

Lord of the Sermon

By

B. K. Campbell

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Introduction

I am glad that Martin Luther wrote *Bondage of the Will*, but I would prefer that he never had to write it at all. The author feels no different about the following paper. This work is the result of burden. Within my own theological circle certain Christians have sprung up that refuse to distribute copies of sermons. There is no need to mention names, as I do not desire to be accused of slander. On several occasions I have requested copies of sermons from these people each time only to be denied by an austere deacon or member. The reason given for these denials was 1) that the work was the product and property of the pastor and 2) the pastor *didn't owe anything to anyone*. However, most insulting of all was the excuse that, *our congregation is not a tape ministry*. Of course, these tapes are distributed, but the pastor, deacon or individual members prejudicially selected those that receive them. The rational Christian will know that there is no purpose in recording a message if the message is not going to be heard. I hope the reader will be able to see that this attitude is not consistent with scripture. Those that have given me sermons from this congregation have done so upon the basis of the Word of God knowing: *he that is not against us is with us* (Lk 9:50). As far as the preaching goes it is perhaps the best I have ever heard. The fact that the congregation would give the same testimony about these sermons and then deny others copies is quite disturbing. Certainly, we want those who know Christ and those who have not yet come to Christ to have the very best; for unintelligible theology makes for unintelligible Christianity. Overall sharing what is good can only help to make a better, more accurate Christianity by equipping a more theologically precise Christian. To deny men what is good and then pretend that we have done them no wrong is a grave error. Perhaps, the position could be better defended if it was not the case that these sermons are distributed to people outside the congregation. Certain individuals are given copies while others are denied. Neither the legitimacy of the request or the urgency of the need decide who gets a copy, it is solely decided upon the basis of partisanship. It will be evident to the reader that a double standard is at work. If the pastor will deny one man then he has no right to affirm another. Such actions constitute a practical contradiction of scripture. What the reader will find in the following work is a series of rebuttals that have universal application. I have intentionally not addressed my words to any one person. Essentially, the paper stands as a refutation to all who attempt to withhold or restrict what is good. The argument is for unity upon the basis of confession and belief in Christ. My own desire is that those who have withheld will withhold no more. I long to see a deeper gratitude and appreciation to Christ for the knowledge that He alone bestows on His church. Hopefully every thought will be brought captive to the obedience of Christ as my brothers and sisters will give Him credit, as He alone is Lord of the Sermon.

As far as the technical aspect of the paper only a few words need to be said. First of all there is no need to read my work in chronological order, each verse was written to contain a complete thought and all the verses together make a powerful whole. Secondly, the paper is full of repetition, but this is how I have chosen to make and force my point. Finally, there is always the possibility that I have stated something in ignorance. I make no claim to infallibility (Pr 18:17). Hence, the reader should reject the thesis insofar as it

departs from the Word of God. Certainly, my aim is not to mislead any that belong to Christ. The reader is cautioned to read prayerfully and thoughtfully- the same way one should read any theological paper. I trust that regardless of agreement the reader will be challenged to think.

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Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do everything for God's glory. Give no offense to the Jews or the Greeks or the church of God, just as I also try to please all people in all things, not seeking my own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved. [1 Corinthians 10:31-33]

"There is a limit, for, "The Lord knoweth them that are His," but in the preaching of the gospel we are not bound by the decree which is secret, but by our marching orders, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature; he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." He who bade me preach to every creature did not bid me exempt one soul from my message." C. H. Spurgeon.

[1] Let the Christian settle early on in his mind that all things belong to Christ and that all things are from God¹. Without this foundation there is always the danger and threat of humanism².

¹ 1 Chron 29:11 "Yours, LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the splendor and the majesty, for everything in the heavens and on earth belongs to You. Yours, LORD, is the kingdom, and You are exalted as head over all." Also, Ps 89:11. Contrast Luke 20:3-4 with John 3:27

James 1:17 "Every generous act and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights; with Him there is no variation or shadow cast by turning."

1 Cor 8:6-7 "...yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things, and we for Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and we through Him. However, not everyone has this knowledge..."

2 Cor 3:4-6 "We have this kind of confidence toward God through Christ: not that we are competent in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our competence is from God. He has made us

[2] Man in relation to man can rightfully own possession but must always use them as God tells him to use them. This is because all possessions belong to God. There will never be a time when God does not own everything just as no possession can be legally utilized according to the fiat of man's will.

[3] Matt 5:42³ is the discernment between unwise giving and wise giving. To deny a man in need when God has given us the ability to help that man is to disobey the Word of God. Such men fail to grasp the reality that God gives what we possess- or they simply do not care. Pearls before swine never, but bread for the brethren always⁴.

[4] A church that does not have a Biblical policy of charity will not be able to remain consistent in charity. What the Scripture says on every topic is systematic- including charity. Let a church maintain Biblical propositions on charity that can be deduced from the whole of Scripture. To go without these propositions is to perform charity in the dark- often upon the basis of feeling instead of Scripture. If men want what is good and it is in our power to give it, then how can we deny it? Give men what God will have you give them and nothing more; to give less is to rob God of what rightfully belongs to Him.

[5] We must remember that there is a great difference between a business and a ministry.

[6] The idea of restricting the receptivity of the Word of God is contrary to God⁵. Those who distribute spiritual meat with prejudice only do so justly if a Biblical distinction is made between those who want to listen and those who do not⁶. However, when men seek

competent to be ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter, but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit produces life.”

² By humanism we mean everything established on the basis of autonomy, we mean the original sin in the garden (ye shall be as God), we mean the essence of Arminianism. The foundational presupposition of humanism is the fallacious idea of free will.

³ “Give to the one who asks you, and don't turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.”

“Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away” (v. 42). This supplies a further illustration of that noble and generous spirit which the righteousness of Christ's kingdom requires of its subjects. That righteousness will not only deter them from standing on every point of individual rights, but it will incline them to do good unto others. Interpreting this precept in the light of its setting, it sets forth the *positive* side of our duty: not only does Christ forbid men to requite evil for evil, but He commands them to return good for evil. It is better to give unto those who have no claims upon us and to lend unto those who would impose upon kindness, than to cause strife by a selfish or surly refusal. Our possessions are to be held in stewardship for God and at the disposal of the real need of our followers.” A. W. Pink Sermon on the Mount

⁴ Gal 6:10 “Therefore, as we have opportunity, we must work for the good of all, especially for those who belong to the household of faith.”

⁵ Mark 4:23 “If anyone has ears to hear, he should listen!” HCSB. For even though not all will hear those who can are not prohibited nor should they be prohibited.

of us what we have from God we have no right to deny them what is profitable and brings glory to God in the dispensing. The spiritual as well as the material belongs to God, but a man can much more easily give that which is spiritual without sacrificing anything pertaining to his livelihood. As the material is constrained by a limited number the spiritual is infinite. This means it may be given away without being expended. We have only so many earthly loaves of bread, but spiritual bread is infinite.

[7] Jesus is the Lord of the sermon. To deny Him this place is to assert someone else in His place. Those who believe that sermons are the product and property of the one who speaks them have no Biblical warrant for that which they selfishly practice⁷.

[8] On reflection, I am reminded of the Pharisees and the Sadducees⁸, of the history of Rome and its denial of the Word of God to all men. In other circles, it is the denial of doctrine by the denial of a sermon. No one is advocating that learning must stop because a selfish preacher will not allow his sermons to be obtained by those who want them. However, shouldn't the preacher want his messages to be heard? After all, does not the sermon presuppose an audience to hear it? Further, if the pastor's study has yielded accurate theological knowledge (unknown to the masses) then how can he deny others what he received himself?⁹

[9] How often do men err by calling theirs what really belongs to the Lord, as we are all prone to think higher of ourselves than we ought.¹⁰

6 Matt 7:6 Don't give what is holy to dogs or toss your pearls before pigs, or they will trample them with their feet, turn, and tear you to pieces. HCSB

7 1 Peter 4:9-11 "Be hospitable to one another without complaining. Based on the gift they have received, everyone should use it to serve others, as good managers of the varied grace of God. If anyone speaks, [his speech should be] like the oracles of God; if anyone serves, [his service should be] from the strength God provides, so that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To Him belong the glory and the power forever and ever. Amen."

8 Matt 23:13 "But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! You lock up the kingdom of heaven from people. For you don't go in, and you don't allow those entering to go in."

9 Augustine has said, "For no one ought to consider anything as his own, except perhaps what is false. All truth is of Him who says, "I am the truth." For what have we that we did not receive? And if we have received it, why do we glory, as if we had not received it?" From Augustine, On Christian Doctrine, From the Preface paragraph 8. To back his point Augustine quotes from John 14:6 and 1 Corinthians 4:7. In respect to Sovereignty Augustine was the most consistent thinker I have ever read. For he was always aware of the fact that what he knew, and all he wrote, was because of God. To take credit for spiritual things is a fatal mistake of the theologian.

10 James 1:17 "Every generous act and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights; with Him there is no variation or shadow cast by turning."

Rom 12:3 "For by the grace given to me, I tell everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he should think. Instead, think sensibly, as God has distributed a measure of faith to each one."

[10] Can it be a crime to ask for what is good? If not, then how can men treat us as if we have done wrong by asking for good? More importantly, what right does a man have to withhold good?

[11] What is implicit, in the individual's mind that refuses to distribute his sermons to others is that his sermons are not the property of God. "They belong to man not God", and therefore, should be distributed by the will and desire of man instead of the commandment of God¹¹.

[12] Only God is responsible for conversion, only He furnishes the mind with knowledge¹². This is also true in the case of the teacher and preacher. Those who wish to negate the proposition must defend some sort of 'freedom' that allows them to take responsibility for knowledge. Even though the consistent Christian understands the doctrine of Sovereignty¹³, the man who takes credit for his sermon does not maintain it. Any accurate proposition of theological knowledge uttered by the mouth of man, or contained in the mind is the result of God and as such I content that it belongs to God¹⁴. Those who pretend to own (as original) what they confess to believe are greatly mistaken about the nature of knowledge¹⁵. If accurate theological knowledge is known because of God, then it is a stupid idea to believe that we are the reason for what we believe. Likewise, if God owns all theological knowledge then it is a stupid idea to believe that

¹¹ In the Church of which we speak, if one was to kindly ask the Pastor or Deacons for a copy of the Lord's Day sermon one would be denied. This is not because of financial stain upon the church, but because the pastor believes he has the right to restrict his message to the confines of the congregation. In this he sets himself up as lord of the sermon. At first glance the argument might seem to carry little weight, but consider the reality of the idea. It is clear from scripture that what a Christian has received (by way of theological knowledge) is because of the Holy Spirit (John 14:26, 1 John 2:27). To claim other than this is to contradict the Word of God by advocating the notion that man possesses something that he did not receive from God (1Cor 4:7). Essentially, if the pastor "owns" the sermon then he must prove it from scripture, if "his" sermon is not the right of men then he must prove it from scripture. We will do our best to prove that it is the right of men because it is from God.

