follows from the union and union of soul and body. The soul is the principle of life, and as soon as it leaves the body, it is dead and lifeless. So, even though you do many duties, how sad and difficult they are? Yet they must be done. This is a dead work without comfort or peace when they are performed because they do not come from life.

4. Because what comes from oneself comes from all sins. Being baptized, it is contaminated and poisoned with unrighteousness. "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" If a person wants to do something by themselves, without Christ, they do not want Him to rule over them as King, but they overthrow God's kingdom that should be within them. Thus, they show themselves to be enemies of Christ and His kingdom, etc.
5. The soul must wholly and entirely bear fruits of love as if through Christ in Him. For, John 15:2: "Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away." Christ's disciples could do nothing without Him. The soul can do everything through Christ when there is sanctification from above. In its deadness, it prays for God to make it alive and help. Like David after his great fall, "Create in me a clean heart, O God" (Psalm 51). And in Isaiah 63:17, the church laments, "O Lord, why do you make us wander from your ways and harden our heart, so that we fear you not? Return for the sake of your servants, the tribes of your heritage." In this case, God must come to the soul because it cannot value or love the Lord or His ways. It cannot say, "I will bring my soul to God and offer it to Him." Instead, it says, "I will go to the Lord so that He will revive my dead affections." Just as the centurion said to Christ, "But only say the word, and my servant will be healed." So, Jesus marveled at his faith. I cannot love Christ on my own or believe as I want. I can do nothing, but God is willing to help when we are most helpless. Timothy had to stir up the gift. The church laments in Isaiah 64:7, "There is no one who

calls upon your name, who rouses himself to take hold of you." A person must stir themselves to believe, as in other graces. The kingdom of heaven is taken by force. Hoist your sails and wait for a fair wind.

D. You must expect strength from Christ in the use of all known means, for faith derives everything from Christ.

1. Go where Christ can be found, in His house and ordinances, where we must wait for Him, while reading or hearing God's Word. You may say, "Christ is full, and He is not for Himself, but for those who are in need, and I come to Him because I lack something, yet I find no help." In this case, you may think it is in vain to come to Christ or that you have no faith in Christ. Then say, "Lord, I cannot endure this unless You help me. The Lord is the Rock of my strength" (Isaiah 26). When you mortify the works of the flesh in this manner, you will live, here in grace, and hereafter in glory.
2. You need the presence and life of God. In heaven, it is abundant; is it not sufficient now? I am not satisfied without it. Will wicked people thirst to satisfy their desires, and is Christ and His grace and presence not better? Why am I satisfied so quickly? Would I not give all my love to Jesus before I die? Now, when you feel the need, know that you are at the door of help, through which the Lord enters the soul. In a true Christian, faith is the door that gives access to all treasures. Therefore, open the gates and doors of your heart high for the Lord Jesus to come in with all His fullness.

Conclusion.

1. Christians, my wish and prayer are that you may be chaste and pure virgin churches, not stained with the mixture of human

inventions, nor tainted by the company of evil people. A pure people must have pure ordinances in a holy Christian church. Although this may cause enmity and ridicule from some, it is the desire and joy of others. How happy and blessed we would be if all that is corrupted could be improved! Take care not to contaminate yourselves! Public whoredom is too gross and disgraceful. Surrendering to human inventions and commands opens the door to all heretics in the church. But be cautious of secret whoredoms and deviations from Christ, who takes great offense at your secret dalliances. The Lord has preserved you thus far; see that you maintain it, for you may soon be defiled again. Few churches retain their old purity for long but fall back due to the trials of persecution and the withdrawal of the Lord. Would you abandon the Lord, who has done great things for your soul, and now you are so close to heaven? For a little while, He may withdraw from you, but He will follow you even if you faithlessly depart from Him. Is it not hell to die without Him, and will it not be death to live without Him?

2. Secret contamination comes from neglecting secluded communion with Him. This is whorish in a woman. Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation through much care and busyness. Your earthly work and soul's grief make you weary during the day and sleepy in the evening. Be busy not only in the morning but continually through daily examination and meditation. But these are often sent away, as Paul was by Felix, saying, "When I get an opportunity, I will summon you." From this, the heart becomes narrow and strange towards Christ. Oh, do you have such a Man in heaven who loves your countenance, values your sighs, speeches, and company, and yet will you contemptuously disregard Him, causing Him to be brokenhearted by your whorish heart? How can you then

comfort yourselves with the words that you will be with the Lord always hereafter?

3. Secret contamination is when you bring other lovers into the same bed. When a person sees what they can gain by plowing their fields in many mornings and tending to their livestock over the years, their land and yoke of oxen, sheep, and goats become so dear to them that they throw themselves into the world. They do not want to completely abandon Christ, but they want to accommodate both in the same heart. The Lord Jesus may have some love and desire, but the world has just as much, and so the heart is divided because it embraces earthly things. Certainly, greed does not befit the saints of the Most High. God burned Lot out of all his possessions.

4. Contamination comes from a decrease in love for those whom Christ loves, the saints who bear His image! This causes quarrels in the church, so that people do not know whether you are Christ's disciples or not. If they do not wear Jesus' robe and image, why do you not convict and exhort them? And if they do not want to be better, away with them. But if they are true Christians who follow King Jesus, endure them and love them as you expect the Lord Jesus to love you. But if you choose to live in enmity, the Lord can and will soon send wolves to gather His sheep closer together. Oh, do not let a new generation of harlots enter the church of Christ. But take care that your descendants know and serve God. How sad it would be for your parents to bring forth children to tear down God's temple? Take care of a godly upbringing for them in schools and pray for them. Continue to bear witness to what the Lord has done for you so that God may be with you, His church for adornment and glory, so that in the end, you may say, "Here am I, and the children

whom you have given me." And together, in the Lamb's Bridal Chamber, you may enter, led forth in joy, eternally following the Lamb wherever He goes. Then we will always be with the Lord. Comfort one another with these words. Amen.

Spiritual exercise conducted by the blessed author in The Hague among special friends

On these beneficial subjects, namely:

1. The emptiness of the creature.
2. The fullness of the Lord Jesus Christ.
3. About the offering to that empty creature.
4. About the choice made by that empty creature, according to the choice it has made.
5. About the path God takes and leads those who have chosen this path.
6. About the abandonments that occur to them in this path.
7. About the labor that a soul must perform, having chosen Jesus.
8. And about the wrong grounds that need to be removed in this state.

Now, let us open our hearts to the Lord, eager to be transferred and qualified to be participants in this grace.

Regarding the first matter: the emptiness of the soul.

In nature, we are of one blood with others and lack the glory of God. We are deprived of truth, holiness, purity, and glory, Rom. 3:10. It is not enough that we understand this with our intellect; we must elevate our hearts and set the seal of truth upon it and upon all truths. Being deprived of the image of God, we are not like the image of the devil, Joh. 8:44: "You are of your father the devil." We are full of all abominations and wickedness, having within us the form of hatred, envy, anger, deceit, the form of pride to exalt oneself as a god. The form of unbelief, contempt for God, the seed of all unrighteousness lies within us. Have you not quickly fallen into all abominations? It is only because God restrains you. It's not because your heart is good, or your wisdom; your heart is like filth, Rom. 3. See how all your filth wells up from your heart, the filth of your youth and impurity. What vanity for the eyes, they consider this and that, all sins. The ears receive the sins of others. The tongue is full of vanity and falsehood. Say then to the Lord: Yes, Lord, that's how I am. But oh, you must have experiential knowledge of this! I give you this advice again: every evening, reflect on your day, and your emptiness will become evident. And thus, through these sins, an infinite debt has come upon us. You are not worthy that the sun shines upon you, that the sky covers you, that you put a morsel in your mouth, that you have a thread around your body. You are worthy of being trampled like a loathsome toad. Oh, may God's wrath not be poured out upon you, it's an incomprehensible wonder! And that it does not consume and silence you, and that you are not already in hell, that is a wonder. It is God's longsuffering and tolerance that you still live. Marvel at it, you have come under the dominion of sin and the devil through sin and apostasy, Rom. 5:3-21.

