

Monergism



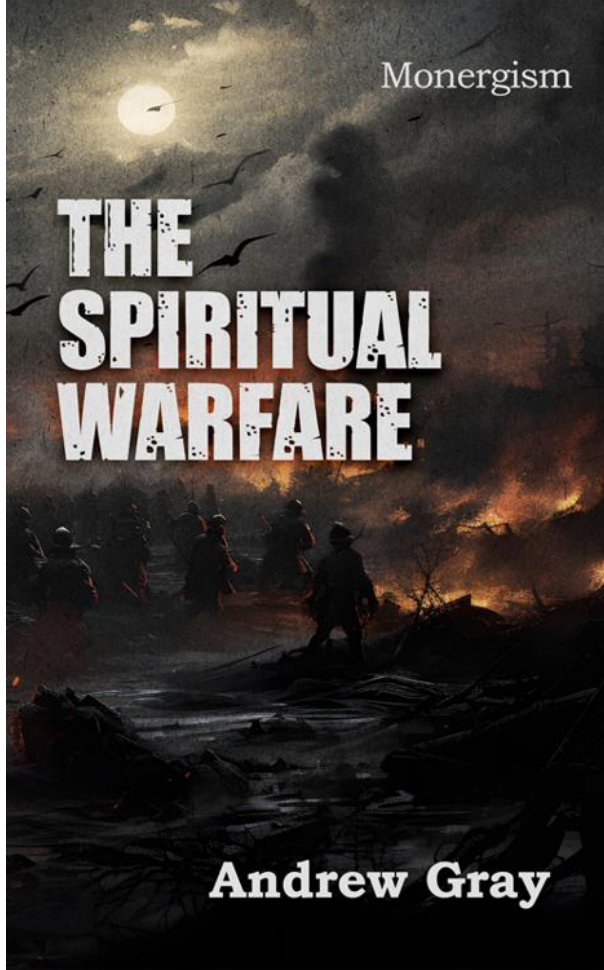
THE SPIRITUAL WARFARE

Andrew Gray

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The Spiritual Warfare:

OR, Some SERMONS concerning the nature of Mortification, right exercise, and spiritual advantages thereof.

Whereunto are added other two Sermons, concerning the mystery of Contentment.

Being the substance of ten Sermons, never heretofore printed.

By Mr. Andrew Gray, late Minister of the Gospel at Glasgow.

Col. 3. 5. Mortify therefore your members, etc.

Heb. 13. 5. Let your conversation be without covetousness, etc.

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To the sincere Sin-mortifying and Soul-contentment-seeking Christian

Dear and loving Friend,

As the name of the precious Author (who now enjoys what he then aspired to, when he preached these following Sermons) will, no doubt, endear them to thee, so we are persuaded that the divine Subjects here treated upon, when perused by thee, whose serious design is to study and aspire to what is here pressed, may not only prove effectual to increase thy esteem of the worthy Author and thy respect for his Works, but also may highly advance thy soul in thy

begun work of mortification of sin, of dying to the world, and of having the world crucified to thee, so that thou may possess thy soul in patience and sit down as a contented one, in every state whatsoever, good or bad, letting patience have its perfect work. O! how timely has the Lord begun with the blessed Author, to make him not only acquainted in his own experience as a Scholar, with the hardest lessons of Christianity, but also to make him a practical Preacher of the spiritual and successful method of learning these so intricate lessons, and of the advantages of studying, or disadvantages by the neglect of the study of them. This we dare say, that in perusing them, thou shalt find him a workman, who (if he were alive) needed not to be ashamed, nor afraid of thy censure, if thou be a real student in these spiritual duties thyself. For these two or three things (as eminent perfections in a youth) are most remarkable in him. First, that from the speculations and metaphysical contemplations of Schools, he was immediately, as it were, wrapped, not only into the contemplation, but also soul experiencing and powerful preaching of the most mysterious points of Christian profession and practice. Secondly, that in the handling of these mysteries, he was free of all youthful vanity and affectation of human literature, (though he had more than common abilities therein) and having renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully, he preached the Word of God, not as the word of man, but as the Word of God, commending himself to every man's conscience in the sight of God. Thirdly, that he was gifted of God with such plainness of speech, and with such an open door of utterance, in delivering these mysteries, that he did outstrip and overreach many of those who entered into the Lord's Vineyard long before him, the Lord verifying that in him which is, 2 Cor. 3. 17. Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. All which singularities and eminences of a spiritual Preacher, to have been his special mercy from the Lord, to fit him to be eminently a burning and

shining light, for the space of about two years in our Western climate, is manifest from what of his Works have already come forth to the view of the world, and does now further appear by these excellent and divine Sermons, upon these two most necessary, but little studied and less practiced points of Christian Doctrine, viz. Mortification of lusts, and Spiritual Contentment, never heretofore Printed. Wherein the zealous servant of God endeavours to awaken this secure generation unto the study of these so excellent and necessary duties, by laying before us the necessity of these duties, and the advantages attending the study of them, and the prejudices and disadvantages accompanying the neglecters of the said duties: As also, to encourage and strengthen in the way, all such as have begun the spiritual conflict against sin, and are aiming at perfection in the study of spiritual contentment. He not only presses the duties, but also points out the right means whereby a Christian may be helped to attain at last, victory over his lusts, and to sit down contentedly with Jonah under the shadow of his Gourd, Jon. 3. 6. And be satisfied with Elijah to hide himself by the brook Cherith, and to drink of the brook, and to have the ravens to feed him there, I King. 17. 3, 4. And to say with David in a universal resignation of himself to the will of God, 2 Sam. 15. 26. Behold, here am I, let him do to me as seemeth good unto him: And withal thou shalt find intermixed, soul-reviving and comforting resolutions, of the most pressing soul-exercises accompanying such as seriously set about these so much soul-concerning duties, of sin's mortification and spiritual contentment under every lot. That thou may read with that same affection that the holy Author preached, and reap the same blessing which was with much prayer wrestled for by him to his hearers, wherein he was not unheard, is the earnest prayer of his soul to God, who is

Thy servant in the Gospel of our dearest Lord and Saviour. A. S.

THE SPIRITUAL WARFARE.

SERMON I.

O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death? - Rom. 7. 24.

When the sword of the justice of God was coming down upon us, then our blessed Lord Jesus, in the infinite depth of his unsearchable love and compassion to self-destroying sinners, cried forth with a loud voice, that justice might hold the hand. And as that ram sacrificed for Isaac, so was he willingly content to be caught in a thicket, and to become a spotless and everlasting sacrifice for sinners. He was content to be bruised, so that we might pass free, and his Father's hand might be turned upon the little ones. But, notwithstanding he has died for our sins, and risen for our righteousness, yet has he given to all his followers a spiritual warfare to accomplish, so that they should be continually taken up in contending against principalities and powers, and spiritual wickednesses in high places; or, as the words are rendered by some, we conceive more appositely, in heavenly things. And certainly, there is no discharge in this war, neither any interruption while we are on this side of Eternity. We confess, God might easily have served an Inhibition on all our spiritual enemies, that they should no more oppose themselves against a believer after Justification, but He in the depth of his unsearchable wisdom, and, we may say likewise, infinite love towards his own, has so contrived their way to heaven, that through many afflictions and tribulations in our spiritual warfare, we must enter there. It is much indeed for a Christian to die a victor after war, though not a triumpher; that must come after

death, and the trophies and rewards of our victory, shall then be fully given to us, when our feet shall stand within the gates of the new Jerusalem, and when we shall receive these two glorious and everlasting badges of our victory, a crown set upon our head, having this written upon it, "It endures forever," a motto which could never be engraved upon any Crown here below; and a Palm put in our hands; and then indeed shall we sing, as those that divide the spoil, when we have led captivity captive, and sat down upon a Throne which is established forever. And we conceive, much divine reflection and holy contemplation upon that precious recompense of reward, and that high and inconceivable pitch of dignity unto which believers and overcomers are to be advanced, would make us with much cheerfulness and alacrity undergo this spiritual warfare. And yet all our triumphing is not suspended, till our war be ended; believe me, there is more real joy in the victory and vanquishing of one lust, yea more divine satisfaction, in a serious pursuit and contending with them, though with very small success to our apprehension, than in the actual enjoyment and fruition of all your lusts. You may hide sin under your tongue, and have it pleasant to your taste, yet at last it shall be as the gall of asps, and the poison of dragons. O! put on so much holy generosity and spiritual ambition, that though Satan should offer unto you all the Kingdoms of the world, that you may fall down and worship him, you may cry forth in holy zeal and indignation, "Get you behind me, Satan;" O! that deceitful oratory and malicious guile wherewith he ensnares immortal souls, and brings them into subjection. O! but the depths of Satan are subtle and great; And he is a man of understanding that can draw them out, and not be ignorant of his devices; and except we be helped by the candle of the Lord that discovers the inward parts of the belly, to know these mysterious subtleties of him, whose name is A deceiver, they will remain still riddles and mysteries to us.

But since we are compassed about with this body of death, and there is a law in our members rebelling against the law of our mind, we should be much in groaning for the day of our redemption, when the lawful captive may be delivered, and the prey taken from the mighty, and that blessed decree may come forth, "O prisoners of hope, go forth and show yourselves." We are afraid that the Christians of this generation, have proclaimed a cessation of arms, and have concluded a treaty of peace with their lusts, and a league not only offensive, but (shall I add this) even defensive; not only, that we shall offend our lusts, but shall defend them: and if once we have sealed this treaty and agreement with our Idols, what can they require more at our hands? We conceive, we may sadly allude unto that word, that there is not one amongst forty thousand in Israel, with whom there is a spear and shield seen in contending in this holy warfare. O! can such a delusion as this overtake you, that you can be an overcomer without fighting; is your strength greater then those that have gone before you, that you think you can accomplish this war in one day, and pursue your enemies till you overtake and consume them? O! when shall that day be, when we shall be groaning forth daily this mournful ditty, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death?"

In the words we conceive first, there is a sweet and pleasant emphasis in that word ("me") speaking so much, that if infinite power and grace were capable of any limitation, and there could be any bounds fixed to it, Paul did conceive he was the bounds and limits of infinite power and grace; if there were an impossibility for grace to save any sinner, it should be impossible for grace to have saved him who was the chiefest of sinners, and less than the least of all Saints. And if each Christian did look upon himself as the greatest debtor to the Justice of God, his debt to the infinite grace of God should appear more singular.

Secondly, we may perceive that a Christian's happiness consists in a sweet exchange of dominion and governance: Once sin reigns in his mortal body, and he is under the dominion of his lusts, but then grace steps in and exonerates and dethrones the former King, and reigns in the temple of our heart. This is clear, Rom. 5, and that is a remarkable word which is there, that grace may reign, the word in the original signifies so much, that grace may play the King, and this fullness of grace's dominion is what the Apostle aims at here. And certainly, there is no repentance of this exchange of Masters: There is much noise and rumour of complaints among people in these days about the exchange of governments, from one form of government to another, we shall leave these debates to those who desire to engage their minds in them: but we are sure of this, that those who are given up to this change, shall have it pass as most legitimate and lawful, by the divine approval, both of angels, and of the souls of just men now made perfect.

Thirdly, the way that Paul takes here to express his complaint under the strong prevalence of the body of death, by way of question "who shall deliver me?" does not imply any doubt about his conviction of certainty, that he would ultimately sing a song of triumph over his lusts; but only that it would be among the richest and most singular monuments and trophies of Christ's victory to save him. Paul no doubt conceived that among all the royal monuments of Christ's conquest, that should be, as it were, hung about the walls of that higher and glorious palace, Paul should be placed in the highest position, as having least merit to bring him there (if there could be any merit at all) and most love and grace.

Now, to come more specifically to the words, after Paul has divinely set forth the woeful opposition and contradiction that existed between the unrenewed part and the renewed, and how sin had

strong dominion over him, he breathes out a sweet desire to be delivered, not only from his actual corruption, but from his original guilt, which he calls here "the body of this death," not only because corruption is something easily discerned and known to us, it being (so to speak) something that can be seen, not being a spirit but a body; but also because of the great multitude of corruptions that flow from the root of original sin, it having so many different members and parts that are so diverse and complete that they can make up a body, and if that body is embraced, it will certainly bring and cause death. So when he is under strong convictions of his guilt and has had a complete revelation of himself, you can see his exercise expressed in these words, "O wretched man," the word in the original signifies one who is wearied with troublesome and continual struggles, with little apparent success, and this certainly implies that he was a man much and continually engaged in wrestling against his corruptions, and striving to bring them into subjection to the obedience of Christ Jesus.

And you can also see in these words the way that Paul took to overcome his lusts; he was much in the exercise of prayer, for the words that we have read are indeed a short and fervent prayer. I believe that the word recorded in Isaiah 38:14, "O Lord, I am oppressed, undertake for me," is a fitting paraphrase of these words.

Fourthly, you can see that his great and primary plea was for deliverance from this body of death: this captive exile was eager to be set free, looking out of the windows of his prison, waiting for the Jailer to come and unlock the doors, and remove his chains and fetters from his feet. We acknowledge that these will not be fully removed until we pass through the door of our eternal rest, and then that woeful and sad complaint shall bid its everlasting farewell; for, if we may say so, the burial place of sin is before the door of our eternal

rest; it ceases to exist when we begin to have a more prominent existence. But should we not be ashamed and blush that we do not express those indescribable sighs and groans of the spirit under the conviction of our sinfulness, since this holy man, who undoubtedly had reached a great depth in mortification, who had plucked out many right eyes and cut off many right hands, and often returned victorious after battle, was so much in groaning under his corruption. Oh, but we have strangely reversed the path to heaven! I believe practical Antinomianism is a prevalent error in these days: Many think that it is beneath a regenerated person to mourn and lament over the body of death; we do not know what it means to make our bed swim with tears and to moisten the path to Zion with our tears as we turn our faces towards it. You may think it is a lesson to be practiced and learned by those in a lower class, by those who are learning, so to speak, the basics of Christianity, and not to be engaged in by those who have reached the higher class of Christianity, as if that would be degrading yourselves from the level of perfection to which you have attained in your imagination. But believe me, it is a task that is not beneath the oldest Christian, nor above the youngest believer; and the more advanced one is in true religion, the more novel this work will always be in their practice. I will only offer you the divine advice of a holy man who urged Christians to engage in the mortification of their lusts as though they had never before undertaken that duty, to approach it each day as a beginner who has made no progress in that blessed work.

Now, speaking about Paul's exercise, which is evident here, that he was constantly engaged in struggling against those corruptions and that body of death within him, we do not need to spend much time proving that it is the duty of a Christian to be so engaged and occupied. There is some implication of this in Acts 24:16, and it is more explicitly urged in Colossians 3:5, Ephesians 6:13, and 1

Corinthians 5:7. Without a doubt, if a Christian contemplated more on the nature of sin and considered that it increases deformity with God and causes us to lose precious conformity with Him, and if we understood sin in its woeful effects, that it works death and subjects us to the curse of a living God, we would be more steadfast in this spiritual warfare. But due to a lack of understanding of these matters, Christians are often incapacitated to stand fast in the liberty with which Christ has made them free and are entangled again with the yoke of bondage. So, I believe if God were to name the Christians of this generation, He might call us Isfachar, because we now bear two burdens and have become servants to tribute. Even those who are more refined and delicate in their walk in these days, He might call them Reuben, because they are as unstable as water, which hinders their excellence.

But let us first address how the struggles of a natural person against the body of death and those corruptions within them can be distinguished from the struggles of someone who is truly godly.

Firstly, we believe that it is beyond dispute and controversy that an entirely unregenerate man, by the light of nature, may be prompted to mortify (if we may use that term) and resist those sins that are most sensual and gross. The light of nature includes an aversion and detestation of these things within itself. Although we acknowledge that, due to the depravity of our nature, the sins that fall within the realm of nature's mortification have now been reduced to a small number, it is no longer as refined and clear as it was when man was in a state of innocence.

Secondly, another group of people, those with more heroic and refined spirits, may oppose some sins based on some common qualification. They may have a detestation for covetousness and

other sins of that nature and, in some sense, may seek to mortify these things.

Thirdly, a natural man may do the same through a conviction by the Holy Spirit, which is only a common work of the Spirit. He may be prompted to mortify sins that are more visible and somewhat gross in their nature, as evident from the practice of those who clean the outside of the platter and strive to have outward conformity to God's law, despite their inner and secret aversion to the strictness of His law. Furthermore, a natural man with a predominant evil may attempt to wrestle against the sin that directly opposes it. For example, someone given to covetousness may strive to mortify the vice of prodigality, as these are two opposing vices. From all these examples, we can conclude that every opposition used against our corruptions does not necessarily mean that we are truly engaged in this spiritual warfare. It is something different from what most of us imagine it to be. We admit that it is even difficult to reach the level of effort in mortification that a natural man can achieve through these means. However, there are differences in their struggles. First, a natural and unregenerate man mainly wrestles against those sins that are outward and gross, not so much against those sins that are inward and hidden from the eye of man. We do not deny that a natural man may wrestle against vain thoughts and have some small resistance against the stirring of corruption within his own heart. However, we believe that there are two secret sins that a natural man does not wrestle against, or at least does so very little: his original corruption and his unbelief. In contrast, a truly godly person is deeply engaged in opposing these sins. Paul, for instance, is wrestling against his original sin here, and David in Psalm 51:5, compared with verses 2 and 7, is also wrestling against it. The man mentioned in the Gospel who cried out, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief," was wrestling against his unbelief, and David in Psalm 77, from the

beginning to verse 10 and beyond, was similarly engaged. If someone has never wrestled against these two sins, or at least to some small extent, they may question whether or not they have ever been seriously engaged in this holy warfare. Many who are considered Professors today, if posed with the challenge of contending with original corruption, might honestly say they never knew what it was to fight against it. This speaks to our ignorance of original guilt. There is certainly more deformity to the image of God in original sin than in a thousand actual transgressions. It is in vain for a Christian to attempt to mortify and cut off branches until they strive to uproot the root, which produces wormwood and gall.

A second difference is that a natural man wrestles against his corruptions more because they bring him under the judgment of God than because they are contrary to the holiness of God. This is evident in Psalm 78:34-35. Joseph and Paul, on the other hand, made the holiness of God the primary source of their arguments against sin. Paul does this in this chapter, and Joseph famously asked, "Shall I do this and sin against God?" Cain, who was cut off from the Lord, had a different motivation for wrestling against his lusts, saying, "My punishment is greater than I can bear" (Genesis 4:13). Therefore, a natural man never opposes sin as a cause of interrupting fellowship and communion with God, nor from the divine principle of Christ's love constraining him. The principle that drives a natural man to wrestle against corruption is often selfish and low. If there were no hell or place of torment, natural men might take liberties with themselves and not mortify sin. However, it indicates a divine and heroic spirit, most fitting for those who have Christ in them, their hope of glory, that they are bound to obedience simply out of a desire to please God and avoid profaning His holiness, which they love. I can confidently say that those who have never experienced the threefold cord and precious triple chain binding them to obedience

and urging them to mortify their lusts—namely, the holiness of God, the fear of disrupting communion with Him, and the love of Christ—may question whether or not they have ever been seriously engaged in this holy warfare. However, we do not deny that the fear of punishment is also a divine principle of mortification in its proper place; yet, without something higher, it is not a sufficient foundation to build upon.

The third difference is this: a natural man tends to restrain sin more than mortify it. He is satisfied with merely limiting the outward expressions of sin, even if there is no mortification of the sinful inclination within. This is evident in the case of Haman (Esther 3:5), Saul (1 Samuel 24:16-17 and following verses, compared with 1 Samuel 26:2), and the Scribes and Pharisees (Matthew 23:25). However, the mortification required by the Gospel is of a higher nature (Galatians 5:24). We are commanded to crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts, not just to restrain the actions but to mortify the underlying habits. While it may be challenging to distinguish between the restraint of sin and the mortification of sin, there are some differences. Firstly, a Christian who has mortified a lust is filled with divine joy and satisfaction in the process. This joy partly arises from the fact that, when a Christian successfully mortifies a lust, they often receive a sense of peace and assurance of their relationship with God in a more vivid and spiritual manner. Secondly, they experience precious and sweet communion with God during this time, and their soul comes alive. This is alluded to in Romans 8:13 and Romans 7:24, compared with verse 25. Thirdly, if a person has engaged in fasting and prayer to mortify a particular lust and did not find it easy, but upon resisting temptation and the acts of their spirit to commit that sin, they realize the lust is mortified, not just restrained. Matthew 17:20-21 suggests that certain powers are cast out through fasting and prayer. While the passage primarily refers to

the faith of miracles, it can be applied by analogy to sanctifying faith. Unfortunately, in our times, our lusts often seem to go out on their own rather than being cast out. Fourthly, the difference can be seen in the frame of spirit that follows the mortification of a lust. A person who has genuinely mortified a lust is filled with the desire to praise the Lord. They are convinced of their duty to bless the Lord, even though they are also aware of their inability to bless Him as they should. However, when lusts are only restrained and not mortified, the person may not be as focused on the exercise of praise. The saints have penned heavenly praises and songs of thanksgiving to the unsearchable and omnipotent grace of Christ when they have been enabled to overcome and crucify a lust. Their tongues have been like those of skilled writers. Finally, sins that are mortified do not usually recur quickly or gain victory over the Christian. While Satan may tempt us to commit a previously mortified sin to weaken our confidence, it is often temporary. In contrast, when sins are only restrained, they tend to regain the upper hand quickly. This can be seen in Esther 4:10, compared with the following verses, as well as 1 Samuel 24:16-17 and others, compared with 1 Samuel 26:2.

The fourth difference is that a natural man is not consistent in his struggle against his corruptions. He may wrestle with them intermittently, typically when he is under affliction or some other distressing event occurs, or when his conscience is suddenly convicted through common enlightenment. However, someone genuinely engaged in this spiritual warfare maintains a level of consistency in their efforts, at least in their endeavours. This is clear from Acts 24:16 and Colossians 3:5. Our lamentable inconsistency in this spiritual warfare indicates our limited commitment to the work. Are there not many among us who can interrupt this warfare for weeks without feeling the weight of their loss or experiencing any sorrow because of it? If we truly believed that more could be lost in

one day than gained in many, we would strive to be more steadfast. Grace is a delicate thing, and we must protect it as we would the apple of our eye. Unfortunately, many slacken their efforts against sin and remain idle for extended periods, yet still think that they can shake off their lusts whenever they please. To these, we can only offer a warning: beware, lest a time comes when your strength will be gone, and your enemies will lead you captive, blinding your eyes. Sometimes our corruptions gain such an advantage over us that we may lament, "Vidio meliora proboque, deteriora sequor."

The fifth difference lies in the source of strength for this warfare. Those who are not true Christians wrestle in their own strength, while genuine Christians rely on the strength of Jehovah, the eternal source of power. This is hinted at in Romans 8:13, where there is a command that a wrestling Christian always seeks to obey. A Christian often relies on the precious divinity of David, as seen in 1 Samuel 17:45-46, when they go to battle. Unfortunately, many who perceive themselves as engaged in this warfare may, on the day of judgment, be found to have never truly entered the battle against principalities, powers, and spiritual wickedness. It's not surprising that many of us are overcome by our iniquities since we did not first sit down to consider whether, with our ten thousand, we were able to confront the one who came against us with his twenty thousand. We engaged without recognizing the difficulty, and thus, it's no wonder we are defeated with little resistance. Examine yourselves through these criteria to determine if you are genuinely involved in this spiritual warfare.