¹² Psalm 3:8 Salvation belongs to the LORD; may Your blessing be on Your people.
Acts 16:14 "A woman named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth from the city of Thyatira, who worshiped God, was listening. The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was spoken by Paul."
Also Acts 13:48, Eph 2:5-8
Prov 2:6, For the LORD gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding. Also, Matt 13:11, Col 2:2

¹³ God is sovereign over the entire universe: Ps 103:19; Rom 8:28; Eph 1:11- God is sovereign over all of nature: Ps 135:6-7; Mt 5:45; 6:25-30 -God is sovereign over angels & Satan: Ps 103:20-21; Job 1:12- God is sovereign over nations: Ps 47:7-9; Dan 2:20-21; 4:34-35 -God is sovereign over human beings: 1 Sam 2:6-7; Gal 1:15-16- God is sovereign over animals: Ps 104:21-30; 1 Ki 17:4-6- God is sovereign over "accidents": Pr 16:33; Jon 1:7; Mt 10:29- God is sovereign over free acts of men: Ex 3:21; 12:25-36; Ez 7:27 -God is sovereign over sinful acts of men and Satan: 2 Sam 24:1; 1 Chr 21:1; Gen 45:5; 50:20

¹⁴ Matt 16:17 "And Jesus responded, "Simon son of Jonah, you are blessed because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father in heaven."

¹⁵ Rom 12:3 "...as God has distributed a measure of faith to each one."

we can do with as we please. Insofar as the sermon contains accurate theological knowledge it is the right of men, in so far as it is synonymous or associated with the gospel it is the right of men¹⁶. This is because theological knowledge is not restricted knowledge¹⁷ and only God may distribute it with respect of persons¹⁸.

[13] One will claim the gospel restricted, but the proposition receives qualification. For it is true that the gospel is restricted¹⁹ and that theological knowledge is only for the Elect, but those exempt are exempt by God²⁰. Hence, we can no more know the Elect than we can know the depravity in our own hearts²¹. Those who attempt to restrict what they know to a select few have deviated from the purpose of their knowledge²². If the Gentiles ask of Paul, Paul knows he has received for the very purpose of letting the Gentiles know²³.

[14] Should those outside the geographical sphere of a congregation seek resources from that congregation what right does the congregation have to deny? Those who make such a strong distinction between locality and distance ultimately fail to understand the idea of unity²⁴. As if distance alone warrants the action of withholding good. It is not evident that

¹⁶ That is, their right to hear it.

¹⁷ Matt 10:27, “What I tell you in the dark, speak in the light. What you hear in a whisper, proclaim on the housetops.”

1 Cor 14:12 “So also you—since you are zealous in matters of the spirit, seek to excel in building up the church.”

Act 2:39 “For the promise is for you and for your children, and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call.” Also, Eph 4:11-13

¹⁸ Rom 9:18 “So then, He shows mercy to whom He wills, and He hardens whom He wills.”

¹⁹ Matt 1:21 “He will save *His people* from their sins.”

Matt 13:11 He answered them, “Because the secrets of the kingdom of heaven have been given for you to know, but it has not been given to them.”

²⁰ Matt 15:13 He replied, “Every plant that My heavenly Father didn’t plant will be uprooted.”

²¹ Jer 17:9 “The heart is more deceitful than anything else and desperately sick—who can understand it?”

²² 1 Peter 2:9 “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for His possession, so that you may proclaim the praises of the One who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.”

Rom 15:14 “Now, my brothers, I myself am convinced about you that you also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, and able to instruct one another.”

1 Cor 14:31 “For you can all prophesy one by one, so that everyone may learn and everyone may be encouraged.”

²³ Eph 3:2 “You have heard, haven’t you, about the administration of God’s grace that He gave to me for you?”

²⁴ Eph 4:11-15 “And He personally gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, for the training of the saints in the work of ministry, to build up the body of Christ, until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of God’s Son, [growing] into a mature man with a stature measured by Christ’s fullness. Then we will no longer be little children, tossed by the waves and

distance should prevent unity or the sharing of those gifts, which God has given for edification. Such a position is hypocritically destroyed if ever the preacher should preach outside his own congregation or utilize commentaries not produced within his congregation.

[15] Those who claim that knowledge is the product of the human mind are guilty of the error of humanism. That one does not acknowledge God for their knowledge and that one does not do with that knowledge what God says they should do with it, is to practice and believe in a form of humanism. Just because one might deny the authority of human autonomy²⁵ does not mean that one does not practice autonomy. The man who restricts his sermons to a selected audience of hearers more or less plays God with what he preaches. This he does each time he denies a man's legitimate request for a sermon²⁶. Certainly, there is a reason for the restriction and it must either be Biblical or humanistic.

[16] A preacher has no right to select his audience. Those who deny sermons to some while giving sermons to others place their own authority above God's authority. In this sense if a pastor has even denied one request for a sermon while affirming another request he is a respecter of persons²⁷. Certainly, one would not be so bold, as to claim that *theological knowledge* is the product of the human mind²⁸? If theological knowledge is the product of God then it is also the property of God and man must do with it what God tells him not what human autonomy desires. For this would be to stand above the authority of God. The logic of such an insane position would not allow the one holding it to limit their actions to the restriction of sermons; instead they must advance in the logical outworking of their humanism. Further, they could not logically refute humanism in others seeing that they practice a form of it themselves. Such theologians obey and utilize the Word of God upon the basis of convenience.

[17] Gen 3:5²⁹ is the foundation of man's attempt to exercise his authority over God's Authority. Whatever one has must be used as God says it is to be used, for Christ is not only the Lord of salvation but he is also the Lord of the sermon. The man who withholds his sermons (provided they contain truth) exercises his authority against God's Authority.

blown around by every wind of teaching, by human cunning with cleverness in the techniques of deceit. But speaking the truth in love, let us grow in every way into Him who is the head—Christ.”

²⁵ Autonomy (Greek: Auto-Nomos - *nomos* meaning "law": one who gives oneself his/her own law) is the right to self-government.

²⁶ Matt 5:42 “Give to the one who asks you, and don't turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.”

²⁷ James 2:8-9 “If you really carry out the royal law prescribed in Scripture, Love your neighbor as yourself, you are doing well. But if you show favoritism, you commit sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors.”

²⁸ John 3:27, John responded, “No one can receive a single thing unless it's given to him from heaven.”

²⁹ “...you eat it your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

Essentially, he is saying, “all of this belongs to God, but this little corner over here belongs to me and I will do with it as I please!”

[18] What makes a man a heretic; is it not deviation from the Word of God?³⁰ It is not how much civil unrest his ideas inspire, it is not how many people hate his character, it is not how many people fear him, nor how his teaching disrupts lives, heresy is simply deviation from the Word of God. That is the definition of heresy. And those who teach that scripture or a sermon is the product of man’s mind apart from the Spirit of God teach heresy...teach that man is autonomous and the center of all things... believe in a form of humanism and through the prejudicial practice of restricting their preaching, they teach that man is the lord of the sermon and not God.

[19] There are false teachers who tell us that *we can have theology only if we can pay for it*,³¹ in contrast, there are those who tell us that *we cannot have theology even if we can pay for it* because *theological knowledge belongs to the solitary mind*. “The preacher owns all that he preaches,” they tell us, *and he may do whatever he pleases with what he knows!* Could the Pope do any worse in restricting the Word of God? Let not the preacher withhold that which is good to those who ask. Like the papist so many years past that prejudicially refused to permit the reading of the Word of God these teachers restrict their own sermons. Implicit in this action of *prejudicial restriction* is the authority to determine the reason why certain Christians “can have” while others “cannot”. Such men claim to know what is good for other men: “No you can’t have a copy of my sermon but that man over there can”. There is always a reason for affirmation or denial the question is whether or not the reason is Biblical. Being part of a congregation should not be the prerequisite qualification for obtaining a copy of a sermon- one will be hard pressed to prove such a stance from scripture. That is, *sermons should never be distributed outside the sphere of the congregation*. This of course, will depend upon the content of the sermon. If unbiblical it should not even be distributed within the congregation, if Biblical it should be heard by as many as are willing to listen. Either a preacher is preaching the gospel and it needs to be preached to every creature under heaven (Mark 16:15) or he is preaching something other than the gospel. However, what the Bible says a pastor preaches is nothing other than the Word of God³². Further, the fact that he is a Biblical

³⁰ Titus 3:10 is a common passage to quote: “Reject a divisive person after a first and second warning, knowing that such a person is perverted and sins, being self-condemned.” Gordon Clark’s exegesis is very instructive on this passage: “*Finally, the adjective in the present passage refers to doctrine more than to immorality or factiousness. It was genealogies and disputes about the law. Heresy, therefore is theological deviation.*” See Gordon Clark’s Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles published by the Trinity Foundation.

³¹ 2 Cor 2:17 For we are not like the many who make a trade in God’s message [for profit], but as those with sincerity, we speak in Christ, as from God and before God.

³² “The subject matter here is called “the word of God.” Although that which is spoken by ministers is only the sound of a man’s voice, yet that which true ministers of God preach in exercising their ministerial function is the Word of God.” William Gouge “Preaching God’s Word” extracted from commentary on Hebrews, also available in- Encyclopedia of Christian Quotations pg. 807
Heb 13:7 “Remember your leaders who have spoken *God’s word* to you. As you carefully observe the outcome of their lives, imitate their faith.”

pastor presupposes that he is doing this. If he is not preaching these things one must ask if he is really fulfilling the duty of his office... is he actually qualified to be in office? Can a man be a legitimate preacher if he doesn't preach the gospel? If a pastor is not preaching what the Bible says he should preach then his sermons should be erased from the face of the earth.

[20] Inasmuch as a sermon is consistent with the Word of God, giving testimony and glory to God... insofar as it proclaims the Gospel and edifies the children of God it is not the property of man- it is the property of God who has given it for the edification of all³³. Those who wish to refute the proposition must demonstrate 1) that their sermon does not contain the Word of God or that their sermon is a separate entity from the Word of God and therefore exempt from the obligation of edification. 2) That even if a sermon does contain the Word of God it is still the exclusive right of the preacher; as opposed to knowledge given to the preacher to edify the Church of God. Essentially, one must demonstrate that the Word of God is only circumscribed to the preacher and those he sees fit to preach to. However, if the sermon is the property and product of God then only He has the right to restrict it.