You often think: it should not be like this, that I act this way. You also think: oh, that I were delivered from sin. But you return to it again; you are miserable. I wish you felt it rightly and cried out with

Isaiah chapter 6: "Woe is me, for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips!" And with a holy dread, arising from the feeling of your miserable state, to look for help. You are not compassionately miserable. There are miserable people that one weeps with, but a toad is miserable because it is trampled. When God looks at you, you are also worthy of being trampled. Read Ezekiel 16, about your loathsome nakedness. Thus, an inability has come upon you to help yourself. And by nature, you do not know that there is such a Savior. Why are you not interested in it? And even if there is some sight of salvation, who can give God the ransom? There is an inability; you have neither sight nor hearing, etc. And even if you can do something, it depends solely on God's mercy, and He chooses whom He will, Rom. 9:11, 15. If no help comes from outside, it is over for you, and there is nothing left for you but a dreadful judgment and a fire that will consume and destroy the adversaries and sinners.

Now, go further and consider the eternal counsel of peace that God carefully took for men from eternity. That ordaining of the Mediator. He presents Himself to the sinner in all His grace, wisdom, and goodness, to be glorified by Him. Behold the power, goodness, and love that are in God, that by His power, wisdom, and goodness, He overcomes the sinner to do him good. To this end, He presents the sinner with Christ, His Son, through whom alone is salvation and forgiveness of sins, by the inner movement of the mercy of our God, with which He has visited us from on high, Luk. 1:77, 78.

2. The fullness of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, go further and consider attentively, with composure, the fullness and willingness of the Lord Jesus. He is truly God and truly Man, the Brightness of God's Glory and the Express Image of the invisible God, Col. 1:15. Light in which there is no darkness. To Him belongs honor, glory, and the kingdom because of His nature.

A. See the fullness and glory of His nature before He was in the world and the glory He now possesses. This is who He is for all His children. Consider Him in His satisfaction. If man is to draw near to God again, He had to take all the guilt upon Himself, He can save completely, by completely removing the debts, punishments, and imputation of His righteousness, as if the sinner had personally accomplished everything. In Him, there is a fullness of union to absolve the sinner from all the bonds of sin and the law, so there is a fullness in Jesus. Oh, consider such a sinner as you are, who has more sins inside and out than the sand of the sea, against which you have nothing to pay! Just consider one sin rightly; how terrible it is! The soul may well reflect: what then has been the entire course of my life? Oh, against such a God, could there still be grace for me? Oh, believe in the fullness of Jesus, with a historical faith, and this will make you accept Him. Your sins are finite, but His grace and mercy are infinite. Do you think it matters to Him if you have committed a thousand sins or two? No, even if you had committed all sins in the most terrible way, in Jesus, there is enough fullness. I do not say this to excuse your sins so that grace would be abused in licentiousness, but so that you would not think that there is scarce payment for sins in Jesus.

B. Consider Jesus' fullness of the Spirit. God has not given Him the Spirit in measure. Joh. 3:34. He is also anointed with oil like Aaron, which descends to the edge of His garment. Such fullness is in Jesus to animate all His members. If there is lifelessness in you, that you live in visible things, see yourself as so lifeless and go to Him with holy embarrassment; He can set you free from the creature. Tell Him, He does not care about filling your buckets; everything is abundant in Him. Let this be the meaning of Jesus in your heart: the Lord Jesus is so full of light and glory, He is the Sun of righteousness, He is the Rising Sun from on high, the illustrious

Morning Star. As Mediator, He is so full of light; He does not care about clearing your darkness. He is also full of life. Are you dead, are you unmoved by Jesus, by these four extremes: death, heaven, hell, and judgment? Well, come to Jesus, it is the Father's pleasure that all fullness would dwell in Him. He is so full of life, and He shines upon you with His sun, giving you life. Yes, if you could receive all that is in Him, your glass would shatter. We often demand so much; God is good not to give it to us. We are so weak; we could not bear it. Also, Jesus is full of power. Oh, now you see, an almighty power is needed for you. Do not think: would my unbelieving heart, my unmoved sinful heart, that hasty heart, which clings so to the earth, would Jesus want or be able to make that cruel heart, so ungentle, gentle? Oh yes, He can do anything. All power has been given to Me in heaven and on earth, says Jesus Himself, Matthew 28. He can change your heart if you have the desire and longing for it. In the Lord Jesus, there is a fullness of holiness to make you humble. This makes the angels humble, Isa. 6:3. In Him is holiness to make you humble and holy. This is the radiance that springs from all the perfections of His virtues.

C. O people, contemplate Jesus' holiness! Even if you had no part in Him, you would say: such is Jesus!! And if you have a share in Him, to say: such is my Beloved, such is my Friend, Song of Solomon 5. Oh, if you had that fullness! Well, that fullness is offered to you. Although that fullness exists, oh, what benefit do the blind Indians and Africans derive from it? Suppose the world was enclosed in this assembly, there is hardly a particle as large as this Bible where this offer is made, for darkness covers the peoples, and darkness the nations. Oh, how they go to destruction! Poor people! But what a great benefit is done to you! Jesus calls you, He wants you to abandon your wickedness and live and come to Him so that He may fulfill all your lack. He calls: he who is thirsty, come, and take the

water of life freely, Isa. 55. Just open your mouth, Ps. 81. Oh, come, friends, come, for everything is ready. He entices and pleads with you, that you may turn to Him. Yes, He prays for you, 2 Cor. 5: Therefore, we are ambassadors for the Lord Jesus, we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God!

3. Of the offer to the empty creature. Now consider that fullness of Jesus, and He now offers it to you. God the Father says: I beseech you, accept my Son. I want to come to you in friendship. Believe it, Jesus presents this to you as surely as if you saw Him and says: here I am, I have fullness for you. Oh, to despise salvation and not to accept the testimony of God, which He testifies of His Son! Don't you hear His voice in the word? The Holy Spirit calls you. You may have stopped up your ears, but He has still come in and convicts and entices you, yes, He stretches out His hands all day long in the sermons, catechism, and exercises. If you thought He would not come anymore, then He beckons you with His finger: come! Then He entices you with blessings. If you say, I no longer want to resist Him, He compels, He shames me. He is too diligent, too mighty. Well, He took away from you what alienated you from Him, on which you gazed, all so that you would accept His offer. Oh, that is a precious matter. Believe this truly now.

4. Of choosing the empty creature, according to the choice it has made.

A. Now we should choose that fullness. Have you already chosen? Do you say: yes. Come, would you like to choose again and say: yes, my Friend, I choose You again? A child of God does not always do this with words or at such a time. But the choice is included in turning away from the world and going to Jesus. Well, what do you have

outside of Jesus? Aren't you empty? Everything you have is just to reach out to Him and to constantly occupy yourself with Him. Jesus wants you to choose. I set before you life and death. Well, choose life! Come on! It is now the time to choose. Haven't you done it yet? Oh, so did the saints, Lamentations 3: The Lord is my portion, says my soul. And Psalms 16: The lines have fallen to me in pleasant places; indeed, I have a beautiful inheritance. Well, then choose! Why are you hesitating? Do you not want to, or do you not have enough in Jesus? Do you not dare? Not to choose is to remain outside of Jesus; you must choose Him as your only Portion, as your all-sufficient Portion, and as your eternal Portion. Yes, if you do not choose Him, you reject Him with all His gifts.