Secondly, let's consider the advantages that a Christian can gain by being continually engaged in this spiritual warfare. The first advantage is that it is an excellent means to gain victory over the lusts and idols that beset us. It's no wonder that many Christians in

these times lament being led captive by their iniquities, and the voice and noise of the enemy are so prevalent among them. This is because they are not consistently engaged in contending with sin. Revelation 3:5 alludes to this, where the promise of being clothed in white is understood primarily as a reward for overcoming. Yet, it may also imply that a person who is constantly striving to overcome sin will attain much divine conformity with God and much separation from the world. To those who are discouraged by their limited success and apparent victory in this war, despite their constancy in battling their lusts, we offer this comfort by way of analogy: "Their dominion shall be taken from them, but their lives be prolonged for a season and time" (Dan. 7:12). The dominion of your lusts will be taken away, although their existence may be prolonged for your exercise and dependence on Him for a short season. You may face tribulation in this spiritual warfare for ten days, but rest assured that a day is coming when you will sit on a throne after overcoming, just as Christ did after His victory. You will stand and defend the field while your lusts flee like chaff before the wind. Although our discouragement often echoes Saul's words to David (1 Samuel 17:33) when facing the devil, "You are not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him, for you are but a youth, and he a man of war from his youth," a Christian should respond, "Through God, I shall do valiantly."

Secondly, this warfare is the path to acquiring much divine consolation, as evident in Revelation 2:17. "To him that overcometh will I give to eat the hidden Manna," which we believe includes partaking in the consolations of the Holy Spirit, though it primarily refers to Jesus Christ. Oh, what divine contentment and unspeakable solace a Christian obtains by maintaining constant enmity against their lusts! I am convinced that the interruption of a Christian's peace often results from the interruption of the holy and divine enmity we ought to have against sin. Believe me, there is more

genuine satisfaction in one day's earnest battle against sin than in an eternity of indulging in the most lavish worldly pleasures. You may sow in tears during this warfare, but you shall only reap in joy. The first part might hold true for worldly individuals in their pursuit of pleasures—they sow in tears. However, it has never been heard of or recorded that they reap in joy. There has always been a correspondence between their sowing and their harvest. But for a Christian, there is a divine transformation and disproportion between their time of sowing in sorrow and their harvest. Unspeakable joy springs from the roots of their most bitter sorrows.

Thirdly, it is an excellent means to maintain faith in our relationship with God. This is evident from Revelation 2:17, where Christ promises overcomers a new name, symbolizing their adoption and connection with Him. Nothing clouds a Christian's hope and darkens their sense of belonging more than a pause in this holy warfare. Moreover, they gain a more certain conviction of their victory over their corruptions. This is hinted at in 2 Timothy 7:8 when Paul declares that he has fought the good fight of faith and confidently anticipates a crown of righteousness. Paul's constant endeavour to wrestle against corruption led him to a greater certainty of overcoming. It seems entirely impossible for a Christian who intermittently engages in this holy warfare to have a divine or assured conviction of the blessed outcome of their battle. Hence, they often cry out, "Who can stand before the children of Anak?" and contemplate returning to Egypt. However, if we were persistent in this struggle, we would not only devalue our lusts but also gain a divine certainty of victory. A Christian not only has the advantage of being assured that they will overcome by maintaining this warfare, but they can also confidently assert that the strength of their corruption has waned, allowing them to engage in battle.

Fourthly, by continuing in this warfare, a Christian gains invaluable experience. They attain a distinct understanding of the deceitfulness of the adversary, who deceives the brethren. We firmly believe that those who persevere in this warfare can speak most effectively about Satan's singular subtleties and deeply comprehend his cunning devices. Additionally, they become more aware of the unfathomable deceitfulness of their own hearts. Grasping both aspects provokes self-distrust and encourages confidence and hope to rest primarily in Jesus Christ, the Captain of their salvation. This way, they can turn to Him, whose name is an everlasting strength when the terrible one blasts against the wall and the archer grievously wounds them, and through His strength, they can overcome.

Thirdly, let's address why Christians often achieve limited victory in this spiritual warfare. In doing so, we will not only discuss the moral and culpable reasons why Christians do not gain significant victories but also touch on the divine and precious purposes God has in withholding victory from His own, who consistently maintain enmity against their corruptions. Regarding the first, it often results from excessive self-conceit and a presumptuous opinion of their own strength. I am convinced that Peter's inability to resist the temptation to deny Christ stemmed largely from his statement in Matthew 26:33, "Though all men should be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended." Therefore, the most excellent way to gain victory is to dwell under the awareness of our own weakness to overcome, as the holy and divine paradox holds true: "When we are weak, then are we strong." When we enter the battle with our corruptions, we should have no confidence in the flesh but desire to wrestle with the mightiest Goliath we encounter. Humility serves as a strong and sweet armour with which a Christian should be clad when entering into this warfare. They must walk in that holy fear that is

compatible with faith, maintaining sufficient faith and spiritual confidence without entirely eliminating holy fear.

The second cause is becoming too entangled in the pleasures and affairs of the world. It is impossible for someone engrossed in the constant noise and commotion of worldly matters to be an overcomer. Hence, Paul urges in 2 Timothy 2:4 that those engaged in warfare should not entangle themselves in the affairs of this life but seek to please the One who has chosen them to be soldiers. Additionally, 1 Corinthians 9:25 states, "And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things." Often, we are ensnared by our iniquities and fall before our enemies due to the world's deceit and its pleasures. To overcome, a Christian should be denied three cardinal and fundamental temptations by which Satan seeks to ensnare us: the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life. They should guard against being captivated by the transient allurements of the world, resist the allure of sinful pleasures, and avoid becoming ambitious in their pursuit and possession.

There is a third reason, which is that we do not practice watchfulness enough. It is certain that the exercise of this grace has a divine influence on overcoming our corruptions, as evident from Matthew 26:41 and Mark 14:38. This should be the motto of every Christian soldier, engraved on their arms: "Watch." Watchfulness not only helps us discern our temptations as they begin to assail us but also discerns the subtlety and strength of our temptations and acknowledges the weakness and inability of the Christian to resist them. When these three aspects are attended to, a Christian is seldom or never greatly defeated by their iniquities. Therefore, what I would say to a Christian soldier, I would say to all: Watch.

A fourth reason is that we do not engage in secret prayer enough. Prayer is indeed the noble and spiritual weapon by which Christians overcome, as evidenced in Matthew 26:41 and 2 Corinthians 12:7, where Paul, while a messenger of Satan was afflicting him, beseeched the Lord three times. This practice is unfamiliar to most Christians, who do not know what it means to pray without ceasing, especially when they face frequent and uninterrupted temptations. I believe that among all the weapons a Christian uses to resist temptation, this is the most effective. When Satan sees that a Christian turns the temptation into an opportunity to approach God, he often ceases his attacks. While a Christian may take pride in their weaknesses as they lead to more frequent communion with God, had we spent more time conversing with God in solitude, we might have achieved many sweet victories and fruits of our triumphs, which we now possess only in hope and expectation.

A fifth reason is that we do not exercise our faith enough. Faith is the general piece of armour that Paul prescribes to Christians in Ephesians 6:16: "Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked." Faith is highly commended as it allows a Christian to overcome any temptation they encounter. Paul says, "ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the Devil." This piece of armour is not merely defensive; it can also be considered somewhat offensive. Faith assists a Christian in overcoming temptations and corruptions by not only relying on the infinite strength of the Captain of Salvation but also by discerning the strength of corruption with a subtle and divine eye. A person who exercises faith frequently can make a precise judgment about the lusts and idols they confront. Nothing is impossible for a believing person, and if any grace allows a Christian to resemble the omnipotence of God, it is the grace of faith. This is how a Christian's power is primarily increased. Faith can make the weak strong, so we

encourage you to exercise your trust in Him, who is a stronghold, so that through Him, you may overcome, along with the word of your testimony.

Lastly, this may also be a reason why, after achieving some minor victory over our lusts, we tend to become entangled with complacency. We often fail to grasp that conquering one lust should serve as a motivating factor for overcoming another. I believe (if we may draw an analogy from Psalm 18:37) it should be the practice of a Christian to pursue their enemies until they are overtaken, never turning back until they are vanquished. By relying on the strength of Jehovah, we can advance through a multitude of adversaries, and by our God, we can scale any obstacle. Consistent engagement in this war, without declaring a ceasefire, would swiftly rid us of all our adversaries. The Lord Himself should teach our hands to wage war, and with our arms, we could break a bow of steel. David's limited success in controlling his lusts after minor victories may have been due to his complacency, as was the case with Peter. There is no discharge from this war until death, and then we shall receive our everlasting rewards for all our toil.

Now, concerning the second point: the divine purposes behind why Christians may not achieve victory over their lusts, despite striving for constancy in warfare. It could either stem from the fact that God knows we can better benefit from a state of continuous wrestling than from a state of perpetual conquest while we are here on earth. We can better endure war than victory. Therefore, as we journey through this wilderness, He continually keeps us engaged with serpents and scorpions. Alternatively, it may largely be because He desires us to maintain an unceasing dependence on Him and cultivate a holy and perpetual communion with Him. It is certain that if we were not compelled to walk with God out of necessity, we

would seldom walk with Him out of a sense of duty or love. A Christian's secret introspection will reveal that we walk most closely with God when we are most in need of Him. It also serves to keep us humble while we are on this earthly plane, preventing us from becoming excessively proud. Furthermore, it allows the grace and power of our blessed Lord Jesus in aiding us to overcome to shine forth more prominently and evidently. This is the grand stage where Christ's power is most conspicuously displayed over our weaknesses and in our apprehension of the seemingly insurmountable challenges we face and often succumb to.

To conclude our discourse, we implore you to commit your names to Jesus Christ, to fight under His royal banner. Believe me, even if your corruptions were exceedingly strong, He will ultimately overcome them. The certainty of this is confirmed to you by the fact that your blessed leader has led captivity captive and is now exalted at the right hand of Majesty on high. The hope and anticipation of this blessed outcome should fill you with indescribable joy and glory.

SERMON II.

And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. - Gal. 5. 24.

Oh! when shall that great and excellent wonder be seen in heaven, which John did see, Rev. 12. 1. 6. to behold the invisible Church and those who anticipate heaven? This Church is represented as a woman adorned with the spotless and beautiful righteousness of a crucified

Saviour. This is signified by her being clothed with the Sun and being guided by the Doctrine of the twelve Apostles, those precious Stars that lead us to where Christ dwells and guide us to Him. At the same time, we ought to have the great idol of the world under our feet. The divine emblem of the world is likened to the Moon because it is subject to many changes and presents various contradictory aspects. However, if we were to portray many Christians, we might as well place the Moon atop their heads, for they do not use the world as their servant but as their master.

Mortification is an exercise that does not sit well with our fleshly nature. It is a difficult concept for someone entrenched in the old ways. Indeed, it is a hard saying to a person who is deeply rooted in the ways of the world. Oh! but it is a melancholy truth to many that unless we die with Christ, we cannot reign with Him. We must share in the fellowship of His sufferings and be conformed to His death before we can attain the resurrection from the dead. We have a tendency to split things that God has joined together, accepting Christ for righteousness and salvation but not as our King and sanctification. If it was evidence to wise Solomon that the woman who proposed dividing the child was not its true mother, then it can be assumed that anyone who does not accept the fullness of Christ but desires to divide Him is not predestined for adoption as a child of God. It is true that many love Christ's coat more than His graces. Even when they pursue these graces, it is more for those that adorn rather than save. We believe that hypocrites most vigorously pursue three graces: the grace of prayer, the grace of knowledge, and the grace of humility. Concerning the last grace, we may say that a hypocrite may try to impersonate it, but there are always some convictions within him that reveal his lack of true humility. It is impossible for a hypocrite to think himself as nothing. Oh! that we could attain to the sublime heights of Christianity where we entertain

a holy oblivion of our attainments and a sanctified memory of our imperfections. The former should be written as if in the sand, and the latter engraved on the fleshly tablets of our hearts and constantly remembered. In our times, our leaves may not wither much, but our fruit certainly withers and decays. Has man become so brutish and ignorant that he needs to be instructed by the beasts of the field in his duty? Solomon mentions four small and wise creatures of the earth in Proverbs 30:24-28, and each of them can impart some spiritual lesson. First, there are the ants, who can teach us the grace of divine prudence and Christian wisdom in seizing our opportunities. Though they are not a strong people, they gather their food in the summer. No doubt, we should engage our spiritual enemies while it is daytime, for the night comes when no one can work. Actions done in season add much lustre and perfection to them, as everything is beautiful in its season. Second, there are the conies, who can teach us the grace of self-distrust and the need to rely on God's strength. In times of distress, we should run to Him, the Rock of refuge. The conies, though feeble, make their homes in the rocks. No doubt, atheism and idolatry are the two great hindrances to mortification. It's the excessive confidence in ourselves, which is idolatry, and our excessive distrust in God, which is akin to atheism. Third, we can learn the grace of unity from the locusts. They go forth in bands even though they lack a king. Lastly, we can learn the grace of spiritual-mindedness and aspiring to the sublime and excellent things of God from the spider. They are found in king's palaces. Oh, to be more preoccupied with heaven and the things above! This would make us lose our taste for these lower springs, which would become as the waters of Marah to us.

But to come more particularly to the words, you have many precious things concerning Mortification held forth, which is that precious and cardinal grace we intend to discuss at this time. You have the

infinite advantage of this grace presented: those who possess it receive divine confirmation of their interest in Christ, that they belong to Christ Himself. This is indeed a lofty elevation for a Christian. This is clear from the words; such a person may gather that their name was written in the ancient and precious records of heaven. Without a doubt, little wrestling with our corruptions causes us to frequently lose the sense of our peace. The passage also highlights the extensive nature of mortification. A Christian ought not only to mortify the flesh, which is original sin, so called not only because of the strong bond of friendship and affection between us and our lusts (hence the phrase, "no man ever hated his own flesh"), but also because sin has contaminated the entire person. From the crown of the head to the sole of the foot, nothing remains undefiled. Additionally, during our earthly sojourn, we must endure the woeful companionship of sin, a decree of heaven for our period of minority. Moreover, a Christian should mortify their affections, which are their predominant lusts, to which our affections are so deeply attached. Also, they must mortify their lusts, the first stirrings of corruption within, and avoid the first shadows and appearances of evil (Prov. 4. 14, 15). Our mortification should also extend to our invisible idols as much as our visible lusts.

Likewise, the passage highlights the difficulty and pain involved in this work under the notion of crucifying, one of the most painful deaths. There is no doubt more difficulty in this than we often realize. We must not rest in ease if we intend to be mortifying Christians. We must wrestle with God like princes until we prevail. The protracted nature of this work is also indicated by the analogy of crucifixion. We cannot usually fight and triumph in a single day. Caesar's ambitious motto, "Veni, Vidi, Vici" does not apply here. We must die mortifying and struggling with our corruptions, and when one of our feet is within the borders of eternity, we may still sigh out

the lamentation, "O wretched man that I am, etc." The passage also underscores the intensity of mortification. A Christian should be content with nothing less than the death of their predominant lust, as indicated by the word "crucify." We must not offer our idols favourable terms of submission, for doing so will likely lead to broken alliances and sorrow. Finally, the passage assures us of the certainty of this victory through the use of the past tense "they have crucified." This certainty can fill us with unspeakable joy and glory.

Now, before we address any of these points, let's discuss some preliminary matters. We won't dwell long on explaining the nature of Mortification. We conceive it as follows: Mortification is a divine quality of the immortal soul derived from the efficacy and virtue of Christ's death. It weakens the strength of sin and removes its dominion, preventing us from entirely and willingly surrendering ourselves to the iron yoke of our iniquity. Nor will we linger on proving that it is your duty to practice this virtue. It is evident not only from Colossians 3:5, "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth," but also from 1 Peter 1:15-16 and 2 Corinthians 7:1. Our primary goal should be to subdue everything that opposes Jesus Christ, and it is the noble prerogative of young men in 1 John 2:13-14 that they have overcome the wicked one and have, to some extent, trodden Satan under their feet.

But we shall discuss whether or not a Christian can fall again into committing a sin that they had previously mortified, repented for, and received an act of pardon. We believe that there can be no explicit proof of such a case in Scripture, where those who were heirs of the grace of life fell into a sin they had once mortified and repented for. However, we are confident in asserting that it is not inconsistent with a gracious state. This is clear not only from God's names but also from His promises and commands. Isn't His name as

a healer of our backslidings and a repairer of our breaches, as well as the name of the One who multiplies pardons, evidence that a saint relapsing into a mortified sin does not put them beyond hope? (Isaiah 55:7, Hosea 14:4). A believer may have confidence that they will not die but live and declare the wondrous works of the Lord. Although God may speak to them as Absalom spoke to Hushai, asking if their actions are kindness to their friend. His promises support this view as well (Jeremiah 3:22). Furthermore, His commands reinforce it (Jeremiah 3:1, 12, 14, 22). How often is backsliding Israel encouraged to return? He who commanded us to forgive our brother seventy-seven times if he returns and repents—will His bowels not be moved towards a backsliding heifer? Nevertheless, to caution you against committing such a sin after repentance and mortification, we will propose these considerations. Firstly, such a sin hardens and numbs the heart, so that our own backslidings reprove us and become not only our sin but our punishment. After God has spoken peace to us, should we turn to folly again? Secondly, such apostasy often leads to the loss of a sense of one's interest and comfortable assurance. Sometimes, the foundations seem to crumble. Backsliders in heart are filled with the fruit of their own way and are made to walk in darkness without light. It is a significant challenge for a Christian to maintain their spiritual standing when, in this manner, they have lost their footing. Fourthly, such individuals often give their corruptions much rein and liberty. It becomes their year of Jubilee and release, as evident in Jeremiah 5:6. Doesn't the nature and aggravating circumstances of such a sin compel you to avoid it? Isn't it a sinning against light and against God after He has appeared to you twice? Thus, you may lament in this way: "If it had been an enemy who had done this, Lord, I might have borne it. But it is someone with whom You condescended to have familiarity, someone with whom You took sweet counsel, who has lifted up their heel against You."

Undoubtedly, this is an iniquity of deep dye. We can only say that it is engraved on the character of godly Judah, as in Genesis 38:26. After his first fall with Tamar, he knew her no more. No doubt, it would be to your advantage to heed the counsel: "Let him who stands take heed lest he fall."

Now, secondly, let us propose something by which you may determine your progress in mortification. Many deceive themselves, thinking their lusts are truly mortified when they are merely dormant, or that their lusts have been cast out when they are only temporarily gone. These are the ones who appear pure in their own eyes but are not cleansed from their iniquity. Before addressing this further, consider the following points:

First, remember that there can be a growth of leaves where there isn't much growth of fruit. Some may have abundant professions but little practical righteousness. There are those whose leaves do not wither even though their fruit decays, individuals who maintain a façade without the substance. It is possible to be proficient in prayer, knowledge, and joy of the Holy Spirit while not making similar progress in mortification and humility. Both aspects of growth are promised (Hosea 14:5, 6).

Secondly, understand that there is a divine necessity for Christians to grow in all the graces of the Spirit and to bear fruit even in old age, advancing in mortification and ascending to divine conformity with God. We must strive to become more like Him. Though interruptions occur, we must not forget that we were cleansed from our old sins. This need for growth is evident not only because Christ is the head of believers and we are His members (Ephesians 4:15, 16; Colossians 2:10) but also because we are predestined to this noble end (Romans 8:29). We must purify ourselves through the blood of Christ to be

holy, as He who called us is holy. His fullness is for our growth (Colossians 2:9, 10), and our growth is for completing His fullness (Ephesians 1:23). Mystical Christ will not be complete until all His members reach the stature of the fullness of Jesus Christ.

Thirdly, recognise that there is an invisible bond of union and supernatural relationship between us and Christ. A Christian must grow, and if the first traces and imperfect characteristics of Christ's image are engraved on our soul, He will bring it to perfection. His work is perfect.

Fourthly, consider that the faithfulness of all persons of the blessed Trinity is engaged in this growth and laid in pledge. The faithfulness of the Father is pledged to His promise of bringing forth fruit in old age (Psalms 92:14, 15), relating to His promise to the Son (Isaiah 53:10). The faithfulness of the Son is pledged in the commandment given by the Father to lose none of those given to Him but to raise them up on the last day (John 6:39, 40). The faithfulness of the Holy Spirit is engaged in revealing God's will, applying Christ's purchase, and guiding us in all truth (John 16:13). All these works result in growth in grace.

Lastly, be aware that some graces of the Spirit require time to grow. Grace does not grow overnight and perish overnight, unlike the grass of the field. It is unwise to examine your growth before it has had time to develop. While it is a Christian's duty to take notice and observe their progress, it is also important to exercise patience. Judge nothing before its time; allow your graces to grow before you pass judgment on their growth.

In conclusion, growing in grace and the fruits of the Spirit is a mystery that is more discerned by faith than by sense. We must grow by faith, especially during times of desertion or when walking under

a cloud, when Christ seems to provide bitter things. It is true that our growth can be sensed when we are dandled on His knee and our cup of divine consolations overflows, when He sets a table for us in the wilderness, but growing by faith is paramount, especially in difficult times.

Now, regarding the question we initially proposed, here are some signs of your growth in Mortification:

First, those who grow in mortification are granted the privilege of reading their names in the ancient and precious records of heaven. They come to know that their names were engraved upon the heart of Christ before the foundation of the world. This is evident from Revelation 2:17 and 2 Timothy 4:8. The reason for this is that those who wrestle with their lusts as princes and endure the heat of the spiritual battle are shown glimpses of the crown of eternal felicity. This encourages them to persevere in the fight of faith, knowing that they will obtain the crown of life. The exercise of the cardinal graces of faith and prayer fosters divine fellowship with God, resulting in an increase of faith.

Second, a sign of growth in mortification is when your lusts no longer have the power to disturb you during holy duties such as prayer, hearing the Word, and meditation. If you have expelled these sinful influences and can engage in these activities with greater serenity and composure of spirit, it is a positive sign of growth in mortification. However, the absence of this sign indicates limited progress in mortification. This is evident from Jeremiah 23:11 and Ezekiel 33:31. A Christian who is victorious in the spiritual battle is often deeply impressed by the majesty and holiness of God, which diminishes sinful stirrings and movements in their heart. They are

wary of allowing their thoughts to rebel against the knowledge and excellence of Jesus Christ.

Third, another evidence of growth in mortification is the frequent exaltation and magnification of Jesus Christ. When a Christian has truly experienced the grace of mortification and pardon, they hold Christ in such high esteem that an inner compulsion to praise and exalt Him overwhelms them. Paul's growth in mortification is evident in Romans 7:25 and 1 Corinthians 15:56, 57, 58. Christians find themselves at a loss for words to adequately express His worth during two special times. The first is when a Christian is caught up to the third heavens and experiences remarkable revelations of God. At such times, they cry out for the exaltation of the Lord because their thoughts of Him are too lofty for words. The second occasion is when Christians gain victory over their spiritual enemies and turn the battle to the gate. They are then faced with the challenge of exalting the One who is infinitely above their praise. Sometimes, believers reach such a spiritual state that their hearts are filled with commendation for Christ, yet their tongues cannot find suitable expressions.

Fourth, a Christian's growth is evidenced by gaining more insight into their corruptions and wrestling against them. It's essential to note that this primarily refers to discovering hidden and internal lusts and engaging in spiritual warfare against them. Additionally, every victory over these lusts should intensify our aversion to sin and motivate us to zealously pursue complete victory and the culmination of our spiritual warfare.

There is a fifth indication of our growth when the recollection of our former lusts and idols does not provoke desires for their enjoyment again. Instead, it stirs feelings of sorrow that we were once under the

dominion of such lusts and idols. However, many are enticed by the memory of their lusts, as seen in Ezekiel 23:19, 21. This indicates strong affection for the idols, and it reveals little progress in mortification.