[21] There can be no defense for those that claim exclusive rights to theological propositions. This is because all theological propositions belong to God. To demand that what we have written or what we have preached should not be heard unless men can afford to pay for it is to charge money for what God said to give freely. Such actions can have no Biblical defense³⁴. If men will give from their hearts to support our ministries we must not reject what they give, but if we demand money outside the sphere of faith³⁵ we demand what is not found in the Word of God. And by thus we rob men of their right to hear the Word of God. There is no set price for the gospel as there should be no set price for theological knowledge³⁶. If the binding on a book comes at a price then men must pay

33 Eph 4:11-15 "And He personally gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, for the training of the saints in the work of ministry, to build up the body of Christ, until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of God's Son, [growing] into a mature man with a stature measured by Christ's fullness. Then we will no longer be little children, tossed by the waves and blown around by every wind of teaching, by human cunning with cleverness in the techniques of deceit. But speaking the truth in love, let us grow in every way into Him who is the head—Christ."

34 Matt 10:8 "You have received free of charge; give free of charge."

35 Mark 12:41-44 "Sitting across from the temple treasury, He watched how the crowd dropped money into the treasury. Many rich people were putting in large sums. And a poor widow came and dropped in two tiny coins worth very little. Summoning His disciples, He said to them, "I assure you: This poor widow has put in more than all those giving to the temple treasury. For they all gave out of their surplus, but she out of her poverty has put in everything she possessed—all she had to live on."

36 Acts 8:18-23 "When Simon saw that the Holy Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money, saying, "Give me this power too, so that anyone I lay hands on may receive the Holy Spirit." But Peter told him, "May your silver be destroyed with you, because you thought the gift of God could be obtained with money! You have no part or share in this matter, because your heart is not right before God. Therefore repent of this wickedness of yours, and pray to the Lord that the intent of your heart may be forgiven you. For I see you are poisoned by bitterness and bound by iniquity."

for the material, but to withhold what God has distributed freely for the edification of all is to place man's authority against the Authority of God. Does the owner of a product not have the right to tell his servant what to do with His product? All that we receive from men is upon the basis of faith not for the profit of business³⁷.

[22] The idea of a Christian is that his mind is being renewed³⁸. He is one who can think³⁹ and does think⁴⁰. This ought to mean that we no longer take the word of the Pope or any other man attempting to bind our conscience outside to the Word of God⁴¹. Those individuals who claim that their sermons or books should be the sole property of a few have deviated from the authority of Scripture. In turn this has led men to redefine, or else violently neglect God's structure for edification (Eph 4:11-15).

[23] The idea that a sermon should only be distributed within the confines of a local assembly is as absurd as saying that the Epistle of the Romans should remain in Rome⁴². The presuppositions that rest behind this proposition are enough to refute the proposition. Essentially, that a sermon can have no edification and bring no glory to God outside the geographical location in which it was preached. Also, implicit in the proposition is the error of the preachers right to restrict his words to a confined audience of his choosing. This right he has only if he is lord of the sermon, only if he is responsible⁴³ for what he preaches.

³⁷ Luke 19:46 and He said, "It is written, My house will be a house of prayer, but you have made it a den of thieves!"

³⁸ 2 Cor 4:16 "Therefore we do not give up; even though our outer person is being destroyed, our inner person is being renewed day by day."

2 Cor 5:17 "Therefore if any man *be* in Christ, *he is* a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."

Titus 3:5 "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost..."

³⁹ Eph 4:14 "Then we will no longer be little children, tossed by the waves and blown around by every wind of teaching, by human cunning with cleverness in the techniques of deceit."

⁴⁰ The Christian has stood against the error of the Pope on the basis of scripture. If there is one thing associated with authentic Christianity it is "by Scripture alone". When Rome forbid thinking the Christian thought and eventually declared the truth of his thought. We proclaim what is right upon the basis of the Word of God. Essentially, true Christianity must presuppose the authority and rule of the Word of God.

⁴¹ Acts 5:29 But Peter and the apostles replied, "We must obey God rather than men."

⁴² "No church, therefore, is so independent as that it can always and in all cases observe the duties it owes unto the Lord Christ and the church catholic, by all those powers which it is able to act in itself distinctly, without conjunction with others. And the church that confines its duty unto the acts of its own assemblies cuts itself off from the external communion of the church catholic; nor will it be safe for any man to commit the conduct of his soul to such a church." John Owen Vol. 16, The True Nature of a Gospel Church, Chapter 11 Of The Communion of The Churches Pg. 243. Ages Digital Library, John Owen Collection.

⁴³ Meaning "creator" not merely that God will hold him responsible, for this is true, but that it is false that he is the solo creator, independent of Christ. Is a preacher responsible for his sermon in the sense that he is

[24] To deny men what is good for their soul is among the errors of the Pharisees and Sadducees⁴⁴.

[25] If the Lord does not deny those who seek, if he gives to those that ask⁴⁵ then what right does the preacher have to withhold what is good?

[26] Does anything pertaining to theology belong to man? Certainly, in a very real sense we do not even own the paper and ink upon which we write. Can the content of a man's sermon therefore, belong to man if it is true of God?

[27] Those who practice theological selfishness are in great error; for they cannot defend their actions by scripture because scripture cannot be bound⁴⁶ nor does scripture support a prejudice distribution of the gospel. To be able to selectively distribute that which is edifying or reserve it to a limit class is the work of God not the work of man. Woe to them who try to bind what cannot be bound; for such men will answer to the God that they refuse to obey. Indeed, those who are respecters of persons, distributing to some while denying others are guilty of sin⁴⁷.

[28] When men seek to restrict what they preach to those that they know, even when those they know not desire to hear, they manifest the spoiled nature of a non-persecuted Christian. For in other lands where the gospel is not permitted to be spoken in the streets or in private, the preacher cannot get his message into the hands of enough that will listen. He is persecuted for sharing what is good. How then can men restrict what others are so desperately seeking to give? Are not both joined in the same cause⁴⁸? The one is a

the author of it? Even if it is objected that the preacher has a right to restrict his message because he is responsible for it he must demonstrate why he already preached it to others. No preacher can be held accountable for being taken out of context, but if he willfully deceives his hearers he is guilty. The fact that he is responsible for the message only further demonstrates that he must not restrict it. If it has been spoken to a congregation and the preacher learns later that it was false he is under obligation to refute himself from the pulpit- not simply withhold the message. There is no loophole or excuse here to justify the preacher's act of selfishness in withholding or distributing his sermons prejudicially.

⁴⁴ Acts 4:2-3 "...because they were provoked that they were teaching the people and proclaiming in the person of Jesus the resurrection from the dead. So they seized them and put them in custody until the next day, since it was already evening."

Acts 4:17-18 "But so this does not spread any further among the people, let's threaten them against speaking to anyone in this name again." So they called for them and ordered them not to preach or teach at all in the name of Jesus."

⁴⁵ Matt 7:7-8 "Keep asking, and it will be given to you. Keep searching, and you will find. Keep knocking, and the door will be opened to you. ⁸ For everyone who asks receives, and the one who searches finds, and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened."

⁴⁶ 2 Tim 2:9 "For this I suffer, to the point of being bound like a criminal; but God's message is not bound."

⁴⁷ James 2:8-9 "If you really carry out the royal law prescribed in Scripture, Love your neighbor as yourself, you are doing well. But if you show favoritism, you commit sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors." HCSB

spoiled theologian; selfishly burying knowledge,⁴⁹ while the other, knowing what he has received, knows that he must give.

[29] Just because the gospel only takes effect in the Elect⁵⁰ does not mean that its proclamation is limited to the Elect⁵¹. That the effect of the gospel is the work of God does not mean that the restriction of the gospel is the work of man. Likewise, one cannot claim a similar argument for the distribution of spiritual gifts. Only God can restrict because only God is omniscient.

[30] While most preachers long to get the message out there are some who try to keep it in. Indeed, the idea is strange to those who desire to advance the Kingdom of God, but nonetheless such selfishness does exist. Preaching presupposes that it needs to be heard. If it did not why does one preach? Certainly, theological knowledge is not simply for private edification! The whole idea of preaching is to be heard is it not... to advance the Kingdom of God unto the glory of God? For a man to pick who *can hear* and who *cannot*, who *can be* edified and who *cannot* is to play God with one's sermon. How can Paul be "obligated" when others are private and isolated?⁵²

[31] The strongest argument against those who restrict theological knowledge is the origin and nature of that knowledge.⁵³ The Christian who has freely received theological

⁴⁸ Phil 1:18 "What does it matter? Just that in every way, whether out of false motives or true, Christ is proclaimed. And in this I rejoice."

⁴⁹ Matt 25:18 "But the man who had received one talent went off, dug a hole in the ground, and hid his master's money." Note: the money belongs to the Master!

⁵⁰ John 10:27-29, "My sheep hear My voice, I know them, and they follow Me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish—ever! No one will snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all. No one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand."

⁵¹ Mark 16:15 "Then He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation."

⁵² 1 Cor 9:19 "For if I preach the gospel, I have no reason to boast, because an obligation is placed on me. And woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!"

⁵³ 2 Cor 3:4-6 "We have this kind of confidence toward God through Christ: ⁵ not that we are competent in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our competence is from God. ⁶ He has made us competent to be ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter, but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit produces life."

Matt 16:17 "And Jesus responded, "Simon son of Jonah, you are blessed because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father in heaven."

Ex 4:11 "The LORD said to him, "Who made the human mouth? Who makes him mute or deaf, seeing or blind? Is it not I, the LORD?"

Phil 2:13 "For it is God who is working in you, [enabling you] both to will and to act for His good purpose."

Jam 1:17 "Every generous act and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights; with Him there is no variation or shadow cast by turning."

Prov 16:1 "The reflections of the heart belong to man, but the answer of the tongue is from the LORD."