B. Oh, when He comes so joyfully in proclaiming peace and that He has satisfied in everything, saying: Come, My beloved, open to Me, would you not want to? Oh, I implore you, do not let Jesus pray in vain anymore. Do you not want salvation yourself, do it to glorify Jesus as a subject. Do it to be an object that He may be glorified to you. Do it for your own benefit and salvation. Salvation is to be delivered from all the power of the devil, to have God as a reconciled God, to have God as our delight and pleasure, to lose ourselves in Him, to sink into eternal wonder. Blessedness waits in heaven, where soul and body will enjoy it together in the spacious halls. God has made them and set them aside. He may be called Creator concerning the making of the world, but concerning the making and preparing of this heavenly work for His children: an Artist. When one sees only a ray of it, Paul was amazed by it. And Moses, seeing a small ray of it, said: give me more. He has purchased this blessedness through Jesus' blood, and it will last forever in enjoying God, knowing God, and singing that eternal song. Then God is in the soul, and the soul is in God; what a wonder that will be!

C. Oh, choose and forsake the wickedness, you foolish person! You do not know how long God will offer it to you, tomorrow you could be a corpse. Is it not worth considering? Yes, but I dare not choose, I wretched one, inside and out I am a knot of sins, would I come to heaven? But know this, God has purposed to do so much for a sinner that the world must be amazed. He came to save and seek what was lost. Oh, even if you are such a great sinner, in Jesus there is fullness. Then let Him in and expect it from Him, and from the fullness of His grace. Do not keep Him outside anymore. You say: what should I choose, I do not know Him? I am like Job: if I go forward, I do not see Him, or backward, I do not perceive Him, and He is not there; when He works on the left hand, I do not behold Him. Oh, know this: He has all these things to give to you, just wait for His grace.

D. No one is so devoid that he is not fit for the covenant of grace. Do you have no light? Oh, He has fullness of it. Do you have no faith? Well, draw it from Him. Do you have no strength? Get it from Him. But you say: oh, it is too great for me, I am like a child, I dare not take on such a big piece. Your smallness is fine, but His goodness and grace are so great! Oh, is then His goodness a burden to you? Well, that cannot be tolerated; it must be removed! The unworthy and wretched one is commanded to come to Jesus. But you may say: could I not deceive myself in choosing? Oh, those who have not yet chosen, let them choose then. And those who have chosen, let them hold on to Him and delight in Him.

The signs of this will be as follows:

A. Do you have knowledge of the matter you chose? Because where there is choice, there are two things: better and worse. Do you know the fullness of Jesus? Set your heart on it now; it will all come down to this. Do you ever think: oh, if only I could know and taste Him? Do

you have such an elevation of the heart for these things? Or do you not even consider them?

B. Where Jesus is chosen, there is a rejection of everything outside of Him: the devil, the world, allurements, and everything in creatures. It is in everything: Jesus has far the preeminence. Oh, believer, Jesus is precious to you! You reject everything for Him, indeed, you gladly give up everything for that precious Treasure and priceless Pearl. You use the goods of the world only as travel money. Do not set your heart on them but use them to be more fit for the glory of God. If Jesus needs your body, your honor, yes, everything, then show that you lay it at His feet. Oh, friends, having Him alone is enough. Choose Him with all your heart.

C. And when one chooses Jesus, one does not choose Him just once but a thousand times. Again and again, one wants to draw near to Him, and He also wants to draw near to us. People often say: I have no regret that I chose You. I know you would all say this. Furthermore, whoever has made this choice is not satisfied until he possesses it. It is then: Lord, I have chosen You as my inheritance; let me enjoy You. Just as Abraham said: Lord, if I have found grace in Your eyes, do not pass by Your servant. And like Moses: Lord, let me see Your face. Oh, when her share lags behind, she cannot bear it; she sighs, she weeps, she longs for it. And when she is close to that share, her joy is in it. And when she receives it, oh, then it is: I delight in His shadow, I sit under it, and His fruit is sweet to my taste, Song of Solomon 2:3. Oh, how good it is to be so close to God! If she is somewhat distant, she cannot bear it; her soul is overwhelmed. When she hears about Jesus, her heart goes out to Him, Song of Solomon 5:6. If this is so, if this choice has truly been made, then see what happiness God has done for you. Do not rest until you possess and enjoy Jesus with all His fullness.

D. Believe, and you will not hurry. Even if Jesus delays, persist with an insatiable hunger and thirst until you enjoy Him. If you choose Him, God will take you by the hand and hold you. You might say: I will not hold You, well, that is true: you have not chosen to hold; He will give you what the law demands from you Himself. Just say: Lord, do not let me go, no matter how I am, draw me, do not look at my wickedness. You were not chosen for yourself.

5. Of the way God holds and leads those who have chosen this way. Furthermore, observe the actions that God takes with those children who have now chosen this fullness. They all do not follow one path; the ways of the Lord are very diverse. He leads His children in a wonderful manner. He carries one on His hands and guides them through His Spirit. Jesus once said: if I want John to remain, what is that to you? Jesus desires to be greatly glorified. For some, they may enjoy a lot of comfort to do much for Jesus and His children. Is it not enough if Jesus is glorified, and you enter heaven? But for some, He may also lead them through hell to heaven. You may ask: Lord, is this the way to heaven, through such a sinful path? Oh, but He leads you according to His plan. Thus, the promise is: I will lead the blind in a way they do not know. Many thought they would sink into hell at their death. But they open their eyes in heaven. Many believe by delusion that they will enter heaven but end up in hell. Oh, children, wake up, you have only a little time here! Pray to God that He brings these matters to your heart. Oh, those whom the Lord refreshed with sugar, He may feed them with hard food afterward. Jesus sometimes cuts off His children on the way, even though He knows they can hardly walk or stand, and He remains absent for days on end, only to return later to His place. Hosea 5:15 The saints often complain: Why do You forget me and consider me Your enemy? Psalm 77. And Psalm

88: Will the Lord cast off forever? Will He be favorable no more? etc. They think that God does not love them. He does not look at them, and they have such a wicked unbelieving heart. Yes, look at Job: The arrows of the Almighty are within me, the poison thereof drinks up my spirit. The terrors of God set themselves in array against me. But do as the saints do, according to Isaiah 8:17: I will wait for the Lord, who hides His face from the house of Jacob.

6. Of the forsakings that befall them on that path. A. You may ask, why does Jesus do this? But why does a mother stand aside from her child? She wants to see the tears of love from the child. Jesus wants to see how much the soul cares about Him. Their eyes drip day and night with tears because Jesus is absent. When faith falters, love is revealed because they cannot make it without Him. Oh, they cannot stay away from Him; they must look up to Him again and again! And when they have received a taste of Jesus, they cannot get it out of their mouths. Through these ways, He shows that it is not the one who runs but only the merciful God. It is to glorify the Lord Jesus. You may complain in such a state. Your forsaking is full of sadness. I know that the God of joy, the Comforter who used to refresh your soul, has left. What do I have now? Said Micah. How dark they are because their light is gone. How weak they are because their Healer delays to come. The way to the Father seems closed now that they do not have Jesus, the Way, the Truth, and the Life. They may lift their heads at times but sink down again. The Word is like a dead letter because Jesus is absent. She wishes she could cry out to Him. She let His love go, but unrighteous things prevail, and this grieves her even more because she previously, as a faithful hero, armed against the devil, the world, and the

flesh, rejoiced that she overcame sins through Jesus and His Spirit.