The last sign of our growth is our exalted and majestic thoughts of Christ and His Word. As we purge our humors, we desire the sincere milk of the Word like newborn babes. It is my belief that success in this precious warfare leads to an elevated spiritual conception of Christ. Those who experience this seek to confine all their affections to Jesus Christ, the precious and excellent object. Just one glimpse of Jesus Christ in His unparalleled beauty, with His divine harmony and the conjunction of all spiritual graces in Him, should be enough to motivate us to cast aside our idols to the moles and the bats. Shouldn't they lose their allure and charm? To contemplate eternally the infinite Majesty in Him, harmoniously combined with His humility, reveals both majestic lowliness and lowly majesty. To behold His absolute Sovereignty alongside His unparalleled humility might lead us to exclaim, "Who would not love You, O King of Nations?"

Now, let us address what indicates our soul-union and heart-connection with our idols so that we may be encouraged to mortify them. First, embracing our idols despite frequent convictions of their disadvantages is a sign of a most unmortified disposition. Even after seeing them in their true colours, some continue to embrace them, as Isaiah 57:10 and Jeremiah 50:38 attest. This indicates a deep love for idols.

Second, embracing our idols upon slight temptations, as seen in 2 Samuel 12:2-3, reveals a strong union with our lusts. Some temptations are aimed at gaining our affections, while others target

our judgment. To sin without the promise of great advantage or immediate pleasure suggests a close bond with our lusts.

Third, the excessive toil and labour we subject ourselves to in satisfying our lusts is another sign of our attachment to them. Ecclesiastes 2 recounts how Solomon, in making pleasure and carnal joy his idols, laboured intensely to satisfy them. It is easier to mortify our lusts than to satisfy them because the latter is an impossible task. Our idols always demand more, and their appetite is insatiable.

Fourth, embracing idols after being exposed to threats against such sins demonstrates our defiance of God's justice. Committing these sins while raising our hands in defiance is akin to playing with God's justice and believing we are beyond its reach.

Fifth, killing convictions that reveal the sinfulness of sin and press us to mortify them suggests a deep union with our idols. By stifling our convictions, we foster our love for idols, and our love for idols kills our convictions.

Lastly, our anxious sorrows when we miss the enjoyment of our idols indicate a profound connection. We may cry out that it is better to die than to live when deprived of them. When our idols are taken away, our living lusts often lament over their grave, exclaiming, "Ah, my Lord." Since there are invisible and sorrowful bonds between us and our idols, we should strive to break these bonds. We should unite our souls with Christ through the precious chains of faith and love, making our hearts a Bethel, a house for God and a temple for the Holy Spirit, instead of a Bethaven, a house of idols and a cage for unclean birds. Our spirits should be mansions for the eternal Spirit, and He should have the authority to lead us to heaven.

SERMON III.

And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. - Gal. 5. 24.

Mortification is that precious duty imposed upon man, not only by the law of Nature, but by the royal and excellent law of Grace. Does not the law and light of nature instruct man thus: it is better to kill than to be killed? Certainly, unless a Christian becomes the ruin of his iniquities, iniquity shall certainly be his ruin. We shall either sing a song of triumph over our lusts, or our lusts shall sing a song of triumph over us. The royal law of liberty and grace enforces this upon us when it desires that we should crucify our members which are upon the earth and aspire to divine conformity with the Image of the invisible God. Though we believe there are some who, if they would retire for a moment to contemplate the subtle and invisible workings of the mystery of iniquity within them, the deep devices of Satan, and how many strange lords, beside Jesus Christ, exercise dominion over them, they might be compelled to agree with the truth that it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for such unmortified Christians, as many of us are, to enter into the kingdom of God.

It is better for us to dwell in the house of mourning than in the house of mirth. We may say of much of the carnal joy among us: "Such laughter is mad, and such mirth, what does it accomplish?" We may wish for some secluded cottage in the wilderness where we can go aside and spend our seventy years in the bitterness of our souls, accounting it a marvelous act of loving kindness if we obtain hope in the end. There is no doubt that the general and universal evil of our

days is that Christians are so little in the exercise of this precious grace of Mortification. We think we take a broader path to heaven than the cloud of witnesses who went before us ever dared to take. It is certain that if someone risen from the dead were allowed to write commentaries on the disadvantages of satisfying the lusts of the flesh, they would point out the immense harm and infinite loss in indulging in any of those lusts. Likewise, if anyone from above were permitted to write on the benefits of crucifying the flesh with its affections and lusts, they might give precious commendation to those who engage in these humble yet exalting works of Mortification. Believe me, this is most certain: it is easier to mortify your lusts than to satisfy them. We believe that someone who spends their precious time trying to satisfy their lusts is caught between three things: the impatience of their lusts, which continually cry out, "Give, give"; the inadequacy and weakness of the means they have to satisfy such lusts; and the conviction of the impossibility of satisfying the insatiable desires and infinite lusts of sin. Anxiety and sorrow are the constant companions of a person who is not striving to crucify their lusts and affections. Surely, if we may allude to the words of Jeremiah 48:10, "Cursed be he that keepeth back his sword from blood," then he is indeed cursed who does not endeavour to crucify and subdue the seven abominations of his heart. Let us strive to cut them in pieces before the Lord, so that none of our lusts cry out within us, "The bitterness of death is past," but instead, may we strive to cut them down before the Lord. We believe this work of Mortification, if not pleasant in its own nature, is most pleasant in its fruits and effects.

Now, before we shall speak anything concerning those matters which we proposed to discuss during our previous meeting, let's address a little the question: why do Christians' resolutions and intentions to quit such a dominant lust and forsake such an idol often dissipate

without yielding any fruit? All these cords of divine resolution by which they bind themselves are as fragile as tow and flax before the fire of temptation; they decree many things, but these decrees are not firmly established. We confess that this is such a prevalent issue among the faithful that sometimes they resolve in nothing more than this: to resolve no more. They almost give up on the duty of making resolutions because they fall short in the duty of actual performance. We believe that this issue occurs either because Christians do not resolve with the strength of a Mediator, or if they do resolve with His strength, they do not make much use of it to bring down such iniquity. We think that this was the reason Peter's resolutions were greatly diminished and came to nothing. This is somewhat hinted at in Isaiah 40:30-31, where it is said that even youths shall faint and be weary, and young men shall utterly fall. The greatest natural abilities that might help people to run without growing weary and the most promising signs from themselves shall fail and come to nothing. But as the 31st verse goes on to say, "they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength," even those who have no strength of their own. We believe that there are two great mysteries of Christianity in this context. Firstly, to resolve with the understanding that we are unable, by ourselves, to think one good thought. Secondly, which is a bit more mysterious, to believe that Christ's strength, laid hold of by faith, is as effective for crucifying such a lust as if it were our own inherent strength and excellence. Surely, someone who has embraced this core concept of Christianity need not struggle with its lesser aspects. We would like to emphasize this along the way: strive to avoid comparative resolutions, for these are often undermined. As we have seen in the case of Peter, although all others may forsake you, yet I will not, such resolutions are often shattered. Aim for resolute and unwavering resolutions, but be cautious of comparisons.

This is also caused by the fact that Christians often determine to mortify such a lust more with their intellectual understanding than with their affections. Sometimes, when a Christian prays for the mortification of a particular idol, it appears that their intellect is praying more fervently than their affections. Occasionally, it happens that when reason and judgement are petitioning for the death of a particular idol, the affections seem to protest against the granting of such a request. It is almost as if they say, "Lord, do not mortify this lust." We believe this was the situation and practice of those mentioned in Ezekiel 14:4-5, who came to inquire of the Lord while keeping their idols in their hearts. We may set our idols aside in our thoughts, but they still reside in our hearts when we seek their mortification. We would like to emphasize this: when you start making resolutions, endeavour to have your souls deeply impressed with the sinfulness of such a lust, as well as with the immense disadvantage of indulging in such a lust. We believe that the usual time for a Christian's resolutions is when they have been blessed with heavenly dew and have tasted the sweetness of God's presence. Often, Christians' resolutions are more in line with their current frame of mind than with what their frame of mind will likely be in the near future. This is often why Christians who make lofty resolutions often fall short in their performance. Alternatively, we believe it occurs because Christians are inclined toward slothfulness and the woeful idol of self-indulgence. They make fair resolutions but do not exert the effort to fulfil their vows. This is clearly indicated not only in Proverbs 13:4, where it is said, "The sluggard desires, but has nothing," but more pointedly in Proverbs 21:25, where it says, "The desire of the sluggard hinders him, for his hands refuse to labour." It is certainly true that unless a Christian is diligent, they can never be effective at mortification. Mortification is not achieved without effort; we must labour diligently and experience the pangs of spiritual rebirth before Christ can be fully formed in us.

And lastly, there is this reason which occasions it: Christians do not set for themselves a lofty and divine purpose in mortifying their lusts. Certainly, we believe this is the most common situation among believers. Either we propose to mortify our lusts so that we may have something to boast about, to make mention of our righteousness, as if it were ours alone, or we set this carnal end, to ensure we have a continual reputation among the living in Jerusalem, lest the inner mystery of iniquity within us be engraved on our foreheads. I believe that some in this age may bear a name similar to what Jude assigns to them in verse 12 of his Epistle when he calls them "twice dead." This means that they are not only truly dead, but through the deceitfulness of sin, they have lost any name of living they once had. It has faded and vanished away. I am convinced that if we were known to each other as we are known to Him who has those seven eyes that run to and fro throughout the earth, we would surely marvel at the boldness of our hope and laugh at the strength of our delusions.

Now, as for the first point we intended to discuss from the scripture, it concerns the benefits a Christian gains from mortifying their lusts and continually engaging in this precious battle. As we clarified in our previous discourse, the advantage of a mortifying Christian is this: typically, such a Christian lives with the sense of their interest in God; they are allowed to read their name written in the book of life. This is evident from Revelation 2:17, where it is said that to the one who overcomes, and who is on the path of overcoming, a white stone will be given, and on the stone, a new name will be written which no one knows except the one who receives it. This is also supported by Revelation 2:11, which states that the one who overcomes will not be hurt by the second death. Furthermore, 2 Timothy 4:8 beautifully connects these two aspects. This is certainly true that a mortifying Christian is someone who lives with the divine assurance of their

interest in God. Not only because those who do not mortify their lusts tend to dim their hope and obscure their evidence, but also because every day of failing to mortify is like a strike through the extract of our peace with God, so that over time, this precious extract becomes unreadable to us. We will say this: a Christian who can maintain faith in their interest without the exercise of mortification may doubt the reality of such assurance. Mortification and assurance live and die together; they are weak or strong together. But it is also the case because God typically rewards a mortifying Christian with the assurance of His peace. He admits them into the eternal purposes of His heart and the secrets of His counsel, letting them see their name written in the records of heaven so that they do not grow weary in times of adversity, thereby proving their strength to be real. Have you never experienced that when you were most earnest in the practice of mortification, you were admitted to glimpse that precious and eternal hope?

There is a second advantage that a Christian gains from being continually engaged in this blessed warfare: mortification is the grace that keeps all other spiritual graces active and exercised. It is the superior wheel upon which all inferior wheels move. If we may speak figuratively, mortification represents the culmination of all spiritual graces combined into one, exerting themselves in one divine act. Faith is exercised by a mortifying Christian, not only in drawing resources from Jesus Christ, who is our head, but also as a defensive piece of armour (referred to as the "shield of Faith") with which we quench the fiery darts of the Devil. This war will not proceed with much advantage if faith is not present. Likewise, the grace of hope is exercised by a mortifying Christian, and its role in this blessed warfare is to hold up the crown of immortal glory in its right hand, bearing the engraving that states, "He who perseveres to the end shall be saved and obtain this crown of life." This serves as great

encouragement for a Christian in this exercise. Watchfulness is also a grace exercised in this blessed warfare. It functions as the sentinel of the Christian, stationed on the watchtower, warning them of the movements of their adversary. Watchfulness alerts us when corruption begins to stir. The grace of love is significantly exercised in this blessed warfare. When a Christian beholds the divine and immeasurable compassion of Jesus Christ, which He extends toward them by upholding them in their trials, even when they are grievously wounded by the arrows of their enemies, it ignites the grace of love within them. Lastly, the grace of prayer is greatly exercised in this blessed warfare. When faith begins to wane, hope loses its courage, watchfulness falls asleep, and love grows cold, then prayer, like a flying cherub, goes to the Captain of our salvation, entreating His help in their time of need. Prayer serves as the sweet mediator between the Christian and heaven. It remains with Christ upon the mount when faith and watchfulness are in the field battling with the corruptions and lusts within us. We will only say this in passing: we do not know whether a Christian is more indebted to Jesus Christ for justification than for sanctification, but we believe it is better to unite the two than to compare them.

There is this third advantage that a mortifying Christian possesses: such a Christian most often experiences divine solace and intimate communion with God. They are allowed to taste the honey from the rock and be satisfied with the finest of the wheat. Have you ever wondered why you haven't felt as if you've been in heaven for many days? It is because you haven't been fighting for many days. This is evident from Revelation 2:17, where the promise is given to the mortifying Christian that they shall taste of the hidden manna, which is the sweetness of Jesus Christ. It is also supported by Romans 8:13: "For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live." Likewise,

Romans 7:24, when compared with verse 25, reveals that even wrestling Paul received songs of everlasting praise placed in his mouth. Do you want to know who is allowed to sing one of the songs of Zion while in a foreign land? It is the mortifying Christian. When they are in pursuit of their enemies, they are then allowed to put out their singer and taste the honey so that their eyes may be enlightened. Some plead for a form of mortification in these days, whose highest achievement in this precious grace does not involve knowing, being convinced of, and mourning over sin. Instead, their idea of mortification is that one should be dead to the sense and conviction of sin. We shall pass no other judgment on such Antinomian mortification than this: it is indeed the mortification of godliness, a crucifixion of repentance and holiness, a killing of the new man within a Christian, while at the same time quickening the old man in its lusts and affections. This mortification is nothing but Satan disguised as an angel of light. It is a piece of that new Gospel that is preached so widely in these days, which, even if brought by an angel from heaven, should not be believed. This is not new light but old darkness veiled in the guise of a glittering light. Oh, study to be deeply impressed by the bitterness of sin so that you may taste the consolations of the Holy Spirit.

The fourth advantage that a Christian gains from continually engaging in this warfare is that such a Christian has distinct and perfect discoveries, not only of the deceitfulness of their own heart but also of the subtlety of corruption and sin that assails them. A mortifying Christian is a highly experienced Christian. This is evident throughout Romans 7, where struggling Paul has distinct discoveries of himself, saying that there is a law in his members rebelling against the law of his mind, bringing him into subjection. Certainly, there is much precious advantage that accrues to the Christian from being convinced of the deceitfulness of their own heart and the mystery of

iniquity within them. Such a Christian comes to exercise the grace of humility, for when they see themselves as in a mirror, they cry out, "Woe is me, I am undone." In some sense, it may be lawful for Christians to follow Peter's example, as seen in Luke 5:8 when he said, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man." This may not have been a well-reasoned argument, but it reflects his high regard for the holiness of God and his low view of himself. Moreover, such a Christian is less reliant on their own strength and is compelled to go to One upon whom their strength is laid. Additionally, such a Christian is vigilant and watchful, not ignorant of Satan's devices, which keeps them constantly on guard to avoid being ensnared by the devil.

The fifth advantage that a Christian gains from engaging in the exercise of mortification is that they attain much divine conformity with God and become partakers of the divine nature, sharing in the invisible Majesty. This is evident from Revelation 3:5, where the promise "I will clothe him in white" is partly fulfilled for a Christian even while they are in this valley of tears. Surely, this is a condensed and sweet summary of all Christian benefits—to be made like the Majesty of God. It is not just a temporary conformity, but such a mortifying Christian is consistent in preserving the divine features and spiritual characteristics of that precious image undamaged within them. As promised in Revelation 3:12, "The one who conquers, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God. Never shall he go out of it." This promise of stability is partly fulfilled for a Christian even while they are here on earth. What more could a Christian desire than to partake in the image of the invisible God and be made like Him?

There is this last advantage that a Christian has by being continually engaged in this precious work of mortification: such a person has his

antipathy and hatred against sin greatly increased. Do you want to know who lives under the strong sense of the sinfulness of sin? It is the mortifying Christian. I think that the vain distinction that Papists make between mortal and venial sins is something Christians, in their practice, allow and commend to a great extent. There are some sins that seem venial to them, for which they take liberties and latitude, as can be observed. A Christian will, without much difficulty, if not careful, commit such things that are not in line with the exercise of grace within them. They require no other permission but this: to be convinced that there is a compatibility between such a lust and the living, spiritual nature of grace within them. However, if we were to reason correctly, we would be provoked to abstain from sin, even from the disadvantages that come with pursuing any lust.

Now, moving on to what we shall address next: the disadvantages a Christian faces due to an interruption of this spiritual warfare and not being engaged much in the exercise of Mortification. If this question were posed to many, asking them when they last set aside some hours to mortify their sins, most would be at a loss, not knowing the last time they were involved in this precious warfare. I would only say this: a Christian who can interrupt the work of Mortification for several weeks in a row may either suspect that grace is struggling within them, like a fatally wounded person groaning; or that they have not been born again to a living hope. There is no exemption or discharge in this warfare; we must fight until one foot is within the realm of everlasting delight.

The second disadvantage that befalls a Christian who interrupts this warfare is that they tend to develop much hardness and impenitence of heart. This was evident in the case of David, who, when he once ceased from this battle, could write a letter leading to the killing of the godly Uriah, without any mention of a smitten heart. This is

certainly a common consequence when one does not engage in self-mortification—they allow their heart to become as hard as a stone. The mortifying Christian keeps the holy zeal within them; they hate garments stained with the flesh. If you want to trace the origin and rise of hardness of heart in these days among us, it is this: Christians are not actively practicing Mortification. I believe the Gospel has been preached for nearly six thousand years, and it is highly debatable if disbelief and hardness of heart have ever been such widespread ailments among Christians as they are today. We seem to expect to reach heaven by mere guesswork, which causes us to pay little attention to this blessed work.

The third disadvantage that a Christian encounters due to the cessation of this warfare is that their lusts often become more dominant and alive within them. Sin can gain more strength through the interruption of one day's exercise of Mortification than you can overcome by wrestling with it for many days. This is the cunning skill of sin—it can replenish itself in a short time with great ease. Certainly, if you are not steadfast in this warfare, you may not celebrate many triumphs over your lusts. He must be unwavering in this battle to become a victor in the fight. When was the last time you set up an Eben-ezer to God, saying, "Hitherto the Lord has helped me?" and when did you erect trophies and monuments of your victories? We believe that Christians in this age leave fewer and smaller trophies of their victory on the path to heaven than any who came before them.

There is this fourth disadvantage which a Christian has by the interruption of this warfare, and it is this: typically, such a Christian lives without the expectation of victory and triumph in the end. A Christian who interrupts this practice of mortification engages in a conflict that we might describe as uncertain, not having determined

whether the outcome will be in their favor or not. There is an allusion to this in 1 Timothy 4:8, where Paul, engaged in a strenuous struggle, as the word implies, persuades himself that he will receive that crown of righteousness, which is the fitting reward for a triumphant Christian. Believe me, I know not what could offer a Christian more profound peace and consolation than the belief that they will subdue all their enemies and make them their footstool.

There is this fifth disadvantage that a Christian faces by interrupting the exercise of mortification, and it is this: typically, such a person, as they pass through the first and second gates of death, and when they are to give an account of their stewardship, has the least conviction of their relationship with God. Would you like to know why Christians die with such little faith and assurance? It is because they have not been actively engaged in the practice of Mortification. Certainly, the realization of falling short in this duty and the awareness of eternity and impending judgment are two companions that bring sweet comfort together. I think, next to justification and faith in Jesus Christ, which is the foundation of all our consolation, a Christian finds the most peace in the work of Mortification on the day when they stand at that boundary between time and eternity. Oh, what consolation old Paul had when he spoke these words, as he was ready to depart: "I have fought the good fight of faith." I doubt if Paul ever sang a song of praise on a higher note than when he sang that song in 2 Timothy 4:8: "I have fought the good fight of faith." Paul's heart was almost transported as he reflected on the fact that all his lusts were dying and being subdued at his feet.

And there is this last disadvantage that befalls a Christian who interrupts this warfare: typically, such a person is greatly hindered by God in the exercise of other graces. Furthermore, they are hindered in the exercise of their gifts. These two losses will affect a

Christian who interrupts this warfare. Certainly, if a Christian's graces are stifled and their gifts are not, it is one of the severest blows that can befall them. Often, it serves as a cushion sewn under their armpits, which makes them continue in sin without fear. This is subtly hinted at in Ecclesiastes 2:9, where what led Solomon astray after his idols was the fact that "Also my wisdom remained with me." He was still as wise a man as he was before. Certainly, when gifts remain vigorous while graces do not, individuals may sit down and lament their condition for seven nights and seven days.

Now, we shall conclude our discourse at this time. We will only offer a few words of consolation to those who are earnestly engaged in this warfare, yet have not experienced tangible benefits or success over their lusts, those who have toiled all night and caught nothing. We believe that God typically has three divine purposes when He assigns such a lot to a sincere Christian.

Firstly, it is to maintain a constant connection with the Throne of grace. He, in a sense, wounds us in our legs so that we do not stray far from His Throne. Certainly, Christians may be convinced that if they had their way in mortifying, they would not be inclined to seek His presence much. This can be demonstrated because what drives someone to converse with God is more often a sense of necessity than a desire born out of love. A Christian may go to prayer six times, even many times, out of necessity before going twice out of love and delight.

Secondly, it is to test and exercise the faith of Christians, whether they will believe and trust in Him, even when they do not see Mortification growing within them. We confess that our limited progress in Mortification is the foundation of unbelief. Certainly,

God has this design for His own, to test their faith, to see whether they will believe and hope against all odds.

Thirdly, the Lord does it because He knows that a Christian can better make use of their limited progress in Mortification than they can of great success. Believe me, it is certain that as a Christian advances in grace, it becomes more difficult to handle than when they make only slight progress. The main reason for this is that pride and arrogance usually sprout from this precious root of grace. As one seems to decline, the other appears to ascend. When a Christian diminishes their lusts, it may seem as if pride in their own accomplishments is on the rise.

For those of you who have never understood what this practice of Prayer and Mortification entails (are there not many here who have never experienced any change in their lives?), we would like to ask, have you never known what it was to be deeply aware of the sinfulness of sin? Or have you ever experienced shedding tears over your sins? Like the words in Psalm 32:3 where David says, "When I kept silent, my bones grew old through my groaning all the day long." The word "groaning" implies not only that sometimes a Christian mourns like a beast rather than lamenting like a man (as groaning is the sound of a beast), but it also signifies that Christians are sometimes in such a state that they are more suited to the open field than the quiet chambers of their homes. David was compelled to roar like a beast when the very foundations of his house, his bones, were growing old and deteriorating within him. Surely, the day is coming when those of you who have never known what it is to crucify a lust, Christ will crucify you on the cross of everlasting pain. He will tread you in the winepress of the indignation of the Most High, and He will sharpen the arrows of His indignation against you. Those who refuse to forsake sin, sin shall become their eternal companion.

When Christ has invited you so many times to forsake such lusts, and you have repeatedly declined, this will be the sentence pronounced upon you: "Let it be to you even as you will, they are joined to idols, let them alone." Certainly, when Christ ceases to reprove, that person is in a grave and desperate state. O, that you would strive in this good fight of faith! Your opportunity still remains for many of you. Are there not some among you who have never known what it was to spend an hour in private wrestling and debating with your lusts? The strong man has control of your house, and therefore, all is at peace within it. There is no going out or coming in at the gates of your city, but peace is the exactor of your house, and those who promote peace hold sway within it. Cursed be that peace that will end in eternal war with God.