Matthew Henry commenting on this Proverb: "*As we read this, it teaches us a great truth, that we are not sufficient of ourselves to think or speak any thing of ourselves that is wise and good, but that all our sufficiency is of God, who is with the heart and with the mouth, and works in us both to will and to do.*"

knowledge should never withhold or restrict that knowledge unless God requires Him to do so. Indeed, the only requirement that can be placed on such knowledge is that one is willing to listen. Hence, our Master tells us not to cast pearls before swine⁵⁴ which implies that we should gladly give them to those who will listen. It is impossible for those who argue against the nature of the Word of God⁵⁵ to restrict the teaching of the Word of God. This must also be true in the case of the sermon; the reason is simple, *the sermon is theological knowledge*. Thus men that limit those who *can hear*, or those that *cannot* upon the basis of what they desire and not upon the basis of scripture betray the very nature of their theological knowledge. In this sense, they attempt to assert their own authority against God's Authority. If we are told to give freely then how can we not give at all?

[32] Edification⁵⁶ is a solid refutation against those who seek to withhold that which is good.

[33] Either the preacher's actions of withholding his sermons are righteous or they are sinful because "there is no such thing as neutrality in a moral universe"⁵⁷.

[34] All men who name the name of Christ and possess the Spirit of God have a rightful place in the body of Christ.⁵⁸ Such men are gifted (by God) in order to further the Kingdom of God.⁵⁹ To bury one's gifts or deny them to other men who do not possess them is to invoke the stern rebuke of our Lord "Thou wicked and slothful servant" (Matt 25:26).

[35] We often consider Scripture authoritative until its authority conflicts with our desire. At this point the believer and non-believer take a different course⁶⁰. The man of God will

Eph 4:11- "And He personally gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, for the training of the saints in the work of ministry, to build up the body of Christ, until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of God's Son."

⁵⁴ Matt 7:6 "Don't give what is holy to dogs or toss your pearls before pigs, or they will trample them with their feet, turn, and tear you to pieces."

⁵⁵ 2 Tim 2:9 "For this I suffer, to the point of being bound like a criminal; but God's message is not bound."

⁵⁶ The Greek word *oikodomē* means to "build up" and signifies one who promotes another's growth in Christian wisdom. See Thayer's Greek 3619.

⁵⁷ Quote pastor Tom Lyon.

⁵⁸ 1 Cor 12:21 "And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you."

⁵⁹ "The wise Solomon says in Proverbs 11:26 "The people who withhold grain curse him. But there is a blessing on those who sell it." This verse speaks truly concerning all that can serve the common good or the well-being of Christendom. This is the reason the master in the gospel reprimands the unfaithful servant like a lazy scoundrel for having hidden and buried his money in the ground." From Martin Luther's Open Letter on Translating taken from the preface.

resist, but he will also know the weight of resistance while the non-believer can resist without conflict of conscience.

[36] Those who attempt to limit the distribution of their sermons must demonstrate that their sermons do not contain the Word of God, and as such are not the right of men. Herein, the preacher seeks to define the content of his message and then demonstrate that this content is not the property of God. If there is any Biblical content in his message then the preacher has no right to restrict it. All true sermons belong to God just as all truth is from God. Given this irrefutable fact, the preacher has no right to withhold what he preaches unless God tells him to withhold it. Whatever the Master tells His servant to do with the goods that He has given, the servant must do it because the goods belong to his Master.⁶¹

[37] We will push the logic further, not only do theological propositions belong to God, but every proposition belongs to God. The cautious thinker will demand to know how God can be responsible for an evil thought? To assume that God can be held accountable is a theological fallacy. He cannot steal what he owns and there is no one above Him to call Him to account⁶². The answer is that God is not responsible for “evil thoughts” man is responsible because *he is the actor while God is the author*⁶³. God’s confrontation is the reason for man’s responsibility and without this confrontation there can be no responsibility⁶⁴. To suppose that only those who are “free” can be responsible is a grave and black error. Nothing moves by chance in a universe that is mastered by Sovereignty. What man calls evil God calls good and what God calls evil man calls good⁶⁵.

[38] One might appeal to a lack of finance or the impossibility of time as a valid reason for rejecting requests for sermons. However, one must be careful not to assume that making a copy of a sermon, which contains the content and teaching of Scripture, is a waste of time or a non-Biblical task⁶⁶. Fatal is the assumption that such work is not God’s

⁶⁰ Rom 10:16-18 “But all did not obey the gospel...(18) But I ask, “Did they not hear?” Yes, they did...”

⁶¹ Matt 25:14 “...He called his own slaves and turned over his possessions to them.”
Matt 25:27 “...And when I returned I would have received my money back with interest.”

⁶² Job 9:12 If He snatches [something] , who can stop Him? Who can ask Him, “What are You doing?”^l
Dan 4:35 All the inhabitants of the earth are counted as nothing, and He does what He wants with the army of heaven and the inhabitants of the earth. There is no one who can hold back His hand or say to Him, “What have You done?”

⁶³ Pastor Tom Lyon taken from his series on Predestination.

⁶⁴ See Gordon Clark on “God and Evil: The Problem Solved” published by the Trinity Foundation.

⁶⁵ Gen 50:20 You planned evil against me; God planned it for good to bring about the present result—the survival of many people.

⁶⁶ 1 Cor 15:58 “Therefore, my dear brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the Lord’s work, knowing that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.”
Heb 6:10-12 “For God is not unjust; He will not forget your work and the love you showed for His name when you served the saints—and you continue to serve them. Now we want each of you to demonstrate the

work⁶⁷. Also, we ought to have a legitimate reason for not distributing sermons to men who ask. Refusing to make a copy of a sermon because one would rather distract themselves with worldly amusements is not a Biblical reason for refusing to copy a sermon. Further, the problem might be resolved by allowing the one desiring to hear the message to borrow the message so he can make his own copy. If the financial strain is overbearing then charge the price needed to supply the material. Lack of money is not an excuse to withhold a copy of a sermon; if the student will pay for the materials then no objection can remain.

[39] One asks for a sermon: we might accurately equate this with asking for a spiritual piece of bread⁶⁸. Certainly, it is not a crime to request what promotes holiness? Those who treat a man asking for spiritual things as if he asked for sensual things treat him contrary to the nature of his request. This is not the way Christians ought to treat one another. What right can a Christian have for withholding what is good from his brother⁶⁹? We should detest the evil and give the good⁷⁰.

[40] It is always fatal to claim the work of God to be the work of man. But such is the nature of theological fallacies.

[41] Did not Rome, that serpent of old, restrict the reading of the Word of God? Upon the authority that Rome did this is the same authority upon which a preacher might select his audience for his sermon.

same diligence for the final realization of your hope, so that you won't become lazy, but imitators of those who inherit the promises through faith and perseverance." Also Gal 6:9, Rom 14:23.

⁶⁷ Mark 9:41 "And whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because of My name, since you belong to the Messiah— I assure you: He will never lose his reward."
Rom 15:2, Eph 4:12 "for the training of the saints in the work of ministry, to build up the body of Christ.."

⁶⁸ Matt 25:37-40 Then the righteous will answer Him, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You something to drink? When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or without clothes and clothe You? When did we see You sick, or in prison, and visit You?' "And the King will answer them, 'I assure you: Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of Mine, you did for Me.'

John 4:32 "But He said, "I have food to eat that you don't know about."

John 6:27 "Don't work for the food that perishes but for the food that lasts for eternal life..."

1 Cor 2:13 "We also speak these things, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, explaining spiritual things to spiritual people."

⁶⁹ Matt 25:41-45 Then He will also say to those on the left, 'Depart from Me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the Devil and his angels! For I was hungry and you gave Me nothing to eat; I was thirsty and you gave Me nothing to drink; I was a stranger and you didn't take Me in; I was naked and you didn't clothe Me, sick and in prison and you didn't take care of Me.' "Then they too will answer, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or without clothes, or sick, or in prison, and not help You?' "Then He will answer them, 'I assure you: Whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for Me either.'

Gal 6:10 "Therefore, as we have opportunity, we must work for the good of all, especially for those who belong to the household of faith."

⁷⁰ Rom 12:9 "Love must be without hypocrisy. Detest evil; cling to what is good."

[42] The idea that a sermon does not constitute the “*light*” of which Christ spoke, and therefore “should be” placed under a bushel is in direct contradiction to the Word of God⁷¹. God emphatically declares that we are to let our light shine before men⁷². Either a sermon is a manifestation of light or it is a form of darkness and should not be heard at all. On the other hand, if it is something that has been given to man by God⁷³, if it is something that leads to the edification of the local body then who is man to assume that it would not lead to the edification of those outside the local body? Such an idea constitutes a restriction on the Sovereignty, Power and Authority of God. Essentially, one must know as God knows in order to comprehend the effect of a Biblical proposition as it relates to edification. Hence, the preacher cannot say, “there is no need for you to receive a copy of my sermon because you will not be edified by it”- or “you will be edified better by something else”. Such a man claims to know what only God can know. Those who pretend that they know *who God will edify* and *who He will not edify* expect us to believe that they are omniscient.

[43] The Bible says that the Word of God is not bound⁷⁴. In restricting a sermon one attempts to restrict the reception of the Word of God,⁷⁵ this is a violation of the great commission⁷⁶. Preaching must be defined if one will defend their right to restrict it. This means that the preacher must systematically prove that what he preaches is not the Word of God or the Gospel. The reason for this is quite simple; the Word of God is not bound

⁷¹ Matt 5:15-16 No one lights a lamp and puts it under a basket, but rather on a lamp stand, and it gives light for all who are in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven. Also, Luke 8:16, 11:33, Phil 2:15
Rom 10:14 How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?
Titus 1:3 But hath in due times manifested his word through preaching, which is committed unto me according to the commandment of God our Saviour.

⁷² Matt 5:16 “In the same way, let your light shine before men, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.”

“Jesus proceeded here to show them that the very reason why they were enlightened was, that others might also see the light, and be benefited by it. When men light a candle, they do not conceal the light, but place it where it may be of use. So it is with religion. It is given that we may benefit others. It is not to be concealed, but suffered to show itself, and to shed light on a surrounding wicked world.” —Barnes' Notes on the New Testament Matt 5:15

“They must shine as lights by their good preaching. The knowledge they have, they must communicate for the good of others; not put it under a bushel, but spread it. The talent must not be buried in a napkin, but traded with. The disciples of Christ must not muffle themselves up in privacy and obscurity, under pretence of contemplation, modesty, or self-preservation, but, as they have received the gift, must minister the same...” —Matthew Henry, Notes on Matt 5:13-16

⁷³ 1 Cor 12:7 “A manifestation of the Spirit is given to each person to produce what is beneficial...”

⁷⁴ 2 Tim 2:9 For this I suffer, to the point of being bound like a criminal; but God’s message is not bound.

⁷⁵ Heb 13:7 “Remember your leaders who have spoken *God’s word* to you. As you carefully observe the outcome of their lives, imitate their faith.”