B. O, distressed soul! You who long to faithfully serve the Lord Jesus, we have compassion for you. Jesus does too. He knows the pain of abandonment. He who is about to come will surely come and will not delay. He will say again: "Mary!" And she will say: "Rabboni!" He will leap like a deer over all the mountains of difficulties, even if you cannot see it now. I know it's sad because Jesus is gone. I assure you, wait, be still, He will surely return. Our fathers trusted in Him, and they were not ashamed.

C. But one might ask: how should one behave in such abandonment? Do not despise those who are abandoned. You may think they indulge in self-pity and complaining, but you underestimate them. You who are strong, do not be proud of yourselves; often they are more pleasing to God than you. He sees their ways, He will heal them and restore their consolations, especially to the mourners, Isaiah 57. Jesus desires those who show compassion. Do not lament with them because they lament, but comfort them with Scripture. He does not want everyone to be led in the same way. Think freely: it takes much to treat souls and uplift those in such circumstances. Oh, do not sadden those whom God wants to comfort or comfort those whom God does not want to comfort. Do not be discouraged with them. You who are strong, give them encouragement.

D. And for yourself, are you in abandonment? Do not condemn your previous grace. Let it remain, let a quiet hope sustain you. Do not complain excessively out of habit. Do not let your heart become stiff, saying: "I will not receive it anyway." Sometimes distract yourself with physical things for your health, refreshment, food, sleep, etc., but not just for your pleasure. Consider the Lord Jesus frequently.

7. On the diligence a soul must exert, chosen by Jesus. A. But you may ask, how should those chosen by Jesus behave? Oh, they must be very diligent. Diligence is commanded of them. Strive to enter, for the kingdom of heaven is taken by force, and the violent take it by force. God has chosen the path of struggle to obtain the soul. So that God's children receive a crown after their struggle against sin, through the power of Jesus. Isn't that sweet? B. Seek, and you will find. When you start seeking, you'll remember how sweet it was when you once sought Jesus and eagerly sought Him. Oh, think, could I grab and wrestle with God again! Wouldn't this encourage you to attain it? It may not be pleasant for the flesh, but the afterthoughts are sweet. When you engage in this work, you will naturally cut off the world. Seeking makes you holy. Paul says, "I forget what lies behind and strain forward to what lies ahead," etc. He did not stop at the filth of sin; he pursued the prize of the heavenly calling of God, which is from above. Start, I assure you, the Lord is good to those who wait for Him, the soul that seeks Him, Psalm 9. Those who know your name will put their trust in you, for you, Lord, have not forsaken those who seek you.

C. If you were to say now, "I cannot labor," it's true, but consider whether you cannot bring your heart to heaven if you want to? Do it to see the Invisible. You may not be able to do great things; do small ones for the glory of God. Sin is so wicked; it listens to no reasoning. Strive to tame it with all your might. If you allow one sin, a thousand will come to the door, and they will cling to you so tightly! You will be delivered from life before you are delivered from sins.

On the wrong foundations to be removed in that state. A. The wrong foundation in this state is particularly working in one's own strength. Working from ourselves, driven only by reason, by justice,

profitability, and harm. B. If you want to have it solely through the means and neglect to consider your own insignificance. C. If you have such an intention in your soul and then act on that intention. Oh, then you fall easily. D. Well, how should I begin then? Not with strength or force, but waiting with a quiet soul. Looking to Jesus, what He is working in you. Let Jesus be continually active in you, while the wickedness of your heart rises against Him and refuses to listen. Begin by working in the power of Jesus, through union with Jesus, feeling that you can do nothing and depending solely on Jesus and the influence of the working of His Spirit. For if you put to death the deeds of the body by the Spirit, you will live, Rom. 8. Pray and beseech Jesus especially with tears and also through constant prayer, to specifically counteract and guard against the sins of your disposition. E. Then the Lord Jesus will make your way prosperous as you wait and hope in Him continually. For His mercy is upon His children as they hope in Him, Ps. 33. By doing so, we will not hasten or be ashamed in faith as long as we live, as we wait and desire to be with the Lord always in the hereafter. F. Comfort each other with these words until you eternally enjoy the fullness of joy and the pleasures at the right hand of God, Ps. 16. May He guide you through His Spirit and counsel until He takes you up to the blessed glory. Amen.

Hiding of God's Face from the House of Jacob

An awakening and soul-stirring sermon for the guidance and encouragement of the Lord's people in these dark and spiritually barren days, to rely on the Lord and wait upon Him.

Text: Isaiah 8:17: "Therefore I will look to the Lord; I will wait for the God of my salvation; my God will hear me."

The children of God can be considered in three respects or states.

1. They are in a state of true absence from God.
2. They are in a state of enjoyment of God.
3. They are in a state of estrangement from God.

In the state of absence, they are before conversion, and in that state which they share with natural people, Ephesians 2, being dead in trespasses and sins, having no spiritual life in them at all, yes, children of wrath by nature, alienated from Christ and from the covenant of grace and all other blessings, so that they have neither inclination, nor movement, nor power for good; on the contrary, they are enemies and haters of God and their neighbors, Titus 3:3, foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another, and thus they are advancing rapidly towards hell unless God, out of pure love, becomes a God of mercy to them, looking upon them in the mercies of our Savior God, and in His love toward humanity, and thus saves them according to His mercies, through the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit, and thus draws them out of the power of darkness and translates them into the Kingdom of the Son of His love, Colossians 1, and He draws them from death to life, and from darkness to light.

Now, when a child of God is thus set in the light, they are in that second state, namely enjoyment, then they enjoy the Lord, and have

communion and right as beloved children to God and to Jesus; He comes with His Spirit and makes them alive where they were dead; then the Lord Jesus embraces them with great love and says to them: Ammi, my beloved, my bride, and speaks to their hearts, and He comes with a favorable revelation to the soul, from which the joy of a child of God arises, so that they become fervent and alive and walk in the powers of the Lord the Lord. And He overshadows them with His shadow, and thus comes before the soul with His excellent love, and leads her into the winehouse, Song of Solomon 2, and then He makes her drunk with the fatness of His house and quenches her from the streams of His pleasures and from the fountain of life, Psalms 65; then He makes the soul joyful like Hannah, 1 Samuel 2, so that her countenance is not as it was yesterday and the day before.

But God, in His wisdom, does not allow Himself to be enjoyed by everyone in this way, nor does the soul always remain in enjoyment, for not all the disciples were with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration; it had to be those three, Peter, James, and John, Mark 12. Not all the apostles lay in the bosom of the Lord Jesus with John, but although He did not entertain the others in the same way, He did not love them any less for that; Paul also did not always have the privilege of being caught up into the third heaven, 2 Corinthians 12, where he saw unspeakable things; oh, that did not last forever, but he immediately received a sharp thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan who struck him with fists, so that that feeling ceased, and the soul was no longer in that enjoyment, and that is the third state in which the soul finds itself, namely the state of estrangement.

As here the church, where the Lord kept Himself estranged and hidden, knew how to behave well in this state, that is:

1. Art.

2. Necessity.

It is an art to behave properly in this situation because when the heart inclines towards unbelief and the opportunity is present, it tends to fall into it first. It is necessary for the soul to behave well in it so that the cross does not press heavily upon it, and that misfortune does not rest on it for too long, and its burden does not become too heavy, and it does not sink too deep into the heart, and it does not lose courage. For the Lord does it to make Himself known to people and sometimes He grieves His children, but He also comforts and rejoices them again so that they may bear it quietly and with patience, enjoy the Lord again, and rejoice in His return to the point of leaping for joy. This is our current subject for the discovery of many and the encouragement of others.

"Therefore I will look to the Lord; I will wait for the God of my salvation," says the text.