Would you like to know the condition and experience of those who are in eternal chains? We can describe it as follows: it is infinite justice and infinite omnipotence wrestling and crushing finite and sinful humanity. Sometimes the plague of divine wrath descends upon one part of their being, and at other times on another. They are now living an endless life of death, and they are spending their days in a dying life. They shall be eternally dying, yet never able to die. Are there not some among you who are so attached to your idols that if Dives were to come from hell and preach to you, urging you to crucify your lusts, you would stop your ears at that precious exhortation? You may hide sin under your tongue, but be persuaded that in the end, it will be in your belly like the poison of asps and the venom of dragons.

We leave you with this advice and counsel, dear Christians who have embarked on this precious warfare: stand firm in the liberty with which Christ has made you free, and do not become entangled again in the yoke of bondage. Sin is a yoke that neither we nor our

forefathers were able to bear. Meditate on this advice: strive to be as engaged in mortification and in the exercise of this duty as if you were to attain salvation through works. However, also strive to be as self-denying and to have as low an opinion of yourselves as if you were bound to do nothing or had done nothing at all. Aim to work as someone who indeed follows the law and desires to maintain good works. But also study self-denial, as one who has fled for refuge to the blessed hope set before you. Christ is waiting at the end of the path of a mortifying Christian with a crown in His right hand. He desires us to persevere to the end so that we may obtain that immortal crown. A day with precious Christ will be an infinite reward for all our toil, and the more you are engaged in mortification, the sweeter and more delightful heaven will be to you.

SERMON IV.

And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. - Galatians 5:24.

Such is that universal stupidity and hardness of heart that has overtaken the professors of this generation, that if Christ should come from heaven and read over to us the complete roll of our iniquities and show us these records, in which all our wanderings are written, the majority of us would not be much affected, not much in the exercise of sorrow. No doubt, it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for stupid Christians, such as we are, to enter into the Kingdom of God. It is one of the mysteries of His overcoming grace that He has not broken these two precious

staves of beauty and bands among us, that He has not broken the covenant of His peace and ceased to entertain such a close relationship between Himself and us. Likewise, it is a mystery of His love that we are not made eternal monuments of the justice of God, with the motto engraved upon us, "Behold these who did not make God their refuge." God is glorious in the exercise of all His holy attributes, but in none more than in the exercise of His patience and longsuffering toward us. He, in a manner, dims the glory of His justice and casts a veil over His spotless holiness so that the exercise of the attribute of patience and longsuffering may be made more conspicuous. I only pose you with this question: Is not mortification a mystery to your practice? Can such a delusion overtake you that you shall reign with Christ, even though your lusts reign with you as long as you are here? It is certain you know that mortification is that precious exercise in which you ought to be engaged. I conceive that there is only this difference between sinning against light and that unpardonable sin against the Holy Ghost: sinning against light is a sinning against the common work of the Spirit upon your understanding, but the sin against the Holy Ghost is a sin against the common work of the Spirit upon the affections. No doubt, there is a near bordering between these two, and it is the first step to it by which you go up and ascend to the acting of this sin. It is a faithful saying, as the Apostle Paul says, that if we die with Christ, we shall also reign with Him. We may likewise say, it is a faithful saying that if we are not with Christ and are not conformed unto Him in His suffering, we cannot be conformed unto Him in the power of His resurrection. You are all willing to take Christ as a Justifier and as a Saviour but unwilling to take Him as a Sanctifier and as a Prince. But know this, that the gifts of this spotless Lamb are so sweetly linked together, like His own seamless coat upon His body, which could not be divided. So unless all the gifts of Jesus Christ fall to us by divine allotment, we can have no part or portion therein. This Mortification

is the compendium of Christianity, and certainly, a Christian reading these words may stand amazed and be ashamed at his own stupidity, that an interest in Christ should be connected with such a degree of Mortification, although we believe there are many who take the name of Christians that never knew what it was to exercise themselves in Mortification.

I shall only (before I speak to what mainly we intend to address) emphasise this grace of Mortification upon you through these points. First, this should enforce the duty of Mortification of lusts because it is impossible to satisfy your lusts, no matter how diligently you search for satisfaction. Therefore, you should be undeceived and convinced that if your lusts had their desire, they would not be satisfied. This is clearly shown to be false, as in Psalm 78:29-30, where it is said that they got their heart's desire, yet they were not estranged from their lusts. Let a covetous person suppose that upon having so much wealth, their lust for covetousness would be satisfied. But Job refutes this in Job 20:22, stating that in the fullness of his sufficiency, he shall be in straits. It is easier to mortify your lusts than to satisfy them. Secondly, even though you hide sin under your tongue and find it sweet, know that the day is coming when it shall be in your bowels like the gall of asps and the poison of dragons. Be certain that the momentary pleasures of sin are not worthy to be compared with the eternal weight of insupportable misery that will be inflicted upon you. It is a terrible sight to behold a living God eternally contending with a poor sinful sinner, with omnipotence and justice fighting against the dust of his feet. Lastly, not constantly engaging in this precious work of Mortification interrupts precious fellowship that you might have with Christ. Those who are tasting the sweetness of sin cannot taste the sweetness of heaven. This is clear in Romans 8:13, where mortifiers have the promise that they shall live. We shall only say this by the

way: it is a difficult question to determine whether it is more advantageous for one under any predominant lust to have the objects upon which it feeds withdrawn or to have them furnished to feed upon. For instance, if one is under the predominant sin of pride, it is a question whether the lack of occasion to exercise and feed that lust is better or to have it. Proud Achitophel, when he lacked the objects upon which pride feeds, strangled himself. When we have them furnished to us, what secret idolatry and desperate atheism do we commit in the secret temples of our hearts and in the chambers of our imagery? Mortify more, or you shall pray less.

Now, what we mainly intend to address is the second thing concerning Mortification from these words: the extent of Mortification. It is not only about crucifying your predominant lusts, which are here called affections because they are idols and linked together by the passion of love. You must also mortify the first motions and stirrings of corruption and all occasions for it, which are here called lusts. Furthermore, a spiritual mortifier must mortify original sin, which is here called the flesh, as it is often named in Scripture. It is an exercise unknown to many, if not all. We think of original sin as a Zoar, and it is indeed hard to be convinced of the sinfulness of original sin and to recognize it in its true colours. In speaking about the work of Mortification of original sin, we shall not insist for long on the duty of a Christian to crucify this sin, as it is clear from Colossians 3:5, where we are commanded to mortify our members. It is also evident from the practice of Paul in Romans 7:24: "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death?" There is strong emphasis in the word "me," as if Paul would have said that if infinite grace can have bounds, then sinful Paul is the limit of it.

To make this more clear, let us first discuss what original sin is. We believe that it consists of the imputation of Adam's transgression to us. Since he was a common and representative person, we fell in his falling and stood in his standing. Original sin also includes the absence of original righteousness. Man was not created according to the noble pattern and divine idea, the image of God. Man now bears only the image of God in his wisdom and omnipotence, but in his primitive state, he carried an impression of the holiness of God. Original sin further encompasses a proclivity to commit all evil, as well as an ineptitude and unfitness for performing any good. This is our natural state. The first part of original sin is clear from Romans 5:12 and 14. The rest can be gathered from various places in Scripture but is encapsulated in Ephesians 2:1, where it is stated that we were dead in sins and trespasses. One can no more move in the performance of any spiritual good than if they were completely lifeless.

We shall secondly speak a little about the advantages that a Christian may gain from being convinced of original sin. It is most certain that a Christian is less convinced of original corruption than they are of any actual transgression that befalls them. The reason for this partly comes from not acknowledging the sinfulness of original sin, which is a greater sin than twenty, even a hundred, actual transgressions. Or it might arise from Christians not being aware of the influence that original sin has on all outward acts of iniquity. It is a fertile womb that always bears twins and is never barren; it is a root that daily brings forth wormwood and gall. Or perhaps it proceeds from the belief that original sin is not our own and that we are not as guilty as if we had indeed eaten that cursed apple.

But in terms of the advantages of being convinced of original corruption, there is, firstly, the advantage that it is impossible for

anyone to hold high thoughts of Jesus Christ's love and the offer of mercy without being convinced of original sin. If you want to know why Christ is not highly esteemed among you, it is because you are not convinced of your original corruption. This is alluded to in Romans 5:6-8, where the Apostle highlights the love of Christ in dying for us by emphasising our original corruption, that we were sinners and without strength. The condescending grace of Christ towards a sinner who believes in original corruption is a profound mystery; it is the foundation upon which all our esteem is built. This is also hinted at in Romans 7:24, compared with verse 25, where Paul begins to extol free grace, and his song rises to the highest pitch because he has been convinced of this body of death that dwells within him. If you want to learn the divine lesson of holding Christ in high regard, study original corruption extensively.

Secondly, there is the advantage that the conviction of original sin greatly magnifies the omnipotence of Christ's grace in mortifying corruption. When did Paul have the highest regard for the omnipotence of Christ's grace? Was it not when he was compelled to cry out, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death?" This is certainly alluded to in Ephesians 2:1, where the quickening power of grace is commended in its exercise upon those who were dead in sins and trespasses.

Thirdly, there is the advantage that flows from the conviction of original sin, which helps to keep the Christian humble, even in the highest attainments of mortification or communion with God. If you wonder why you are easily filled with pride after a small success or some familiarity with Christ, it is due to the lack of reflection on the original corruption within you. Therefore, I would advise Christians, in their highest advancements in grace, to sit down and seriously contemplate their natural state, where their father is an Amorite and

their mother an Hittite. The rock from which they were hewn may preach humility to them. This is evident from Romans 7:24, where, under the conviction of original sin, Paul calls himself a wretched man. It is also clear from the 9th verse of that chapter, where once original sin is discovered, he feels as though he has died in his own perception. If we were more aware of this, the wind of the wilderness would not bind us up in its wings until our substance is dissolved.

Fourthly, there is an advantage for a Christian in the conviction of original corruption in keeping them under the deepest impression of the sinfulness of sin. It is one of the greatest mysteries of Christianity to have our souls constantly under the impression of the sinfulness of sin, which we believe is impossible to attain without a solid conviction of original corruption. This is hinted at in Romans 7:13 when Paul, through the commandment, had original sin revealed, and sin became exceedingly sinful to him. The reason why the discovery of original sin has such an impact on this is because we often think that the acts of sin do not come from ourselves but from the deceiver of the brethren, a notion that James thoroughly refutes, for when a man is tempted, he is enticed by his own lusts.

There is this fifth advantage that a Christian has by being convinced of original sin: it is an excellent way to keep the Christian in a most watchful and cautious frame. Such language as "Am I a dog to commit this?" would not have been heard if he had been convinced of original sin. But because he was a stranger to this, his presumption led him to exceed what was indeed within him. Therefore, when one is convinced of their inclination to act iniquity and their lack of conformity to God, they remember to stand upon their watchtower lest they be ensnared. This is clearly referred to in 1 Corinthians 9:27, where Paul speaks of bringing his body into subjection because he possessed a holy jealousy of himself and

entertained a divine suspicion, which was consistent with the action of hope. I know of nothing that makes a Christian watch over their own heart more than this: to see that spawn of iniquity within them, to behold that fruitful mother of iniquity which has never been declared barren and never shall be until sin shall exist no more within them.

There is this sixth advantage a Christian has by being convinced of original corruption: it is that which will keep the soul in the highest estimation of Christ and make the grace of love burn most vigorously within a Christian. When one reflects upon these two things—the spotless holiness of Christ and the absolute purity of that precious Lamb—and then descends to reflect upon the mysteries of iniquity within themselves, it is no wonder that they are sometimes compelled to use Peter's divinity and cry out, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man." But when they fully appreciate this sight, their soul is transported, and they enter a holy ecstasy of love towards that precious and matchless One.

And there is this last advantage that a Christian has by being convinced of original sin: it puts a Christian in a state of holy diffidence in their own strength and makes them rely on the strength of Him whose name is Jehovah. What is the reason that Christians commit a breach of that first commandment, so often trusting in their own strength and not making mention of His righteousness and relying on His strength, even on His alone? It is because we do not live under the constant impression of original corruption. We believe that it is as great a mystery to men's judgment as it is a mystery to their practice to mortify it. What made Paul cry out so much, as in Romans 7:18, to disclaim his own ability, and in verse 23? Was it not the conviction of original sin within him?

Now, secondly, let's discuss the necessity of the mortification of original sin, which we believe is pointed out by these factors. First, all mortification is in vain, like beating the air, until original corruption is mortified. What is all your mortification without this? It's like pruning branches while the root remains intact, it's like damming up streams while the fountain still flows. Mortification without dealing with this mother of sin will ultimately be in vain. We would only mention, under correction, that we believe original sin cannot be mortified in the body but only in the members. We must strive to mortify some living lusts within us while groaning under the rest. It is challenging to address the entire body of original sin and make it the subject of mortification or lamentation.

Secondly, the necessity of the mortification of original sin is undeniable because it serves as clear evidence of a Christian. We believe it is impossible for a hypocrite to go to such lengths as to genuinely mortify original corruption. This was the practice of two holy men, the Apostle Paul (Romans 7:24) and David (Psalms 51:5), where they sat down to lament the iniquity within them. The reason why the mortification of original sin is undeniable evidence of a Christian is not only because one who sets out to mortify it has the most distinct self-discoveries but also some revelations of the holiness and spotlessness of God. It is difficult to be convinced of original sin by the light of nature, if at all. This is a question the Apostle seems to hint at in Romans 7:7, where he says, "I had not known lust except the Lord had said, Thou shalt not covet."

There is this, thirdly, which speaks forth the necessity of the mortification of original corruption: all the duties that proceed from a Christian are exceedingly defiled and polluted unless they endeavour the mortification of this sin. For this was a paradox to the Apostle James in chapter 3, verse 11, that a fountain at one place

shall send forth bitter water and sweet. And until the fountain of corruption is removed, it is reasonable to assume that all the acts of duty performed by us shall be exceedingly polluted. Oh, but when original sin remains untouched by a Christian's mortification, his duties will not ascend with acceptance upon his altar.

And there is this, fourthly, which pleads the necessity of the Mortification of original sin: it is that sin which exceedingly wars against the grace of God in a Christian. Would you know why grace is in such a languishing state? It is because of the power of original sin. We believe that the opposition of original sin to the advancement of grace is more invisible, while the opposition of actual corruption to the acts of grace is more visible and obvious. But certainly, that which entangles a Christian in his walk and prevents him from ascending like pillars of smoke from this present wilderness is that original sin. This is clear from Romans 7:23 and Galatians 5:17, where the spirit wars against the flesh, and the flesh against the spirit, and these two are contrary to each other.

Now, thirdly, we shall speak about the mortification of original sin, how a Christian may be convinced and brought to a spiritual impression of original sin. We believe that if a Christian shall engage in these three practices, he may attain to some spiritual convictions of this sin. First, let him engage in self-examination frequently, and when he reflects upon himself, he will behold the invisible stirrings of iniquity towards almost every sin that has been named among the Gentiles. Who is such a stranger to his own heart that, if he reflects upon it, may not sometimes see the stirrings of unknown (almost) corruptions? This loudly speaks to the Christian that there is a fountain and spring within him that would send forth such bitter waters unless they were graciously restrained.

Secondly, by which a Christian may be brought to the conviction of original sin, is to be deeply engaged in the study of the spirituality of the law. This was the way that Paul attained to the conviction of original sin, as seen in Romans 7. It is the concise path by which one may behold the holiness of God who imposes a command not only to abstain from the acts of sin but also from the first motions and lusts of sin.

Lastly, a Christian should be much engaged in the exercise of prayer, for that Spirit who convicts the world of sin, that which you do not know of yourselves, He, who is the great Convincer of the world, may imprint those convictions upon your souls that make you sit down and bewail yourselves in the bitterness of your spirit. And now, we shall conclude our discourse. Only this we would say to those who are engaged in this holy warfare against their corruptions, that they should not be easily discouraged even if they do not see tangible victories. You must understand that sin will be with you as long as you have a being. We can certainly allude to that verse in Daniel 7:12 and say that the dominion of your sins shall be taken away, even if their lives are prolonged for a time and a season. Likewise, we would encourage you who have your corruptions stirring most within you, for it is often observed that Satan, when he is about to be removed, then stirs and acts most violently. Just as it is noted that the last beating of the pulse in a dying man is the strongest, the beating of corruption, when it is about to be cast out, may be most intense. We shall only provide the reason why Christians are not deeply affected by the good news that the day is coming when they shall prevail over their corruptions and tread Satan underfoot. Why aren't the feet of those who bring such glad tidings beautiful upon the mountains? We believe this either arises from the fact that Christians are not fully engaged in this holy warfare, for it is certain that if you were fighting day by day, then the hope of victory and a blessed outcome would be

as glad tidings from a far country and as refreshing as cold water to a thirsty soul. Even if your hope were deferred until your hearts were sick, the fulfillment of your desires should be sweet to your souls. Or it might be because Christians do not truly believe this truth that there is an end to their struggle. If you could come to believe this truth that victory shall be heard in heaven, "Speak comfort to Jerusalem, for her warfare is accomplished," as we may allude to these words, or if a Christian is seriously contending with his lusts and has some measure of faith in this truth, then it may finally be due to the lack of distinct assurance of our interest and the assurance of our peace with Him. As long as a Christian is uncertain about his eternal rest, he cannot be deeply affected with joy under the declaration of these means, that there is an end to their struggle and that those who have shared in the first resurrection shall not be subject to the second death. Oh, what a blessed day will that be when your feet shall stand within the gate of the new Jerusalem! When you shall receive these two precious badges and eternal trophies of your victory: a crown placed upon your head, of infinite value surpassing all material crowns, and a palm in your hand. It is impossible to determine the joy that will come to a Christian upon reflecting that he has trampled Satan under his feet and has crushed the head of him who has so often bruised his heel. And as for those who are strangers (as most of us are) to this spiritual warfare, be convinced of this, that within fewer than sixty years, God shall enter into an eternal warfare with you where there shall be no cessation of arms, and there shall be no interruption. It is better to fight against your lusts than to fight against a living and eternal God when He declares Himself to be your adversary and enemy. Man was once made perfect, but he devised many inventions, and among all those inventions, he found that accursed one: how there might be a separation between him and the living God. And unless He whose name is Prudence, and who has discovered the knowledge of many

witty inventions, had found out that precious invention of reconciling sinners to God, we would have been Magor-Missabib, terrors to ourselves. Oh, that you might be persuaded to contend with your lusts so that you can endure the heat of the day and the cold of the night in wrestling against sin! Know this: sin will not depart except through fasting and prayer. It is so closely united to us; it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for many of us to mortify our corruptions. Let us conclude by saying this one thing: be convinced that the day is approaching and is close at hand when our blessed Lord Jesus shall come with ten thousands of His saints. What if this were the day (O unmortified sinners!) when you should behold that white Throne fixed in the clouds, and you should receive a summons, with no continuation of days, to appear before His Tribunal? What could you answer when you are reprov'd? Would not silence and confession be your best defence? Certainly, there is an eternal curse pronounced against those who do not engage themselves in this precious act of godliness: crucifying the flesh with its lusts and affections. There is a law of death over your head, and there is a law of sin within your hearts, and you shall be eternally subject to these two laws unless the law of the spirit of life makes you free.

SERMON V.

And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. - Galatians 5:24.

The walk of a Christian who has Christ in him, the hope of glory, is most sublime. Being from spiritual principles for spiritual ends, it follows a spiritual rule. The walk of a Christian proceeds from faith and love in Jesus Christ as the predominant principle. Indeed, it is from the Spirit of Christ dwelling in the soul of a Christian by faith and abiding in it through love, which is the primary mover, the first wheel of all its motions. Furthermore, it is for a spiritual purpose: the glory of God. Their own salvation and advantage are subordinated to this purpose. They do not resemble Ephraim, empty vines bearing fruit for themselves. Instead, their aim is to make Christ all and themselves nothing. Although it is natural for a person to exalt themselves, making themselves the first starting point of their actions and the ultimate goal of all their deeds, the Christian seeks a different path. Their walk conforms to a spiritual rule, aligning with the precious Word of Life, perfect in itself and guiding humanity toward perfection.

Nevertheless, it is a lamentable fact that we often take excessive liberties and adopt a wide variety of approaches in our journey towards heaven. Many fear and lament the loss of their civil liberties, bemoaning their captivity in their own land under the rule of strangers. However, there is a less lamented yet more unbearable bondage: the bondage of sin and iniquity. Some remain content under the chains of their sin and the fetters of their iniquity, as though they were made of gold or adorned with fine gold. Mortification remains a mystery to our practice. Many seem to follow the paradox Saul encountered: finding their enemy yet allowing him to live. This paradox is frequently committed in our times when we fail to crucify the lusts and affections of our hearts. I believe that Christians today, when reflecting on their unmortified corruptions, must find their hope grounded in the notion that a living dog is better than a dead lion. Their confidence lies in the fact that they are

still on this side of eternity. We tend to seek uniqueness in our opinions but shy away from distinctiveness in our actions. The former is undoubtedly more commendable than the latter.

Perhaps, for two months, we should go to the mountains and mourn our virginity, regretting that we have not been espoused to the precious and excellent Jesus Christ and that we have not been striving to conform ourselves to His blessed image. It may be a mystery to many that they are not eternal monuments of God's justice and wrath. It is almost as if Cain's belief possesses our hearts, that whoever finds us will kill us. We would only suggest that you engage as fervently in mortifying your invisible lusts as you do in mortifying your visible lusts and iniquities.

During our previous discussion on these words, we mentioned that the second aspect of Mortification was its extent. A Christian should mortify not only original corruption but also their predominant lusts and the first movements and occasions of sin. Regarding the mortification of original sin, we have already spoken somewhat, and we will not dwell on it further. However, we maintain that original sin cannot be mortified in its entirety but only in its manifestations. The reason for this assertion is that it is impossible for a Christian to fully grasp original sin in its essence, as Jeremiah 17:9 states that the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked— who can know it? The deceitfulness of one's heart is beyond human understanding and remains a mystery that has never been fully uncovered. A Christian who is aware of original sin, understanding that it contains the seeds of every conceivable corruption, will greatly appreciate the restraining grace of Christ and compose songs of praise for His immeasurable grace. Christians often have much to do with pardoning grace, following David's example in 1 Samuel 25:32. We might call original sin Gad, for it emerges as a troop, a chorus of

vices. It is a fertile womb that consistently produces twins. We believe that those called Christians should be diligent in studying original sin.

It is a wonder that we journey toward heaven with such contentment, seeking an imagined happiness. Can you be so deluded as to think you can reap joy when you have not sown in tears, and that you can return with sheaves in your bosom when you have never gone forth bearing precious seed? We often think we can ascend to heaven through the short ladder of presumption. I would say, and I hope you will consider it, that we fear many will experience woeful and bitter disappointments of their hopes, compelled to reject their misplaced confidence. We separate what God has joined together, either pursuing holiness without justification or seeking justification without holiness.

Now, in speaking about the mortification of predominant lusts, which are referred to as affections here because the spirit of a Christian, and anyone else for that matter, is most strongly attached to them, we will not dwell on proving that it is the duty of a Christian or anyone to mortify their predominant lusts. This is evident from Matthew 18:8-9, where we are urged to pluck out our right eye if it offends us. The meaning of this is that if we had a lust as dear to us as our right eye, we should pluck it out if it causes us to sin. This is also clear from Mark 9:45 and 9:47, as well as Colossians 3:5, where we are commanded to mortify our inordinate affections. We shall not delve into the distinction of predominant lusts, some of which are more refined and often appear as virtues. For example, when pride is mixed with prudence, it can be seen as generosity, and prodigality, when not sensual and brutish, can be seen as mortification of worldly desires. When Satan tempts people to act on these predominant lusts, he not only seeks to gain their affections but also their light and

judgment to justify these actions. There are other predominant lusts that are more gross, and their sinfulness is more easily discerned. When tempting people to indulge in these lusts, Satan mainly targets their affections, which in turn affect their judgment as they devise ways to accomplish these sinful desires. The human mind is adept at plotting subtle iniquity, and the heart executes these schemes with great care and diligence.