⁷⁶ Mark 16:15 Then He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation. Also, Luke 14:23, Acts 1:8, Rom 16:26, Eph 2:17,

by the selfishness of men. For the Gospel does not belong exclusively to one man, but has been given to all men that are able to hear it. Christians should not partake in the errors of humanisms. The non-believer will only distribute his work if the interested party can meet the financial qualifications- the believer ought to distribute his work even if the interested party cannot meet the financial qualifications. Where the non-believer refuses to give glory to God for his thought the believer should always recognize God as the foundation of his thought. What God has freely given to the Christian- the Christian is under obligation to freely give (Matt 10:8).

[44] Must we be reminded that we are Christians not conformists to the doctrines and commandments of men.⁷⁷ The Christian either finds it to be true according to Scripture or it cannot be true at all.⁷⁸

[45] In so far as a sermon is synonymous or associated with the Gospel it is the right of men⁷⁹. The idea is, as many as will listen will have the right to hear- not only those in a particular congregation. Further, if we have rights in the pew why do we have no rights outside the pew? The preacher will let us listen, but he will not give us a copy of what he preached...

[46] Individuals who practice and teach theological selfishness practice and teach what is not found in the Word of God.

[47] Those who practice ‘theological selfishness’ (against the edification of other men) attempt to hanker to themselves some form of superior knowledge. This might be traced back to the error of Gnosticism⁸⁰. They are guilty of not understanding the doctrine of edification nor the purpose and reason for spiritual gifts⁸¹. Such *theological selfishness* amounts to the idea that those who profess to have knowledge have some form of *superior knowledge*.

[48] Acts 13:7-8⁸²: This is a picture of the way the unregenerate try to suppress or prohibit the Word of God. The ministers were more than willing to expound the gospel; it was the

⁷⁷ Mark 7:8-9 Disregarding the command of God, you keep the tradition of men.” He also said to them, “You completely invalidate God’s command in order to maintain your tradition! Acts 5:29 But Peter and the apostles replied, “We must obey God rather than men.”

⁷⁸ Acts 17:11 “The people here were more open-minded than those in Thessalonica, since they welcomed the message with eagerness and examined the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so.”

⁷⁹ Even the most particular Christian thinker should not object to what is meant; For the Gospel is the right of the Elect and because we do not know the Elect we preach it to all.

⁸⁰ For a most excellent article on the topic see “International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, heading- Gnosticism by John Rutherford”

⁸¹ Eph 4:12-13 “for the training of the saints in the work of ministry, to build up the body of Christ, ¹³ until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of God’s Son, [growing] into a mature man with a stature measured by Christ’s fullness.”

non-believing sorcerer who discouraged it. Likewise, what can be said about those who discourage the distribution of godly material? Is not such an act of suppression consistent with the actions of non-believers⁸³?

[49] Heb 13:7 “Remember your leaders who have spoken God’s word to you. As you carefully observe the outcome of their lives, imitate their faith.” What is the preacher preaching if not the Word of God? If he indeed, speaks the Word of God then it cannot be bound. Further, if his sermons are not filled with “the Word of God” then should one “imitate”, “observe” or “remember” let alone consider such a man a “leader”?

[50] 1 Corinthians 6:1-8⁸⁴ The logical conclusion of the text will not allow one to go to law with another believer especially over issues regarding spiritual gifts. Suppose a man should be offended that his sermons were distributed to a large number of people, how could he make a legitimate case before God that this distribution was sinful or illegal?⁸⁵ Such a man would find no justification before God- in God’s court he could not petition. This is because of the nature of the content in his sermon. The Christian has nothing that he did not receive, further he is one conscious of this reality. Hence, he cannot appeal to the court of law. And more importantly, he should be able to resolve the matter by considering the nature of the content he is trying to restrict. The exhortation presupposes the ability of the saints to discern the verdict. This we can do guided by the Word of God; For it alone should define the nature of the content we wish to restrict. If the distribution of edifying material should cause a dispute in the heart of the one trying to restrict it, the

⁸² “When they had gone through the whole island as far as Paphos, they came across a sorcerer, a Jewish false prophet named Bar-Jesus. He was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, an intelligent man. This man summoned Barnabas and Saul and desired to hear God’s message. But Elymas, the sorcerer, which is how his name is translated, opposed them and tried to turn the proconsul away from the faith.” (HCSB) Further, if the exegetical refutation should arise claiming that “Sergius Paulus” was not authentically sincere it would side step the point. Such would be nothing more than a logical fallacy- Red Herring. The point is that the non-believer tried to prevent God’s message from being received. Likewise, what can be said for those who refuse to share theological knowledge with those who ask?

⁸³ Acts 4:2-3 “because they were provoked that they were teaching the people and proclaiming in the person of Jesus the resurrection from the dead. So they seized them and put them in custody until the next day, since it was already evening.”
Acts 4:17-18 But so this does not spread any further among the people, let’s threaten them against speaking to anyone in this name again.”¹⁸ So they called for them and ordered them not to preach or teach at all in the name of Jesus.

⁸⁴ 1 Cor 6:1-8 “Does any of you who has a complaint against someone dare go to law before the unrighteous, and not before the saints? Or do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world is judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest cases? Do you not know that we will judge angels—not to speak of things pertaining to this life? So if you have cases pertaining to this life, do you select those who have no standing in the church to judge? I say this to your shame! Can it be that there is not one person among you who will be able to arbitrate between his brothers? Instead, brother goes to law against brother, and that before unbelievers! Therefore, it is already a total defeat for you that you have lawsuits against one another. Why not rather put up with injustice? Why not rather be cheated? Instead, you act unjustly and cheat—and this to brothers!”

⁸⁵ Phil 1:18 “Just that in every way, whether out of false motives or true, Christ is proclaimed. And in this I rejoice. Yes, and I will rejoice.”

Luke 6:30 “Give to everyone who asks from you, and from one who takes away your things, don’t ask for them back.” Also, Matt 10:8.

complainant will not have the option of taking the matter to court. Rather, because the complainant cannot legitimately restrict his content (from the Word of God) he cannot restrict it at all and is in the wrong to insist that others must do what scripture does not teach. Essentially, it is wrong to demand the restriction of that which God has not restricted. Into this dark chamber we must not proceed. It is evident that our verse is stated in context because Paul speaks of the saints judging the “smallest matters”. This would include the distribution of sermons.

[51] All men do for the Church and the Kingdom upon the basis of gifts and grace⁸⁶. If we write a book it is only because we have been given a spiritual gift. Further, there is a reason for the distribution of these gifts. God is working through men for the edification of His Church. Would any man leave his bride in ignorance or fail to instruct her? How much worse if we fail to instruct the Bride of Christ?⁸⁷ For what God gives he gives for the edification of all⁸⁸. Those who will refute the proposition must refute the Word of God.

[52] One ought to always seek the interest of the body of Christ- to fail to seek this interest is to be seeking another interest⁸⁹. In most cases, as issues pertain to copyrights the author is seeking some form of temporal gain for himself⁹⁰. This is in direct contradiction to the Christian life as we are to seek those things, which are above;⁹¹ to store up treasure in heaven were moss and rust does not corrupt⁹². Those seeking to be

⁸⁶ 1 Cor 12:7 “A manifestation of the Spirit is given to each person to produce what is beneficial...”

1 Peter 4:9-11 “Be hospitable to one another without complaining. Based on the gift they have received, everyone should use it to serve others, as good managers of the varied grace of God. If anyone speaks, [his speech should be] like the oracles of God; if anyone serves, [his service should be] from the strength God provides, so that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To Him belong the glory and the power forever and ever. Amen.”

⁸⁷ John 21:17 “He asked him the third time, “Simon, son of John, do you love Me?” Peter was grieved that He asked him the third time, “Do you love Me?” He said, “Lord, You know everything! You know that I love You.” “Feed My sheep,” Jesus said.”

⁸⁸ 1 Cor 12:7 “A manifestation of the Spirit is given to each person to produce what is beneficial.”

1 Peter 4:10 “Based on the gift they have received, everyone should use it to serve others, as good managers of the varied grace of God.”

⁸⁹ Matt 6:33 But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be provided for you.

Matt 12:30 Anyone who is not with Me is against Me, and anyone who does not gather with Me scatters.

⁹⁰ Matt 6:24 No one can be a slave of two masters, since either he will hate one and love the other, or be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot be slaves of God and of money.

At the same time one must protect the integrity of what they write or speak, but this is not a money issue.

⁹¹ Col 3:1 So if you have been raised with the Messiah, seek what is above, where the Messiah is, seated at the right hand of God.

great among men forget that Jesus said *those who will be first shall be last and those who are last shall be first*⁹³.

[53] Let no man be so foolish as to claim that the minister is not worthy of reaping material sustenance.⁹⁴ Certainly, such an argument is vain- going against the full fabric of scripture⁹⁵. The minister should be ministered to in a material way, but a minister should never preach for material gain. We preach for the advancement of the Kingdom of Heaven and if God sees fit to provide for our material needs then so be it⁹⁶.

[54] What we are after is the refutation of those who pervert the gospel or attempt to restrict the administration of its message. In no way should our zeal for justice turn against the Word of God. If we are told that the minister of Christ has a right to reap materially then we should not deny this proposition⁹⁷. However, what we do deny is that the preacher is responsible for what he preaches or that God has given it to him for his own profit⁹⁸.

[55] Parable of the talents: “the man who had received one talent went off, dug a hole in the ground, and hid *his master’s* money.” Jesus said, *Thou wicked and slothful servant* because he buried what God gave. I say that withholding a sermon is like withholding light! It is like burying one’s talent ...not letting one’s light shine before men. If a sermon is true then it is wrong to believe that men will not be edified or that God will not be glorified by letting others listen.

[56] James 2:9 “*But if you show favoritism, you commit sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors.*” Any man who is a Christian and is guilty of showing favoritism ought to be convicted upon reading the text. It is only those who do not take the Word of God seriously that would not be affected in their conscience by it. Favoritism is refuted in us as soon as we hear the Word of God speak against it⁹⁹. For the non-believer scripture has no authority, and no power,¹⁰⁰ but for the believer it is the only Authority and Power.¹⁰¹

⁹² Matt 6:20 But collect for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves don’t break in and steal.

⁹³ Mark 9:35 Sitting down, He called the Twelve and said to them, If anyone wants to be first, he must be last of all and servant of all.

⁹⁴ 1 Cor 9:11-12 If we have sown spiritual things for you, is it too much if we reap material things from you? If others share this authority over you, don’t we even more?