The text contains these two main parts:

1. God's dealing with His people in these words: the Lord who hides His face from the house of Jacob.
2. The people's actions towards God: therefore I will look to the Lord, and I will wait for Him.

In God's dealing with His people, we must consider three things.

1. The face of God.
2. The act that was done to the face: He hid it.
3. For whom He hid it: from the house of Jacob.

Regarding the face of God, it should be understood figuratively so that we do not form fleshly thoughts and conceptions of the Lord,

nor imagine such a face; but when the Lord speaks to us in human terms and speaks of Himself in a human way, that must be properly understood by us as God, for the Lord is pleased to help us in our weakness to understand it better; otherwise, it would be a violation of the second commandment. Then, the face of God means:

1. The presence of God, Psalm 139: "Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence?"
2. It signifies the wrath of God because wrath is commonly revealed in the face and seen, as David says, Psalm 34: "The face of the Lord is against those who do evil."
3. His friendly, favorable love, and loving presence, as the Lord revealed Himself to Moses, Exodus 33 and 34. Moses did not want to go up, and the Lord called out to him, gracious and merciful, longsuffering and abounding in goodness and truth. It should be understood in this sense here as well. Now, the act that happens to this face is that He hides it. But how can God hide Himself when He fills heaven and earth, and He is not far from each one of us, and we live and move in Him and are?

One must know that the hiding is not to be understood as a hiding of God's essence; hiding here means withholding His favor and kindness, so that the soul enters into darkness, where it used to walk in the light of God's presence. He does not help her now, and the soul does not enjoy the same light and God is not as intimate with her as before; instead, He is out of her sight, and His light, favor, love, and life depart, so that the soul becomes deaf, blind, and crippled. He leaves her in solitude; she finds neither God nor her way, and the Lord is then angry about sin. Moreover, sins come more than before, such as hatred, envy, lust, and other corruptions, and all her enemies rise up to make the soul or that people sin even more, so that the soul falls into sin more than when she walked in the light of God's face.

But for whom did the Lord hide His face? For the house of Jacob. By the house of Jacob, we mean the tribe of Israel, descended from Jacob, the son of Isaac, from whom the Messiah was also expected, and with whom the Lord had established a covenant that He would be their God, and they would be His people. But in the second place, one must understand here the true church and believers who were the true descendants of Abraham, not the common people, for not all Israel is Israel, as Romans 9 says, and the Lord hid His face from them.

2. But how does the people of God behave in this? And this is our second chapter now, the action of the people towards the Lord. "Therefore I will look to the Lord; I will wait for the God of my salvation." Here, we must again consider:
 3. An action of the people, which is waiting.
 4. The basis for that waiting.

The action is to wait, which is similar in meaning to "looking," to further instill confidence, by which they also express their settled purpose to continually wait for and expect the Lord. This waiting means:

1. Calmness and composure of the heart, where the soul is patient, does not murmur, nor oppose the Lord. Solomon says, "My son, do not be grieved," and as David says, "My soul, be silent before God, for from Him is my hope," Psalm 62. So, the soul does not want to oppose God but submit to God's providence concerning all His ways with her.
2. Hope for deliverance so that they do not give up, and as hope is, so is expectation. For one who has no hope also has no expectation.

3. Activity and effort to use all the means and duties, to watch and look out for the Lord, saying, "When will You come to me?" Psalm 101; waiting like this with patience and composure under the means. Yes, when the church or the soul is in such a state, she says, "I will be patient and not be so resentful in whatever misfortune it may be."

But the basis for this is expressed in the word "therefore," which refers to the previous 10th, 11th, and 12th verses of this chapter, where the church says that the counsel of her enemies will be nullified because God is with her and with a strong hand, He had promised her that He would help her in her distress and be a sanctuary for her. So, the basis for her waiting is the divine promise because she wants to say, "Because the Lord has spoken to me, therefore, I will firmly rely on the Lord and confidently trust in His promises."

There are two teachings in the text and in each part. The first teaching is that God does indeed hide His face from His children. Oh, this truth is of great importance, and it is necessary that this truth be deeply impressed upon the heart, and we set our hearts on it. It is particularly useful for two kinds of Christians.

1. For those Christians who are accustomed to feeling God's love, favor, and inspirations and take pleasure in them, and therefore know little darkness or difficult paths of God. They think or even imagine that they will progress smoothly in sanctification and travel to Zion with joy and happiness. But this truth serves to remind them that they will not always be so joyfully led in grace, for if I were a child of God, I wouldn't struggle like this.
2. Also for the children of God who walk in dark gloom, to take away the rising thought that their state is not good and that they

are not children of God because the Lord leads them so darkly and unhappily. For them, it is to learn here: God does this to His children. Yes, when children of God walk in darkness, they feel that something is wrong, but they do not know where the problem lies. Namely, it originates in the hiding of His face. Surely, God does not always reveal Himself in love and comfort, so the soul does not always make great progress in sanctification and grace, and it is certain and true, Christians, that you will often experience that the Lord often hides His face. If only people paid more attention to the heart and its condition, but it is regrettable that the hiding of God's face is not noticed like it used to be. Yes, it has become almost a habit for many Christians to go there so listlessly.

But can it be that the Lord hides His face from His children like this? Oh yes, because:

1. The Lord Himself says it, Isaiah 54:7-8: "For a mere moment, I have forsaken you, but with great mercies, I will gather you. In a little wrath, I hid My face from you for a moment, but with everlasting kindness, I will have mercy on you." The Lord behaved like a man who has hidden himself from his wife for a while but has not completely forgotten her. In Isaiah 57, the Lord says, "I was angry and hid myself because of their sins." Thus, God the Lord deals with His children, and one might think: Is that love, goodness? Yes, this is how I act, says the Lord. Hosea 5:14: "For I will be to Ephraim like a lion and to the house of Jacob like a young lion. Yes, I will tear them and go away. I will take them away, and no one shall rescue." And so, the Lord acts like a friend who is not welcome or not well-received and goes away again. Not only does God say this, but:

2. The church and God's people also say it, Song of Solomon 5:4-6: "My beloved put his hand by the latch of the door, and my heart yearned for him. I arose to open for my beloved, and my hands dripped with myrrh, my fingers with liquid myrrh, on the handles of the lock. I opened for my beloved, but my beloved had turned away and was gone." This matter has often been experienced by God's children that they do not always have joy, comfort, and happiness, nor do they always enjoy God, nor are they always so lively and strong. But the Lord also sometimes terrifies them by hiding His face, Psalm 30: "I said in my prosperity, 'I shall never be moved.' Lord, by Your favor, You have made my mountain stand strong; You hid Your face, and I was troubled." And so, the Lord deals with His people in this way, and we do not always know the reasons for it, for God's ways are not like our ways, Isaiah 55. There are not always known reasons why the Lord acts in this way with the soul. It is not that there is no cause at all; oh yes, but God does not always reveal why He hides His face from them. It is also to see if the soul is sincere before Him, and thus, the Lord visited Job, who still walked in uprightness before Him, of which He says that Satan incited against Job to consume him without cause, Job 2, but one should not understand it as if Job was without sin. Oh no, for just as there are remnants of sin in all the saints, so there were also in Job, but we will nevertheless say something about it stammeringly.

The reasons, then, why the Lord acts in this way with His children are:

1. Because of their sin. Oh, God's children also have their particular sins, their beloved and cherished sins that create a separation between God and them, Isaiah 59, for which the Lord

hides His face from them. Yes, even for the sins committed in their youth: "You write bitter things against me and make me inherit the iniquities of my youth," says Job, chapter 13. Someone might ask, "Were not Job's sins of his youth all forgiven, and were all of them taken away?" But the Lord wants to make the weight of sin more visible so that more sorrow may be shown.