Now, let us turn to the first aspect of the mortification of predominant lusts: the disadvantages that a Christian faces when they do not make an effort to mortify and crucify their predominant lusts but instead allow them to thrive.

The first disadvantage is that a Christian who does not vigorously mortify their predominant lusts hinders the precious fellowship and divine intimacy that should exist between them and God. Allowing the King of our lusts to reign separates us from God, and it is true that a brother offended is harder to win back than the bars of a strong castle. This is evident from Ezekiel 14:5, where it is stated that people are estranged from God by their idols, and from verse 7 of the same chapter, which warns against separating from God and setting up idols in one's heart. Separation from God and idolatry are closely connected. This connection is reinforced by Ezekiel 44:10 and Isaiah 59:2, which state that iniquities separate us from God. A Christian who believes they can enjoy God's presence without the exercise of mortification may question the reality of their enjoyment. Allowing predominant lusts to persist significantly disrupts communion and fellowship with God, not only because they weaken a Christian's diligence, zeal, and fervency in performing duties that lead to communion with God but also because they obscure the sweetness of that communion.

The second disadvantage is that a Christian who neglects to crucify their predominant lusts does not receive answers to their prayers, and God denies their requests. This is evident from Ezekiel 20:31, where God declares that those who defile themselves with idols should not come and inquire of Him. It aligns with the sentiment expressed by the blind man in John 9:31, "God heareth not sinners." David also acknowledges in Psalm 66 that if he regards iniquity in his heart, God will not hear his prayer. Most explicitly, Isaiah 59:2 states that iniquities cause God to deny hearing their prayers. It is not surprising that prayers presented to God while predominant lusts are active go unanswered. We often pray to God with indifference and formality, treating our prayers as mere compliments to greet God in the morning and bid Him farewell at night. We do not see much purpose in many of our prayers, and that is why God denies us their answers. I would advise you to let your hearts speak the words they are to say in prayer, and then let your words reflect your heart's desires so that your heart may dictate the content of your prayers.

There is this third disadvantage that a Christian has when entertaining his predominant lusts, and it is this: it exceedingly hinders a Christian's progress towards heaven. How far have you progressed in these many days or years? The movement of Christians is often retrograde these days; they go backward instead of advancing from strength to strength. Oh, that we might heed the command in Hebrews 12:1 to lay aside every weight and sin that hinders us and run with patience the race set before us! More mortification would propel us further toward heaven than we currently attain.

The fourth disadvantage is that when predominant lusts remain unbridled, any corruption within you will easily be exposed in the

day of trial. The Lord often takes revenge on those who refuse to mortify their lusts at home. He writes their iniquities in legible letters on their foreheads for all to see. If Christians believed more that God might be provoked to display their unmortified lusts in capital letters on their foreheads, it might motivate them to engage in this exercise. This is evident in Ezekiel 16:36, compared with verse 37, where entertaining idols is threatened with the curse of exposing their shame.

The fifth disadvantage is that, on the day when a Christian is passing through the valley of the shadow of death and facing endless eternity, an unmortified predominant lust will be terrible company and will stir up a storm within the conscience that is not easily calmed. Many of us are ill-prepared for eternity, and we do not live as if we were to die daily. If you want to pass through the gates of death with peace, study the mortification of your lusts. But when the triumphant song is sung, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" the soul will be filled with divine consolation and unspeakable joy.

The last disadvantage that befalls the Christian is this: one who fails to mortify their predominant lusts significantly mars all their religious performances and leaves a mark of their hands on those holy and excellent duties. A Christian with a predominant lust, not studying to mortify it, makes their gifts pray more than their grace. They seek the approval of men more than the praise of God. Such a Christian is more concerned with the adornments of Christianity than its substance. The vital and essential aspects of Christianity have been depleted, leaving only a few bones—more the image and anatomy of a Christian than an actual one. Additionally, such a Christian does not heed the command of faith, and their heart becomes hardened and impenitent. Often, through the deceitfulness

of sin, our hearts become as stones within us, and we are delivered into the hands of our iniquities.

Now, secondly, we shall speak to the profound subtlety and desperate deceit that Satan employs in tempting people to indulge in their predominant lusts. Over six thousand years of experience have shown that he is a liar and a murderer from the beginning. Nevertheless, we believe the flatteries of sin, as if our iniquities had an impeccable reputation and never deceived us. Satan's cunning is evident in several ways. Firstly, he often tempts a Christian to act on their predominant lusts when they are in a secure and presumptuous state. He attacks when Christ seems absent, rather than when Christ is near. This is indicated in Luke 22:31, compared with verse 33, where Jesus tells Peter that Satan has desired to sift him as wheat. Peter's frame at that moment was one of high presumption when he declared that he would not deny Christ even if everyone else did. Similarly, in 2 Samuel 11:2, when David was lying on his bed and walking on the roof of his house, Satan tempted him to commit the sin of uncleanness. Satan seeks to take advantage, especially when we are most inclined to embrace sin and least inclined to resist it. Therefore, it should be a Christian's endeavour to exercise vigilance and remain watchful on their watchtower.

There is, secondly, where his subtlety appears, that he usually proposes the imagined advantage of embracing such a lust and affects our affections with its pleasure. However, he does not mention the disadvantage and infinite harm that comes from such a lust. This was evident in his first temptation with our first father; he mentioned that eating the forbidden fruit would make them like God but made no mention of them becoming sinners. This is also evident in Matthew 4:8, where Satan showed all the kingdoms of the world with their glory to the holy and spotless Christ, promising to give

them to Him. He displayed the glory but did not show Him the vexation and toil that came with ruling those kingdoms. No doubt, one is much more than the other. The hook with which he seeks to ensnare us is coated with the bait of imaginary dignity, fleeting pleasures, and passing vanities. Oh, that we were as wise as serpents to understand the depths of Satan's schemes and not be ensnared by his enticements.

Thirdly, it appears that he usually tries to either downplay the sinfulness of sin so that a Christian may consider it a minor matter, or he attempts to prove the compatibility of such a sin with the reality of God's grace. When a Christian reaches the point of debating whether God's grace is consistent with acting on such a lust, they are on the verge of falling. At that point, they cry out, "Master, pardon me when I bow my knee in the house of Rimmon, and when my Master leans upon my hand." They grant themselves an indulgence and licence to commit that iniquity.

Fourthly, it is evident that he often restrains the temptations to act on your predominant lusts and withdraws the objects of them. This is done to catch you off guard or, more commonly, to give life to your lusts when the objects of lust are removed. It is most certain that lust often grows when there are fewer temptations to provoke it. When idols are absent, our love for these things increases. A lusting Amnon will become lean every day when deprived of the object to feed upon.

Fifthly, his subtlety is most evident in that he typically tempts people to commit sins that introduce and pave the way for the acting out of their predominant lusts. He tempts one inclined to uncleanness with pride, idleness, and gluttony. Certainly, one prone to pride will be tempted to smaller acts of these sins, thus ascending by degrees. He seeks to capture the outposts of the soul to gain control of the

affections. He breaks the covenant we made with our eyes, and as a result, we break the covenant we made with our hearts.

Lastly, his subtlety often tempts people to indulge in their predominant lusts under the guise of virtue and commendable actions. For instance, he tempts one to covetousness so they can be charitable to the poor and useful to those in need. He tempts one to sin, as seen in Romans 3:6, so that the grace of Christ's forgiveness may be more apparent. He tempted Christ to presumption under the guise of faith, as seen in Matthew 4:6 when he suggested that Christ cast Himself down because the angels would save Him, citing scripture. Likewise, he tempts many to unbelief under the guise of humility, knowledge, and distinct apprehensions of God.

Thirdly, we shall speak about providing you with some evidence of whether or not you have achieved the mortification of your predominant lusts and have truly triumphed over them. Although we mentioned this before, we won't dwell on it too much. We would only say these three things:

1. A Christian who can reflect on a lust they believe to be mortified with delight, without experiencing grief, may question the reality of their mortification. If one can meditate on their predominant lust, which they thought was mortified, and yet not be compelled to cover themselves with ashes and put sackcloth on their loins, they may cry out, "Miserere mei," have pity on me.
2. The second piece of evidence that your predominant lust is not mortified is when you are not diligent and careful to avoid anything that leads to the act of that predominant sin. If you are not obeying the command in 1 Thessalonians 5:22 to abstain from all appearance of evil, you may question the reality of your mortification. It is an excellent practice for a Christian to be as

mindful of the sinfulness of their predominant lust and sin even after it is mortified and to pursue its avoidance as diligently as when it was in its vigorous and active state.

And lastly, another way to evidence it is when one can, upon suitable and convenient occasions for acting such a predominant sin, have their lust ignited and endeavour to act on it. In such cases, they may question the reality of their Mortification. I know that for many, the main restraint from acting on their predominant lust isn't the apprehension of the holiness of God but rather the lack of secrecy. If we had secrecy, we might not grieve much for sins committed in secret, nor would we be inclined to refrain from acting on things our lust leads us to. It was indeed a commendable practice of someone who, when tempted to the sin of uncleanness, agreed to satisfy the pursuer's desires on the condition of absolute secrecy. However, when he attempted to take her to the most secluded place imaginable, she piously exclaimed, "Does not God behold us?" These words influenced him to desist from pursuing such wicked and carnal designs. The awareness of God's omniscience should indeed keep us committed to crucifying our most predominant lust.

We shall conclude our discourse for now, but we would like to address those who are guilty of the predominant lust of Covetousness. We believe that this is not just a predominant lust but a universal one. Sin is a universal ruler, reigning over even the most absolute monarch and every person. We consider covetousness to be one of the greatest Princes of Sin, acting under this absolute Monarch and having the most subjects. We would like to suggest some things that might help you mortify such a lust and idol.

Meditate extensively on the disadvantages associated with the idol of covetousness. We believe these disadvantages are clearly outlined in

1 Timothy 6:9-10. The Apostle Paul enumerates four disadvantages of covetousness:

1. It leads people astray from the faith.
2. It plunges them into destruction and perdition.
3. It is the root of all evil.
4. It pierces them through with many sorrows.

For those whose god is the world, consider this: covetousness will abbreviate and shorten your life, as indicated in Isaiah 5:3. This idol of covetousness will consume your flesh as if it were fire. It will not merely cut short your life without you noticing; it will sensibly abbreviate it, bringing you to your long and eternal home in the midst of your days. Additionally, covetousness is the sin that most directly violates the first commandment, "You shall have no other gods before me." As made clear in Colossians 3:5, covetousness is referred to as idolatry. And truly, what are the things you pursue but white and yellow dust and glittering clay? Their value, in the estimation of men, often depends on their rarity rather than any intrinsic worth or excellence. How contemptible riches and the world become is evident when there is an abundance of them. Solomon's statement that he made silver as common as stones in the streets of Jerusalem not only indicates the abundance of these things in his time but also how their abundance renders them contemptible, leading us to undervalue them. As Proverbs 23:5 says, "Why set your heart on that which is not, for riches take to themselves wings and flee away." Soon enough, the world will either leave you or you will leave the world.

Now, we urge you to seriously focus on mortifying your lusts and to engage earnestly with the Spirit of Christ. Christ has conquered the damning power of sin and has promised us the Spirit of

Mortification, which enables us to subdue the dominion of sin. A Christian should act with such dependence on the Spirit of Christ as if they were passive patients and instruments under His hand. However, in terms of activity and effort, a Christian should act as if they were acting independently, as if they were doing it all themselves. Nevertheless, in terms of self-denial, they should act as if they were doing nothing at all, allowing the Spirit to act alone within them. After having done all, they should still declare themselves to be unprofitable servants. We urge you to seriously ponder and weigh these considerations, for unless you ruin your iniquities, your iniquity will undoubtedly be your ruin. You do not know how long it will be until the day when the decree in heaven is passed against you, saying, "They are joined to their idols; let them alone." I will only leave you with the words of John in his first Epistle, chapter 5, verse 21: "Little children, keep yourselves from idols."

SERMON VI.

And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. - Galatians 5:24

It is an unchangeable and unalterable decree of heaven that cannot be repealed: the wages of sin is death, and as a man sows, so shall he reap. Yet, we believe there are many who are deceived by the imagination that, although they add drunkenness to their thirst and continually partake of that forbidden fruit, they will eventually find a place among the righteous. They believe in the possible union of pure and undefiled religion with the absence of Mortification. However,

we hold that religion without mortification is nothing more than the mortification of religion and the crucifixion of Christ afresh.

Are there not many here who, instead of labouring until Christ is formed in them, are labouring until they give birth to iniquity and fully embody the image of the old man? It is essential that you understand and engrave upon your hearts the following: there are two tribunals before which God judges. The first is the tribunal of justice, where all sentences are pure, unmixed wrath without any tempering or mercy. Every person must appear before this tribunal and receive the dreadful sentence of eternal separation from the majesty of the Lord. If you do well, you must acknowledge the justice of this sentence. However, know that this is not God's final word. This court of justice is subordinate, and there is a higher court to which we may appeal to have the sentence of justice sweetly revoked.

Isn't it a mysterious depth of infinite love that grace should declare righteous those whom justice has condemned, all without impugning God's justice? Love gently overrules decrees of justice, rendering them void and null in law. Isn't it a wonder that what is abominable for man—to justify the wicked—is love and justice in God's eyes? Isn't it astonishing that divine love can distinguish between many condemnable things and condemnation itself? Justice and judgment are the foundations of God's throne, yet mercy and truth go before it, coming closest to sinners to prepare their way so they can approach with justice.

In the accomplishment of the work of mortification, a Christian possesses the same power to overcome temptations as Christ had in overcoming principalities and powers. This is clear in Ephesians 1:19-20. Sometimes, when a Christian reflects upon the living and powerful corruptions within, they may feel much fear, similar to

Elisha's servant who cried, "Master, what shall we do?" But if our eyes were opened, we would see that there are more for us than against us. Put on the divine courage of Nehemiah and remain balanced between discouragement and anxious unbelief.

Let me offer this counsel to Christians engaged in this holy warfare: remember the difference between the grant and gift of pardon and the intimation of pardon to a Christian. Furthermore, there is a difference between the intimation of pardon, even for a sin mortified and repented for, and the divine application of it. This can be seen by comparing 2 Samuel 12:13 with Psalm 51. Nathan tells David that his iniquities are blotted out, and his sin is taken away. Here, we see both the grant of pardon and the intimation of it, yet David prays for the application of pardon. Pardon was not applied, although it was intimated. Therefore, do not always conclude from the absence of sensible convictions of pardon that there is an absence of the grant of pardon.

But now, let us return to where we left off last time, which was the scope of Mortification. A Christian should not only mortify original sin but also their predominant lusts, along with all the impulses and occasions that lead to the commission of these sins. We have already spoken about the mortification of original sin, referred to here as "the flesh," and we have discussed the mortification of predominant lusts and presumptuous sins. It has now become inappropriate to speak of a predominant grace standing in opposition to predominant lusts. I would only say this: under the law, there is no mention of a sacrifice for presumptuous sins, as alluded to by the Apostle in Hebrews 10:26, "If a man sin willfully after he hath received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin." This should astonish us and deter us from entertaining our predominant sins and presumptuous iniquities without wrestling

against them. They do not become presumptuous sins until we reach a certain point. Therefore, we should be diligent in presenting the supplication found in Psalm 19:13: "Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me."

Now, let us discuss the most effective and spiritual means by which a Christian can be assisted in mortifying their predominant lusts. Before we delve into this, let me say that this generation tends to seek knowledge of what to do more than putting into practice what they already know. While we acknowledge the importance of knowledge in reaching heaven, there is more required of a Christian.

The first way a Christian can receive help in mortifying their predominant lusts is by engaging in secret prayer. I would say that a blessed Christian is the one who has mortified even the least degree of a lust through private prayer. Whether it is more private or within families or with a group, public prayer alone will not suffice. Pride and self-seeking are the worms that consume the fruit of these prayers. However, if you were devoted to secret prayer, it would be a concise path to mortifying your lusts. When a Messenger of Satan buffets you, you can go to the throne and beseech the Lord to remove this evil from you. This is evident not only in Ephesians 6:18, where prayer is mentioned among the spiritual armour of a Christian, but also in James 5:17: "If any man be afflicted, let him pray." Furthermore, 2 Corinthians 12:7-8 refers to the words we discussed earlier. "O, where is that weeping and the presentation of supplications with sighs and groans that cannot be expressed? There are few Christians who can express their grief in words, but their grief of heart never reaches a point where they can cry, 'I am so troubled that I cannot speak.' A Christian who is not striving for this will descend to their grave with their bones filled with the sins of their youth.

The second means we wish to discuss is that a Christian should engage in the grace of watchfulness. This is evident from Luke 21 near the end and from Matthew 26:41, which says, "Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation." Surely, watchfulness is a necessary piece of armour so that after having done all, one may stand. Not only does watchfulness reveal to a Christian their weakness and inability, which, when acknowledged, becomes their strength, as seen in 2 Corinthians 12:10, "When I am weak, then am I strong," but it also uncovers the subtlety and profound deceitfulness of one's adversaries, making them watch over their own hearts. Watchfulness is also the grace that reveals the formal and remiss actions of grace in this precious battle. When faith begins to wane, hope to languish, and love and zeal to grow cold, watchfulness alerts prayer to seek strength for those that are faltering. Watchfulness is necessary because it reveals the initial movements of one's adversaries and when they first begin to stir, which is undoubtedly a great advantage. Additionally, watchfulness shows a Christian the advantage they have over their lusts, greatly encouraging them to continue in this spiritual warfare.

There is, thirdly, a necessity for a Christian to engage in the meditation upon the sufferings, death, and love of Jesus Christ. To a tender Christian, I know of no more effective means to mortify their affections and lusts than this. It is evident that this is so, not only from 2 Corinthians 5:14-15, where Paul states that the love of Christ constrained him, but also from 1 Peter 1:18, compared with verse 20. Peter emphasizes the importance of being holy as Christ is holy and adds the reason: "for ye are bought with a price, even with the incorruptible blood of Jesus Christ." In 1 Peter 4:1-2, he stresses the doctrine of mortification by reminding us that Christ was crucified in the flesh. We can also see the power of meditation on God's love in Psalm 26:3, where David is persuaded to pursue sincerity because

"the love of God is always before my eyes." Isn't it a sweet practice to always contemplate and behold love, transforming us into that very image from glory to glory? And certainly, Christ's death and love must have a profound influence on us. How can one read the words about Jesus sweating drops of blood or His plea, "If it be possible, let this cup depart from me," and not be moved to hate sin with a perfect hatred? Can you love that which crucified Christ and brought Him so low? If, hypothetically, all sinners had been standing around the cross on the day when Christ was crucified, as His precious body was dropping drops of blood, wouldn't you have said, "What kind of thing must sin be that it has brought Him so low?" Can you love that which crucified Christ? If Christ has condescended so far for you, shouldn't you strive to please Him and obey His commandments? Who would dispute the commands of such a One? It is certain that if we meditate on these things until we wonder and wonder until we love, it will persuade us to strive for the mortification of our lusts. Christ's death has not only a moral influence (as we have discussed) but also a physical one on the mortification of sin. We are bought (says the Apostle Peter in 1 Peter 1:20) with a price from our vain conduct. Christ has crucified the damning power of sin and purchased for us the gift of the Spirit of Sanctification to crucify the dominion of sin.

Fourthly, it is necessary for a Christian, during their conflicts with lusts, to exercise the grace of faith. It may seem an imperceptible and unknown aid to our understanding. We often think of faith as a help when all else has failed. As a result, we tend to view prayer as a more suitable help to our senses and understanding. When faced with the prevalence of our corruptions, we are more likely to rely on the grace of prayer than on the grace of faith. However, I can tell you this: faith has a most effective and divine influence on the crucifixion of lusts. If I may say so, faith is that which comes closest to Christ Himself, for faith, as described, possesses a kind of omnipotence, as it is said, "All

things are possible for those who believe." This is evident not only from 1 John 5:5, where it states, "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith," but also from Ephesians 6:16, which says, "Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked." Certainly, if we had as much faith as a grain of mustard seed, we could say to every obstacle in our path, "Be removed and cast into the sea," and it would obey us. The influence of faith in the mortification of corruption can be further demonstrated. Faith, as a grace, reveals to a Christian the supreme and precious excellence of Jesus Christ, in whose presence the glory of our idols fades away. When faith lays hold of the promises, it allows strength from the Head to flow to the combatant. For instance, when a believer wrestles with their lusts, faith seizes the promise of help and, through it, lays hold of Jesus Christ, the Promiser. Faith also reveals the crown and reward, igniting love and zeal, making them tread upon the high places of the earth. Even when archers shoot at them and grievously wound them, their bow remains strong.

There is, likewise, a means by which a Christian should mortify their predominant lusts, and that is to be much in nurturing the grace of tenderness, akin to Joseph's response when faced with temptation: "Shall I do this and sin against God?" I am convinced that sin, when not resisted in its early motions, hardens the heart. Conversely, resisting sin at its inception brings forth the grace of tenderness in an effective and prominent manner.

Additionally, it is necessary that a Christian be much in contemplating death, judgment, and eternity. Meditating on these three aspects would deter us from sinning. A Christian should not walk as they ought until they walk as if they expect to appear before the judgment seat of Christ at any moment, as if each moment were a

step closer to that moment. Imagine receiving a summons today to appear before the dreadful tribunal of Jesus Christ, where the books containing your deeds are opened, and your conscience affirms everything recorded within them. This is evident from Acts 17:30-31, where it is stated that God has commanded all people to repent because He has appointed a day when He will judge the world through Jesus Christ. Ecclesiastes 11:9 also emphasizes the importance of considering death, stating that God will bring young people to judgment for their actions. We hope that the reminder that always accompanied a holy person may also resonate with you and resound in your ears: "Awake and come to judgment." Let this guide your conduct. I won't say much, but I caution against indulging your lusts, as the very walls of this house could bear witness against you on the day of the Lord. You have been invited to flee from the wrath to come and have rejected the precious offers of a crucified Savior. We earnestly beseech you to take your own salvation seriously, for heaven, God, eternity, and hell are certain and infallible truths. You possess precious and immortal souls; therefore, show compassion for yourselves, for through lack of knowledge, you are destroying yourselves. Hell is expanding to accommodate many inhabitants of this place and many living in this generation who lack the grace of the living God.

Now, secondly, let us discuss the evidences and signs of when lust has dominion over someone. We will briefly point out the signs of lust when it rules over a person. Firstly, it may be evident when someone reaches a point where they commit sin with delight and eagerness, finding pleasure in pursuing their detestable desires. Such individuals are described in 2 Peter 2:13 as those who indulge in sinful pleasures and revel in their own deceit. They are like the fools Solomon speaks of, making a mockery of sin. Ephesians 4:19 also

mentions those who commit iniquity with greediness, and as another prophet says, their hearts are mad for their idols.

Secondly, it may be evident when someone commits sin with their predominant lust without conviction, or if they are convicted, their convictions quickly vanish. This is exemplified in Jeremiah 6:15, where the people were unashamed of their abominations, and their shame had vanished. The same is true in Jeremiah 8:12 and Proverbs 30:20. When you find yourself in such a state of impiety, it indicates that you have yielded yourself as a servant to unrighteousness for a time.