⁹⁵ Gal 6:6 The one who is taught the message must share his goods with the teacher. Also, Rom 15:27, 1 Cor 9:5-14, 1 Tim 5:17-18

⁹⁶ Gal 2:20 “The life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.”

⁹⁷ 1 Cor 9:14 “In the same way, the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should earn their living by the gospel.”

⁹⁸ 1 Tim 6:5 ...who imagine that godliness is a way to material gain.

[57] If a preacher has been edified by the sermons of other men then what right does he have to deny his sermons to other men? All men are edified by each other just as all men are contingent upon the Spirit of God. This we know to be true because it is how the Church is edified. What if all men privatized their knowledge? How would the body be edified? For what God gives one man he gives for the edification of all. That which is given, cannot justly be restricted, when God gave it to be administered. Those who deduct theological knowledge seek to withhold what God has given without the authority of God. Such men attempt to stifle progress by hoarding knowledge for their own theological gain. The logical outworking of such madness is that men attempt to tell Christ how to edify His Church, acting as though, their gifts can be dispersed or denied without the sanction of God.

[58] Can hypocrisy ever be plainer, then when a man benefits from the gifts of others but refuses to let those that will benefit from him partake of his gifts? “You will not learn from me as I have learned from others” is the proposition behind the action of the selfish theologian, “all for me and none for you.” Even though such men might not profess to possess *better* or *more accurate* theological knowledge, they act as though they do- and yet, they will not share this knowledge with others who need it. *If you have refuted errors in your sermons and then refuse to distribute your sermons to those that ask, are you not withholding that which is good?* All men must stand and account not only for what they “know” but what they did with what they knew¹⁰². Once upon a time the Pope stood as

⁹⁹ Lev 19:15 “You must not act unjustly when rendering judgment. Do not be partial to the poor or give preference to the rich; judge your neighbor fairly.”

James 2:1 “My brothers, hold your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ without showing favoritism.”

1Tim 5:21 “I solemnly charge you, before God and Christ Jesus and the elect angels, to observe these things without prejudice, doing nothing out of favoritism.”

¹⁰⁰ 2 Tim 3:5 ...holding to the form of religion but denying its power. Avoid these people!

¹⁰¹ Heb 4:12-13 “For the word of God is living and effective and sharper than any two-edged sword, penetrating as far as to divide soul, spirit, joints, and marrow; it is a judge of the ideas and thoughts of the heart. ¹³ No creature is hidden from Him, but all things are naked and exposed to the eyes of Him to whom we must give an account.”

Luther’s statement at the Diet of Worms: “Unless I am convicted of error by the testimony of Scripture or (since I put no trust in the unsupported authority of Pope or councils, since it is plain that they have often erred and often contradicted themselves) by manifest reasoning, I stand convicted by the Scriptures to which I have appealed, and my conscience is taken captive by God’s word, I cannot and will not recant anything, for to act against our conscience is neither safe for us, nor open to us.” The translation is from H.C. Bettenson, *Documents of the Christian Church* 1903

¹⁰² Ecc 12:14 “For God will bring every act to judgment, including every hidden thing, whether good or evil.”

Matt 12:36 “I tell you that on the day of judgment people will have to account for every careless word they speak.”

Luke 12:47-48 “And that slave who knew his master’s will and didn’t prepare himself or do it will be severely beaten. But the one who did not know and did things deserving of blows will be beaten lightly. Much will be required of everyone who has been given much. And even more will be expected of the one who has been entrusted with more.”

Lord over the people and many bishops and monks refused to go against his error. In this they help to promote his evil. Will not such men, knowing far better than the Pope, still be called to account for what they knew?¹⁰³ If I can see error then am I not obligated to forsake it and fight against it?¹⁰⁴ Herein, it is no different for those in congregations with authoritarian Lords that demand obedience to the doctrines of men. My dear sir, you may petition all you desire, but I will not obey if it is not from the Word of God! Your selfishness permits you to restrict your sermons to the confines of the assembly in which you preach; well the Word of God bids me to work for the Kingdom of God. Thus, as a soldier of Jesus Christ I withstand your human decree and withhold nothing that might lead to the edification of my brother and the glorification of my God.¹⁰⁵

[59] Nothing more needs to be said after we mention the word *edification*¹⁰⁶ and establish the fact that a sermon is a legitimate medium for edification. This alone presupposes a holy obligation. When the law says to “love thy neighbor as thyself” (Lev 19:18) it does not allow for the restriction of theological knowledge. It will always be impossible to love one’s neighbor without sharing one’s theology. This is true because theological knowledge is the most important thing we possess next to the indwelling of the Holy Spirit¹⁰⁷. Thus to withhold theological knowledge from those that ask is to withstand the commandment of Christ¹⁰⁸. How can we say we love if we do not share with our neighbor the thing that is most important to him?¹⁰⁹

¹⁰³ James 4:17 “So, for the person who knows to do good and doesn’t do it, it is a sin.”

¹⁰⁴ Eph 5:11 Don’t participate in the fruitless works of darkness, but instead, expose them.

¹⁰⁵ “No one in Christendom has authority to do injury, or to forbid the resisting of injury. There is no authority in the Church save edification. Therefore, if the pope were to use his authority to prevent the calling of a free council, and thus became a hindrance to the edification of the Church, we should have regard neither for him nor for his authority; and if he were to hurl his bans and thunderbolts, we should despise his conduct as that of a madman, and relying on God, hurl back the ban on him, and coerce him as best we could. For this presumptuous authority of his is nothing; he has no such authority, and he is quickly overthrown by a text of Scripture; for Paul says to the Corinthians, II Corinthians 10:8 “God has given us authority not for the destruction, but for the edification of Christendom.” Who is ready to overleap this text? It is only the power of the devil and of Antichrist which resists the things that serve for the edification of Christendom; it is, therefore, in no wise to be obeyed, but is to be opposed with life and goods and all our strength.” Martin Luther, The Three Walls of the Romanists

¹⁰⁶ The word *oikodomay* (Strong’s 3619) in the NT is used metaphorically [the act of one who promotes another’s growth in Christian wisdom, piety, holiness, happiness—Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon] as it literally means, “to build a home”. See Vines entry for Edification.

¹⁰⁷ John 14:17 “He is the Spirit of truth. The world is unable to receive Him because it doesn’t see Him or know Him. But you do know Him, because He remains with you and will be in you.”

¹⁰⁸ Matt 5:42 “Give to the one who asks you, and don’t turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.”

¹⁰⁹ Rom 1:11 “For I want very much to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you.”

[60] The selfish theologian: while denying men gifts he has received from God, utilizes gifts that other men have received from God, and this he does outside the precinct of his own congregation.

[61] A man only needs to ask a few questions before he knows whether or not he should listen to a sermon. 1) Does it contain truth from the Word of God and 2) Does it inspire holiness upon the basis of the Word of God? If it has these two qualities then it will not fail to bring glory to God. That such sermons should be made available to all who will listen is evident from the nature and content in the sermon. To restrict truth is to restrict edification.

[62] Eph 3:1-2¹¹⁰ Here we have a proposition that hints at the reason why the teacher obtains theological knowledge, here we are told why Paul was given the ability to teach the Word of God. Can it be any different for the preacher? Theological knowledge is not simply for the preacher's own edification, but for those who hear him¹¹¹. We argue that such knowledge is not confined or isolated to one local assembly... for if this was the case it would constitute another wall of hostility that Christ already abolished.¹¹² Even though the context of unity in Ephesians 2 is not specifically referring to *withholding knowledge* I think it can still be applied or extrapolated from the text without doing violence to the text or any other portion of Holy Scripture.¹¹³ The reason for this is that God makes no discrimination; a professing Christian is a professing Christian¹¹⁴. The

¹¹⁰ Eph 3:1-2 For this reason, I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles— you have heard, haven't you, about the administration of God's grace that He gave to me for you?

¹¹¹ 1Cor 10:33 "just as I also try to please all people in all things, not seeking my own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved."
Eph 4:12-13 "...for the training of the saints in the work of ministry, to build up the body of Christ, ¹³ until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of God's Son..."

¹¹² Eph 2:11-22 So then, remember that at one time you were Gentiles in the flesh—called "the uncircumcised" by those called "the circumcised," done by hand in the flesh. At that time you were without the Messiah, excluded from the citizenship of Israel, and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, with no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus, you who were far away have been brought near by the blood of the Messiah. For He is our peace, who made both groups one and tore down the dividing wall of hostility. In His flesh, He did away with the law of the commandments in regulations, so that He might create in Himself one new man from the two, resulting in peace. [He did this so] that He might reconcile both to God in one body through the cross and put the hostility to death by it. When [Christ] came, He proclaimed the good news of peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with the saints, and members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus Himself as the cornerstone. The whole building is being fitted together in Him and is growing into a holy sanctuary in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for God's dwelling in the Spirit.

¹¹³ At one point in time the passage assures us that knowledge was withheld as the Gentiles were "excluded", but that now "we both have access by one Spirit to the Father." Upon this basis do men still have a right to "exclude" or isolate knowledge?

administration of Grace is given for the benefit of all that belong to Christ ... for those that have the Spirit of God.¹¹⁵ Edification transcends the boundaries of the *local body* so that if we ask another believer for a sermon he should rejoice to give it. We have clear propositions in scripture that tell us the source of the preacher's knowledge as well as the reason for his knowledge.¹¹⁶ What a preacher knows is not based upon his own knowledge.¹¹⁷ Thus all who will hear the preacher have a right to hear him and should not be denied.

[63] The error of a preacher in taking credit for the message he preaches has the ability to cause disorder and division- this is because those who take credit for the message they preach often do what they want with it instead of what God wills for it.¹¹⁸ "*Did the word of God originate from you, or did it come to you only?*" [1Cor 14:36]- this is the same type of elitism a preacher practices when he will not share his gifts with others. He essentially believes that the Word of God originated from him, belongs to him alone and is his to do with as he pleases, but those who know scripture know better for Christ alone is Lord of the sermon.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁴ "... Since no class of men are ever endowed with the power of discriminating with absolute accuracy the genuineness of Christian characteristics, it necessarily follows that a credible profession, as presumptive evidence of real religion, constitutes a person a member of the visible Church... Every such profession is ground for the presumption that the person is a member of the true Church, and consequently constitutes him a member of the visible Church, and lays an obligation upon all other Christians to regard and treat him accordingly." A. A. Hodge The Confession of Faith pg. 313 published by Banner of Truth

¹¹⁵ 1 John 4:2 This is how you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit who confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God. Also, 1 John 5:1, 5:5
Rom 8:9 "You, however, are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God lives in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him." Does this text not imply that if one *does have the Spirit* then they do belong to Christ?
2 John 1:7 Many deceivers have gone out into the world; they do not confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist.
1 Cor 12:3 Therefore I am informing you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus is cursed," and no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit.