2. To make them live by faith. Look, that is why the Lord does it as well; He wants to teach His children to walk by faith and not by sight. When the soul is so cared for and nurtured by the Lord, she uses faith little. When the Lord then hides His lovely face, oh, then she thinks it is over, Psalm 89. But in that darkness, she must trust in the Lord herself, and even though she does not see that pleasant light, she must rely on her God, Isaiah 50.
3. To make them small and humble, not only outwardly but especially inwardly, for there is no evil or sin as ugly and repulsive in God's eyes as the spiritual pride of His children. Oh, that sin creeps up very subtly in God's children when they are received so graciously so that in their spiritual progress, the children of God tend to think too highly of the service they render to the Lord, and they sometimes let their eyes go to their diligence or services they have rendered to the Lord and that also belonged to Him. Therefore, when the Lord wants to bring them to repentance, He hides His face, and they struggle a little so that they may humble themselves.
4. And especially to make the Lord Jesus precious to them, to value Him highly, and to appreciate Him in His three offices, so that they may take great care to stay close to the Lord Jesus and value Him more when they may have Him and enjoy Him again. Like the bride in Song of Solomon, because Jesus knows how to bring forth the divine light from that darkness, He hides Himself for a little while so that they do not see Him.

This teaching should then serve, first of all, for instruction, so that we may see how the Lord hides His face from the land, from the church, and from all of us. What God does when He hides His face can now be deduced from the foregoing, namely, He does these three things:

1. Then He remains silent, far and distant from His children. He lets the soul go alone and stand alone and is so strange and silent about her that she cannot conclude that she has ever had grace. The Lord is entirely out of her sight, so she must say, "If I go forward, He is not there, or backward, I do not perceive Him; if He turns to the left, I do not see Him; if He hides Himself on the right hand, I do not see Him," Job 23. So, the soul begins to complain, and when the Lord meets her again, He acts like a stranger who wants to leave immediately and only comes in to stay overnight, Jeremiah 14:8. That hurts and grieves the soul because she seeks to enjoy God's presence again, but no matter how much she complains and prays, He covers Himself with a cloud so that no prayer can get through, and even if He should meet her again, He is a stranger to her, just like Mary, who thought He was the gardener, and the Lord behaves like a wrestler, Genesis 32.
2. Then He also reveals Himself in His anger and makes her feel it, and He lets His wrath rest upon her. "Your wrath," said Heman, "lies heavy on me," Psalm 88, and just as Job said, "Your arrows pierce me, and Your terrors are arrayed against me," Job 6.
3. When the Lord hides Himself, He does not help, but He releases the enemies upon her and instructs them to attack the soul. Each one is then armed most fiercely against her, yes, each in his own role: the devil seeks to sift her like wheat, just as Peter; the world comes at her from the right and left, from the right with prosperity, goods, honor, and pleasures, and everything in the

world, and from the left with persecutions and various difficulties, and also the corrupt flesh, that evil monster, the greatest of all enemies, oppresses the spirit, and self, and the law of sin takes her captive, Romans 7, so that she must cry out, "Wretched man." Secondly, this teaching must also serve for examination. If we now take a look at the state of the church, the authorities, the teachers, the land, and the children of God. Then we will see that the Lord hides His face from us because if we consider:

4. The church and our land. Will we not have to confess that the Lord hides His face from us? For the church was supposed to be like the moon, pure like the sun, terrible because of its holiness, like an army with banners, Song of Solomon 6. Instead of being holy, it was supposed to be a royal priesthood and a holy people, 1 Peter 2. But where is that glory, beauty, holiness, purity, and liveliness now? Where is all that? Oh, we might weep rivers of tears with Jeremiah and say, "Oh, that my head were waters, and my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people," Jeremiah 9. For there is deadness in the church instead of spiritual liveliness, and a lack of spirit instead of the abundant measure of the Spirit that was supposed to be poured out in the days of the New Testament. Yes, instead of this Spirit, a completely different spirit has come.

Three different spirits have been poured out upon us, namely:

1. A spirit of the world. The apostle speaks of this spirit in 1 Corinthians 1, where he contrasts this spirit with the Spirit that is from God. And you may ask, what is the spirit of the world? Well, it manifests itself in seeking and pleasing the world and worldly things with one's understanding, thoughts, affections,

love, desires, and fears. It involves being occupied with the internal and external movement, with soul and body, with hands, feet, eyes, and with all one's members in the world and earthly things. In all one's activities, the world and these earthly things are the focus and aim. These are those whose portion is in this life, as mentioned in Psalm 17. Examine yourself now, is your heart not set on the world? Are your affections, love, and desires not for the goods, comforts, honor, and other pleasures of the world? Are you not like the beasts that do not look up but always gaze upon the earth, always looking at the beauty of creatures without ever looking at the Creator? Oh, take this to heart, for you are worse than the beasts, making your own will the model of your life and thus living in the world.

2. There is also a spirit of contention or a spirit of confusion poured out upon us, which causes everything to be in turmoil and collide against each other. Teachers against teachers, and members against members, and thus the staff of unity is broken. Manasseh is against Ephraim, and Ephraim and Manasseh against Judah, as mentioned in Isaiah 9.
3. There is also a spirit of deep sleep poured out, as mentioned in Isaiah 20. "The Lord has poured out upon you a spirit of deep sleep and has closed your eyes." He has blinded the prophets, your leaders, and the seers. Let the teachers cry with threats and promises. Yes, even if God Himself comes with His judgments, as He is doing now, it does not help; people remain unmoved, calm, and insensitive. They cannot be brought to fear or alarm so that they hear but do not understand, see but do not perceive. Woe to those who are at ease in Zion, as mentioned in Amos 6. Look further at the judgment that follows, as mentioned in Isaiah 6: "Make the heart of this people dull, and their ears

heavy, and blind their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed." Yes, they have grown callous in their lewdness and said in their hearts, "The Lord does not do good, and He does not do evil."

1. These three spirits have been poured out upon us, but the Lord withholds His Spirit.
2. The authorities were supposed to be nurturers of the church and show great concern for Zion. We won't judge anyone here; that's for the Lord to do. But are they truly for the Lord? And do we not see that most of them seek their own interests in general? As for the church, it is Zion that is often neglected. They show little concern for its support, and it's like Saul: at the beginning of his reign, the Spirit of the Lord was upon him, but after some time in power, the Spirit of the Lord departed from him.
3. The teachers were supposed to be holy, heavenly, and spiritual men, abounding in the work of the Lord. On the contrary, it is often found that they enjoy the fat but do not feed the sheep, as mentioned in Ezekiel 34. They seek themselves, not paying much attention to the flock. Those who are still faithful and seek to expand the Kingdom of the Lord Jesus often find their tongues sticking to the roof of their mouths. Some are overwhelmed by discouragement, seeing the fruitlessness of their efforts. Others are disheartened, lacking boldness. Even those who are bold lament that their words are not received, saying, "Who has believed our message?" as mentioned in Isaiah 53. For how few are genuinely impacted by the ministry, although the Word was meant to be a two-edged sword,

penetrating to divide soul and spirit, joints and marrow, as mentioned in Hebrews 4.

4. As for the land, what blessing is there? Year after year, God sends plague upon plague, which need not be specified, for it has affected every inhabitant of the land greatly. Consider the armies; we march out cheerfully but return in sorrow, for the Lord does not go out with our forces. Look at commerce; there is a corrosion and moth that consumes people to the bone. Moreover, the most significant evidence of God's hiding is that all of this does not have the power to lead people to true repentance and humility. One judgment follows another to teach us that if we have not heeded these things so far, the Lord will do even more to chastise us for our sins, as mentioned in Leviticus 26.