Thirdly, it may be evident when someone can commit iniquity in response to small temptations or even none at all. This was evident in David's sin of adultery, as it was committed with minimal or no temptation. This fact was brought up to accentuate the gravity of his sin in 2 Samuel 12:8. Similarly, Isaiah 5:18 speaks of those who draw iniquity with cords of vanity and sin as though with a cart-rope, meaning that they violently pursue their detestable desires without allurements or enticements. Those who immediately bow down and worship an idol upon its presentation should be wary of themselves.

There is, likewise, an evidence of it when someone, despite being convinced of the omniscience of God who beholds them, commits such an iniquity. Without a doubt, sin has reached a most damnable and heinous height in such cases. Sin had dominion over Er, as stated in Genesis 38:7, and he committed evil in the sight of the Lord, even when he was aware of God's omniscience. Ahab, as recorded in 1 Kings 21:20, also sold himself to commit iniquity in the sight of the Lord, despite knowing that God's eyes were everywhere.

Lastly, it is evident when someone sins with deliberate planning and calculation, not being driven solely by temptations and lusts, but

rather sitting down to counsel on how to carry out their sinful actions. In such cases, iniquity has dominion over them. Micah 2:1 pronounces woe upon those who devise iniquity on their beds, who, during the silent hours of the night, contemplate and plan the mischievous intentions of their hearts. These individuals should read verses 3 and 4 of that chapter, where God declares His intention to devise against them in righteous judgment. God will deliberately and indignantly punish those who sin deliberately, as seen in Jeremiah 18:12.

Now, let us briefly consider why God sometimes allows His own to experience the dominion of their lusts. A heathen saying holds true: "As many vices, as many masters," indicating that every lust is a master, with some having numerous servants attending to them. One reason could be that when a Christian begins to rely on their own righteousness, they are at risk of being temporarily given over to the dominion of their sin. This is made clear in Ezekiel 33:13, which states that if someone trusts in their own righteousness and commits iniquity, they will not be spared. Additionally, God may allow this so that individuals may learn to distinguish between the yoke of Christ and the bondage of sin, as mentioned in Deuteronomy 28:47-48. Another possible reason is that God intends to magnify the glory of His unfathomable grace by delivering them from the brink of destruction, as expressed in the song of restoring grace: "This my Son was dead and is alive, was lost and is found." This song of grace is sung after grace has already prevented the Christian.

In conclusion, we urge you to take the precious work of mortification seriously. Many of us are what might be called "idol-Christians" – we have hands but do nothing, eyes but do not see, and feet but do not walk in accordance with our faith. We must not merely possess the appearance of religion and virtue; we must strive for genuine

conformity with Christ in our inner selves. We must not betray the Son of Man with a kiss, as Judas did. Eternity is a weighty matter, and it will be a day of desolation when its visitation comes from afar. Where will you flee for help, and where will you leave your glory? The wrath of the living but often disregarded cornerstone will be more intolerable than the weight of mountains and hills. Therefore, reprobates would prefer to be under the weight of hills and mountains than under the weight of this living Cornerstone, which is so often despised. Will you not embrace Him? May not angels mock your folly and deride you? The triumph awaits above, and it will not be long before His own declare, "It is finished." Undoubtedly, if we were more diligent in exercising our faith, we would easily achieve victory in this spiritual warfare. We can liken faith to Eliezer, who pursued his enemies so relentlessly that the people returned to gather up the spoils. Love, prayer, and joy will reap the sweet fruits of victory brought about by faith. We conclude with praise to Him who can make you overcome through the blood of the Lamb and the word of your testimony.

SERMON VII.

And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. - Galatians 5:24

It was a divine sentence from that master of experiences, that love covers a multitude of sins. We can say that the precious and infinite love that Christ has for sinners has indeed covered a multitude of sins. However, it is lamentable that most of us have not reached the

level of love that even tax collectors and sinners have for those who love them. Christ's engraving of His love to sinners in letters of blood calls us to devote ourselves entirely to Him. But we must confess that the enmity and deceitfulness of human hearts are so desperate that if all who partake in the divine nature, or will partake in it, had only one heart to guide them to heaven, they would mislead it. It is the unique and incommunicable prerogative of the Captain of our salvation to guide many sons and daughters to glory. If we were to describe most of us, it would be as Proverbs 6:13 says: "He speaks with his feet and teaches with his fingers," with the great lesson being iniquity, formality, and distance from God. I urge those of you who hope for heaven and have some small hope of being eternally with Him to engage in the precious work of mortification.

Some are so habituated to sin that, if God does not intervene, the last act they commit in this world will be an act of iniquity, and they will breathe their last while departing from the invisible Majesty. Some, even if they live for seventy years, will not be able to say that they have devoted even one day of their lives to God. Mortification is a mystery to our knowledge, but even more so to our practice. It is a wonder that many of us are not driven to madness and that Cain's divinity does not possess us to the extent that anyone who encounters us on the way would kill us. Nevertheless, for those who have some conscience of this duty, I would say two things. Firstly, you may accept the premises and assertions of unbelief drawn from the dominion of your sin over you but reject the conclusions of unbelief. This was David's practice in Psalm 65:3. He acknowledges the assertion of unbelief in the first words, "Iniquities prevail over me," but he denies the conclusion that he is a reprobate. Instead, faith sweetly adds, "As for our transgressions, thou wilt purge them away." This may be poor logic but it is precious divinity. Secondly, I would say that you can, with great freedom, use the dominion of your

iniquity as an argument to plead with God for pardon, as David did in Psalm 25:11, "For thy name's sake, O Lord, pardon mine iniquity, for it is great." Also, God uses the iniquities of human beings as an argument to provoke Himself to mercy, even those iniquities that He previously used as an argument for justice. It is astonishing to compare these two passages, Genesis 6:5 and Genesis 8:21. In the former, God cites the reason for the destruction of the world because every imagination of the thoughts of man's heart is only evil continually. Yet in the latter, He gives a reason why He will no longer curse the world for man's sake, saying, "the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth."

Now, as we mentioned on the last occasion when we discussed these words, focusing on the second aspect of Mortification, which is its extent, we stated that a Christian should not only mortify original sin, referred to here as "flesh," but should also mortify their predominant idols, called "affections." We have already covered these two aspects. Now, in the extent of Mortification, we find that a Christian should also mortify the first movements and temptations towards sin, referred to as "lusts." To clarify this, we believe that the first motions of sin encompass two aspects. First, a Christian should strive to mortify the initial temptations they encounter towards acting on or embracing a particular lust. Second, a Christian should strive to avoid all appearances of evil that might lead them to commit that sin. We won't spend much time proving that it's a Christian's duty to do the first aspect, as it's clear not only from James 4:7 and 1 Peter 5:9 but also from the practices of David in Psalm 56:3 and Paul in 2 Corinthians 12:7.

Similarly, we won't spend time proving that it's a Christian's duty to flee the appearances of evil. This duty is evident, not only from Deuteronomy 12:30 and Deuteronomy 25:13-14 but also from

Proverbs 5:8, Deuteronomy 12:3, Jude 21, and Deuteronomy 16:19, where avoiding even the appearance of evil is strongly recommended.

Now, we will address why it is crucial for a Christian to flee the first motions and appearances of sin and present some considerations to enforce this duty.

The first consideration is that when iniquity is resisted in its initial movements, it is most easily conquered and overcome. Sin, when thwarted in its infancy, is defeated with the greatest ease. When we delay in mortifying our lusts and fail to resist the devil, it's no wonder that we fall captive to our iniquities. There is an ancient saying worth following: "Resist the beginning of evil, for the remedy is always more difficult in the end than in the beginning." Here are two directions for Christians based on this consideration:

1. After, by the power of grace, you have overcome the initial motions of sin, do not let your guard down or become overconfident. The enemy may return to assail you, even after initial defeat. This is evident in Luke 4:13, where Satan departed from Jesus after being defeated but with the intention to return.
2. Most often, resisting and overcoming the motions of sin, if not coupled with humility, may be followed by a severe chastening from the Lord.

The second consideration to encourage you to resist the first motions of sin is that a conscientious Christian is typically blessed with divine and precious experiences of Jesus Christ. If a Christian makes it a point of duty to resist sin when it first attacks, the dew of heaven will descend upon their lives. Their spiritual vitality will be refreshed, and they will be compelled to raise an Ebenezer to God, saying,

"Hitherto hath the Lord helped us." This is evident in Romans 8:13, which states that if you, through the Spirit, mortify the deeds of the flesh, you shall live. It is also evident in Revelation 2:17, where Christ promises hidden manna to those who are on the path of overcoming sin. In contrast, we see a curse fulfilled in some lives, making the heavens like brass and the earth like iron, where it hasn't rained for three and a half years, and individuals have become as dried-out bottles in the smoke, with the marrow of their bones consumed.

The third consideration we wish to propose is that resisting the motions and initial stirrings of corruption is the way to imbue the soul with a profound sense of the sinfulness of sin. When did the Apostle Paul cry out, "O wretched man that I am!"? Was it not when there was a law in his mind contending against the law of his members? It was during his greatest struggle that sin appeared exceedingly sinful to him. I must confess that the distinction between venial and mortal sins, which Papists so adore, is also practiced by Christians. Are there not many sins that you consider venial, labeling them as minor, and for which you seek pardon, stopping short of going further? However, the path to bringing the soul to a divine loathing of all sin lies in resisting its initial movements.

Another consideration is that resisting the first motions of sin keeps the grace of faith active, especially in times of trial and temptation. I believe that nothing darkens a Christian's assurance as much as the conviction that they have never resisted a sin in its initial stirrings. A guilty conscience, I think, is the mother of unbelief, as clearly indicated by the Apostle in 1 Timothy 3:9, where he speaks of holding "the mystery of faith in a pure conscience." In other words, divine and precious faith can only reside in a pure and undefiled conscience. To illustrate the influence of resisting the motions and initial stirrings of sin in maintaining faith in exercise, consider

Revelation 2:17. To the one who overcomes, who is on the path to overcoming, Christ promises a new name and the assurance that their name is written in the heavenly records. This is also evident in Romans 7 compared with Romans 8, where Paul speaks of having no condemnation in Christ Jesus while wrestling against his corruptions.

The last consideration we will propose to reinforce this duty is that failing to resist sin in its first motions typically leads to hardness and callousness of heart. When we stifle our convictions with laziness and respond to our reproof with excuses like "I have put off my coat, how shall I put it on?"—it's a bad sign that God is likely to cease reproofing you. There is a difference between sinning against light and sinning with light, and many may be guilty of the former without being guilty of the latter. However, if you ever reach the point of making a covenant of peace and agreement with temptation when it assails you, then, if you reach heaven, you will be saved but only as if by fire. Some consciences may bear witness that they have never learned to resist the first motions and stirrings of corruption. It is a lesson of such high importance that it requires explanation for them. Do you think you can attain a living and precious hope if you have never learned to wrestle with sin and your corruptions? Is there a delusion among you that you can reign without contending and triumph without striving? You may seem to reign as kings in your own eyes this way, but you will never reign as kings with Christ unless you strive to mortify your lusts.

What we will address secondly is the reason why Christians often fail to resist sin in its initial movements and stirrings within them. We believe it either stems from Christians not being vigilant enough. Often, temptations seize a Christian's affections before they are even aware of them. Hence, when the Apostle Peter prescribes the

direction to resist the motions of sin, he requires a preceding duty: vigilance (1 Pet. 5:8-9). Once a Christian abandons their watchfulness, they become prey to their lusts. We can confidently say of such a person that they are like a city broken down and without walls because they neglect the grace of watchfulness. Alternatively, it may arise from Christians not being in a divine and spiritual state to resist temptations when initially confronted with them. Our spirits are often so laden with the pleasures of the world and absorbed in the transient delights of the world that we readily embrace temptations when they come. Therefore, when the Apostle James exhorts believers to resist the Devil, he adds as a concurrent duty in verse 9: "Draw near to God." This implies that if temptations find you distant from God, you are vulnerable. If your heart is not focused on walking in the sight of His precious face, you may cry out for pity, for you are prey.

Similarly, Peter prescribes in 1 Peter 5:8-9: "Be sober and then resist him steadfast in the faith." This idea is reinforced in Matthew 26:41, where Jesus instructs His disciples to "watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation." It is a most exalted and divine walk to always live within sight of God. So that when you descend to the grave, you can say, "I am now changing my place, but not my company." Heaven may be to you a transition to a more constant and immediate enjoyment of God. Alternatively, it may stem from Christians not subjecting their own flesh to violence when initially assailed by the motions and stirrings of corruption. These two idols—Self and Ease—depend on each other and are the adversaries of a Christian's diligence. They are the main reasons why we do not overcome through the word of our testimony and by the blood of the Lamb. Do you think it is easy to overcome temptations? Those who are unfamiliar with the struggle may assume so. However, it is certain that such evil does not depart without fasting and prayer. It cost

Christ much to free you from the guilt of sin, and it will require much effort on your part to free yourselves from the filth of sin.

Lastly, Christians may not mortify sin in its initial stirrings and motions because they are not constantly aware of the sinfulness of sin. Often, when temptations assail us, we view departing from God as a dispensable evil, something for which we can easily obtain forgiveness. I would prescribe to you one of the greatest mysteries of Christianity, and blessed is the one who attains to it: To live constantly with a divine awareness of the sinfulness of sin. You must understand its nature and its effects. I believe that even if someone were to come from the dead, bearing the chains of eternal wrath wrapped around their feet and the shackles of the Lord's fury upon their hands, and preach to you about the nature and damnable character of sin, many would not pay much attention to such doctrine.

Now, let us address the third aspect we proposed to discuss from these words—the difficulty of attaining to Mortification, which we believe is symbolized by the word "Crucify." It implies that Mortification is a laborious process, just as crucifixion was a protracted form of death. It also suggests that Mortification is a painful endeavour, akin to crucifixion being one of the most painful forms of death. Furthermore, it conveys the intense nature of Mortification, indicating that a Christian should not be content until they have utterly killed corruption. Regarding these aspects, we shall speak collectively, pointing out the difficulties of achieving Mortification.

Is there not evidence of the difficulty in the fact that there exists a woeful unity of affection between us and our lusts? They are as dear to us as our right eye, right hand, and right foot. To illustrate this

unity, consider the common expression often used when someone reproves you for anger or swearing: "What ails you at me?" This response indicates that you consider your lusts and you to be one. Indeed, Paul expresses a similar sentiment in Romans 7:18: "I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing." Within a Christian, there are two selves: a spiritual and refined self and a carnal and wicked self, as Paul distinguishes them in that verse. So, there are two "me's" in a Christian. Yet, he adds, "In me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing," indicating that there is a unity between the self and its sinful nature. We can indeed say of us, "They are joined to their idols; let them alone."

There is, secondly, another aspect that reveals the difficulty of Mortification, and it is the strength of the lusts within us. We believe the Scripture is replete with references to the power of sin, and thus, we need not elaborate on this point at length. In Romans 8:2, it is referred to as the "law of sin and of death," almost as if sin demands as much subjugation as if we were bound by law to obey it. In the same verse, there is a beautiful contrast between laws: the law of the spirit of life has set us free from the law of sin and of death. In a sense, one divine decree nullifies another. Originally, it was heavenly law that we should be subject to death because we were under sin. But here comes a later law, the law of the Spirit of life, which graciously supersedes the earlier one. It seems as though one statute in heaven annuls another. The deceitfulness and subtlety of our lusts further highlight their strength. James 1:14 describes how a man is "drawn away and enticed of his lusts," comparing it to how fish are deceived by an apparent bait of pleasure. These two factors, the strength of sin and the deceitfulness of our lusts, are the primary obstacles to a Christian's progress to heaven.

To conclude our discourse on Mortification, on which we have been speaking at length, we shall briefly address a potential misconception about the difficulty of Mortification. This also relates to the certainty of overcoming.

Firstly, be persuaded that there is greater divine satisfaction in resisting your lusts and struggling against them than in the actual indulgence of them. Solomon's words come to mind: "Stolen waters are sweet, and bread of deceit is pleasant to the mouth." However, those who partake in such pleasures will ultimately discover the contrary. The Apostle's question in Romans 6:21 resonates: "What fruit have ye in those things whereof ye are now ashamed?" It is indeed disheartening to think of the woeful disappointment that many will encounter.

Secondly, there is a divine certainty of a Christian's victory, regardless of the magnitude of the difficulties. This should bring glad tidings, like cold water to a thirsty soul. A Christian will ultimately overcome. Four reasons underscore the certainty of a Christian's victory:

1. The faithfulness and love of Jesus Christ are pledged for our victory, as stated in John 6:39: "And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me, I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day." Christ is more concerned about a believer's victory than the believer is for themselves. When Christ's faithful love is revealed, and He conveys His saints through the gates of the new Jerusalem, each holding a harp of God, they will sing hallelujahs to Him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb forever and ever. This song will have no end, though it has a beginning.

2. Christ has overcome, and therefore, a Christian shall overcome. The Apostle Paul eloquently speaks of this in Hebrews 2:9-10: "But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man. For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." This victory of Christ is a pledge and a sure token that you will ultimately overcome.

Likewise, another indication of their certainty of overcoming is that the same power which was exercised in bringing Christ from death, and in making Him overcome principalities and powers, is communicated to believers to enable them to overcome. This is evident in Ephesians 1:19-20, where it is said that the power that worked mightily in Christ to raise Him from the dead also works in those who believe. O Christians, heirs of the grace of life, believe this: Omnipotence is engaged on your behalf. Have you not learned the first point of the Creed, that nothing is impossible to God? So, when you are sometimes compelled to cry out, "Who shall stand before the children of Anak?" content yourselves with the knowledge that there is nothing too hard for Him.

Lastly, what underscores this certainty is the divine and invisible bond of union between Christ and His members. Is Christ above? The members must follow. For you see, although Christ is the fullness of the Saints, the Saints are also the fullness of Christ. There is a sweet mutual fulfilling and accomplishing of each other. Do you not know the words, "where I am, there they may be also"? I believe, of all the words Christ ever spoke to the Father, these were the most imperious and commanding-like words He uttered in John 17:24. He did not merely pray for it; He willed it and would not be

contradicted. Certainly, there is nothing that can comfort you in the hour of trial as much as this: Christ is on His way to relieve you, and you are on your way to overcoming. I shall only offer this word, which should be your practice, from 1 John 5:18: "Whosoever is born of God sinneth not, and that wicked one toucheth him not." In other words, you should not engage with him or be touched by him.

To those who are walking in the broad paths of sin, I shall only speak this word found in Job 21:22: "His eyes shall see his destruction, and he shall drink of the wrath of the Almighty." Your eyes and your taste shall be satisfied with it. As for the word in verse 30, "he shall be preserved to the day of destruction," or as it is in the original, "he shall be reserved to the day of wrath," it signifies a combination of wrath and justice that shall seize upon you. Now, to Him who is on His way, who shall come and will not delay, and whose reward is with Him, we desire to give praise.

SERMON VIII.

Through whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world. - Galatians 6:14.

Christianity consists of a blessed exchange of affections, a soul dying in its affections and regards to all things here below, and living and advancing in its desires towards Him who is that blessed and universal good. It should be the chief plot and grand design that Christians ought to promote: to attain that original unity that once existed in man's affections towards God. Oh, what blessedness did

Adam enjoy while he stood in that state of creation, having a blessed harmony of all his affections toward God, and there being a most divine correspondence and blessed familiarity between heaven and earth, between Him who sits on the Throne and the footstool. But that verse was most eminently verified, "Man, being in honor, did not abide." Oh, what anxious and perplexing thoughts poor Adam must have had, no doubt, some hours after his fall, as he reflected upon what was once his condition and compared it with what was now his lot. Might he not have taken up that lamentation over himself: "Man in his best estate is altogether vanity"? Likewise, he might have had that proverb applied to himself: "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning?"

Now, man, by losing that blessed unity that was in his affections, has contracted a woeful and infinite diversity in his affections towards things here below. So that those affections which once sweetly ran in one channel toward God are now divided and separated into many channels, directed towards things below Him. And there is nothing beneath the Sun that captivates so many of our desires as the World. Therefore, it would be to your advantage to be crucified to the world and to have the world crucified to you. So that you may discover that endless vanity and unspeakable vexation of spirit that is in all things here. The world is a perfect compendium and complete epitome of all misery, while God Himself is the compendium of all blessedness. Thus, there is nothing we can take up under this but is most eminently in Him. It is a duty that is much undervalued in these days, Christians, to be engaged in that blessed work of having yourselves crucified to the world and having the world crucified to you. Oh, how suitable it is for those who are heirs and expectants of that blessed hope and everlasting enjoyment of being with God, who is the Judge of all flesh, and with Jesus Christ, who is the Mediator of the New Covenant, and with the innumerable company of holy

Angels, and to be made heirs and co-heirs with Jesus Christ. Is it not beneath you to be preoccupied with vain and anxious pursuits after the things below? The objects of the desires of your immortal spirits should be higher than earthly things and more divine than human things. Your affections should ascend like pillars of smoke, and you should long for that blessed day when all your affections will be centered on Him.

At various times, we have spoken to you about the grace of humility and the grace of love: one teaches us to undervalue ourselves, and the other teaches us to value God. If you had been more engaged in the spiritual and living exercise of these graces, there would not have been much difficulty in persuading you at this time. We shall not dwell long on explaining what Mortification is; it is a constant and blessed effort by the Christian to remove all hindrances that interfere with the exercise of love. Likewise, it involves a constant and perpetual aversion and holy indignation against everything through which his conformity with God and his perfect likeness to his Maker might be in any way impaired. Mortification does not consist of those inconsistent and uneven exercises of mortifying our lusts; it does not consist of those violent outbursts of holy zeal and indignation against our iniquities. For although that indignation is intense for a time, it quickly fades away. But that grace of Mortification must be a constant and daily exercise. We will console ourselves in the chambers of our imagination by beholding our idols portrayed on the wall. We will strive to find satisfaction in our thoughts when we cannot find satisfaction in their actual fruition. Such is likewise the woeful desperation of the hearts of human beings that when God has put a worm at the root of the gourd, under the shadow of which we used to console ourselves, we cry out in discontent, "It is better for us to die than to live." Oh, there are many here for whom it would be

death to outlive their idols. Their idols and they are pleasant in their lives, and they do not desire to be separated in their deaths.

Mortification does not consist of this partial and divided approach to mortifying our corruptions, where we take vengeance on some of our lusts but spare others, like Saul, sparing Agag. Naaman the Syrian must have an indulgence of bowing his knee in the house of Rimmon. Lot must plead for the sparing of Zoar, that small thing. So when we intend to work on Mortification, we plead for the sparing of these things we call Zoars: these small but master corruptions. Certainly, that evangelical Mortification required of us does not consist in this, for we must intend a complete separation between us and all our idols. We must cast away all our idols to the moles and to the bats, and He alone must be the apple of our eye. He never knew the grace of Mortification who never set about the destruction of that great and master idol that dominates over him. We believe that the best and most reliable way to gauge our progress in Mortification is to reflect on the decline of those predominant idols. Other sins that assail us may wane and weaken in strength, yet Mortification may not be on the upswing. For there are many of our lusts that die by concession rather than by constraint. There are many of our idols that depart from us rather than being cast out.