¹¹⁶ 1 Peter 4:9 "Be hospitable to one another without complaining. Based on the gift they have received, everyone should use it to serve others, as good managers of the varied grace of God.
Col 1:28 "We proclaim Him, warning and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone mature in Christ."
2Cor 3:4-6 "We have this kind of confidence toward God through Christ: ⁵ not that we are competent in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our competence is from God. ⁶ He has made us competent to be ministers of a new covenant..."
Acts 17:28 "For in Him we live and move and exist..."

¹¹⁷ 2 Cor 3:4-6 We have this kind of confidence toward God through Christ: not that we are competent in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our competence is from God. He has made us competent to be ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter, but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit produces life.

¹¹⁸ See 1 Cor 14 complete Chapter. This is the case when the preacher not only takes credit for his sermon, but also when he refuses to distribute his sermon.

[64] It is wrong to judge a man divisive¹²⁰ because he asks us for something spiritual ...he asks us for a form of that meat which does not perish¹²¹ so that he may draw closer to his Lord and receive edification. How fallacious to interpret this simple and commendable request as a contentious and perverted request, as if the one asking has wronged the one in possession. The response is counterfactual to the request. Do I now become your enemy because I ask you for the truth?¹²² Who is in the wrong, he who withholds the good or he who asks for the good?

[65] James 2:16 *If a brother or sister is without clothes and lacks daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, keep warm, and eat well," but you don't give them what the body needs, what good is it?* The question is a stern rebuke to those who attempt to withhold spiritual good from those in need. We might posit the notion of an *A fortiori*¹²³ argument. For if the lesser is commanded how much more the greater? The Lord will have us withholding nothing that is good from our brothers; those who think He will must demonstrate it from scripture.

[66] A dangerous doctrine is manifest by contemplating the issue of withholding sermons. It is the idea of the supremacy of the local body above the Kingdom of God. There is no recognition of the Church catholic. Such a doctrine leads to isolationism and sectarianism. Essentially, if we may only know believers because they are part of a physical body then we inevitably promote division and discourage unity. We ought to give place to all men who profess faith in Christ, exalt God's Word and seek to live a godly life.¹²⁴

¹¹⁹ 1 Cor 14 36-37 Did the word of God originate from you, or did it come to you only? If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, he should recognize that what I write to you is the Lord's command. 1 Cor 4:7 For who makes you so superior? What do you have that you didn't receive? If, in fact, you did receive it, why do you boast as if you hadn't received it? Acts 10:36 He sent the message to the sons of Israel, proclaiming the good news of peace through Jesus Christ—He is Lord of all.

¹²⁰ Titus 3:10-11 "Reject a divisive person after a first and second warning, ¹¹ knowing that such a person is perverted and sins, being self-condemned."

¹²¹ John 6:27 "Don't work for the food that perishes but for the food that lasts for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal of approval on Him."

¹²² As opposed to Paul "Have I now become your enemy by telling you the truth?" Gal 4:16

¹²³ The Latin phrase *argumentum a fortiori* literally means "from the stronger". It denotes a proof of a claim by means of an already proved stronger claim. For example, if it is forbidden to ride a bike with an extra passenger, then it is also forbidden to ride a bike with two extra passengers. See Wikipedia "A fortiori argument". To cite another verse which we might apply the *a fortiori* argument: 1John 3:17 "If anyone has this world's goods and sees his brother in need but shuts off his compassion from him—how can God's love reside in him?" How much more can we apply the argument unto spiritual goods?

¹²⁴ John 17:21 "May they all be one, as You, Father, are in Me and I am in You. May they also be one in Us, so the world may believe You sent Me." Rom 12:5 "...we who are many are one body in Christ and individually members of one another."

[67] To further our point, do not false teachers and cults give away that which is false? In such a case, the distribution of error is far and wide.¹²⁵ How then, can the Christian refrain from combating evil by withholding truth? Certainly, this not a Biblical mindset towards the gospel? The soldier of Christ should always seek to further his Masters Kingdom¹²⁶ and this includes preaching the gospel to the poor as well as combating the error of false teaching.¹²⁷ If they have given away error then let us give away truth.¹²⁸

[68] 1Cor 1:11-12 *For it has been reported to me about you, my brothers, by members of Chloe's household, that there are quarrels among you. What I am saying is this: each of you says, "I'm with Paul," or "I'm with Apollos," or "I'm with Cephas," or "I'm with Christ."* Is it any different for the man who says, "I have Cephas sermons?" If they are what the selfish theologian claims they are why will he not share them? If *Apollos* brings glory to God and *Cephas* brings glory to God then what right do we have to restrict *Apollos* or *Cephas*? If a sermon is true then we should share it with our brothers, not withhold it from them. Division is always threatened when truth is restricted by prejudice.

[69] I contend that the man who withholds his gift is guilty of causing strife in the Church. This is because those who ask for his gift ask for what is right according to what

1Cor 1:10 "Now I urge you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all say the same thing, that there be no divisions among you, and that you be united with the same understanding and the same conviction."

Gal 3:27-28 "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is no Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus."

1Peter 3:8 Now finally, all of you should be like-minded and sympathetic, should love believers, and be compassionate and humble

¹²⁵ Matt 7:13 "Enter through the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the road is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who go through it."

1John 5:19 "We know that we are of God, and the whole world is under the sway of the evil one."

¹²⁶ Acts 28:23 "...From dawn to dusk he expounded and witnessed about the kingdom of God."

Matt 6:33 But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be provided for you.

¹²⁷ Eph 5:11 "Don't participate in the fruitless works of darkness, but instead, expose them."

Luke 3:19 "But Herod the tetrarch, being rebuked by him about Herodias, his brother's wife, and about all the evil things Herod had done..."

¹²⁸ 2Cor 11:12-13 "But I will continue to do what I am doing, in order to cut off the opportunity of those who want an opportunity to be regarded just as we are in what they are boasting about. For such people are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ."

Acts 20:30 "And men from among yourselves will rise up with deviant doctrines to lure the disciples into following them."

2Peter 2:1-3 "But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, and will bring swift destruction on themselves. Many will follow their unrestrained ways, and because of them the way of truth will be blasphemed. In their greed they will exploit you with deceptive words. Their condemnation, [pronounced] long ago, is not idle, and their destruction does not sleep."

God gives.¹²⁹ God's people know that He provides gifts for the edification of His Church.¹³⁰ The preacher who will not share his theological knowledge with those who ask creates an atmosphere of strife.¹³¹ Without stating it the preacher acts as if what he possess is either too sacred to share with those that ask, or too controversial to be reviewed. Both reasons are against scripture. The preacher's words must be examined¹³² and no knowledge can be too sacred to share with our brothers.¹³³ What God gives he gives for the edification of all. Those who teach different teach what is not found in Scripture.

[70] The Word of God does not endorse the selfish pursuit of theological knowledge. There is no passage in scripture that permits us to privatize what God has given. However, we are not obligated in the case of non-believers that refuse to listen, but we are obligated to those that will listen.¹³⁴ Our brethren must share our theological knowledge just as we must share theirs. This is true because it is God's order for His Church. When we have *spiritual grain*¹³⁵ we must not withhold it. Those who share

¹²⁹ Contrary, those who withhold their gifts do not do according to the will of God. So who is the guilty party the one denying the Word of God for convenience and selfishness or the one asking according to the Word of God for edification?

¹³⁰ See Eph 4:11-13, Col 2:19 "He doesn't hold on to the head, from whom the whole body, nourished and held together by its ligaments and tendons, develops with growth from God."

¹³¹ "You may be gifted in preaching. You may be gifted in administration. You may be gifted in finances. But if, like the Corinthians, you make a gift of God the basis for strife, for division, for jealousy, and for competition, then Paul says that you are carnal, not spiritual, no matter how gifted you are, or think that you are. Your faith may look pretty to others, and especially to yourself, but it lacks reality and substance." Vincent Cheung, Pure Religion Pg.9 Reformed Ministries International.

¹³² 1Cor 14:29 "Two or three prophets should speak, and the others should evaluate."
Prov 18:17 "The first to state his case seems right until another comes and cross-examines him."

¹³³ 1Cor 10:17 "Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for all of us share that one bread."
1Th 2:8 "We cared so much for you that we were pleased to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives, because you had become dear to us."

¹³⁴ Matt 7:6 Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.

¹³⁵ Proverbs 11:26 "People will curse anyone who hoards grain, but a blessing will come to the one who sells it."
Proverbs 11:24 "One person gives freely, yet gains more; another withholds what is right, only to become poor."
John Gill Proverbs 11:26 "*Jarchi interprets it of the law, and of withholding the teaching of it; but it may be better applied to the Gospel, and the withholding the ministrations of that, and so causing a famine, not of bread and of water, but of hearing the word of the Lord; which is done by the Papists, by prohibiting Gospel ministers preaching the word; forbidding the people to read it in their own language; locking it up from them in a language they understand not; and so starve the souls of men, which brings upon them a curse...*"
John Gill Proverbs 11:24 "*...so he that withholds any truth or doctrine, that keeps back anything that may be profitable to the saints; this tends to the impoverishing: of his soul, and the souls of them that attend on his ministry.*"

theological knowledge advance the Kingdom God regardless of their motives.¹³⁶ Those who withhold theological knowledge seek to advance themselves. Such people contend (whether conscious or not) that the gospel is private and that they are sovereign over it. But there is no foundation for this position. Only God can justly withhold good, only He can select His hearers, but for the preacher such actions are a prideful abomination; our message is God's message and therefore we must do with it what He wills.