5. As for God's children, that holy seed that was supposed to be a support, as mentioned in Isaiah 6, it was supposed to be like a lily among thorns, as mentioned in Song of Solomon 2, in constant submission of their will to God's will, living with fervent holiness, and practicing outstanding virtues that the unregenerate cannot perform. But where do we see those virtues now? Where is the growth and increase in grace so that Christians go forth like fattened calves? On the contrary, they are often thin, sluggish, and lazy. They do little for the Lord and the honor of God's name, and they do not put themselves in the breach, going about so sleepily as if God could be glorified in that way. Where do we see that unwavering zeal for God's cause, where they do not shrink back but move forward in the power of the Lord God? No, instead of boasting of God and praising with a joyful spirit, they must complain bitterly in their souls and distress of their spirits, as Job 7, and they say with David: "How

long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily? How long shall my enemy be exalted over me?" Psalm 13. Then they begin to think of the days of old when they walked in the light of God's presence and say, "Oh, that I were as in the months of old, as in the days when God watched over me when His lamp shone upon my head, and by His light I walked through darkness," etc., Job 29.

So we see that God hides His face from the church, the land, and His children, and woe to them, says the Lord when I have turned away from them. Oh, if we were wise and conducted ourselves in such a way that we would wait for Him in His hiding. This is now our duty, and that is our second lesson in the other part of our text.

But before I proceed to that, I must say this beforehand, to those of you who not only fall into the world occasionally but live in it, as we have previously pointed out: Come now and know yourselves. You are alive, indeed, but are you alive as one who is born again or as one who is not born again?

Well, examine yourselves and see if you are in the favor or disfavor of God, and whether these three different spirits do not reign in you. If you live in hatred, envy, without love, in deceitful speech, quarrels, gambling, and any other known sins! Oh, the Lord hides His face from you, but in a completely different way than from His children and the born-again, for you will forever miss the face of God. You will never enjoy a glimpse of His favorable countenance or a ray of God's grace; instead, you will have sparks of hell and its dismal darkness. And when the Lord reveals His face to you, it will be in terrible wrath, on that day when He comes to execute vengeance with flaming fire on those who have disobeyed the Gospel, for the wrath of God will be revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and

unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, as described in Romans 1. O man, remember, if it goes thus for God's children, how will it go for me? What will become of me in that day? For if God hides His face from the elect, how will it end for you? What will be your fate? O worldly people, it will surely be very bitter for you; even if you reject it now or seek to distract yourself with fear, seeking pleasure in your possessions and indulgences, it will not help you. God will take all those things away from you one day, and you will be left bare and exposed before Him. Then you will cry out, like the foolish virgins, "Lord, Lord, open to us," but the door will be shut, and the Lord will say, "I do not know you," as mentioned in Matthew 25.

The second lesson in our text is that those who are forsaken by the Lord must expect and await the Lord. This teaching should be considered for God's children. O children of God, you must now wait for His face, now that you are so dry, so dead, so insensitive, so lukewarm in all good duties and virtues. O, then, wait for the Lord with joy, not being discouraged or impatient, but hoping against hope, waiting for Him, for that is your duty.

See this in the church: "I will wait for the Lord, I will expect Him," as also in David, Psalm 130: "I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in His word, I hope. My soul waits for the Lord more than watchmen for the morning; so does the church, Micah 7: "But as for me, I will look to the Lord; I will wait for the God of my salvation." And thus, she begins to address her soul, as David does in Psalm 27: "Wait for the Lord; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the Lord." So also in Habakkuk 2, "If it seems slow, wait for it; it will surely come; it will not delay."

This teaching should serve as our motivation. If it is the duty to wait for the Lord in darkness, we must earnestly encourage ourselves to do so because it is a deficiency in many Christians that they sigh and lament more about the hiding of Jehovah's face than that they are tender and faithful in investigating the causes why He hides Himself. They fail to acknowledge that it is their sins that make it so bitter for them and give the Holy One of Israel reasons to withdraw from them. No, they sit down in discouragement, let their hands hang down, and say with the church, "The Lord has forgotten me, the Lord has forsaken me," as mentioned in Isaiah 49. Allow me to encourage you to be earnest and tender on the one hand in all your activities and duties and commend the outcome to the Lord. On the other hand, engage in a quiet hope and patient waiting for the Lord and the fulfillment of His promises. O, you disconsolate and driven soul, wait for the Lord, Psalm 27. "Israel hope in the Lord! For with the Lord there is steadfast love," Psalm 130. And to move you to this, consider:

1. That a soul that does not expect or wait for the Lord falls into a very sad and pitiable state, for the Lord is the God of the joy of our gladness, Psalm 43, and not to have expectations of that God can only lead to great sorrow, anxiety, and anguish. The soul may enjoy itself for a while in visible things, but when it turns inward and sees its wretched soul, and that the Lord hides Himself and abandons it, there is nothing that can comfort it. If it sinks into sorrow and says with the church, "For these things I weep; my eyes flow with tears; for a comforter is far from me," as in Lamentations 1. Then it is that it says with David, "My bones stick to my skin, and to my flesh; I am like a desert owl of the wilderness, like an owl of the waste places; I lie awake; I am like a lonely sparrow on the housetop." Psalm 102. Then the soul gives up courage, gnaws at its own heart, and takes pleasure in

devouring its heart, wasting its strength and consuming itself. Therefore, let us wait for the Lord.

2. The soul that does not expect the Lord falls into a state of great darkness, for when the light of God's countenance no longer shines in the soul, it cannot be otherwise but that it is entirely engulfed in blindness. It is so blind that when it worships God, it does not see any of the attributes that are in God, nor can it form appropriate thoughts or conceptions of that great God, nor can it find Him. Thus, it worships an unknown God, as mentioned in Acts 17, and when the soul comes to do any duty for God and for its neighbor, it stumbles against dim mountains, knowing neither faith, hope, nor love. This greatly saddens and troubles it, and therefore, should you not wait for the Lord?
3. When one does not expect the Lord, a great deadness comes over the soul concerning spiritual things, so that it has neither desire nor love for them. The agile limbs stiffen, the eye is unable to shed tears for sin, and the heart is too insensitive for it. Where once tears flowed freely, either from a sense of God's love or from an awareness of one's sins, now there is no sense or feeling of either. The heart and eyes are sealed and frozen. Where the mouth used to be a constant fountain for the glory and praise of God, now it is closed. The heart that used to send forth constant and ardent prayers and thanksgivings to God becomes a sealed fountain. There is not even a sigh; no heavenly thought comes. The Word and its ministry have no effect on it. It is neither a hammer nor a sword for the time being. It misapplies everything, interprets everything wrongly, and is immune to consolations and threats. Neither promises nor anything else can move it. The heaviest burden is that, while

God hides His face from it, it remains unfeeling and content under it.