Now the first thing that a Christian ought to endeavour to mortify is his love for the world, which was the practice of this holy man. In these words, he points out to us the way in which he achieved this complete and spiritual Mortification to the world. This is indicated in the words, "by whom," which relates to Jesus Christ mentioned in the preceding words, or, as the words may be rendered, "by which I am crucified to the world," and thus they relate to the cross of Jesus Christ. Now, under this notion of being crucified, he certainly presents to us the great difficulty involved in accomplishing the work

of Mortification. And under this name of being crucified, he conveys to us the lengthiness of the time we must spend before we can attain complete Mortification, as crucifixion is one of the most prolonged and slow of all violent deaths. Mortification is not a work of one day; it will take many days and years before we can crush the head of him who has so often crushed our heel. Before that blessed promise is fulfilled, that all things shall be put in subjection to us, sin easily invades us and takes possession, but it is not easily dispossessed. If we did not have the infinite strength of Him who is Jehovah, we might sit down and fold our hands, never intending to oppose these idols that have us under their subjection. This word "being crucified" also signifies the painfulness and discomfort of the work of Mortification, as crucifixion, among all violent deaths, is one of the most bitter. We must certainly be mortified to our ease before we can be mortified to our lusts. We must travail in birth before the grace of Mortification can be formed in us. It is a woeful evil in these days that most people walk under the mistaken notion that there is not much difficulty in Mortifying their corruptions. But it is a sign that they have never known what it is to mortify them, who have never known the difficulty of Mortification.

The third thing conveyed under this name of being crucified is the strong reluctance and unwillingness of spirit that we have toward this blessed exercise of mortifying our corruptions. We have as great aversion to it as if we were going to subject ourselves to some violent death. Oh, how vanity and corruption are joined to the spirits of human beings! How reluctant we are to have that woeful and accursed union between us and our lusts dissolved. How many orators and pleaders within ourselves we have to argue for sparing our lusts! We can be persuaded that if we do not ruin our iniquity, iniquity shall certainly be our ruin. How we should be ashamed and confounded for our unwillingness to have a separation between us

and these things that increase our distance from God and our estrangement from Him. This vanity is unspeakable, that we should be so averse from that in which our eternal blessedness lies: having that woeful bond, which we have woven around our own necks, taken off by the blessed and everlasting hands of Him who has died and risen again to accomplish this blessed purpose.

Lastly, under this word "being crucified," is shown to us the complete and spiritual Mortification to the world that this holy man achieved. He was as one dead to these things: he did not greatly rejoice in having the world, nor was he deeply grieved by lacking the things of the world. He was a man dead, unaffected by any of these things. We do not mean that Paul was entirely stoic, without all passions of grief and sorrow or joy. But we only mean this, that he did not grieve for the lack of the world as those who have no hope, nor did he take excessive joy in having the world as those who have no more divine and lofty source of consolation. He was clothed with a holy indifference and a blessed neutrality in having or lacking these things. It was not Paul's desire to have the world; he had learned the divine and excellent art of being content in every circumstance of life. He did not murmur. It would certainly be to our advantage to be provoked to jealousy when we reflect on the practice of this holy man. I believe that if all here were to examine themselves, they would find how much their Mortification to the world falls short of this. They might conclude that they are yet to begin to mortify. Indeed, there are many here to whom we can say that they are so far from being clothed with a holy indifference in having the things of the world that they are clothed with a woeful and insatiable necessity in pursuing these things. This is the language of most people: "Give, give," as they hurry themselves with countless hopes, fears, expectations, and desires. And what is the result of all these things but vanity and vexation of spirit?

Now, to help you attain this important duty of being mortified to the world, we shall propose these things to you:

The first is this: Engage in holy contemplation and spiritual beholding of the unfathomable excellencies of God. If our souls were elevated to behold Him, there would not be much difficulty in being mortified to the world. If we were allowed to draw aside the veil and gaze upon the uncreated glory and inexpressible Majesty stored within Him, Mortification would become less daunting. This is clearly indicated here, for Paul tells us by whom he obtained this grace of Mortification, and it was through beholding that pleasant plant of renown, Jesus Christ. This is also clear in 1 John 5:5, "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus Christ is the Son of God?" If we truly believed in this fundamental article of faith, that He who was crucified on the tree was the real Son of God, we would more easily fulfil this duty of Mortification. We can trace all the causes of our slow progress in this blessed work to our woeful ignorance of God, with which most of us are clothed. If a door to heaven were opened to us, and we could behold Him who sits upon the Throne, whose countenance is like a sardine stone, and the rainbow around His Throne, if we could penetrate through the veils that cover both Him and us, our ignorance and impurity veiling us, and His unsearchable veil and the veil of His indescribable Majesty veiling Him, both confusing judgment and affection to the point where they are almost non-functional and both sweetly resolving into the blessed act of admiration - if this were the case, then affection and judgment would be silenced and resolved into blessed admiration. We need not speak much to commend those to you who have never acquainted themselves with Him so that you might be persuaded to forsake your old lovers. We shall only say this: silence and admiration speak the least, yet they speak the most. There is more divine eloquence in holy silence and more excellent

expressions in blessed admiration than in all our inventions. What can man say about Him who is that unsearchable and incomprehensible Majesty? It may seem paradoxical to you that silence should commend and admiration should commend, but it is not a paradox when the object of our commendation is infinitely exalted above our praise and practice. O people of the world, will you be persuaded to separate yourselves from your idols so that there may be an everlasting union between God and you? If you had enough divine understanding to judge things according to their true worth, He alone would be exalted on that day. Come and see and behold the infinite sweetness treasured up in Him. Those springs that delight you will soon dry up, but He is that high and infinite spring that flows continuously and remains undiminished.

The second way to achieve this blessed duty of Mortification to the world is by reflecting on how fleeting and transient are the things with which human beings console themselves. Paul presses Mortification to the world from this perspective in 1 Corinthians 7:31: "The fashion of this world passeth away." The word used here is highly significant. It refers to the scheme or representation of the world, or the theatrical performance of the world - it passes away. Therefore, those who rejoice should do so as though they were not rejoicing, and those who are careful for nothing should be so because of this truth. This is also clear in 1 John 2:17 and 1 Peter 4:7. If we truly believed in how changeable the enjoyments of the world are, would we rush so eagerly in our pursuit of them? Those who are exalted in their enjoyments today may be brought low the next day. John, a man enriched in many things, experienced a sudden and dramatic change in just a few days, even hours. We can confidently assert that "Man at his best estate is altogether vanity." The phrase "at his best estate" could also be rendered as "in your most fixed and settled condition in the world." It serves as an emblem and motto of

your state of vanity, highly susceptible to change. So why should you exhaust yourselves for that which is truly vanity?

The third way by which you may attain to this duty of Mortification is to consider the brevity of your life. If we walked more in the house of mourning and believed the truth that it is appointed for man to die once, and that shortly, we would be brought home to that unchangeable state of life. How would this calm our pursuits? It could be like water mixed with wine when there is great confidence in creature comforts. This mixture would prevent the foam of this wine from disorienting our heads. It's a sweet subject for meditation, even in our highest moments, to consider that in a few days, we will be at our lowest. What is your life but a vapor, which quickly vanishes and only appears for a short while? Suppose the whole creation stayed with you throughout your life, yet your enjoyment would be so short. What is man's life but a hand's breadth, merely four finger's widths, which is one of the smallest geometric measures? There is morning, forenoon, afternoon, and night, which all add up to a day. There's infancy, youth, manhood, and old age, and they all quickly vanish and fade away. Many enter eternity in the early steps of life, during their infancy. Others do so in their youth. We frequently witness many in their prime, and the height of their age, suddenly receiving the sentence, "Return, ye children of men." There's scarcely one in a hundred who reaches the maximum lifespan allowed by nature. Even if you lived to be eighty years old, the utmost period allowed by nature, your time would still quickly fade away. Why would you console yourselves with things that cannot remain with you eternally? When you go to the grave, you can take nothing of these things with you. Just as you came into the world, you will leave it. What profit is there in labouring for the wind?

The fourth way to achieve this is to engage in mortifying those corruptions that can only thrive by entertaining the woeful corruption of covetousness. Some corruptions are closely related to, and dependent on, this sin. If these are not crushed, we cannot attain to this duty of Mortification. Prodigality and pride are two major enemies to the accomplishment of this blessed design. We should begin by crushing these before we can hope to accomplish it.

Another way is to reflect on the blessed hope and grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Peter urges sobriety in all things here below with the argument, "For the grace that shall be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." If we were occupied with contemplating the blessed state of life that the souls of the just made perfect will have with God, where we will enjoy without ever growing weary, our attachment to the world would wane. There will be an eternal union between desire and the enjoyment of the beloved, so that satisfaction will never be complete. Everything received will only provoke a greater appetite rather than satisfying desire.

Lastly, consider the day when all the families of the earth will appear before Him in the valley of decision. This would certainly help us mortify our attachment to worldly things, as is clear from Ecclesiastes 11:9. If we had the faith of that day engraved on our spirits, where we must give an account of our ways, how cautious we would be in engaging with vanity. The primary reason why sin has such universal dominion over humanity is because we do not firmly believe that such a day is approaching when we will stand before the judgment seat of the One who judges righteously. The fear of the Lord would surely persuade us if we truly believed this. We would have a holy reluctance to walk in the paths of our idols.

Now, we shall conclude our discourse with this: Be persuaded to begin the work of mortification, especially in mortifying your love for the world. He who returns victorious after a war with his idols can be called Joseph, for he shall be like a fruitful bough with branches spreading over the wall. If you once conquer that chief and arch-rebel who opposes you so much, you would almost stand alone in triumph. They shall flee when no one pursues them, and we should be strong as lions, with no one to rouse us up.

Of Spiritual Contentment.

SERMON IX.

I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.

- Philippians 4:11.

Adam's ignorance of this divine mystery of Christianity, to be content with every state in which he was placed, brought him down from the high pinnacle of his excellency and degraded him from that primitive glory with which he was clothed. He was not content with the precious and excellent lot in which God had placed him but coveted a more noble and excellent being, and as a result, he fell short of God's design. This woeful frame of spirit, in which men can find no blessedness in what they are but imagine a great blessedness in what they are not, continues to this day. Hence, men covet the lot of others and are dissatisfied with their own estate and condition. The affections of men, while living under these ever-moving spheres, can never be satisfied or find rest. This was observed by the master of experiences in Proverbs 27:20, "Hell and destruction are never full, so the eyes of man are never satisfied," and in Ecclesiastes 1:8, "The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing." We may also add that the heart is not satisfied with enjoying. Through the deceitfulness of the human spirit and the invisible root of pride, every lot and condition of life is subject to satiety and loathing. Private individuals envy the greatness of princes, while princes envy the quiet repose of private individuals. However, they will not descend or reduce themselves to that condition, always fearing what they sometimes are compelled to desire.

Believe me, a Christian who seriously contemplates the infinite multitude of hopes, fears, and desires with which the human spirit is filled, as well as the vanity and vexation of spirit engraved upon the choicest lot a Christian can find here, may long for that precious day when Christ shall be as a roe or a young hind coming over the mountains of Bether, waiting to be exalted to that excellent estate of life where there will be neither loathing nor longing. Abel, the first possessor of heaven among the descendants of Adam, has dwelt there for nearly six thousand years, yet there is no inclination or desire to change or alter his estate in heaven. This divine mystery of contentment with every lot and condition in which a Christian is placed is not easily attained. The unmortified spirit of man often murmurs against God's providential dispensations, revealing the atheism within our hearts. It is as if man were proposing a model and form to God on how He should govern the world. Christians are not exempt from this pride and discontent. One wise saying praises victory over oneself: "Tunc omnia regna tenebis, cum poteris rex esse tui," meaning "You shall then possess all kingdoms when you can be the ruler of yourself." Once a Christian is mortified to the passion of discontent, they can endure every lot that befalls them with patience and possess their soul in patience, even in the midst of all the revolutions and changes that occur in this world.

If men only knew that the whole circumference of the earth is but one point in the universe, and that all time that has been, is, or shall be is but one instant compared to eternity, and that man is but a part of that point, and his life is a small part of that instant, why then should man anxiously complain about spending a moment enduring the most anxious and sad things that can befall them? As Christ divinely speaks, "Can a man by taking thought add one cubit to his stature?" What poor advantage does a man gain from his discontent and sorrow, except to render himself more miserable? Heavenly-

mindedness and contentment are like Hippocrates' twins, living and dying together. They are two sweet companions that always go hand in hand and cannot be separated.

But to descend a little more to the words, you have Paul in them obviating any misconstruction that the Philippians might have of his joy, which he expressed in the former verse, as if he had been one coveting great things for himself or desiring to be great in the world. No, says he, I speak not these things because of want, which I formerly had and is now made up, for, says he, I have learned in every state that I am, therewith to be content. There is no lot, says Paul, but I can patiently endure it and can carry myself under it with a divine complacency. This he proves in verse 12, saying, "I know how to be debased, I am instructed in this divine art, how to walk soberly under debasement, and I know how to abound; I am not one who is puffed up with a prosperous lot in the world." And lest this assertion of Paul's should seem to be boasting beyond his measure and of being exalted above measure, he sweetly adds that humble assertion, "I can do all things through Christ that strengthens me." As if he would have said, "Do not mistake me or conceive me under a more divine and high notion than you ought, for I am but a poor and sinful man who can do nothing of myself, but as I am over-acted by a divine and supreme hand. I am enabled to triumph over the most adverse and sinister lot that can befall me."

The words we have read, in the original, are most significant and emphatic; the word rendered "Content" can also mean "All-sufficient." So, the words may sweetly run thus, "I have learned in every estate wherein I am, to be all-sufficient," of which Proverbs 14:14 is a sweet commentary: "The backslider in heart shall be filled with the fruit of his own way, but a godly man shall be satisfied from himself." In a way, there is a wellspring of everlasting consolation

within the Christian, which enables them to endure every anxious lot. That word "I have learned" speaks both to the difficulty of attaining this mystery of divine contentment and also to the ignorance of this divine and noble end with which Paul was once possessed. "I was once," says he, "as ignorant as any in the knowledge of this thing, but now through the understanding and wisdom of God, I am made perfect in the knowledge of these things." The phrase "in every estate" highly commends the elevated state of Christianity to which Paul had attained. There was no lot that could befall him wrongly.

By the way, the continuance of affliction is one of the greatest occasions of impatience imaginable. A Christian, when they first encounter a cross, may be provoked to accept it and embrace it, but if it is prolonged, they may cry out, "Have you found me, O you my enemy?" and begin to call into question the Lord's loving kindness and complain that He has forgotten His mercies. Yet, when a Christian is passing through the valley of the shadow of death, they shall be sweetly convinced of their impatience. In that moment, a Christian shall be constrained to engrave the motto upon the door of their everlasting rest: "He has done all things well." What thoughts will they have of those risings and debatings of spirit with which they have been previously possessed? We may imagine, and not without some ground, that a great part of eternity shall be spent in interrogations. Christ shall interrogate us, asking if we lacked anything while we were here below, and we shall be compelled to answer, "Nothing," even in that day when He sent us forth without script, money, sandals, or anything that belonged to us. We shall be compelled to subscribe to the infinite wisdom of God in regulating our lot.

Now, in speaking upon this divine quality and duty of divine contentment, which we consider most requisite in these days, we shall not insist long on pointing out what this divine grace of contentment is. However, we believe it includes not only a sweet and composed frame of spirit under every anxious lot and dispensation, of which Leviticus 10:3 is a commentary where it is said of Aaron, when his sons were cut off, "He held his peace." The words in the original are, "Truly my soul, be thou silent unto God," as they are rendered in the margin of the book, as if he would have said, "Do not fret or be disquieted because of anything that He carves out unto you."

But likewise, this grace and duty of contentment include a holy complacency and sweet serenity and calmness of spirit under every lot, of which James 1:2 is a commentary: "Count it all joy when you fall into diverse temptations." Also, Romans 5:3 expresses this idea: "We glory in tribulation." We shall not dwell long on proving that it is the duty of a Christian to be content with every estate in which God places them. This is clear in 1 Timothy 6:8: "Having food and raiment let us therewith be content." Also, in Hebrews 13:5: "Be content with these things that you have." And Luke 3:14: "And we may say, if a Christian made the world but his servant, little would content him. But if once he makes the world his master and lord of his affections, then his desires will be infinite and cannot be satisfied at all."

We shall not long stand to inveigh against that too much addiction of man to those passing and transient vanities of the world. We believe that men most earnestly covet three things: pleasure, riches, and honor. Certainly, these are beneath an immortal spirit to fix its desires upon them. Would you have Solomon's verdict on riches, O you who trust in uncertain riches? You have it sweetly in Proverbs

23:5: "Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not?" In a manner, riches have no true existence, for they take wings to themselves and flee away, as Solomon eloquently speaks in Ecclesiastes 5:11: "If riches increase, what profit is there to the owner thereof, save to behold them with his eyes." All that the owner of riches has is the sight of them, which a man passing by may likewise have, even though he does not possess them.

As for honor and glory, which more refined spirits pursue, I would have them take note of one word in Psalm 62:9: "Men of high degree are a lie, and men of low degree are vanity." As if the psalmist meant to say, any preeminence that one has, who has an excellent lot in the world over a poor one, consists in this: one is vanity, and the other is a lying vanity, pretending to possess something which is not truly in their possession. Another example is found in Acts 25:23, where speaking of Bernice, who came into the Senate-house with great pomp and glory, the word that is there rendered pomp and glory is "fantasie," with a great show and image without anything in reality. Regarding the pleasures of the world, with which epicurean spirits of the world are so besotted, consider Solomon's verdict in Ecclesiastes 1:2: "Vanity of vanities, and all things are vanity and vexation of spirit." If Solomon found no more, surely none who come after him can find more.

Now, let us address the causes and principles from which the discontentment of one arises under any anxious or sad lot that befalls them. We believe it either proceeds from a Christian not engaging in self-examination, as it is clear from Psalm 4:4: "Examine yourselves upon your bed and be still." Self-examination has much influence on contentment under every lot because it helps one to accurately discern their imperfections and blemishes. Instead of complaining, they are compelled to wonder and cry out, "Why should

a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sin?" Additionally, one who engages in self-examination can understand the purpose of the rod and its advantages, leading them to patiently bear it in their youth and to sit down and adore the unsearchable wisdom of God in dispensing such things to them. Proverbs 19:3 is often verified in us, "The heart of man perverteth his way, and then he fretteth against the Lord when he is chastened for it." If Christians were dwelling more at home in self-examination, they might wonder that they still have a being in the world and are not cut off from the right hand of the Lord. They should bless Him eternally that they are not sent away to be reserved in everlasting chains.

There is likewise that which occasions discontentment under our lot, and it is the lack of divine preparation to face any situation that may befall us before it comes. We think a Christian should have general resolutions to bear every cross that Christ will ordain. There are two advantages to having such universal resolutions. Firstly, when he is afflicted in his possessions or any other aspect of his life, he begins to sing a song of praise because it is not worse. Secondly, foresight and resolution to meet any cross disposes the Christian for encountering it. Job 3:25 has had great influence on Job's patience, for "the thing which I greatly feared, is come upon me." Afflictions often surprise us, and we faint in the day of adversity because we have not prepared ourselves.

Another factor that can lead to discontentment is the lack of heavenly-mindedness when a Christian faces difficulty. A Christian who contemplates the promised land from the mountaintop could patiently bear his rod. This is clear in 2 Corinthians 4:16, compared with verse 17, where Paul explains that he had an eye on eternal things, which gave him courage and constancy under his afflictions.

Drowning one's thoughts of present misery in the depths of eternity can solace and make up for all losses here.

The Stoic opinion, which commended apathy and a lack of passions so that one would not be greatly moved by the want or possession of anything, has some merit. They believed that nothing good or bad happens to a person except through their own state of mind. If the heart was in a divine and spiritual frame, they knew that no sad or anxious lot could greatly affect them.

Discontentment can also stem from failing to recognise God as the cause and author of the sad evils that befall us. If we truly believed this, we would be ashamed to dispute and murmur as we do. Eli's words in 1 Samuel 3, "It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good," and the psalmist's silence in Psalm 39:9, "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth, because thou didst it," demonstrate the right response to God's sovereignty. Our murmurings and complaints reveal the atheism within us. We dare not debate with the Almighty or demand an account of His ways. We must contemplate the sovereignty of God when He gathers all our terrors around us as if in a solemn assembly.

Another factor contributing to discontentment is our lack of meditation on the brevity of our life and time. If we knew that our tribulation would last only for an hour or ten days, we might more patiently endure it. 1 Corinthians 7:29, in conjunction with the following verses, emphasizes the shortness of time as a reason to not be greatly moved by our sorrows. The small span of time between eternity past and eternity future will soon be swallowed up, and there will be nothing but eternity.

Lastly, what greatly contributes to our discontentment under our trials is the lack of mortification and humility. Pride is the

predominant evil, and we can allude to the saying, "Only by pride cometh contention." In this context, it holds true that only by pride do we contend with God regarding His dispensations toward us. In summary, it is impossible for a Christian not to be content without humility. Pride is one of the greatest hindrances to divine contentment under any trial we face. If a Christian were humble, they could sit in the dust and sweetly adore the infinite love and patience of God.

Now, in the second place, we shall propose some considerations that may prevent a Christian or anyone else from becoming discontented with any situation that befalls them. Firstly, there are many sad and woeful companions of a Christian's discontentment and repining against any of God's dispensations. We believe it is not just the bad company of being unfit for spiritual duties, especially prayer and praise, that affects a Christian who is discontent. It is impossible for a discontented Christian to pray or praise. This is implied in 1 Timothy 2:8, where a qualification for right prayer is being without wrath, murmuring, or repining in one's heart. Similarly, genuine praise requires a divine and composed frame of spirit, as stated in Psalm 57:7, "My heart is fixed, it is fixed." Discontentment hinders prayer because it cuts off three essential ingredients of prayer: love, fervency, and faith. A discontented Christian cannot have the burning love that should characterise a Christian; jealousy dominates them, making love impossible. And if prayer doesn't stem from the precious principle of love, it lacks a vital component. Faith is hindered because the Christian has formed such a low opinion of God that they cannot place their trust or hope in Him. Fervency is lost because they are preoccupied with their current situation rather than being able to focus on anything spiritual. Discontentment essentially transforms the spirit into a brutish one, making it unfit for any spiritual communion with God.

Secondly, discontentment renders a Christian incapable of resisting temptations. It is impossible for a Christian to mortify or resist lust when they are consumed by discontent. Two evils thrive under discontentment: the predominant lust of the individual and pride. These two evils flourish, and other lusts gain the upper hand. A Christian can lose more in one hour of discontentment under a trial than they can regain in many months, even on this side of eternity. Temptations easily overtake such a person because they have let down their guard and lost their strength. It's almost as if temptation is saying, "Their strength is gone from them; let's go up and put them to flight."

Thirdly, discontentment robs a Christian of tenderness of spirit and its sensitivity. Nothing diminishes tenderness more than discontentment because a discontented Christian is not living under the influence of the fear or love of the Almighty, which are the two main sources of tenderness. If one examines themselves, they will find that their anxiety and bitterness have hardened their hearts, making them as unfeeling as stone and tightening their grip on their spirits.

Lastly, discontentment causes a Christian to undervalue all the previous mercies they have received. When a Christian encounters something that contradicts their desires, they begin to lose their appreciation for everything that was previously given to them. This can be seen in Jacob's impatience over the loss of Joseph in Genesis 37, where he undervalues all his other blessings. A similar sentiment is expressed in Esther 5:12-13 when a wicked man, Haman, cries out that Mordecai's refusal to bow to him nullifies all his other blessings. Discontentment leads a Christian to disregard the most precious and excellent things of God. It's one of Satan's subtleties and devices to make a Christian disrespect their blessings more easily and with less

conviction. They often consider their choicest blessings to be illusions and, as a result, begin to undervalue and misprize them.