[71] ... Your boasting will come to naught because your boasting is not good. It is not boasting in Christ,¹³⁷ it is not boasting at what the Lord has done, it is boasting in what you possess. In your boast you claim to possess and yet your brother has not. It is a boast against those seeking to walk with God and therefore, it is against Christ. If we will boast let us boast in Christ, not in our superior knowledge or theological impetus above other men. If you have knowledge then why don't you share it with your brother?¹³⁸ Would not love seek the edification, instead of the alienation of one who names Christ? By all means boast in knowledge, but not to exclude your brother in Christ, rather, share with him what is good that you both might boast in Christ.¹³⁹

[72] Let the objection arise, that a teacher's responsibility does not exceed the boundaries of his own congregation- that we should never share with those in other congregations- and we will smash it to pieces with the Word of God.¹⁴⁰ The Christian is told to do good to all men, to preach the gospel without discrimination. So what can be the prerequisite

¹³⁶ Phil 1:15-18 "Some, to be sure, preach Christ out of envy and strife, but others out of good will. ¹⁶ These do so out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel; the others proclaim Christ out of rivalry, not sincerely, seeking to cause [me] trouble in my imprisonment. What does it matter? Just that in every way, whether out of false motives or true, Christ is proclaimed. And in this I rejoice. Yes, and I will rejoice..."

¹³⁷ 1 Corinth 1:30-31 "But from Him you are in Christ Jesus, who for us became wisdom from God, as well as righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, in order that, as it is written: The one who boasts must boast in the Lord."

2 Corinth 10:13 "But we will not boast of things without *our* measure, but according to the measure of the rule which God hath distributed to us, a measure to reach even unto you."

¹³⁸ Acts 20:35 In every way I've shown you that by laboring like this, it is necessary to help the weak and to keep in mind the words of the Lord Jesus, for He said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' HCSB

¹³⁹ "We ought to desire, however, that they should all join with us in loving God, and all the assistance that we either give them or accept from them should tend to that one end." Augustine "On Christian Doctrine" Book 1 Chap. 29 translated by J.F. Shaw

¹⁴⁰ 1Th 4:9-10 "About brotherly love: you don't need me to write you because you yourselves are taught by God to love one another. In fact, you are doing this toward all the brothers in the entire region of Macedonia. But we encourage you, brothers, to do so even more..."

Galatians 6:10 "Therefore, as we have opportunity, we must work for the good of all, especially for those who belong to the household of faith."

1Thessalonians 5:15 "See to it that no one repays evil for evil to anyone, but always pursue what is good for one another and for all."

for sharing beyond one's willingness to listen?¹⁴¹ For all that the preacher has, all that He preaches comes from God. Are sermons not spiritual *talents*,¹⁴² has the Master not distributed them to his preachers? What right then does a preacher have to bury his message in the ground? What right does he have to deny others edification? "We do not forbid men" one will say, "We merely bid them to obtain their theology some place else." Such a reply begs the question- it attempts to evade the argument of the parable. If you bid me to get from others what you have- then have you not buried the talent your Master gave?¹⁴³ Does your theology belong to you or to God and what has God told you to do with it? Do you have a right to deny the one who wants to listen? Upon what basis can you demonstrate that you own all that you preach? Have you not received it from God dear man! Then how can you deny it to his children? Further, let these selfish theologians not be guilty of violating their own principles. If they will not give outside their congregation then they *must never* give outside their congregation. Likewise, they should never *receive outside* their congregation- this means books as well as spoken sermons.¹⁴⁴ To do such would constitute the practice of a double standard. However, God tells us to give, not to withhold the thing that is good. Men who seek to dodge their obligation by appealing to the locality of the Church must hold that the Church does not exceed beyond the walls of their congregation. If it is admitted, that the Church encompasses more than four walls, then what right can the preacher have to confine his message to four walls? We must share and do good to all men, not because other men have said so, but because God has said so. Herein is the refutation of the idea that edification is strictly confined to locality: "*we must work for the good of all, especially for those who belong to the household of faith.*"¹⁴⁵

[73] We can give an argument why the minister should allow his message to escape the confines of the local assembly, but can a minister, who believes his message should remain within the local assembly, give an argument to sanction his strange idea?

¹⁴¹ Matt 10:14 "If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, shake the dust off your feet when you leave that house or town." Comment: By outlining the ethical action we are to take towards those who will not hear the passage presupposes the action we are to take towards those who will.

¹⁴² See Matt 25:14-30

¹⁴³ Prov 3:27 "When it is in your power, don't withhold good from the one to whom it is due."

¹⁴⁴ It is utterly futile to attempt to defend books as a legitimate form of edification and then restrict the preaching of ones sermon. What is the difference between listening to a sermon or reading a book other than the mode of transference?

¹⁴⁵ "And that particular church which extends not its duty beyond its own assemblies and members is fallen off from the principal end of its institution; and every principle, opinion, or persuasion, that inclines any church to confine its care and duty unto its own edification only, yea, or of those only which agree with it in some peculiar practice, making it neglective of all due means of the edification of the church catholic, is schismatical." John Owen Vol. 16, The True Nature of a Gospel Church, Chapter 11, Of The Communion of The Churches Pg. 244. Ages Digital Library, John Owen Collection.

[74] By withholding the preaching of the gospel one is despising the ministry and power of the gospel, minimizing it or believing that it can only have effect within a limited sphere. Such is the error of men who pretend to know all that God knows.

[75] Dear ministers what do you have- what do you give? Acts 3:6 *But Peter said, "I have neither silver nor gold, but what I have, I give to you: In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, get up and walk!"*

[76] In a very real sense we are not combating the errors of the world if we are not preaching against the errors of the world. At the same time we cannot be preaching Christ if we are not preaching against the world, and finally, what good is preaching if it is never heard? Those who refuse to let men hear what they preach when they have preached something true for Christ covet knowledge that belongs to God. When the message is clear to the preacher he has an obligation to speak it to the people.¹⁴⁶ Restriction can only be imposed on those who will not listen. When the world is full of darkness and children crave the Light, the man who withholds Light is really refusing to withstand darkness.

[77] In the final analysis it comes down to a matter of rights, of who has authoritative possession of the material. After this has been established it becomes a matter of purpose- what will the owner decide to do with his material? God may delegate what he owns to man, transferring the authority of his property into the possession of His creature.¹⁴⁷ In this sense, man is only a steward while God is the owner.¹⁴⁸ The reality of God owning all things is that nothing can ever really belong to another; even though God holds man responsible for His possessions man does not actually own them. They are God's and we

146 Augustine speaking about the Christian and non-believer punished together: "Where is the man who lives with them in the style in which it becomes us to live with them? For often we wickedly blind ourselves to the occasions of teaching and admonishing them, sometimes even of reprimanding and chiding them, either because we shrink from the labor or are ashamed to offend them, or because we fear to lose good friendships, lest this should stand in the way of our advancement, or injure us in some worldly matter, which either our covetous disposition desires to obtain, or our weakness shrinks from losing. So that, although the conduct of wicked men is distasteful to the good, and therefore they do not fall with them into that damnation which in the next life awaits such persons, yet, because they spare their damnable sins through fear, therefore, even though their own sins be slight and venial, they are justly scourged with the wicked in this world, though in eternity they quite escape punishment... They abstain from interference, because they fear that, if it fail of good effect, their own safety or reputation may be damaged or destroyed; not because they see that their preservation and good name are needful, that they may be able to influence those who need their instruction, but rather because they weakly relish the flattery and respect of men, and fear the judgments of the people, and the pain or death of the body; that is to say, their non-intervention is the result of selfishness, and not of love." Augustine City of God Book 1 Chap. 9, translated by Rev. Marcus Dods, D.D.

¹⁴⁷ Jer 27:5 "By My great strength and outstretched arm, I made the earth, and the people, and animals on the face of the earth. I give it to anyone I please."

¹⁴⁸ Matt 25:14 "...He called his own slaves and turned over his possessions to them."

are his stewards.¹⁴⁹ Private property exists because all property belongs to God and no man can challenge what He gives to another. If God says certain goods belong to certain men- then He is simply holding man responsible for what He owns. There is no way to escape the reality of this position because God is the creator of all things. No man can take what God has given: the man who takes what God has given to another has stolen from God. This means the State cannot take property that is mine by the right of God. Further, man cannot legitimately superimpose his authority against the Authority of God. What the Lord of the Sermon tells us to do with the sermon is His right and prerogative. Those who seek to take from men what God has rightfully given to them seek to superimpose their will above God's will. Likewise, those who restrict what God has given for the edification of all seek to impose their will above God's will. Hence, those who take by force and those who withhold in greed are guilty of the same crime- they have no respect for the Authority of God. If the Master bids us to sell or keep what He has given than no man can rightfully take it from us. However, if God should tell His steward to give away the goods that he has been given and the steward refuses to obey the command of his Master then the steward must stand before God just as guilty as the thief who stole what God never gave him.

[78] If God gives me a rock He has given it to me for a purpose- in a universe ordered by Sovereignty there is no such thing as a rock without a purpose.¹⁵⁰ Therefore, possessions and goods (including knowledge) are always given with a purpose- nothing is ever given without a purpose, as that would be a contradiction of the Sovereignty of God. Hence, what I should do with my rock always depends upon the purpose that God gave it to me. This means that other men cannot take my rock unless God has told me to give it to them- or commanded them to take it from me. To demand that I hand over my rock, when God has told me to keep my rock, would be to desert the reason God gave me the rock. All things are given for a reason-that reason is nothing other than the will of God. Hence, to use my rock other than God has told me to use it or to take another man's rock that God has not given to me is to rebel against God's purpose. In the end my rock is only good to accomplish the purpose for which God gave it.

[79] It must not be denied that God has provided teachers.¹⁵¹ Neither should we assume that just because a man has the ability to teach it makes him a good Christian.¹⁵² Further, if a good teacher opens up the mysteries of the text to his hearers, if he shows that all its parts work together without contradiction, thereby inspiring his hearers to holiness upon the basis of the complete system of Christ,¹⁵³ then he has done well. Yet, even as strange

¹⁴⁹ Matt 25:27 "...And when I returned I would have received my money back with interest."

¹⁵⁰ Heb 1:3 "...He sustains all things by His powerful word."

¹⁵¹ See Eph 4:11

¹⁵² Matt 23:3 "Therefore do whatever they tell you and observe [it]. But don't do what they do, because they don't practice what they teach."

¹⁵³ Matt 22:31 "Now concerning the resurrection of the dead, haven't you read what was spoken to you by God..."

Matt 19:4 "Haven't you read..."

as it seems there are good teachers who deny men the right to listen to their sermons. Thus it follows, that just because a man is a poor Christian does not mean that he is poor teacher. Likewise, the fact that certain teachers will not provide copies of their sermons for those who want to listen does not mean that those sermons are fallacious. It can well be the case, by the Providence of God, that the most stubborn and selfish theologian is also one of the best. Knowing that his selfishness is contrary to the Word of God we exhort him by the Word of God to live consistent with what scripture teaches. Indeed, for all his light there remains great darkness if he refuses to share what he knows with those he is commanded to love.