4. When the soul does not expect the Lord, it falls into a very sinful state. Enemies attack it at its weakest point, and the evil flesh seeks revenge against the spirit, attempting to break in and subdue the spirit entirely. Indeed, the flesh then takes the soul captive under sin. Even if the soul lifts its head for a moment, it does not have enough strength to keep it up; it sinks back down. It may gather some courage and resolve against sin, but it quickly falls back into it. Those who have experienced and felt this know how sorrowful it is. Well, haven't you sighed and panted under this long enough? Has it not been a heavy burden under which you have groaned? Oh, come and wait for the Lord, that is: be still and ground yourself on the promises of return. Go, call, cry, or sigh; for if you continue to fall deeper into sin and this does not move you, then consider this:

Should you not wait for the Lord when the Lord Himself has waited for you for so long? He has stood knocking at the door of your heart for so long, saying, "Open to me, my sister, my friend, my dove," as in Song of Solomon 5. And not only has Jesus Himself stood knocking at the door of our hearts, but He has allowed us to pray for years and days through His messengers, as mentioned in 2 Corinthians 5. Even when the Lord hides Himself under the condition that He will return: "For the Lord will not forsake His people, for His great name's sake," as in 1 Samuel 12. Should you then not expect the Lord? Well, consider the glorious state of a Christian when the Lord reveals Himself to him, for:

1. He takes away sins and delivers the soul from that burdensome load, giving it the enjoyment of Himself, His love, and His

kindness, so that it must say with the prophet, "You, Lord, have lovingly embraced my soul, that it did not come into the pit of destruction; for You have cast all my sins behind Your back," as in Isaiah 38. Thus, the Lord brings the soul back to the enjoyment of Himself and to a state of rejoicing, where He shines upon it again, not with an external sun but with the Sun of Righteousness, as mentioned in Malachi 4, the Rising Sun from on high, as in Luke 1. Then the Lord addresses the soul again with such sweet names, saying, "My friend, my sister, O bride!"

2. Then He gives the soul boldness to approach Him and come to the throne of grace, so that it can call God by the sweet name of Abba, Father, so that it can say with David, "In God is my salvation."
3. Then He gives peace to the soul and pours it into their hearts. He pours into them the peace of God that surpasses all understanding, as in Colossians 4. He pours His love into their hearts through His Spirit, as in Romans 8, whereby the soul becomes warm in the love of Jesus, and all around is nothing but love. Whatever it thinks, hears, sees, or tastes, it is all love, and it grieves the soul if anyone goes against that love, so that it enjoys a foretaste of eternal love and eternal life.

Who now desires all these blessings from the Lord, forgiveness of sins, peace with God, and the enjoyment of His love? Well, let them wait for Him and expect the Lord. But will you not wait for the Lord? I can assure you that the Lord, who now hides His face from you, will return to you in His appointed time, just as He did for Abraham and Sarah, as mentioned in Genesis 18. And how would you regret not waiting for Him when He meets you so suddenly? What shame you

would feel for murmuring and being resentful towards Him, for being so sorrowful, irritable, and grumbling.

But the soul will say: If I knew that I was a child of God, then it would not matter, and I would patiently wait for the Lord even while sitting in darkness. In brief, I will respond to this for examination.

1. Do you not have a vision of that state and a feeling of those sins? Does that not take away all your desire and comfort? Does sin not trouble and distress you wherever you are? Does your spiritual deadness and darkness not make you sad? Is there not a desire in you to be in a different state? Do you sometimes begin to have some understanding of it, even if it's just a small glimpse? Do you not become different when you catch a glimpse of restoration? Well, is that not a sign of God's work?
2. Can you stop looking up to heaven, to the Lord Jesus, and sighing for Him, even if it's not very reflective, even if it's just a sigh? Can you go a day without doing that?
3. Do you not wish to be the object of His love so that you can love Him in return? Would that not be your desire? Do you not wish to serve and fear Him as a Father? Would you not give up everything for the sake of Jesus? Would you not want Jesus to transform your heart to be like His? Well, I can assure you that He will return to you; He says He will pour His love into your heart. So, lift your sluggish hands and weak knees to wait for the Lord.
4. The soul that expects the Lord has a great blessing reserved for it, even eternal life, as mentioned in Isaiah 40: "They shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint."

"Indeed, those who wait for the Lord shall not be put to shame," as in Psalm 25. So, let the devil, the world, and the flesh come; they will be put to shame.

O children of God, I cannot fully describe the good that is reserved for those who wait, for no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man here on earth, as in Isaiah 64. Since God has reserved such great good for you and has set such a great prize, wait, and you will find that God is almighty, wise, and all-sufficient. Therefore, commit your way to the Lord, and He will make it successful, as in Psalm 37. And He will, as in the days of old, return to you and embrace you.

But now you may ask, how should I wait? I will briefly give you some means.

1. You must guard yourself against certain things: 1. Do not reject the previous experience of God's favor and grace that you may have had, even though you are now in darkness. If you were sensitive, sorrowful, and weeping over your sins before, do not hide that, but say instead: I will pause in my judgments.
2. Guard against insensitivity and do not harden your heart as if you would become stronger than the Lord, for as Job said, "Who has hardened himself against Him and succeeded?" But walk in tenderness toward God.
3. Beware of being irritable, as Solomon advises: "My son, do not be irritable." We become irritable like David in Psalm 77: "My soul refuses to be comforted."
4. Guard against despair and saying, "I give up," and then abandoning all means, saying, "It's too late, I am too sinful, God

will not hear me now that I have strayed so far," for in this way, you provoke the Lord.

5. Do not abandon the means and your duty, such as your regular prayers, reading the Word of God, stirring your heart with Psalms and spiritual songs, and singing and serving the Lord with joy in your hearts. Also, do not avoid your public religious duties or the company of the righteous. Do not neglect anything, as Habakkuk, who waited for the Lord at his post. For surely, the Lord will not be found on those crooked paths, and it is a provoking sin that grieves the Lord, for then you go from life to death, and you act as if it didn't matter and as if God didn't care about you.
6. Beware of using wrong means to divert yourself with worldly company and entertainment and to fall in love with the world again, like Demas, in order to relieve your sorrow.

You must also do these things:

2. Investigate the reason why the Lord has departed and why He hides His face. To do this, examine how you have behaved towards Him, consider your life, your deeds, your duties, and your sins. Once you have found the cause, judge it and justify the Lord in hiding His face. Do not desire anything other than what the Lord is willing to allow or perform upon you. And this is our duty during prayer: to lay before the Lord all the sins of the land, the church, authorities, teachers, and the entire people.
3. You must exercise faith and thus wait for the Lord through the right way and the appointed means, and that is the Lord Jesus. He is the way through which the Lord is willing to grant His children everything they ask of Him in His name. And when they

are clothed with His robe, they will receive double blessings from God. Therefore, turn to Him, for no one comes to the Father except through the Son, and just as we come to the Father through the Son, the Father comes to us through the Son and the Spirit. Therefore, faith is particularly important here. O children of God, whoever you are, if you only desire it, set before yourselves the Gospel and the Lord Jesus, and grasp Him through faith. Bring Him into the inner chamber of your heart, and lay hold of all the glorious things He presents to you in the promises, for whoever comes to Him, He will not cast out. And then, whoever beholds the Son, burdened with sins, bitten by the old serpent, will not only have eternal life but already possesses it, as in John 3. Oh, seek to touch the Lord Jesus from behind like that woman, and be assured that power will come from Him. Whenever the Lord brings a Scripture passage or promise to your mind, think that He is drawing you, and just believe and forsake your wickedness and walk in the way of understanding, as in Proverbs 6. Come and eat of Jesus' bread and drink of His wine, which He has mixed, and come to the Lord Jesus as the Samaritan woman did and ask Him for the water of life, as in John 4, and He Himself will refresh your troubled souls with that living water. And if you cannot feel, believe, and if you cannot believe, desire.

4. You must submit yourself in silence to God's arrangement, which is wise, holy, and good; indeed, He knows better than you what is good for you, for He is wisdom itself. Therefore, let His will, which is so holy and blameless, be your resting place to continually find rest in it. Hope against hope in whatever adversity the Lord brings upon you, saying with Abraham, "The Lord will provide."

5. Be constantly active in all means and fulfill your duties at their appointed times—morning, noon, and evening—just as Daniel did, while waiting for the Lord. Then you will not be put to shame, and after you have struggled for so long in this way, walking by faith and hope, you will one day see His face for eternity.

Amen.

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