There is this consideration that should encourage you to resist discontentment: it is a distinguishing mark of a Christian from a reprobate. I would urge murmurers to seriously reflect on the sobering words found in Jude verse 19, compared with verse 15. When speaking of Christ's coming to judge and execute vengeance, the first group mentioned are "murmurers and complainers." Similarly, in 1 Corinthians 10:10, it is stated, "Do not murmur, as some of them were, and were destroyed by the destroyer." It is not surprising that murmuring is viewed so negatively, not only because it is a sin that reveals our atheism, but also because it shows a desire in a Christian or anyone else to be independent and not subject to God. It seems that our sinful ambition is such that we do not want to depend on Him; instead, we wish to hold our own destiny in our hands and shape it ourselves. We often fail to understand what it means to give Christ a negative vote in the events that befall us. We love to be co-equal with God rather than subordinate to Him. It would be better to put a blank slate in His hands and ask Him to fill it with whatever He pleases. Christ often puts a blank slate in a Christian's hand, as seen in the words, "What do you want me to do for you?" We may not always know how to fill it out due to our ignorance, but it is best to return it to Him so that He can fill it with His choice.

Additionally, consider that discontentment disrupts the fulfilment of God's promises and hinders faith in those promises. This is evident in Numbers 14:27, compared with verse 28, where the promise of entering the land of Canaan was unfulfilled due to murmuring. Similarly, Psalm 106:24, compared with verse 25, reveals that murmuring led to a lack of belief in God's word. It is no wonder that

murmuring disrupts faith in God's promises because it is impossible for a murmurer to have faith in both God's omnipotence and His goodness or love—two crucial pillars of faith. Those who engage in debates with God quickly stifle their faith. It is important to note that there is discontentment of the intellect and discontentment of the will and affections. A Christian may overcome the intellectual discontentment but still struggle with the discontentment of the will and affections. While the sovereignty of God and the sinfulness of human nature can silence our reason, it is often necessary for God's direct intervention to silence the murmurs of our will. This is evident in Psalm 42:5, where David acknowledges the unreasonableness of his discontent but still grapples with his will regarding letting it go.

Furthermore, consider the unreasonableness of impatience under adversity. As Christ asks in Matthew 6:27, "Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit to his stature?" It is futile to lose patience when one has already lost something valuable. What poor revenge it is for a person to take it out on themselves! Impatience is not only unreasonable because it hinders and interrupts a Christian's recognition of any mercy in the adversity, but also because it prolongs the hardship and leads to greater miseries and bondage. Impatience exacerbates the causes of one's bondage and multiplies one's iniquities. Therefore, it is an excellent endeavour for a Christian to practice patience in every circumstance. Even when we cannot perceive God's love in His actions or face due to His frowns and afflictions, faith allows us to draw back the veil and perceive His love in His heart. We can confidently proclaim, "I know the thoughts of His heart, that they are thoughts of peace, and not of evil." Discontentment often leads us to wrongly accuse God of inconsistency between His profession and His intentions.

There is also this consideration that may discourage you from discontentment, and it is this: it is impossible for a Christian to benefit from his trials while he is discontent. All the time a Christian spends in a fit of impatience is wasted prodigally. Instead of using that time to promote the great purpose of trials, which is to take away sin, the discontented Christian studies to entangle himself in greater captivity and bondage, subjecting himself to his iniquities. I urge you to strive for greater divine contentment in your circumstances and to focus on contemplating the precious and excellent things above. Jacob's words to Esau in Genesis 33:11 are remarkable: "I have enough." In the original language, it can be translated as "I have all." Critics note that the word Esau used in verse 8, "I have enough," is not the same as Jacob's declaration in verse 11, "I have enough." Although Jacob was poorer than Esau, he had everything. Similarly, a Christian who has Christ as their portion can joyfully proclaim, "Though I am poor, I possess all things," experiencing both poverty and richness, mourning and rejoicing, being poor yet truly rich. The day will come when Christ will gather His jewels, making a clear and palpable distinction between the precious and the vile. Keep in mind that Christ is on His way, so do not murmur or complain. A Christian should not expect two heavens; possessing one is enough. We must not anticipate a path to heaven strewn with roses. It is not a great matter if we journey to heaven in a fiery chariot with afflictions and calamities as our companions along the way. When we are at the threshold of our eternal rest, our chains will fall from our hands, and our fetters will be removed from our feet. We can then lift our heads in joy and rejoice. Oh, but when the heavens we now see are rolled up like a scroll, when both the visible veil of the heavens and the invisible veil of iniquity are torn from top to bottom, and we have clear and precious revelations of the noble Plant of Renown, we will sit by the wellspring to drink. We will forget our misery and remember our poverty no more. Let hope turn into

fruition, and anticipation become possession, as time gracefully transforms into eternity.

SERMON X.

I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.
- Philippians 4:11.

It is an ordinary and usual error and delusion among Christians that they place the exercise of religion in these duties that are more sublime and high in their apprehension, such as faith, hope, and prayer. They undervalue the exercise of those lower duties like contentment, mortification to the world, and charity to the poor, as if they were not so essential for the Christian life. I am convinced that if any of you had heard the Apostle James discussing the subject of pure and undefiled religion, you might have expected him to expound some divine and profound concept upon which pure religion before God and the Father is built. However, believe me, religion consists more in practice than in speculation, and it is more about obedience than refined notions. What do you think of this definition of pure and undefiled religion: "Pure religion and undefiled consist in mortification to the world and in charity to the poor"? These two duties are often considered low and undervalued, yet they make up a significant part of the exercise of true religion. Furthermore, when Christ appears to judge the living and the dead, the approval of the saints will be based on this low and seemingly insignificant duty of charity to the poor. The neglect of this duty and the lack of charity towards the poor will be the grounds for the

reprobation of the wicked. In the exercise of Christian contentment, a significant portion of true religion is found. Paul states, "Godliness with contentment is great gain." Through faith, a Christian enjoys God; through love, a Christian enjoys their neighbor, and through contentment, a Christian enjoys themselves. It is undoubtedly a mysterious and challenging lesson for a Christian to be able to say in every situation, "It is good for me to be here; let me make a tabernacle here." Often, we have strong desires to carve out our own path. Solomon mentions three insatiable things and four things that never say, "It is enough": the grave, the barren womb, the earth that is not filled with water, and the fire. We can add a fifth to these: most people are unsatisfied with their lot. It is no surprise that those with unlimited desires encounter great disappointments. Those who have excessive and eccentric desires will experience both great hopes and great disappointments. Therefore, it would be in your best interest to strive to limit and restrain your desires for worldly things. As one wise person put it, the greatest wealth a person can have lies in having few desires and being content with the lot God has placed them in. There are only three things that make it difficult for a Christian to attain contentment. First is the loss of their predominant lust and idol, especially if it is somewhat veiled under the guise of virtue. For example, if one seeks the applause of the world, losing that applause can be extremely challenging for them to find contentment. Our hearts often cry out when our idols are taken away, saying, "They have taken away my gods, and what do I have left?" Often, our lusts die within us before we die to them. This is why our living lusts often sit and mourn over the graves of our buried idols, wishing that they would rise from the dead. To such individuals, we can only say, "Woe to you when all men speak well of you," for seeking the approval of others can hinder people from pursuing their idols. Even more so, consider the words in John 5:44: "How can you believe, who seek glory from one another?" These

words suggest an inconsistency between exercising faith and pursuing idols.

There is likewise another difficulty that befalls a Christian, under which it is challenging for him to attain contentment, and that is the continuation and prolongation of any affliction that befalls him. Often, a Christian, when he first encounters his trial, will accept and embrace it, saying, "This is a grief, and I must bear it." However, when the thread of our affliction is spun out over time, we begin to feel discontented and cry out, "Have you found me, O you, my enemy?" This was evident in the experience of Job, who initially expressed divine contentment in the face of great adversity, saying, "Blessed be the name of the Lord." But when he had to endure months of vanity and wearisome nights, he cried out, "I choose strangling and death rather than life." To those who struggle with prolonged afflictions, we can only say, immerse yourself in the meditation of the precious and immense hope and ascend to the top of Mount Pisgah, joining Moses in viewing the distant land. Also, strive to affirm the divine conclusion that God does all things well.

Thirdly, there is poverty and want in the world, which presents a great challenge for a Christian to find contentment. Solomon, who understood his own heart well and knew his unsuitability to bear such a burden, cried out, "Give me not poverty, lest I steal and take the name of my God in vain." It is certain that exercising faith in God for common mercies is more difficult than exercising faith for our eternal salvation and our union with Jesus Christ. The reason for this difficulty may lie in the fact that when faith is exercised for common mercies, it relies more simply and immediately on the omnipotence and faithfulness of God, without the support of other considerations. In such cases, sense and reason often contradict the exercise of faith. However, when Christians exercise faith in God for righteousness

and salvation, they usually have some sense or holy reason to underpin and support their faith. Additionally, Christians are not as frequently required to exercise faith for common mercies as they are for their eternal salvation. Nevertheless, it is no small challenge for a Christian to trust in God when they are reduced to a meager and pinching condition in the world. To those who grumble and complain in such circumstances, we say, look at Him who was the heir of all things but had nowhere to lay His head. Also, consider the numerous witnesses who have entered into the everlasting possession of a precious and excellent inheritance, even though they were compelled to wander in dens and caves of the earth, wearing sheep and goat skins. You are now in your minority, and therefore you are rich in hope and expectation, even if you are not rich in possession. We can say that a Christian who possesses Christ, who is everything, must necessarily enjoy all things.

Now, as for further thoughts on this divine quality of contentment, in addition to what we mentioned previously, let us briefly consider the difficulty of attaining contentment under every circumstance a Christian encounters. The difficulty is made clear in the statement, "I have learned." This implies that Paul was once ignorant of this mysterious lesson of divine contentment but was instructed by Him who is the Prince of Pastors. This reveals the difficulty involved; a Christian must engage in self-examination and introspection before attaining contentment. This is hinted at in Psalm 4:4, "Examine yourselves upon your beds," with a promise attached: "and be still." Self-examination has a significant influence on contentment. A Christian who reflects on themselves often finds a harmony between their cross and their disposition. They see infinite wisdom in the design of their lot and are compelled to adore the unsearchable riches of God's wisdom. Furthermore, self-examination leads them to see their own flaws and imperfections, causing them to wonder why

their situation is not worse. This leads them to glorify God even in the midst of trials. It may indeed be a daily wonder for a Christian that they are not consumed and cut off. Oh, that you would engage in the study of self! The ancient advice of a heathen, "Know yourself," is worth practicing for all Christians. We often wander abroad but spend too little time at home. It is said of some animals that they have eyes to see outside but none to see within, which seems to be the case for many in these times.

This also points to the difficulty of achieving the duty of contentment, that a Christian must exercise two cardinal graces, Faith and Love, before attaining it. Certainly, without practising these graces, contentment will remain at a low and weak state. The exercise of faith is not only necessary for concluding our interest in Jesus Christ and sealing that conclusion, but it also serves as the best interpreter of God's dispensations. Faith knows not how to bring a bad report upon God. As long as we consult with sense, reason, and unbelief about God's providence, we will have daily sorrow. Instead, turn to the wise counselor, Faith, which is sometimes called understanding because of its intelligence (Col. 2:2). It has a clear influence on contentment, as seen in 2 Samuel 23:5, where David, based on God's everlasting covenant, says, "I am not much anxious, though other things should fail." Similarly, in Psalm 142:4-5, faith in God as his portion enables David to submit patiently even if all refuge fails him. In Psalm 37:1, trusting in God is recommended to avoid discontent and fretting.

Love must also be exercised before a Christian can attain this divine quality of contentment. Love has two precious properties described in 1 Corinthians 13:4-5: it endures long and thinks no evil. These properties greatly influence contentment. Although love can sometimes be the most impatient grace of a Christian, it can also be

the most patient. When exercised vigorously, love endures more afflictions than faith. Love knows not how to entertain jealous thoughts of the beloved; it thinks no evil. Love is peremptory only in one thing—the enjoyment of the loved one. Love is sorrowful only for the loss of the loved one. It exists on such a high plane, far above all earthly things, that it maintains patience amidst the changes and fluctuations of life. Love incorporates a Christian into Jesus Christ, making them dwell in Christ as their mansion and home, and thus, they are not overly concerned with earthly matters.

Likewise, another difficulty in achieving divine contentment is that a Christian must exercise the grace of Mortification towards the passing and transient vanities of the world. The rise of discontent and murmuring in our spirits indicates the lack of mortification among us. If we were mortified to the world, we would naturally exercise contentment in every situation. This is clear when comparing two passages: Psalm 119:29, where David says he has seen an end of all perfection, indicating his clear understanding of the world's vanity, and 2 Samuel 15:25-26, where David resigns his crown, showing divine contentment. Another comparison is found in Galatians 6:14, where Paul states, "I am crucified to the world, and the world is crucified to me." Here, Paul and the world part ways as if two dead men separating from each other. A Christian reflecting on the changeability, inconsistency, and vexation of worldly things will not be greatly disturbed by their loss. This insight was also gained by some pagans who observed that fear and desire were inseparable companions of those who pursued worldly pleasures. Even those with great abundance were troubled by fear of losing what they had and the desire for more. For example, Sesostris, the King of Egypt, was so ambitious that he wanted his chariot drawn by four kings. One of them constantly watched the motion of the wheel of the chariot. When asked about it, he explained that it reminded him of

the mutability and changeability of worldly things, with the highest part of the wheel becoming the lowest and vice versa. This wisdom led the ambitious king to abandon his practice. If you could read "vanity and vexation of spirit" on the forehead of all things, you would easily attain contentment.

Fourthly, what also signifies the difficulty of attaining contentment is that a Christian must be mortified to the innate and natural idol of pride before reaching it. Pride must be humbled before contentment can be achieved. Discontent and pride seem to have made a solemn pact, swearing to remain inseparable in life and death, bound together by an unbreakable bond of friendship. Trust me, a Christian cannot be discontent without also being proud. Conversely, a proud Christian must inevitably be discontented. Humility is the greatest mother of contentment, silently leading a Christian to bear their burdens and to humbly place their mouth in the dust, acknowledging their lowliness. A humble individual, aware of their own unworthiness, does not complain, "Why am I like this?" Instead, they admire much and murmur little, offering praise more than complaint.

Lastly, what emphasizes the difficulty of contentment is that a Christian cannot attain it without being heavily inclined toward heavenly matters and having a spiritually elevated state of mind. This is hinted at in John 14:1-2, where Jesus, to counter the disciples' discontentment, speaks of heaven, saying, "In my Father's house are many mansions" and reminding them of their place there. Similarly, in Matthew 6:25-26, to prevent anxiety about earthly needs, Jesus advises seeking the Kingdom of God first. Undoubtedly, one who frequently contemplates eternal life, beholding the precious and infinite delights awaiting at God's right hand, lives in a composed and divine state of mind. They drown their thoughts of present

miseries in the boundless depths of eternity, knowing that a single moment of enjoying Christ fully compensates for all the sorrows endured. I cannot fathom the thoughts of Christians when they are presented with the vast volume of the Lord's mercies they have experienced here below. They may be filled with wonder upon seeing that book, both inside and out, recording the unique and precious demonstrations of His love.

We shall secondly speak a little to provoke you to the pursuit of this divine quality, and thus to the advantages that a Christian has by exercising contentment under every lot. We believe contentment to be such an excellent grace that it is, indeed, a compound of five graces: faith, humility, patience, hope, and mortification. In a way, contentment is the result of all these graces exercising themselves in harmony. Unless these graces are in vigorous exercise, absolute contentment is not easily attained. However, it must be an excellent thing that derives from such high and excellent virtues as these precious spiritual graces.

The first advantage a Christian gains through divine contentment under their saddest circumstances is that it brings them into closer fellowship and correspondence with God. A contented individual also receives sweet manifestations of God's presence and fellowship with them under their trials. It is clear that contentment is usually accompanied by nearness and correspondence with Him. This is hinted at in Hebrews 13:5, where, while emphasizing the doctrine of contentment, it is said, "The Lord will not leave you nor forsake you," which, though primarily about God's providence, may also include manifestations of His presence. Likewise, in James 4:7, there is an invitation that often comes to a contented Christian, "Come unto me from Amana, and from the top of Shenir, and from the mount Lebanon." Christ loves to dwell with one who walks in a composed

and tranquil state of mind. A contented Christian enjoys much of God under their trials because they are often in prayer. It is impossible for a discontented Christian to pray effectively under their trials as they lack the required qualification of prayer, "to lift up their hands without wrath." The soul is so troubled that it cannot speak, as seen in Psalm 77:4 or 5, where David had the advantage of being so troubled that he couldn't speak. We believe that there is something to imitate in David's case. Even when one can't speak, they can pray like David did in that Psalm.

The second advantage a Christian gains from practicing divine contentment is that the lack of it significantly obstructs their ability to benefit from the trials they face. A Christian who is discontent cannot receive any benefits from their trials. This is indicated in Hebrews 12:11, where it talks about the peaceable fruits of righteousness flowing to a Christian who is exercised under their trials. This certainly includes the divine quality of contentment. There are three precious advantages a Christian may gain from their trials that discontent obstructs: the exercise of humility, the exercise of prayer, and the exercise of mortification. One who is discontent obstructs the great advantage of the cross, namely, humility. They are so preoccupied with complaining about God's providence that they cannot sit down, fold their feet, and quietly bear their yoke. Contentment inherently involves a great deal of divine humility. In a way, a contented Christian is clothed with humility. Discontentment is the mother of pride and adds fuel to that fire. Discontentment also obstructs mortification and conformity to God, which is the precious end of the cross. God chastises us so that we may partake in His holiness and take away our sin. A discontented Christian cannot be taken up with mortification. It is most certain that a Christian may lose more through one hour of discontent than they can gain in many days, even in this lifetime. Discontentment can lead one to a great

length. It obstructs the exercise of prayer, which is a precious end of the cross. In affliction, people seek God early and pour forth their prayers into His bosom. But someone in a disturbed and discontented frame is incapable of engaging in this duty of prayer. They are so consumed with their trials that they cannot converse much with God. This is certainly a great deficiency in a Christian because they are more focused on studying the disadvantages of the cross than the advantages of it. Most of us become eloquent like Cicero in lamenting our calamities and describing them in full detail. However, when it comes to the exercise of praise, our tongues stick to the roof of our mouths, and we remain silent before God.

The third advantage a Christian gains from practicing contentment is that it prevents and obstructs many temptations to which a Christian is vulnerable due to their discontentment. There is no sin in Scripture that has produced such dire and woeful consequences as the sin of discontentment. What led Ahithophel to seek a cord and hang himself? Was it not his discontent? Discontentment is the mother of the most melancholic and desperate resolutions. Unable to submit to our cross, we seek to extricate ourselves from it by entangling ourselves in an endless and unbearable misery. Therefore, we encourage you to study contentment in the face of your afflictions. What atheistic thoughts may arise in the heart of one who is discontent! We can see them clearly in David's practice, who, under his discontentment, cried out, "I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocence." There is nothing that fosters doubt about the existence of God more than discontentment. The fourth advantage a Christian gains through contentment is that it makes the cross much easier to bear. If you want to know what contributes most to the weight of any cross, it is discontent. Discontentment makes our burdens heavier and more unbearable. If we were pursuing contentment, it would lessen much of the

bitterness of the cross. A contented Christian can triumph over their cross, saying, "O cross, where is thy sting? O affliction, where is your victory?" Discontent is what makes us sit down and cry, "My stroke is heavier than my groaning." Have you ever experienced the joy and peace of mind that comes from bearing your affliction with inward joy? This often happens when you possess the grace of contentment.

There is this advantage likewise that a Christian has by exercising contentment under his cross, that he finds; it is a concise way for a Christian to find a way out of his cross. Would you know what is the most concise way to prolong your affliction? Then study discontentment. But would you know what is the most spiritual and concise way to have the rod removed and God no longer to turn His face away from His throne? Then study contentment. In a way, the cross has achieved its purpose when you attain contentment and humility under it. We can say of the sin of discontent that it is a most irrational and baseless sin, for you cannot extricate yourself from your calamities through your discontent. All you achieve by it is to make your bonds tighter on your spirit and your chains and fetters weigh even more heavily.

There is this advantage likewise that a Christian has through the exercise of contentment under every rod they encounter: it is the divine quality of the soul by which a Christian attains to greater mortification of the pleasures and vanities of the world. How sweetly will a contented Christian, amid the loss of things here below, speak against these imagined illusions? It is a pitiful sight to see a living being bound to shadows by the two iron chains of love and delight. Should we not aspire to holy ambition and spiritual generosity to undervalue everything below God as being beneath us? In a way, as Jonadab spoke to Amnon in 2 Samuel 13:4, "Why art thou, being a king's son, lean from day to day?" We might also address the heirs of

the promise, those begotten by a living hope, as children of the King of kings. Why should you grow thin due to the loss or lack of things here below? Do you not have a kingdom? So why should you complain about losing these passing and transient vanities? The great idol of the world, silver and gold, is nothing more than refined dust. It is white and yellow clay. We believe that much of its excellence is based on human estimation, on how much people value it. But one who is assured of eternal life and that God is theirs can walk through the wilderness with joy. We acknowledge that among the heirs of the promise, there is a tendency to desire an easy and pleasant path to heaven, to traverse a valley of roses to reach the palace of eternal rest. However, there is only one eternal and everlasting heaven, and we should not expect two heavens. As for the cause of discontent under our cross or any calamity we encounter, we believe pride and lack of mortification are the two common and general reasons for all our discontent and impatience.

We shall conclude our discussion of this divine quality of contentment by urging those who have an abundance of worldly goods to pursue contentment. Though this may appear paradoxical to many—why should those who have enough be encouraged to seek contentment? We believe there is no one more discontented than those who have the greatest reason for contentment. Their desires are so closely tied to things below that they never say, "It is enough, and I am satisfied." We believe this refutes the vain opinion entertained by Christians and others that if they had a sufficient income, they would no longer be discontented but would silently continue on their way. They claim that the cause of their discontent is the lack of sufficient sustenance. We can only say that which is recorded of Alexander, who, after acquiring possession of the world, was far from attaining contentment. As it is recorded, he sat down and wept because there was no other world left to conquer. And

believe me, it is undeniable that if you cannot attain contentment in your current circumstances, you will not attain it when your situation improves. It is only Satan's deception that veils the evil of your discontent.

Regarding those who have an abundance of worldly goods, we urge them, as stated in Proverbs 23:4, "Labour not to be rich." This may not be easily embraced, although riches (as beautifully expressed there) are a transient thing. It is clear that there is a need to urge those who have an abundance of wealth to find contentment. This is evident from what follows in the next verse when Paul says, "I know how to abound." People might have thought this was not much of a lesson, but believe me, it is a great, if not greater, lesson than the previous one. This is the lesson by which we would encourage contentment in those who are poor in every circumstance and situation they encounter here on earth. Understand that the day is approaching when you will recognize the infinite wisdom in leading you to heaven through this path. Allow Christ to have the final say in the distribution of your fortunes, and be content to be led by Him, who is the wonderful counselor. Although He leads you through unknown paths, trust Him implicitly, for He never disappoints expectations. Study contentment, for it is heaven brought down to earth. What is the happiness and blessedness of those above? It is encapsulated in one word: Contentment. They have cast away all anxieties, aversions, and desires except one. Oh, what a life it must be to drink from rivers of pleasure! Have you ever known or read about a river whose waters are pure delight and pleasure? When we sit down and are overwhelmed by the consolations flowing from His presence, when we experience the endless eternity of joy, light, admiration, and praise—then you will believe me. Time will soon come to an end, and eternity is drawing near. Take comfort in the fact that eternity is at hand, when you will hear the voice, and truth

sealed by the oath of an angel: "Time shall be no more." Let that precious day come, and let all other days pass away.

FINIS.

MONERGISM BOOKS

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